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# ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS

2017

Fourth Progress  
Report





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## Commentary

This is the fourth and final quarterly Progress Report for the Action Plan for Jobs 2017 which outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the fourth quarter. It also includes an update on measures described in the Plan as “Ongoing”, and delayed measures from previous quarters.

The Government published the sixth in its multi-annual Action Plan for Jobs series in February 2017. This Plan, which contains 164 actions and circa 430 measures to be implemented in 2017 by all Government Departments and by agencies under the remit of these Departments, aimed to build on the progress made since 2012 to improve supports for job-creating businesses and remove the barriers to employment creation across the economy. These actions are additional to the over 2,800 actions already implemented under Action Plan for Jobs 2012-2016, cumulatively, and reported on in previous quarterly reports (see [www.dbei.gov.ie](http://www.dbei.gov.ie)).

The latest official statistics on employment and unemployment in Ireland (CSO LFS Quarter 3 2017) show that total seasonally adjusted employment increased to 2,192,000. Over the period since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs in Quarter 1 2012, over 312,000 jobs have been created in the Irish economy. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December was 6.2% and January 2017 was 6.1%, down from a high of 16% in 2012.

All QNHS series (including employment and unemployment) have been revised due to the incorporation of the Census of Population and the introduction of the Labour Force Survey. This has resulted in changes to overall employment and unemployment figures, and a substantial increase in the number of jobs recorded as created since 2012.

### Actions due in Quarter 4

In the fourth quarter of 2017, Departments and agencies were to deliver 118 measures under the Action Plan. 28 of the measures due in Quarter 4 of 2017 have not been delivered, giving a completion rate of 76%.

### Measures not delivered as planned in Q4

As stated above, 28 of the Q4 measures outlined in the Plan have not been delivered on schedule:

- *Enhance Ireland’s position and competitiveness in global aviation to realise the sector’s growth potential; In line with the National Aviation Policy goal of enhancing connectivity, ratify two EU Aviation agreements and two bilateral Air Transport Agreements by year-end. - Action 32.*

The ratification of aviation agreements has been delayed. However, this has not impacted on connectivity. Ireland’s overall aviation policy of encouraging competition

and connectivity has facilitated the launch of a number of new services in 2017 and the announcement of new services for 2018. Notable examples are Norwegian Air's transatlantic services from Cork, Shannon and Dublin which started in summer 2017 and Cathay Pacific's announcement of a direct service to Hong Kong starting in summer 2018; the first ever direct service from Ireland to the Asia Pacific region.

- *Implement an ambitious International Education Strategy to strengthen the quality and relevance of our education system in global terms, and to support the development of Ireland's global relationships.; Increase the number of international Higher Education and English language training students coming to study in Ireland in 2017. – Action 33*

The latest data in relation to the number studying in Ireland in 2017 is not yet available. The Department of Education and Skills are currently collecting data on the numbers of International Higher Education and English Language Students that studied in Ireland in 2017 and these numbers will be available by the end of Q1 in 2018.

- *Create a stronger focus on entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation in schools.; Introduce a National Entrepreneurial Award for the education sector- both primary and post- primary- to encourage the development of entrepreneurial skills at schools level. - Action 49.*

The new National Entrepreneurial Award for the education sector is in preparation and will be launched following the publication of the Entrepreneurship Education Guidelines for schools which are now expected to be finalised in Q3, 2018.

- *Develop a Further Education and Training policy framework for employee development to guide Education and Training Board activity to support skills development for those in employment, in consultation with partners, aligning with the National Skills Strategy.; Develop the implementation plan for the FET policy framework for employee development. - Action 69.*

While the draft policy framework and implementation plan have been prepared, the Department is engaging with SOLAS on a number of issues, raised through review with the Minister, which will need to be reflected in the final document.

- *Enact the Technological Universities Bill to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland.; As per headline action. - Action 76.*

The Technological Universities Bill was passed by the Dáil and is currently at Report Stage in the Seanad.

- *Increase collaboration between enterprise and the health sector leading to the development and commercialisation of new healthcare technologies, products and services and to facilitate the health system to find efficiencies and improvements*

*through Health Innovation Hub Ireland by selecting and supporting projects emerging from open and focused calls that create solutions to identified problems/challenges.; Issue the 2017-2018 call for new projects. - Action 87.*

Following consultations between the HHI Stakeholder Advisory Group, National Oversight Group and the HSE, the theme for the 2017/18 focused call was determined as 'Frail Elderly'. It is now intended to issue this second call for new HHI projects, both open and focused, in Q1 2018.

- *Support knowledge transfer by implementing a successor to the current Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative, delivering on targets for the transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise, from all publicly-funded research, through the knowledge transfer infrastructure supported by Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), reviewing the operations of KTI, finalising and implementing a 2017-2021 strategy for KTI, and by establishing a KTI Industry Connectors group to increase quality engagement and collaboration between companies and publicly funded research and technology in the higher education sector.; All funders of public research will increase the commercialisation of the research that they support, using the available commercialisation and technology transfer programmes, to ensure the efficient transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise and to meet the following targets:*
  - Commercially relevant technologies (licences, options, assignments): over 155
  - Spin outs: over 25
  - High Potential Start-Ups from spin outs: over 8. - Action 95

Two of the above three targets were exceeded. 75 commercially valuable technologies transferred to Irish companies were confirmed in 2017. The outturn of licences, options, assignments to the end of Q3 was 113 totalling 118. While the Spin outs target of over 25 was not met 22 spin outs were achieved, which is substantially above international average in this area. 15 spinouts were progressed to become iHPSUs\*

In 2017 Knowledge Transfer Ireland supported the commercialisation of the research through the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI) and through its central knowledge transfer functions (including the KTI Website, Model Agreements, Practical Guides and information on expertise within the public research system), to ensure the efficient transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise.

The National Technology Transfer system enables the transfer of commercially valuable research outputs to industry. With funding from various sources including Enterprise Ireland, the Higher Education Authority, Science Foundation Ireland and others, researchers in higher education institutes are inventing new technologies and

developing solutions to challenges in areas like healthcare, transport, energy, engineering, food, software and telecommunications.

Many of these solutions and inventions have commercial potential and could become the basis for new companies, or could be used by existing companies to develop new products and services or processes and open up new markets. The technology transfer system plays a vital role in the early stage of this innovation pipeline.

Enterprise Ireland's Commercialisation Specialists work with research teams in Research Performing Organisations (RPO) on research projects with the potential for commercial exploitation via a spin-out company. Together with these research teams and their Technology Transfer Office they work to nurture and develop spin-out companies to the point where it can be classed as an Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-ups and considered for financial investment from Enterprise Ireland

*\* HPSUs are start-up businesses with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale on international markets and the potential to create 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 years of starting up.*

- *Complete construction of three new advance buildings in Sligo, Castlebar and Tralee and develop three new advance buildings in Limerick, Dundalk and Galway.; Commence construction in Limerick, Dundalk and Galway. - Action 98*

The planning process for the Galway building is underway, with detailed design and tender expected in Quarter 1/2 2018 and works are expected to commence in late Quarter 2, 2018. Planning has been granted for the Dundalk building and works are estimated to commence in Quarter 2 2018. There have been some delays in planning and procurement for the Limerick building, however works are expected to commence in March 2018.

- *Support the creation of 500 new jobs in 2017 and continue to help maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprises sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.; Commence the development of a Marine Innovation Park which will facilitate both research and commercial activities in Cill Chiaráin, Co Galway by: Preparing and completing Full Master Plan, Undertaking and completing a Environmental Impact Study, Preparing and submitting a planning application. - Action 99.*

The development of a marine innovation park at Páirc na Mara, Cill Chiaráin, Conamara represents a key strategic project for Údarás na Gaeltachta. In order to advance the

project a consultative planning and advisory group has been established which includes representation from the relevant state agencies and public bodies, including Bord Iascaigh Mhara, NUIG, GMIT and the Marine Institute.

Expressions of Interest from potential project promoters in the marine sector who may be interested in establishing a presence at the facility are currently being sought (see [www.udaras.ie](http://www.udaras.ie)). Discussions are on-going with a number of interested parties with regard to their specific enterprise development requirements, and following a review of these requirements, and an appraisal of the relevant statutory permits which are required, Údarás na Gaeltachta will be in a position to proceed with the overall planning application process.

In relation to the specific actions referred to above the following is the current position:

Preparing and completing Full Master Plan – 70% of the Plan has been developed and will be completed by July 2018 in line with the planning application

Undertaking and completing an Environmental Impact Study – This action has moved to a full Environmental Impact Assessment due to the increased capacity requirements of the project. This action is will be undertaken in full by the end of July 2018 in line with the planning application

Preparing and submitting a planning application (DCHG, ÚnaG) – It was envisaged that an outline planning application would be submitted by the end of 2017, but due to an increased demand for facilities in the park and discussions with Galway County Council, a full planning application along with an EIA is now required and is expected to be completed by July 2018.

- *Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. - Action 106.*

*Updates on DAFM, DCHG, DHPLG, DJE, DBEI, DTTAS, DCCAE, DoH*

Development of **DAFM's** custom platform to support online forms and licence applications was delayed to accommodate some suggested amendments. Once the platform is in place, relevant business areas can engage and begin making available relevant forms and applications online. The latest version is awaiting approval and is due to go live early 2018. In the interim, two further business areas have demoed the platform and are interested in providing forms for inclusion; these will initially go to the test version so it will be at least early 2018 before these further forms become available online .

**DCHG** is in the initial stages of developing an e-licensing system for applications for licences for various activities under the Wildlife Acts. Progress will be contingent on the completion of a major consolidation of IT services due to be completed by mid - 2018.

**DHPLG** has identified a list of 10 relevant licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application and payment-taking 'procedures' to be made available online. As of Q4 2017, 6 of these procedures are now online with plans in place for another 4 to move online by Q1 2018.

**DJE** has identified 64 licences/permits under Action 106, 47 of which are now either online or will be shortly. A proposal to develop an online licensing system is under consideration which would bring another 10 licences online.

**DBEI** has identified 45 licences, authorisations, certifications and permits which are provided to business, though it is consulting on and reviewing the ongoing need for one of these. 16 of the services are available online - 13 through the Department and a further 3 services through another source. A further 2 services are substantially available online but require legislative amendment to lift a restriction before being fully online. Legislative proposals for this are in preparation. Detailed plans to put a further 15 services online have been developed, with development completed on 2 of these. Those completed licences will be available online once terms have been agreed with the Online Payment Service Provider. Finally, of the remaining 11 licences, there are EU legal restrictions to the provision of the service online for 1 licence; a further 2 are not provided online due to current requirements for hearings in person (for example, copyright and trade mark disputes); and the final 8 can be renewed by email but the very low level of new applications means online service systems for new applications has not been developed to date.

**DTTAS** initially identified 32 licences / permits to achieve the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. A further 6 were subsequently added, bringing the total number to 38. As of Q4 2017, 18 of these licences are now online and progress is continuing to be made with the remaining 20. In 2018 DTTAS will continue its efforts to ensure that all 38 are made fully available online.

**DCCAIE** has identified 14 licences to achieve the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online as relevant on a progressive basis by November 2017. As of Q4 2017, either the application forms, licences, permits or payment process for 12 of these are now online and progress is continuing to have the application form and guidance for two others completed.

DoH has identified 58 licence/permits/notifications Of these 47 are now fully available online. Five others are on schedule to be online by early in Q1 2018. Three further licences are being assessed in the context of the development of an appropriate ICT infrastructure and consideration of legal restrictions (original signature) with a view to making the certificates of registration available online as quickly as possible.

In relation to two other licences, work will continue on the overall portal development project during the course of 2018. The final one is low volume, has some legislative restrictions and is not economically viable to move to an online procedure.

- *Roll out a pilot of enterprises across key sectors of the economy, to exemplify good practice and new ways of working, with employer and employee stakeholders; As per headline action. - Action 113.*

An online pilot to expemplify good practice and new ways of working, with employer and employee stakeholders is in the development stage, but as of end 2017 it has not been rolled out. Following testing in Q1 2018, the pilot will then be rolled out.

- *Publish and start to implement the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to ensure proper planning and sustainable development and the optimal economic and social development at a national and regional level.; Publish the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, which set a long-term regional framework to ensure the optimal economic and social development of our regions. - Action 125.*

The Government launched Project Ireland 2040 on Friday 16 February, in Sligo Institute of Technology. Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of our country. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2018 to 2027, the National Development Plan 2018-2027, and the National Planning Framework 2040.

The National Planning Framework has been developed in parallel with the National Development Plan, marking the first time there has been such a coordinated approach to how investment in public infrastructure ties in with national spatial priorities.

Together, the two plans set out a national framework – this framework envisages major national projects but, crucially, regional and local projects will be prioritised, designed and delivered at regional and local level. The three Regional Assemblies will develop complementary Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, linking strategic planning and investment at the national level with the physical planning and local economic and community development functions of local authorities. Formulation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) has just commenced, and there will be an

opportunity through extensive public consultation process to share views and feed into the shaping of these RSEs.

- *Publish and start to implement the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to ensure proper planning and sustainable development and the optimal economic and social development at a national and regional level.; Start to implement the National Planning Framework. - Action 125.*

As mentioned above, the National Planning Framework was published by the Government under Project Ireland 2040 on Friday 16 February 2018. The formulation of the corresponding Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) by the three Regional Assemblies has commenced and DHPLG will continue to engage with the Assemblies to ensure a consistent, joined-up approach. DHPLG has commenced preparation for briefings with local authorities in the context of the content of the final NPF and implications for statutory development plans.

- *Facilitate an effective and competitive market for maritime transport services to meet the needs of our trading economy.; Commence construction on the Ringaskiddy project, which will inter alia facilitate the transfer of port activities from the Upper to Lower Harbour area. - Action 127.*

Borrowing towards funding the Ringaskiddy Redevelopment project was secured in 2017. Construction is now due to commence in 2018.

- *Deliver policy supports to develop Ireland's indigenous renewable energy and further decrease our dependence on imported fossil fuels, including new support schemes for heat and electricity.; Work with all relevant Departments, agencies and stakeholders and complete a mid-term progress review of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan. – Action 129*

This measure is due for completion in Q1 2018.

- *Introduce the new Single Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will provide a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme, as part of a package to enhance the provision of quality and affordable childcare, which will support increased labour market participation.; As per headline action. - Action 132.*

Preparation for the Affordable Childcare Scheme, which includes introduction of legislation and development of a new IT infrastructure for user-friendly automated assessments of applicants' income, is well underway. These preparations will continue into 2018.

To ensure families benefitted from improved childcare subsidies as soon as possible a series of measures aimed at reducing the cost of childcare were introduced in

September 2017; utilising changes to the existing childcare subvention schemes, including the introduction of a new universal, non means tested element.

The new Scheme will complement the ECCE Free Pre-School Programme which has been expanded for a second time; this time ensuring that all children may avail of two years (2 x 38wks) of the programme from September 2018.

- *Stimulate growth in international tourism to Ireland via the events sector (in particular sporting events), in partnership with key stakeholders to identify, bid for and ultimately secure suitable events for Ireland.; Identify and build a pipeline of relevant and appropriate bid-worthy events for Ireland through collaboration with strategic partners.* - Action 149.
- *Stimulate growth in international tourism to Ireland via the events sector (in particular sporting events), in partnership with key stakeholders to identify, bid for and ultimately secure suitable events for Ireland.; Support ten leads in making strong, competitive bids for new sports tourism events.* - Action 149.
- *Stimulate growth in international tourism to Ireland via the events sector (in particular sporting events), in partnership with key stakeholders to identify, bid for and ultimately secure suitable events for Ireland.; Secure a minimum of four new events for Ireland (generating an estimated €30 million in revenue).* - Action 149.

Owing to resource constraints, these 3 action was not progressed.

- *Develop the impact of investment in the Irish arts sector both at home and abroad to identify new markets for Irish work, and build awareness of the range and quality of work produced by Irish artists and working with other State bodies.; Work with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to carry out a baseline study on arts investment as a priority area for employment creation.* - Action 151.

Proposals for the baseline study to be developed in consultation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) are being considered by the Arts Council.

- *Maximise the potential of the design sector to drive innovation and competitiveness.; Develop a proposal for a design innovation clustering initiative in one region, promoting collaboration between industry, design education, designers and agencies.* - Action 157.

This action was delayed as additional time was required to develop the partnership and secure match funding as part of the application process. DCCol along with a consortium of partners - Institute of Technology, Carlow, Kilkenny Local Authority and KIDCO - will submit an application under the second round of Enterprise Ireland's Regional Development Fund to develop a Design Hub in the South East, the application date for the funds is due to be announced in March 2018

## Action Plan for Jobs 2017: Delivery of “Ongoing 2017” Measures

The Action Plan contains 114 measures that are described as “Ongoing” in 2017. Although not due in any specific quarter, Departments and Agencies with responsibility for actions listed as “Ongoing” report progress on them for the Quarter 2 and the Quarter 4 report.

The “ongoing” measures not delivered on schedule for the Q4 Report are:

- *Drive scale in Irish based enterprises through a package of targeted interventions to meet their specific needs.; Support 250 new large scale investments including across sectors and regions. – Action 23*

Enterprise Ireland supported 233 new large-scale investments including across sectors and regions. These are investments where clients invest more than €500k. Enterprise Ireland has set ambitious targets to increase clients’ exports by €5bn to €26bn on 2020 and to support its client companies in the creation of 60,000 new jobs while also sustaining the existing 200,000 jobs.

- *Strengthen the potential of Local Enterprise Offices to support jobs and start-ups at local level; Roll out a new Portfolio Management Model in the LEOs nationwide, to drive effective client engagement, enhanced portfolio performance and increased levels of client progression towards scale and exporting. - Action 24.*

EI, LEOS and LGMA established a Customer Relationship Management Project Steering Group which developed the business case for a new IT solution for the delivery of a comprehensive customer service tool. This will allow the LEOs to track all client engagements and ensure that the appropriate solutions are being provided to LEO client companies in a consistent manner across the LEO network, with the overarching objective of strengthening the potential of Local Enterprise Offices to support jobs and start-ups at local level.

EI tendered for the provision of a Business Process Systems review and associated Services for the network of Local Enterprise Offices. The contract has been awarded. The development of a new system will drive effective client engagement, enhanced portfolio performance and increased levels of client progression towards scale and exporting. The Implementation of this project will commence in Q1 2018.

- *Implement an ambitious International Education Strategy to strengthen the quality and relevance of our education system in global terms, and to support the development of Ireland’s global relationships.; Introduce the International Education Mark (IEM) to*

ensure quality standard and best international practice for international learners in Ireland. - Action 33.

Legislative amendments to facilitate the introduction of the IEM are contained in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill. The General Scheme of this Bill was published on 15 May 2017, following Government approval. Following consideration by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills, the Bill has been referred to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for the appointment of a legislative drafter. It is anticipated that the IEM will be introduced in 2018.

- *Work with the Irish Film Board and other agencies including Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound and Vision Fund and public service broadcasters to explore the capacity to expand the audio-visual screen content production sector and implement the joint Irish Film Board/Broadcasting Authority of Ireland national strategy on skills shortages and talent development.; Implement increased Irish Film Board funding along with other industry supports including Section 481, to deliver increased employment in the sector of up to 1,000 full time equivalents per annum over the period 2016 to 2020.* - Action 34.

The Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG), the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA), the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI), The Irish Film Board (IFB) and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) are considering the *Economic Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland*, and the *Crowe Horwath Strategy for the Development of Skills for the audiovisual industry in Ireland* reports.

These two consultant reports will provide inputs to the Government Plan for the audio-visual industry as envisaged under the Creative Ireland Programme, Pillar 4.

- *Develop and implement whole-of-Government cross sectoral strategies for Asia-Pacific and the Americas; As per headline action.* - Action 43.

Further to the publication of the *Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World* strategy, drafting of both the Asia Pacific and Americas Strategies are well advanced and these should be launched in late Q1/Q2 2018.

- *Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017.; Support the rollout of licences.ie, the integrated one-stop-shop licensing application portal for public sector licensing bodies.* - Action 106.

While the licences.ie website is live and some licencing authorities are already processing licences, Government Departments are currently not in a position to use licences.ie due

to unforeseen legal issues which are currently being addressed and should be resolved during Q1 2018.

- *Award the contract to the winning bidder(s) to deliver a high speed broadband network to over 750,000 premises in Ireland.; Manage the procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area. - Action 115.*

The National Broadband Plan is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention. As of November 2017 67% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband.

On 4 April 2017, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment finalised the High Speed Broadband Map, which set the State Intervention area at 542,000 premises.

On 4 April 2017, the Minister also signed a commitment agreement with eir to deploy high speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas by the end of 2018. According to figures provided by eir to the Department, over 120,000 of these premises were passed by the end of Q4 2017. As a result of this and other substantial commercial investment by telecoms operators over 77% of premises will have access to high speed broadband by end 2018, with this figure expected to reach 90% in 2020.

The Procurement Process to appoint a company/companies to build, operate and maintain a broadband network for 25 years is now at an advanced stage. Solutions submitted by two bidders in September 2017 have been evaluated by the NBP specialist team. This is the last stage of the procurement process before moving to the final tender stage.

On 31 January 2018 one bidder, Eircom Limited (eir), formally communicated to the Department that it is withdrawing from the NBP procurement process. The remaining bidder in the procurement process, the consortium comprising of Granahan McCourt, enet, SSE, John Laing Group plc, has reaffirmed its commitment to the successful conclusion of the NBP process. The NBP procurement process remains on track and the Department continues to engage intensively with all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that procurement process reaches a satisfactory conclusion for Government, and that a contract will be awarded and the network rollout will commence as early as possible.

- *Deliver policy supports to develop Ireland's indigenous renewable energy and further decrease our dependence on imported fossil fuels, including new support schemes for heat and electricity.; Develop and implement two new support schemes, the Renewable Heat Incentive focusing on larger heat users and the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme which will address a wider range of technologies and community aspects. - Action 129.*

In Budget 2018, €7m was allocated for the roll out of the first phase of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (formerly called the Renewable Heat Incentive). The scheme was approved by Government in December 2017 and is expected to commence in 2018 subject to State Aid approval. A public consultation on the emerging principles of the new RESS (including measures for increased community ownership and participation) closed in November 2017. All submissions will inform the final design of the new scheme which will be brought to Government for approval in 2018. Following this a formal State Aid approval process will commence.

- *Generate and secure six investments from food FDI firms.; As per headline action. – Action 143*

EI competes internationally to secure Food and Drink related Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects for Ireland in an environment where attracting mobile food investment is extremely competitive and challenging. A strong pipeline has been developed in 2017 and five investments from Food & Beverage FDI firms have been secured from these. A sixth project was progressed significantly however consideration of the project was delayed pending additional information from the company. Following receipt of that additional information from the company, the project is now scheduled for consideration shortly.

Additional FDI projects continue to be developed with investments due for consideration in 2018.

- *Work with Fáilte Ireland, the OPW and other strategic partners to develop heritage tourism initiatives, based on Ireland's built and natural heritage and the enhanced management and presentation of collections held by the National Cultural Institutions and other bodies, to contribute to the implementation of the growth objectives set out in People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025.; Develop trailways in National Parks and Nature Reserves, in partnership with key stakeholders. - Action 152.*

DCHG has entered into a strategic partnership with Failte Ireland which will target investment at developing and enhancing the tourism offering at the 6 National Parks and Coole Park Nature Reserve. A number of priority projects including trail development have been identified under this partnership.

### **Update on actions delayed in Quarter 1**

As reported at the end of Quarter 1, there were 13 actions delayed. The following three measures from this report have now been delivered:

- *Develop and run a pilot Training Needs Analysis Workshop to provide companies with the framework to identify their training need.; As per headline action.- Action 27.*

Following the successful Enterprise Ireland Skills Pilot Programme, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, officially launched the roll out of the **Spotlight on Skills** initiative. Enterprise Ireland's Spotlight on Skills is a nationwide series of one-day workshops to empower companies to identify the skills they require to support their business growth plans. The 2017 workshops, which targeted the North East; Midlands; North West and Dublin took place in Dundalk, Mullingar, Sligo, and Dublin. A further 15 workshops are scheduled to take place in 2018 and will take place across the regions (Mid-East; Midlands; Mid-West; North East; North West; South East; South West; West and Dublin).

The Spotlight on Skills initiative was one of two initiatives launched at an event in Enterprise Ireland's head office in Dublin on 14 December 2017. The **Skills for Growth** programme was also launched at this event by Minister for Education and Skills. The Skills for Growth programme, developed by the Department of Education and Skills, seeks to align the educational system to industry skills needs. Both programmes are focused on driving the delivery of skills to employers, and involve very close collaboration between Enterprise Ireland and the Dept. of Education and Skills.

- *Introduce a new Counter Guarantee Scheme to support the leveraging of greater funds for Irish SMEs from EU risk sharing financial instruments.; As per headline action - Action 54.*

The Counter Guarantee Scheme was put in place in Q4 2017.

- *Support knowledge transfer by implementing a successor to the current Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative, delivering on targets for the transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise, from all publicly-funded research, through the knowledge transfer infrastructure supported by Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), reviewing the operations of KTI, finalising and implementing a 2017-2021 strategy for KTI, and by establishing a KTI Industry Connectors group to increase quality engagement and collaboration between companies and publicly funded research and technology in the higher education sector; Finalise and implement a 2017-2021 Strategy for Knowledge Transfer Ireland to ensure companies continue to benefit from access to Irish expertise and technology through simple connection to and engagement with the Higher Education research base, in turn supporting employment. – Action 95.*

Enterprise Ireland has approved and commenced the implementation of the Knowledge Transfer Ireland Strategy 2017-2021, which aims to ensure companies continue to benefit from access to Irish expertise and technology through simple connection to and engagement with the Higher Education research base. The strategy will in turn support employment. The KTI strategy was endorsed by the Board of Enterprise Ireland on 13

September 2017. Implementation of the strategy commenced, following approval, in Q3 with the launch of the R&D Funding Tool on the KTI website.

#### Update on actions delayed in Quarter 2:

As reported at the end of Quarter 2, there were 18 actions delayed. The following seven measures from this report have now been delivered:

- *Conduct a review of the credit application process with a focus on the administrative burden for SMEs and the time costs to them.; As per headline action. – Action 60.*

On behalf of the SME State Bodies Group, the Credit Review Office (CRO) undertook to lead on this action. The Credit Review Office survey - SME experience of Accessing Bank Credit – was published and circulated to SME's in October and November, primarily through trade bodies and DBEI/DoF/CRO. The survey closed for responses on 15 November. Over 100 responses were received, and a summary report was prepared which highlighted areas for further work to improve access to credit, and more in depth research can be carried out by the DoF SME Demand survey going forward. Results were presented to BPF, who convened a workshop in late December with the 4 Irish banks, which discussed the issues highlighted and the suppressed demand levels in the Irish economy.

- *Monitor data on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources, and demand from SMEs for credit to inform policy and ensure that viable SMEs can access appropriate finance; Collate and examine detailed data from AIB, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB on a monthly basis. – Action 62.*

Quarterly meetings with both AIB and BoI took place in October and November 2017. PTSB have confirmed with the Minister that they will also submit data on SME credit to the Department. All three banks have submitted SME data for 2017.

- *Improve the dissemination of skills requirements and labour market intelligence, nationally and regionally, to inform dialogue between providers and employers and to underpin the provision of relevant skills development opportunities through the establishment of the National Skills Council; Commence the work programme of the National Skills Council in line with the National Skills Strategy. – Action 74.*

The National Skills Council was launched in 2017. Chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills, the Council is made up of high level officials from both public and private organisations. The role of the Council is to oversee research, advise on prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs, and will have a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by education and training providers to those priorities.

A Work Programme for the National Skills Council has been developed for 2018 which includes strategic thematic discussions on areas which are of relevance to the national skills agenda. Planned future strategic discussion items include: Lifelong Learning, the Future of Work, and Career Progression and Information.

- *Ensure RDI supports meet enterprise needs and are readily accessible by finalising a review and streamlining the range of State financial aid for RDI and by promoting the benefits of carrying out RDI including raising awareness to increase the level of collaboration across all sectors; Launch a new communications campaign promoting the benefits of enterprise carrying out RDI. – Action 91.*

Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I) supports have been made more accessible to clients by simplifying the application process, improving the response times from application to approval, and defining the process for project changes. An integrated RDI and Innovation promotion campaign was launched in 2017. It included the promotion of the new Agile Innovation Fund, the Business Innovation Initiative and other Innovation supports in the context of an overall innovation strategy. The campaign involves direct mail, case study promotion radio, digital and print advertising.

- *Implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training, 2016-2019, which builds on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, and expand access to and continuously improve and innovate further education and training provision; Develop a content sharing and management infrastructure to facilitate sharing and development of learning resources among all teachers. – Action 121.*

A content sharing and management infrastructure to facilitate sharing and development of learning resources among all teachers has been developed.

- *Implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training, 2016-2019, which builds on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, and expand access to and continuously improve and innovate further education and training provision; Implement a Bring Your Own Device policy in each ETB. – Action 121.*

The Bring Your Own Device policy strategy is complete and implemented in all ETBs.

- *Prepare a strategy for the adoption of Building Information Modelling across the public capital programme and to mandate the manner in which it is to be adopted across the public sector; As per headline action. – Action 162.*

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Minister of State with special responsibility for Public Procurement, Open Government and eGovernment, 21 November 2017 published the Government's approach for the increased use of digital technology in the delivery of key public works projects that are funded through the public capital programme. The strategy will see public bodies establishing requirements for the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) in the design, construction and operation of public buildings and infrastructure on a phased basis over the next 4 years, commencing with the larger, more complex projects, where those operating at that scale are already working through BIM.

**Update on actions delayed in Quarter 3:**

As reported at the end of Quarter 3 there were eight actions delayed. The following measure from this report has now been delivered:

- *Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning and assessment; Upgrade primary schools to higher broadband speeds - some 800 by end 2016, and at least a further 300 by end of 2017. – Action 120.*

A further 300 primary schools were upgraded to higher broadband speeds during 2017. A total of 1,100 primary schools have been upgraded during 2016 and 2017.

## **Quarter 4 Measures**

## Responding to Brexit

**Action 14:** Fund the development of a programme of initiatives to increase the awareness and capacity of SMEs to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit for cross border trade.

**Q4 Measure:** Complete a research project to assess likely tariff and other issues which will impact on cross border trade. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The latest phase of this research project has been finalised. The *Cross-border trade and supply chain linkages* report has been published.

**Action 15:** Work with retail representative bodies and other relevant members of the Retail Consultation Forum to bring a focus to key evolving challenges for the retail sector resulting from Brexit.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Brexit is a standing item on the agenda at the meetings of the Retail Consultation Forum. The last meeting of the Forum on 20 November 2017 included a facilitated workshop discussion on the opportunities and challenges presented by Brexit for the retail sector. The session also included presentations from the DBEI Brexit Unit and Retail Ireland on the current position of Brexit and its implications for the Retail Sector. The retail sector has been encouraged to engage with a number of supports offered by state agencies to prepare for Brexit, including the Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard and InterTradeIreland workshops.

Retail representative bodies are also included on all Brexit-related stakeholder groups in DBEI, and retail was selected as one of three sectors to examine in the pilot sectoral study by DBEI on impact of Brexit.

**Action 17:** Develop Ireland as an attractive location for mobile, globally renowned researchers, including UK based researchers, and strengthen Ireland's research funding collaborations with the UK and Northern Ireland.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop Ireland as an attractive location for mobile, globally renowned researchers, including UK based researchers, using and adapting SFI programmes such as Research Professorship, Future Research Leaders, Investigators Programme, and ERC support schemes. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017 the following awards have been made by SFI.

**Research Professorship:** SFI offered two research professorship awards in 2017. One of these offers was made in December 2017 and is being considered; the other offer was declined by the applicant.

**ERC support schemes:** A world-class researcher from the University of Bristol, UK, has moved to University College Dublin partially funded by SFI's ERC support programme.

**Future Research Leaders:** Q4 2017- 4 awards made in 2017.

**Action 17:** Develop Ireland as an attractive location for mobile, globally renowned researchers, including UK based researchers, and strengthen Ireland's research funding collaborations with the UK and Northern Ireland.

**Q4 Measure:** Encourage more collaboration between Irish and UK researchers through co-funding partnerships between SFI and UK funding agencies. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)/Science Foundation Ireland partnership was launched in April 2017. The new partnership will support joint UK/Irish research and technology development in all areas of EPSRC's remit which covers chemistry, engineering, information and communications technologies, materials, mathematical sciences and physics. In these partnerships, SFI funds the teams and research work in Ireland and the partner funds the collaborating teams in their country.

Updating on SFI's ongoing UK partnerships, in 2016 and 2017, there were 12 awards made under the Science Foundation Ireland/Health Research Board/Wellcome Partnership amounting to a total SFI contribution of €3.27m, there were 6 awards made under the Royal Society/Science Foundation Ireland partnership amounting to a SFI contribution of €2.8m, and there have been 14 awards made under the BBSRC-SFI partnership amounting to a SFI contribution of €6.7m.

**Action 18:** Provide specific support and advice to food and drinks companies on the impact of Brexit.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

In cooperation with other Departments and Agencies, DAFM is assisting food and drink companies to mitigate the consequences of Brexit through a range of Budgetary activities under two distinctive pillars – Competitiveness and Market/Product Diversification.

Under Competitiveness, the Department introduced a number of measures in Budget 2018 to help reduce farm gate and business costs, including, in collaboration with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, a new €300m Brexit loan scheme, 40% of which will be made available to food businesses. DAFM also allocated a further €25m to support a further loan scheme that will be made available to farmers, fishermen and the food industry in 2018

Under Market Diversification, the Department supported Bord Bia in its investment in market insight and in market prioritisation initiatives aimed at identifying and developing potential diversification opportunities. Following on the €10 million it has already allocated to Bord Bia since the Brexit vote, a further €4.5 million was allocated in Budget 2018.

Under Product Diversification, the Department supported Teagasc in the development of a new National Food Innovation Hub (€8.8 million funding recently announced by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Taoiseach).

**Action 19:** Roll out a schedule of trade visits and secure access to new third country markets for Irish meat and dairy products while maintaining access to existing markets.

**Q4 Measure:** Secure access to new third country markets for Irish meat and dairy products while maintaining access to existing markets. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine led a week-long trade mission to Japan and South Korea from 12-17 November. Both countries are significant net importers of food, and critical target markets for Irish exporters. The Minister was accompanied by 40 representatives of the Irish food sector. Dairy and beef promotion were high on the agenda with the Minister pushing, in particular, for beef market access in Korea.

The EU Japan Economic Partnership Agreement was concluded in December 2017 and will open market opportunities for Irish exporters, particularly in the agri-food.

**Action 19:** Roll out a schedule of trade visits and secure access to new third country markets for Irish meat and dairy products while maintaining access to existing markets.

**Q4 Measure:** Use Bord Bia's Thinking House 'consumer insights' expertise to help companies market their food produce. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

In the period September to December, Bord Bia worked with and supported five companies with their marketing and positioning across existing markets of the US, Germany, Greece and Britain.

**Action 19:** Roll out a schedule of trade visits and secure access to new third country markets for Irish meat and dairy products while maintaining access to existing markets.

**Q4 Measure:** Roll out a schedule of outward and inward trade visits at Ministerial level to promote agri-food exports and foreign direct investment in key markets. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland collaborated with Bord Bia on a DAFM Trade Mission led by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to Korea and Japan in November 2017. EI arranged Ministerial company meetings with an existing EI Client Suntory (Owners of Kilbeggan and Cooley Distilleries) and EI Meetings with a number of large Japanese Dairy Company investment prospects. There were also a number of Networking Business Receptions held that were attended by key Japanese Food Companies and visiting Irish Food Companies.

Enterprise Ireland facilitated a breakfast presentation on Gulf activity to Tánaiste Fitzgerald by EI-FDI / NTMA/ SFSI on the occasion of the UAE/ Oman Trade Mission, coinciding with the Agriscap Invest Forum in Abu Dhabi.

**Action 20:** Accelerate diversification of overseas tourism to Ireland to reduce the impact of a possible decline in visits from Great Britain.

**Q4 Measure:** Increase tourism marketing expenditure in Mainland Europe and North America. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Tourism Ireland continued the roll out of its market diversification strategy in 2017. This strategy commenced in 2014 and focuses greater resources on attracting visitors from those markets who stay longer and spend more while on holiday. The organisation increased its resource in Mainland Europe (+10% to €9.8 million), North America (+14 to €9.5 million) and Australia & Developing Markets (+2% to €2.3 million). As the total marketing budget\* in 2017 declined by 8% (to €31.4m), this was facilitated by reducing the organisation's resource in the British market (-39% to €5 million).

This has seen Mainland Europe become the largest contributor of overseas tourism revenue, and, for the first time, the revenue generated by visitors from North America has outpaced British visitor spend. CSO figures (for January to November 2017) show growth of +5.5% in visitors from Mainland Europe; +16.6% in visitors from North America and +13.1% in visitors from Australia & Developing Markets. Visitor numbers from Britain declined by -5.2% during this period.

Revenue (excluding carrier receipts) associated with overseas visits to Ireland from Mainland Europe grew by 0.9%, in the first nine months of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016 and revenue from North America grew by 17.1%, during the same comparison period.

\*Note: Tourism Ireland is jointly funded by the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive and operates under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

## Driving Enterprise Growth

**Action 21:** Lead and implement an integrated communications plan for enterprise supports that increases awareness among all businesses of the broad suite of supports that are available and how to access them.

**Q4 Measure:** Implement the plan. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and its agencies, Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices, back businesses through a range of supports. During 2017 the Department implemented a communications plan which included a range of initiatives to highlight those supports, particularly in the context of Brexit. Those initiatives were both Department and Agency led:

### DBEI

The Taking Care of Business event was a DBEI initiative, and brought up to 30 State Bodies together to offer advice to small businesses on how to access the supports available to them. It also provided an opportunity for businesses to get information on how to diversify into new export markets in light of Brexit.

The Department chaired the Communications Sub-Group of the Government's SME Access to

Finance Initiative. Part of the Communications Sub Group's work, was the active promotion of the SME Online Guide to Funding Supports toolkit.

#### *DBEI Agencies*

##### **Enterprise Ireland (EI)**

Enterprise Ireland launched its new Brexit awareness Campaign and on-line SME Brexit Scorecard and Toolkit in the first half of the year and was widely promoted.

At the end of May 2017, EI launched a new website and portal, [www.leanbusinessireland.ie](http://www.leanbusinessireland.ie). The Lean Business Community brought together all the key elements supporting and building competitiveness in Ireland for companies large and small, across all sectors. This included a number of government agencies, Universities and Institutes of technology, representative bodies including Ibec, ICBE, Lean Construction Ireland and consultants.

In December, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation announced the results of the first round of the new €60m competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund. The Fund, which is an open national competitive call to support regional projects, is provided by the Department, through EI and is a key action to support the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and the Action Plan for Rural Development.

21 successful applicants representing all regions of the country secured up to €30.5m for their projects in the first competitive call. Over €14m was approved for projects in the southern region, over €11m for projects in the eastern and midlands region and over €5m was approved for the northern and western region, subject to grant conditions.

##### **Local Enterprise Offices**

Earlier in 2017, the Local Enterprise Offices implemented a series of marketing and awareness campaigns, ranging from financial supports for start-ups, to training and mentoring, trading online vouchers and scaling and growing businesses.

The LEOs have also made the online Brexit Scorecard and Toolkit available to their clients and micro and local enterprises generally. A key element of the Scorecard is a report on next steps for businesses to take and supports available. In addition the LEOs ran their annual competition for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur.

##### **Ploughing Championships**

A number of the Department's agencies exhibited at the 2017 Ploughing Championships, reaching an audience of almost 300,000 people.

## **Growing and scaling enterprise**

**Action 31:** Actively engage with enterprise to facilitate SME participation in public procurement, including training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.

**Q4 Measure:** Participate in training and information events such as Meet the Buyer. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

InterTrade Ireland has organised a comprehensive series of events for companies, to assist them in pursuing public procurement opportunities.

**Action 32:** Enhance Ireland's position and competitiveness in global aviation to realise the sector's growth potential.

**Q4 Measure:** Pursue delivery of the recommended actions of the National Civil Aviation Development Forum (NCDAF) report to Government 2016 with emphasis on those actions to improve the competitive advantage of the aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and aviation training sectors. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Over a number of months, DTTAS completed an intensive period of engagement across departments and agencies on the Forum's recommended actions. The response from other government departments has been positive towards progressing implementation of many of the NCADF recommended actions where practicably possible. In some further action is required on the part of the Forum membership. A number of updates on development and initiatives in relation to MRO and Aviation Training are as follows:

- DTTAS has commenced preliminary planning to proceed with the commissioning of an independent, detailed evaluation of the MRO sector with a view to developing an overall strategic plan for the expansion of the sector, to include, an analysis of skills needs of the sector.
- DTTAS has requested the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) to consider the development of a formal scheme for student visa processing applicable to ATOs (Approved Pilot Training Organisations) pending the outcome of current negotiations.
- The Department of Education and Skills advised that the establishment of higher quality assurance standards in the aviation training sector was a prerequisite prior to further development of pilot training in Ireland.
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) have expressed a willingness to engage with approved training organisation to enable them to move towards the implementation of more robust quality assurance structures and ultimately (pilot training) course validation on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- DHPLG secured approval for Heads of a new Commercial Rates Bill which provides for an option to introduce rates alleviation schemes in support of development goals of an authority Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). (Relevant to application of rates on MRO facilities.)

## Supporting Foreign Direct Investment

**Action 36:** Target 7,000 net new jobs in 2017 through the creation of new jobs and sustaining current employment in existing IDA companies.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017, IDA Ireland's client companies created 19,851 jobs on the ground across a range of sectors, with every region of Ireland posting net gains in jobs. The net increase was 10,684. Total employment at IDA client companies now stands at 210,443. The performance was achieved against a background of global economic uncertainty, geopolitical pressures, Brexit and increasing pressure from competitor locations.

**Action 37:** Work to win another 180 FDI projects in 2017, including investment from high growth and emerging markets together with new forms of FDI.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017, IDA secured 237 new investments, which came from (i) New Name companies locating in Ireland for the first time, (ii) Existing companies expanding their operations in Ireland and (iii) companies undertaking R&D activities in Ireland. The number of new name investments increased to 111 from 99 in the previous year.

2017 was a very positive year for the Growth Markets Division as the scale of investment from these geographies broadened and deepened, where 21 investments were secured in 2017 an increase from 19 in 2016.

## Supporting Entrepreneurship

**Action 45:** Progress the implementation of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship.

**Q4 Measure:** Carry out a mid-term review of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, to include stakeholder engagement. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The midterm review of the Policy Statement has been completed. Stakeholder fora were participated in by Government Bodies, academics and entrepreneurs and their representative bodies in June. Further engagement was had with participants of the Going for Growth programme and the Entrepreneur of the Year Alumni group. The performance indicators in the mid-term review show an improvement in the environment for entrepreneurship since 2014. The review sets out a number of recommendations including: supports for regional entrepreneurs and unrepresented cohorts; increasing the attractiveness of investment in start-ups and enabling businesses to attract and retain employees. It is intended to publish the final version of the review in Q1 2018.

**Action 45:** Progress the implementation of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship.

**Q4 Measure:** Examine, as part of the mid-term review, measures that could ensure that greater numbers of people in cohorts identified in the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, including older workers, start and run their own business. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The participants of the midterm review examined in detail how under-represented cohorts could be encouraged to participate in existing support programmes for starting your own business, including if tailored supports would be required.

**Action 50:** Deliver the Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) Competition 2017/2018 with a target of 1,500 applicants.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, launched 'Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur' competition for 2018 through the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in July 2017. The competitions cover three categories: *Best New Idea*, *Best Established*, and *Best Start-up*. By the closing date of the 29 September 2017, a total of 1,470 completed applications were received. Of these 64% of applicants were male while 35% were Female.

The competition will see successful applicants advancing from county to regional finals, and onwards to the National Final. Finalists will be selected for National Final in Google in March 2018.

**Action 51:** Roll out the Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative to promote female entrepreneurship and develop their entrepreneurial capabilities.

**Q4 Measure:** Roll out the Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Four projects with a broad geographical spread (Galway/Mayo/Roscommon, Dublin and Cork/Limerick) continue to implement their action plans. The projects are being funded to carry out the agreed objectives over a 3-year period and are broadly on track to achieve the targets set out in the grant agreements.

**Action 52:** Further develop female centred entrepreneurial and start up initiatives.

**Q4 Measure:** Deliver the National Women's Enterprise Day on a regional basis. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The biggest-ever programme of events to mark National Women's Enterprise Day (NWED) was launched by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Nationwide events were held on 12 October. The focus of National Women's Enterprise Day for 2017 was on facilitating and encouraging access to new markets by female entrepreneurs. Enterprise Ireland clients presented at a number of nationwide events.

Participants included: Dr. Xeumei Germain (Microgen Biotech), Sandra Whelan (Immersive VR), Sonya Lennon (Frock Advisor), Ciara Clancy (Beats Clancy), Roisin Horgan (Hiro), Sara Kiely (Sadies Kitchen), Caroline Keeling (Keelings), and Niamh Sherwin (The Irish Fairy Door Company).

## Ensuring Finance for Growth

**Action 62:** Monitor data on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources, and demand from SMEs for credit to inform policy and ensure that viable SMEs can access appropriate finance.

**Q4 Measure:** Survey the demand for SME credit. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The Credit Demand Survey covering October 2016 to March 2017 was conducted between 3 April and 26 April. The survey was published in early July 2017 following approval from the Minister for Finance. The fieldwork for the survey covering the period April to September 2017 is complete. Publication of the survey is expected in Q1 2018.

**Action 62:** Monitor data on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources, and demand from SMEs for credit to inform policy and ensure that viable SMEs can access appropriate finance.

**Q4 Measure:** Collate and examine detailed data from AIB, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB on a monthly basis. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

Quarterly meetings with both AIB and BoI took place in October and November 2017. PTSB have confirmed with the Minister for Finance that they will also submit data on SME credit to the Department. All three banks have submitted SME data for 2017.

## Delivering Skills for a Growing Economy

**Action 67:** Monitor and progress the actions and recommendations from the National Skills Strategy 2025, which provides the framework for skills development to support long term sustainable growth.

**Q4 Measure:** Continue to implement the actions and recommendations in the National Skills Strategy. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Implementation of the actions and recommendations in the National Skills Strategy is ongoing.

**Action 68:** Support and strengthen the apprenticeship and traineeship systems through enhancing the range of courses and providing 4,947 apprenticeship places and 2,600 traineeships.

**Q4 Measure:** Provide 4,947 apprenticeships and 2,600 traineeships. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Implementation of the measures set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeships and Traineeship in Ireland are being carried out on an ongoing basis.

In Q4, 11 new apprenticeship programmes have been formally validated. Nine of these programmes are underway. There is a strong pipeline in place for the 2018 target of 1,500 new apprenticeship registrations with an accumulative total of 25 new apprenticeship programmes by the end of the year.

€98.7m was allocated to apprenticeship training in 2017 to support the Government's expansion commitments in the area set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland. Provisions were made for 4,947 apprenticeship however at end of year registrations were slightly behind target with a total of 4,843 new registrations in 2017. The two new programmes with a second intake of apprentices in 2017 both showed increased registrations over their year one figures. This pattern of initiating programmes with smaller numbers and building registrations in subsequent years is likely to continue and provides a solid basis to meet registration targets as the programme base grows.

Resulting from the second call for apprenticeship proposals in 2017 a further 26 new programmes have been approved for further development into national apprenticeships. These programmes span a wide range of skills and sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture. It is estimated that the development process will take between 12 and 15 months.

In relation to traineeships, a new Five-Step Guide to Traineeship was launched on 16 November aimed at employers seeking practical information on how to develop a traineeship within their company.

As part of expansion of traineeship nationally, the eligibility requirements have been expanded to include a broader group of potential participants, including those who are in employment.

The 2017 target traineeship enrolments of 2,600 was exceeded with 2,718 new enrolments by year end and 8 new traineeships developed.

**Action 71:** Implement the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy, which will focus on and support increased levels of participation and competence in language learning at all levels.

**Q4 Measure:** Increase the diversity and provision of foreign language learning opportunities, including languages like Mandarin which are of relevance to rapidly growing economies of the future. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The Foreign Languages Strategy in Education was launched in December 2017 and implementation is underway. The Strategy outlines a plan for foreign language learning in our education system until 2026 and includes the introduction of Mandarin Chinese, with the first Leaving Certificate examination in Mandarin to be set by SEC for 2022.

**Action 71:** Implement the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy, which will focus on and support increased levels of participation and competence in language learning at all levels.

**Q4 Measure:** Monitor progress through the strategic dialogue process with the HEIs. The New Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education will include indicators and targets to drive the provision of a diversity of language learning opportunities as a national priority. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 'Languages Connect' Strategy and Implementation Plan was launched on 4 December, 2017. The systems performance framework for Higher Education 2018-2020 has been finalised and published.

**Action 75:** Implement the objectives in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019.

**Q4 Measure:** Publish 2017 progress reports for Q1, Q2 and Q3. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The Action Plan for Education 2017, Q1, Q2 and Q3 Progress Reports, have been published on the Department's website.

**Action 77:** Further scale initiatives to encourage young people and the wider population to participate in STEM disciplines and to raise awareness among the public through broadcasting about STEM, the Smart Futures website and initiatives with industry.

**Q4 Measure:** Support the production of STEM programming during the peak schedule of a national broadcaster. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

SFI has been working with the national broadcaster, RTÉ and the national production community to catalyse a transformation in scientific coverage and programming, particularly supporting programming that highlight Irish STEM stories, across all media platforms. Under the joint agreement with RTÉ, SFI supported a portfolio of programming that featured at peak schedule times to broad audiences. This included:

- Series 2 of "Big Week on the Farm" which screened live and daily across one week, reaching an average of 312k viewers and almost 26% share of audiences. By the end of the week almost 1.5million viewers nationwide had tuned in.
- The documentary 'Will a Robot steal my job' screened on the Monday evening of Science Week 2017, reaching an audience of over 250k viewers.
- Science Week content was featured across the RTÉ schedule, including promos for the week, daily coverage within the weather forecasts on RTÉ One, news items and online content across RTÉ social media channels.
- In addition, the RTÉ and Met Éireann show 'Weather Live' featured during Science Week 2017. This resulted in strong science related content and conversations featuring across the RTÉ schedule throughout Science Week.

**Action 77:** Further scale initiatives to encourage young people and the wider population to participate in STEM disciplines and to raise awareness among the public through broadcasting about STEM, the Smart Futures website and initiatives with industry.

**Q4 Measure:** Grow the diversity of career profiles featured on the new Smart Futures website, including a range of qualification paths. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

A complete suite of careers stories is now on the Smart Futures website and this is updated monthly with new profiles.

**Action 77:** Further scale initiatives to encourage young people and the wider population to participate in STEM disciplines and to raise awareness among the public through broadcasting about STEM, the Smart Futures website and initiatives with industry.

**Q4 Measure:** Grow Smart Futures activity in counties identified as receiving low intervention in 2015. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

A new strategy is under development where Smart Futures will work with current partners to map areas in Ireland with low intervention and deliver Roadshows to ensure all schools are receiving access to role models.

**Action 77:** Further scale initiatives to encourage young people and the wider population to participate in STEM disciplines and to raise awareness among the public through broadcasting about STEM, the Smart Futures website and initiatives with industry.

**Q4 Measure:** Grow the Smart Futures industry partners and volunteer base. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Volunteer training for Smart Futures programmes took place throughout the year. Smart Futures offers industry partners the opportunity to coordinate and strengthen STEM careers messaging under the Smart Futures umbrella, providing schools with high quality resources, access to role models and importantly, a process for evaluating outreach activity in this space.

**Action 79:** Ensure the Employment Permits System remains aligned with labour market needs.

**Q4 Measure:** Continue to review the Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations List (HSEOL) and Ineligible Categories of Employment List (ICEL). (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Two reviews of the highly skilled eligible occupations list and the ineligible categories of employment list were undertaken in 2017.

**Action 82:** Enhance and support business RDI investment and capacity of both Irish and foreign owned enterprise to achieve the Innovation 2020 targets; this will include optimising, simplifying and rebranding Enterprise Ireland's in-company support, rolling out a new Business Innovation Initiative and by enterprise agencies working with companies to ensure they are equipped to exploit disruptive and emerging technologies.

**Q4 Measure:** Approve at least 100 companies for RDI funding of €100,000 or more to grow indigenous RDI spend by 50 per cent (to €1.25 billion) by 2020, through optimising, simplifying and rebranding Enterprise Ireland's in-company RDI supports. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The final 2017 outturn for significant RD&I projects approved for companies was 99.

To encourage greater RD&I investment Enterprise Ireland in 2017 made its Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) supports more accessible to its clients by simplifying the application process, improving the response times from application to approval, and defining the process for project changes. An integrated RDI and Innovation promotion campaign was launched. This included the promotion of Enterprise Ireland's new Agile Innovation Fund, the Business Innovation Initiative and other Innovation supports in the context of an overall innovation strategy and involves direct mail, case study promotion, radio, digital and print advertising.

Enterprise Ireland's new fast-track Agile Innovation Fund, launched in November, gives companies rapid access to innovation funding. The new measure has been introduced by Enterprise Ireland to help companies to respond more quickly to market opportunities and challenges, including those posed by Brexit.

Offering fast-track approval and a streamlined online application process, Enterprise Ireland's new Agile Innovation Fund will allow companies to access up to 50% in support for product, process or service development projects with a total cost of up to €300,000.

Responding to the export challenges and opportunities presented to companies, the new fund is designed to help companies develop new products, processes and services for new market opportunities, enabling exporters to respond quickly and maximise export performance.

## Promoting Innovation

**Action 82:** Enhance and support business RDI investment and capacity of both Irish and foreign owned enterprise to achieve the Innovation 2020 targets; this will include optimising, simplifying and rebranding Enterprise Ireland's in-company support, rolling out a new Business Innovation Initiative and by enterprise agencies working with companies to ensure they are equipped to exploit disruptive and emerging technologies.

**Q4 Measure:** Achieve €600 million in RDI investment annually to have a cumulative €3 billion in new RDI investments by 2019. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

R&D capital investment continues to be very strong. In 2017, IDA client committed to R&D investment of €905M. RD&I remains significantly important to Ireland's FDI landscape embedding existing employment and putting in place the framework for future employment creation. At the end of 2016 (latest data available), as per the ABSEI (Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact) survey, in-house R&D spend increased from €1.50bn in 2015 to €1.65bn in 2016 (+9.5%).

In 2017, Artificial Intelligence was the main area of focus in emerging technology areas, due to its

impact on existing jobs and also the opportunity for Ireland to build on an already strong reputation in Technology and Software Engineering. A programme of work began in January 2017 to exploit opportunities in Artificial Intelligence for Ireland. Some of the actions included:

- A national audit of industrial activity in Artificial Intelligence for Ireland.
- A Design thinking workshop with thought leaders from industry, Academia and Government invited.
- An action plan of activities from the workshop included:
  - Knowledge dissemination of Open Data in Ireland.
  - Information about European A.I. H2020 opportunities.
  - The creation of the world's first national Masters in Artificial Intelligence driven by industry.
  - The development of an Artificial Intelligence value proposition.
  - Training of all operation staff in IDA to market Artificial Intelligence globally.

**Action 82:** Enhance and support business RDI investment and capacity of both Irish and foreign owned enterprise to achieve the Innovation 2020 targets; this will include optimising, simplifying and rebranding Enterprise Ireland's in-company support, rolling out a new Business Innovation Initiative and by enterprise agencies working with companies to ensure they are equipped to exploit disruptive and emerging technologies.

**Q4 Measure:** Ensure that Ireland is equipped to exploit suitable emerging technology areas of economic impact. A pilot action to select one area and test this out will be undertaken in 2017. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

To encourage greater RD&I investment, Enterprise Ireland simplified and optimised its Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) offer to support individual client needs. It has been rebranded with an emphasis on Innovation and Agility. The new Agile Innovation fund offers turnaround times of three weeks and a very simple streamlined application process.

To engage companies an integrated RD&I promotion campaign was launched. This included the promotion of Enterprise Ireland's new Agile Innovation Fund, the Business Innovation Initiative and other Innovation supports in the context of an overall innovation strategy and involves direct mail, case study promotion radio, digital and print advertising.

Enterprise Ireland's Business Innovation Initiative has also been rolled out and the proposed increased grant level of up to 70% (subject to legislation) combined with collaborative support will enable Enterprise Ireland's clients to be more equipped to exploit disruptive and emerging technologies

**Action 86:** Establish an Advisory Office (currently in pilot phase) to provide national scientific and regulatory advice to companies for the development of human medicinal products.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DoH)

**Update: Complete**

The HPRA can offer regulatory and /or scientific advice to companies in the development of new or existing human medicinal products for human use. The pilot phase ended in August 2017 and this is now fully established as a standard process. A number of advisory meetings have taken place. Further information is available on their website which outlines the therapeutic areas, process and the forms when applying for an advisory meeting.

**Action 87:** Increase collaboration between enterprise and the health sector leading to the development and commercialisation of new healthcare technologies, products and services and to facilitate the health system to find efficiencies and improvements through Health Innovation Hub Ireland by selecting and supporting projects emerging from open and focused calls that create solutions to identified problems/challenges.

**Q4 Measure:** Engage with 50 companies to provide access to the health system and support the testing and validation of 30 industry products or services. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

As part of the first Open Call for Health Innovation Hub Ireland, 65 applicant projects were received – 48 in response to the Open Call and 17 from the focused call for elder care. Prior to the Open Call, HHI supported 23 projects involving 27 companies. In addition, HHI operate an ‘Open Door’ policy outside of the formal call process, which has attracted 17 project ideas so far.

As at the end of Q4 2017, HHI are actively supporting a total of 37 projects - 22 companies (innovation In) and 15 ideas or innovative concepts (Innovation Out). HHI are conducting these projects in 13 different clinical locations- ranging from Hospitals, to HSE Community Care Groups, to Pharmacies.

**Action 87:** Increase collaboration between enterprise and the health sector leading to the development and commercialisation of new healthcare technologies, products and services and to facilitate the health system to find efficiencies and improvements through Health Innovation Hub Ireland by selecting and supporting projects emerging from open and focused calls that create solutions to identified problems/challenges.

**Q4 Measure:** Support innovative developments emerging from within the health system. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Through their Innovation Out activity, Health Innovation Hub Ireland supports the development of pre-commercialisation concepts, ideas or innovations, emanating from anyone associated with healthcare delivery or from a relevant researcher, which addresses a valid healthcare need.

Out of the 65 projects submitted through the Open Call process, 20 were Innovation Out from the healthcare system. 11 of these projects are progressing and are actively supported by HHI. All of the Innovation Out project applicants received one-to-one feedback and guidance on direction.

The Open Door has also received several project ideas from the Innovation Out space. HHI are currently supporting nine ideas or innovative concepts from the Open Door process.

**Action 88:** Drive increased collaboration between enterprise and the public research system by increasing the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland, supporting over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects, developing a cadre of “industry ready researchers” to increase SME capability, and enhancing the skills of PhD students to meet the demands of industry and academia.

**Q4 Measure:** Increase the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland by growing the total number of Science Foundation Ireland Industry Fellowships to 135. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

By the end of 2017, SFI awarded 145 Industry Fellowships.

**Action 88:** Drive increased collaboration between enterprise and the public research system by increasing the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland, supporting over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects, developing a cadre of “industry ready researchers” to increase SME capability, and enhancing the skills of PhD students to meet the demands of industry and academia.

**Q4 Measure:** Expand Science Foundation Ireland industry facing programmes to seed the establishment of long term collaborations of academic researchers with SMEs and MNCs in areas of economic importance. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

By the end of 2017, SFI awarded: 18 Strategic Partnerships with industry (including 9 SFI - Pfizer awards), 16 Research Centres Spokes and 145 Industry Fellowships.

**Action 88:** Drive increased collaboration between enterprise and the public research system by increasing the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland, supporting over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects, developing a cadre of “industry ready researchers” to increase SME capability, and enhancing the skills of PhD students to meet the demands of industry and academia.

**Q4 Measure:** Maintain enrolment of postgraduate researchers in partnership with enterprise/employers to address economic demands:

- Establish a new Frontiers Research competitive fund to enable the next generation of researchers transition to Principal Investigator status.
- Maintain the number of postgraduate awards in partnership with enterprise/employers.
- Maintain the number of postdoctoral awards in partnership with enterprise/employers. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The Irish Research Council Laureate Awards (IRCLA) were launched on 6 April 2017, with the closing date for applicants on 29 June 2017. During October applications were put through the first phase of the assessment process which was comprised of external peer review and discussion by the panel members. Shortlisted applications are being invited for interview with awards being made in 2018. The 2017 Enterprise Partnership Scheme Postgraduate Scholarship and Postdoctoral Fellowship were both assessed by an international panel in early September. 40 Postgraduate and 10 Postdoctoral awards were made. The awards made are in line with the number of awards made in 2016. Negotiations with regard to IP agreements are ongoing and the awards are due to commence on 4 January 2018.

**Action 89:** Strengthen the ecosystem of research and technology centres and technology gateways to enhance the competitiveness of enterprise including by reviewing the first seven research centres, launching new research and technology centres in areas of demonstrated enterprise need and developing a plan for the next phase of the technology gateway programme.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop a plan for the next phase of the Technology Gateways programme (the current programme ends in 2017) with a view to enhancing the impacts for regional and nationally based companies. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland in partnership with the Institutes of Technology has established a nationwide network of 15 Technology Gateways which deliver technology solutions for Irish industry close to their market needs. They are an open access points for industry of all sizes and act as local access points to the wider resources in the Irish research infrastructure.

A public call to fund existing Technology Gateways for the five-year period 2018-2022 was launched in May 2017. In October 2017, having completed the application and assessment process, and agreed the new targets for the next five years, the Enterprise Ireland Board approved funding of up to €26.75million for the 15 Gateways. Over the lifetime of the new programme the 15 Gateways will deliver over 4,000 interactions with companies (compared to 2,300 over the past 5 years) on both a regional and national basis.

**Action 89:** Strengthen the ecosystem of research and technology centres and technology gateways to enhance the competitiveness of enterprise including by reviewing the first seven research centres, launching new research and technology centres in areas of demonstrated enterprise need and developing a plan for the next phase of the technology gateway programme.

**Q4 Measure:** Support excellent and impactful research through Research Centres and Technology Centres and launch new centres in areas of demonstrated enterprise need. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

12 Research Centres were operational at the beginning of 2017.

SFI funded four new Research Centres awards in 2017. In total €74m will be invested by the foundation in the new projects and facilities over the next six years, with a further €40m coming from 80 industry partners.

In Budget 2018, SFI received funding for a seventeenth Research Centre - currently titled Future Milk. Future Milk will be funded in partnership with DAFM. The award details are currently being finalised.

**Action 89:** Strengthen the ecosystem of research and technology centres and technology gateways to enhance the competitiveness of enterprise including by reviewing the first seven research centres, launching new research and technology centres in areas of demonstrated enterprise need and developing a plan for the next phase of the technology gateway programme.

**Q4 Measure:** Carry out a review/renewal process for the twelve Research Centres (at year 2 and year 4 respectively). (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017, the 4-year review for the initial seven Research centres was completed by a panel of International Reviewers. A renewal process has been incorporated into the review process, outcomes of which are expected in Q3 2018.

The 2-year review of the remaining five Research Centres was completed in Q2 2017, with the reviewers awarding excellent rankings (an average ranking of 4.3 out of 5). These five Research Centres have received €12.14 million in funding from 182 enterprise collaborators.

**Action 89:** Strengthen the ecosystem of research and technology centres and technology gateways to enhance the competitiveness of enterprise including by reviewing the first seven research centres, launching new research and technology centres in areas of demonstrated enterprise need and developing a plan for the next phase of the technology gateway programme.

**Q4 Measure:** Through the Meat Technology Centre, create, validate and commercialise a pipeline of science and technology-based innovations, leading to enhanced processes, product development and job creation in the Irish beef and sheep meat sector. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

Research commenced across all six strategic programmes in Meat Technology Ireland. The research programme designed to directly meet the commercial requirements of the MTI member companies, with much of the work being carried out within the meat company plants. Topics include genomic predictions, meat safety, meat tenderness management, meat characterisation technologies, meat and health, and future market opportunities.

**Action 90:** Implement specific actions in Innovation 2020 which will support the development of excellent researchers, world-leading research teams, equipment and facilities across the public research system.

**Q4 Measure:** Design PhD programmes to develop and enhance the skills of PhD students through cohort-based, discipline centric, PhD programmes to ensure the provision of a skilled in demand workforce to meet the demands of industry and academia. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The new SFI Postgraduate scheme will be delivered through the following three actions:

- Increasing Postgraduate capacity  
Through its established Research Centres, SFI will launch a scheme to fund additional intakes of postgraduate students starting in Q3 2018.
- Launching new M.Res and PhD programmes  
A new M.Res and PhD programme will be launched by SFI in 2018. This programme will develop and enhance the skills of PhD and Research Masters students through cohort-based, strategic structured programmes to ensure the provision of a skilled workforce to meet both existing and emerging skills demands of industry and academia.
- Enhancing UK Partnerships/Collaborations  
SFI will enter into a partnership with UK funders to increase the number of postgraduate students linked with Centres of Excellence in the UK

The SFI Postgraduate scheme is expected to launch in Q1 2018.

**Action 92:** Develop proposals to put in place a new cycle of Research Prioritisation to align innovation investment with enterprise opportunities through assessment of progress and impact of the current cycle, finalisation of a market horizon scan and identification of technologies that are critical to Ireland's economic and social development.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop proposals to put in place a new cycle of Research Prioritisation on foot of the resulting evidence base. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Three studies have been completed to develop the evidence base to inform the review of research priority areas: a horizon scan of global markets; a technology futures exercise; and an audit of progress under the current priority areas. A Consultation Forum was held in Q4 involving stakeholders from academia, enterprise and the public sector to examine the findings arising from the studies. Proposals for the refreshed priority areas have been developed and will shortly be brought to Government for agreement.

**Action 94:** Drive EU and international research collaboration to maximise the impact of investment in research and innovation including through new international research partnerships, securing €12 million in product development contracts for Irish based companies from the European Space Agency, and by Enterprise Ireland continuing to lead the national drive to secure €1.25 billion in funding for Irish companies and academics by 2020.

**Q4 Measure:** Continue discussions with CERN and the European South Observatory regarding Membership options for Ireland. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The increased capital allocation secured by DBEI for innovation in Budget 2018 will enable Ireland to join the European Southern Observatory (ESO) in 2018.

In view of the intense demands on the capital programme and the tight fiscal constraints it will not be possible progress membership of both CERN and ESO in 2018. Nevertheless, membership of CERN will remain on the policy agenda and DBEI will keep the issue under active review. It may be possible to progress CERN membership in the future, when the fiscal situation improves.

## Stimulating Regional Growth

### Regional Enterprise Development

**Action 99:** Support the creation of 500 new jobs in 2017 and continue to help maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprises sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop four innovation hubs (Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry) by refurbishing existing buildings and investing in ancillary infrastructure which supports and develops entrepreneurship and start-up companies in the Gaeltacht Regions. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

- **County Donegal: Áislann Ghaoth Dobhair**  
This Digital Hub opened to the public in June 2017.
- **Co. Mayo: Digital Unit, Béal an Mhuirthead**  
This digital hub was officially opened in September 2017 and is managed by Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- **County Kerry: Mol Tech – Daingean Uí Chúis**  
This digital hub opened to the public on 28 April 2017. It is being managed by local community groups under the umbrella of the Dingle Chamber and supported by Údarás na Gaeltachta and Kerry County Council.
- **Co. Galway: Digital Unit, An Spidéal**

The development of the Hub is progressing with a planning application lodged with Galway County Council for this unit.

- **Co. Galway: Digital Hub in Carna and An Cheathrú Rua**

Capital funding has been approved by the Board to develop a digital hub in both Carna and An Cheathrú Rua.

## Improving the ease of doing business

**Action 106:** Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017.

**Q4 Measure:** Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017.(DBEI)

**Update: Update: Complete – Quarterly updates for the following Departments were received: DCYA and DoF.**

DCYA operates an online application system for licensing childcare facilities.

Through the Revenue Commissioners, DoF has identified 88 licences to achieve the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017.

As of Q4 2017, 84 of the licence categories can be renewed online. The exceptions are three Tobacco related licences and the Passenger Vehicle Licences. In view of the small numbers of licensees involved (two for Tobacco related licences and 29 for Passenger Vehicle Licences) online facilities are not planned for these licences at this time.

**Action 107:** Develop an easy user friendly SME test suitable for the Irish context to ensure policymakers "Think Small First".

**Q4 Measure:** Develop a test, which implements the 'Think Small Principle', based on the EU Commission's SME test, in consultation with stakeholders. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Irish SME test has been developed after consultation with the Advisory Group on Small Business and following a public consultation through DBEI's Business Bulletin and website. The views of these parties have been incorporated and Management Board will review the Test in Q1 2018.

**Action 109:** Invest at least €100 million in energy projects to improve efficiency, and reduce carbon emissions and our overall dependence on imported fossil fuels.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DCCA)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017 over €100m in Exchequer funds has been allocated to energy projects. By the end of 2017 these projects aim to have achieved overall energy savings of 415GWh, CO2 savings of 102kt and

monetary savings of €22.8m to homeowners and businesses. It has also supported around 3,000 jobs, many of them in local communities, and reduced Ireland's dependence on imported fossil fuels.

## Realising the Digital Economy Opportunities

**Action 117:** Develop proposals in consultation with other stakeholders, which may include the need for legislation, to provide a mechanism regarding employments entailing access to sensitive data, for example, whereby an individual prospective employee may seek from An Garda Síochána a certificate stating their criminal history.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DJE)

**Update: Complete**

Proposals are being finalised regarding a system for access to certificates of criminal history. Primary legislation will be required with regard to data protection matters and to give effect to such a system.

**Action 120:** Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop the pilot for the localised UNESCO ICT Competency Framework and ensure that the eLearning planning resource reflects the framework's requirements. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The Digital Learning Framework for Schools trial is underway in 50 schools. The eLearning Planning resource update – to be called Digital Learning Planning Guidelines, was published online in December.

**Action 120:** Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.

**Q4 Measure:** Improve broadband services to schools, allocate grants for ICT equipment and make available advice and support materials for schools. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The ICT infrastructure Grant of €30m paid out in 2016-2017 has been reviewed and a similar scheme is currently being developed for the 2017-2018 school year. The Minister for Education and Skills announced a further allocation of €30m for ICT infrastructure in February 2018.

An Interdepartmental working group was established and work is ongoing to consider how to deliver enhanced broadband services to primary schools.

**Action 120:** Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.

**Q4 Measure:** Upgrade primary schools to higher broadband speeds - some 800 by end 2016, and at least a further 300 by end of 2017. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

A further 300 primary schools were upgraded to higher broadband speeds during 2017. A total of 1,100 primary schools have been upgraded during 2016 and 2017.

**Action 121:** Implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019, which builds on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, and expand access to and continuously improve and innovate further education and training provision.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop a Technology Enhanced Learning Action Plan in each of the 16 Education and Training Boards to cover infrastructure, pedagogy and continuing professional development, content creation and sharing and organisational practice. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

A Technology Enhanced Learning Action Plan in each of the 16 Education and Training Boards has been developed to cover infrastructure, pedagogy and continuing professional development, content creation and sharing and organisational practice.

**Action 122:** Implement the recommendations of a Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop strategies to support the development and embedding of digital capacity in the teaching and learning activities of the HEIs. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The Digital Roadmap highlighted that building digital capacity is about much more than developing a capacity for online course provision and the use of digital tools. It is about developing new ways of dealing with information, working and learning in a digital environment, using time and information differently, and developing new versatility when it comes to interaction in learning environments.

The National Forum therefore initiated a number of nationally coordinated projects. They focus on issues of national interest with potential to contribute to teaching and learning enhancement in higher education and specifically on activities that are designed to avoid duplication of effort at local level. Furthermore, they focus on activities that will give rise to resources or evidence that support institutional activities.

In this regard, there are four inter-related projects that either have been developed or are underway:

- Learning Analytics/Educational Data Mining for Learning Impact
- Higher Education Sector: Technical Infrastructure Review
- Enabling Policies for Teaching and Learning in a Digital World
- A National Approach to Open Access for Teaching and Learning

These will further enhance the digital capacity of the higher education institutions.

**Action 123:** Implement a new programme to provide basic digital skills training to citizens who have never used the internet and support them in taking the first step to get online.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DCCAIE)

**Update: Complete**

The Digital Skills for Citizens Scheme provides grant funding of over €2m to 15 community, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations to deliver basic digital skills training. The Scheme provides, ten hours of training to specific target groups such as the farming community, unemployed persons, small business owners, persons aged over 45, disadvantaged persons, etc.

By end December, over 22,000 citizens had received training including 2,700 unemployed people. 30% of participants have stated their key objective is to improve their job prospects.

**Action 124:** Develop and roll out a strategy for eHubs for entrepreneurship, eWorking and business growth as part of county development plans, linking effectively with local enterprise stakeholders and enterprise agencies and support the development of ambitious and sustainable proposals for success in competitive calls for funding.

**Q4 Measure:** Establish a network of eHub leaders to engage in peer learning and support collaboration on use initiatives and rollout of best practice models. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

A network of eHub leaders was established and met for the first time in H2 2017. D/BEI has been working with the network of hubs to support them in enabling and driving collaboration and will continue to do so in 2018.

A number of eHubs and entrepreneurial spaces secured funding under the first call of the Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Fund (announced in December 2017) including Monaghan County Enterprise Fund, Leitrim County Enterprise Fund, Donegal Digital Innovation, Bia Innovator Campus in Galway, RDI Hub Kerry, Cork Urban Enterprises, Sneem Innovation and Technology Services Kerry, Mol Teic Kerry, County Kildare Community Network in Kildare, Dublin Enterprise and Technology Centre Dublin, Ghala Dublin and the Social and Local Enterprise Alliance Dublin.

In addition, Project 2040 commits to prioritising eHubs for entrepreneurship and start-ups in every county.

## Investing in Economic Infrastructure

**Action 126:** Enhance Ireland's connectivity and grow our aviation sector, by supporting the development of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate new services and passenger growth at the three State airports including support for and improving access to the regions through Exchequer assistance for the regional airports at Donegal, Knock, Kerry and Waterford.

**Q4 Measure:** Carry out works at Dublin Airport to facilitate growth, including progressing plans for the second parallel runway; the Pier 1 Extension; additional aircraft stands; and the Pier 2 reconfiguration project (to maximise use of the pier). (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Preliminary Works on the North Runway Project are complete and the tender process for the main construction contract is underway. The Pier 1 Extension, additional aircraft stands and Pier 2 Segregation Project are all complete.

**Action 126:** Enhance Ireland's connectivity and grow our aviation sector, by supporting the development of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate new services and passenger growth at the three State airports including support for and improving access to the regions through Exchequer assistance for the regional airports at Donegal, Knock, Kerry and Waterford.

**Q4 Measure:** Undertake a major runway overlay project at Shannon Airport. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

This project is now complete, including resurfacing, grooving and lighting. The airport returned to its 24-hour operational status on 1 October.

**Action 126:** Enhance Ireland's connectivity and grow our aviation sector, by supporting the development of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate new services and passenger growth at the three State airports including support for and improving access to the regions through Exchequer assistance for the regional airports at Donegal, Knock, Kerry and Waterford.

**Q4 Measure:** Implement the Regional Airports Programme 2015-2019 under the various support schemes in line with available Exchequer funding and EU State Aid Guidelines as appropriate at Donegal, Ireland West Airport Knock, Waterford and Kerry airports. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Over €13m in funding was spent in 2017 to support the regional airports under the Regional Airports Programme, including support for the PSO air services linking the airports in Donegal and Kerry with Dublin.

During 2017, more than €1.9m was disbursed to these airports in capital grants and €3.6m in support for operational costs in the areas of safety and security.

As part of the Review of the Capital Plan an additional €17m has been secured in capital funding for the Regional Airports Programme. These additional resources will come into play in the period 2019 to 2021 and are considerably in excess of €10m provided in the Programme for Government.

**Action 127:** Facilitate an effective and competitive market for maritime transport services to meet the needs of our trading economy.

**Q4 Measure:** Implement the Alexandra basin redevelopment project, which will inter alia deepen the navigable channel, reconfigure and/or rebuild quay walls and develop associated port infrastructure. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Construction works on the Alexandra Basin Redevelopment project continued in 2017.

**Action 127:** Facilitate an effective and competitive market for maritime transport services to meet the needs of our trading economy.

**Q4 Measure:** Commence the detailed design and planning consent process for Phase 2 of the jetty expansion, which will inter alia improve international connectivity through the construction of new quay walls and associated port infrastructure. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

The planning application for Phase 2 of the Shannon Foynes jetty expansion programme will be lodged in 2018.

**Action 128:** Progress work on the 'national transition objective' through the development and publication of the first statutory national mitigation plan and adaptation framework, exploiting any economic opportunities that may arise and establishing a national dialogue to consider key issues to be addressed in meeting the transition objective.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop and publish the first statutory national adaptation framework. (DCCAIE)

**Update: Complete**

In line with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 a statutory National Adaptation Framework was submitted to Government for approval by 10 December 2017 and has since been published. In accordance with legislation, this Framework specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects (including the economic opportunities presented by the adaptation economy and climate services as well as those at sectoral level) that may occur.

**Action 129:** Deliver policy supports to develop Ireland's indigenous renewable energy and further decrease our dependence on imported fossil fuels, including new support schemes for heat and electricity.

**Q4 Measure:** Continue the next stage of development of Ireland's Energy Innovation Hub and develop another portal segment. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

SEAI has developed and put in place the holding page for the portal and have updated the Ocean Portal in 2017 with the Smart Grid Portal due for development in 2018.

**Action 130:** Design and implement a national circular economy action plan that increases efficiency, promotes innovation, creates new business models, contributes to our environmental sustainability and enhances our green reputation.

**Q4 Measure:** Work with all relevant Departments, agencies and stakeholders to contribute to the design and implementation of the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan in Ireland. (DCCAIE)

**Update: Complete**

In Q4 2017, DCCAIE has continued to work with other domestic stakeholders across all measures of the EU Action Plan specifically in areas such as negotiation of waste legislation, eco-design, EMAS, plastics strategy, marine litter, food waste and green public procurement. DCCAIE also continues to support the National Waste Prevention Programme underpinning a transition to a circular economy.

**Action 130:** Design and implement a national circular economy action plan that increases efficiency, promotes innovation, creates new business models, contributes to our environmental sustainability and enhances our green reputation.

**Q4 Measure:** Continue to represent Ireland's economic and environmental interests in the negotiation of EU waste directives that will set ambitious new targets for recycling, recovery and landfilling and work with all stakeholders to ensure timely implementation of the targets when agreed. (DCCAIE)

**Update: Complete**

In Q4, negotiations are ongoing via the Trialogue process. Ireland continues to participate in all relevant negotiation platforms. Final agreement of directives is anticipated in early 2018.

## Addressing New Labour Market Challenges

**Action 133:** Roll out training under the Women Returning to the Workforce Initiative, targeting women who are currently detached from the labour market and who are interested in entering/re-entering employment.

**Q4 Measure:** Roll out the training initiative. (DJE)

**Update: Complete**

14 projects with a broad national geographical spread have commenced activities. The projects are being funded to carry out the agreed objectives over a 3-year period. The projects commenced activities between April and July 2017. A broad range of supports are being offered ranging from confidence building, career guidance and support in completing applications, accredited and non-accredited training programmes as well as work placements. The range of training courses includes Healthcare and early childhood care and Business Administration. Many of the formal training courses commenced in September to coincide with the school year. The projects are at an early stage but are broadly on track to achieve the targets set out in the grant agreements.

**Action 135:** Implement the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which, as the primary social inclusion programme of Government, will have a strong focus on community activation, social inclusion and community development, while also focusing on those hardest to reach.

**Q4 Measure:** Support 160 social enterprises operating in disadvantaged communities in 2017 to provide services to those communities and link people from SICAP target groups with employment opportunities within the sector. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017 SICAP supported a total of 321 social enterprises operating in disadvantaged communities.

## Strengthening Clusters

### Agri-Food and Marine

**Action 139:** Support food start-ups through initiatives with retailers including the Food Academy Advance with Musgraves Supervalu and the Taste Buds programme with Tesco.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

The period from October to December 2017 saw a total of 48 companies participating on four Food Academy Start programmes with one of these programmes (17 participants) starting in the previous

quarter. These Food Academy Start programmes were all delivered in the Leinster area with two of the groups offered to combine LEOs in the Dublin area. Other LEOs that ran the programme included Laois and Wicklow, with ten participants on each programme.

12 companies graduated from the Food Academy Advance programme in late October 2017. This represented the third wave of the Advance programme, with participating companies from across the country, though strongest representation from Co. Dublin and Co. Cork.

A full evaluation of the Food Academy Start programme was conducted early in the year and actions resulting from this were progressed in late 2017. These include comprehensive revisions to the programme content. Programme delivery was revised also with a tender from Enterprise Ireland sent out for LEO network delivery of the programme from Q2 2018. In addition to this, Bord Bia and LEO agreed to collaborate in developing a 'Food Starter' programme. Work on this started in November 2017 and sign-off and finalisation of full content is planned in Q1 2018 for delivery by individual LEOs as an entry-level programme (and a prerequisite for Food Academy Start).

**Action 140:** Undertake commercial project proposals, with the participation of relevant Government agencies, to deliver knowledge transfer on Ireland's sustainable food production systems to international customers using the brand Sustainable Food Systems Ireland.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI) developed a pipeline of projects internationally, for training and consultancy services, based on Ireland's expertise in sustainable agriculture and food. Projects in development include those funded directly by governments overseas and by international funding agencies including the European Commission and UN agencies.

Projects won in 2017 include food safety legislation and inspection training (Saudi Arabia) and a series of assignments with Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN to expose Southern and Eastern European countries to Ireland's agri-food systems.

**Action 142:** Support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works and develop the Food Works Plus supports for those entrepreneurs continuing to pursue their ventures.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

Following an application period and screening process involving the Food Works team and external stakeholders, nine companies were selected to progress on to Food Works 5 programme which began in October. This programme will continue until May 2018 during which time participants will focus on developing their investor ready business plans. In the October to December period, four workshops (facilitated by the three agencies) took place covering Consumer & Proposition Development, Finance, Manufacturing and Introduction to Marketing. Participants were also supported on a 1:1 basis by dedicated business advisors and four of the participants commenced consumer research with Bord Bia.

Food Works Plus alumni gathered on 12 December in Bord Bia to mark the fifth anniversary of the Food Works programme. This was the second group networking event of the year and included a showcase display of current Food Works participants.

A number of the new cohorts were existing Teagasc clients and all are working with the Teagasc Food Industry Development Department as part of the Food Works programme. A number of Food Works Plus initiatives were rolled out.

**Action 144:** Implement supports for the fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme; the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development; and the Harnessing our Ocean Wealth strategy.

**Q4 Measure:** Implement supports for the fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

Following its launch in 2016, implementation of Ireland's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme accelerated in 2017 with 16 schemes operational. Supports were focused on fostering innovation, adding value, increasing production, enhancing sustainability, and increasing competitiveness in the seafood sector.

**Action 144:** Implement supports for the fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme; the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development; and the Harnessing our Ocean Wealth strategy.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop scale and export capability in the seafood processing sector. Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland will work collaboratively to scale up companies in the pelagic, whitefish and shellfish sectors. (DAFM)

**Update:** Ireland's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme fostered scale and export capability through a number of measures in 2017 with grant supports of €3.2m approved for the processing sector that will leverage total investment of €10m. The Seafood Promotion Scheme provided €1m funding to Bord Bia to enhance their presence at major international Seafood Trade Fairs to promote Irish seafood products and assist processors to grow and diversify their export markets.

BIM, operating with EI, Bord Bia, UnaG and DAFM modified the Capital Investment Scheme to allow for bi-monthly investment calls to better suit industry's financial requirements. BIM completed four rounds of approvals under the Capital Investment Scheme totalling €2.9 million to date.

Bord Bia worked closely with BIM in Q4 2017 to encourage scale and collaboration within the seafood sector, particularly with regards to developments in the Asian markets. In November 2017, Bord Bia coordinated an Irish Pavilion at the seafood show in Qingdao bringing together 15 of Ireland's leading pelagic and shellfish exporters under an Origin Green brand at this largest seafood trade show in Asia. Working closely with BIM and their China Seafood Council, Bord Bia coordinated Irish seafood tastings on the Ireland stand for the benefit of the seven Irish shellfish companies that participate in the Seafood Council and who were exhibiting on this stand. Bord Bia participated in BIM's quarterly China Seafood Council in October which encourages companies exporting to China to work together to provide scale, range and efficiencies in supplying the China market. Bord Bia works alongside BIM and the members of the Council in coordinating and undertaking market and trade research and looking for synergies in the coordination of retail and foodservice promotions in the Chinese market.

In addition, Bord Bia also sits on BIM's Oyster Collective which brings together the main Irish oyster farmers. Research is undertaken on behalf of these client companies in export markets to identify customer opportunities in new markets. In November, Bord Bia presented on its Asia market development plan which will see a range of research and promotions undertaken on behalf of the Oyster sector to create new market opportunities, grow export values and help the sector diversify into new markets. In November, Bord Bia also met with BIM to discuss the BIM strategy for attracting international landings into Ireland and ideas were discussed around how Bord Bia can assist with this and the support that Bord Bia can provide on the domestic and export market when additional raw material is available for sale through the Irish processing sector. In December, Bord

Bia met with BIM to discuss their innovation pipeline and specifically developments within the Irish pelagic sector that may see added value pelagic raw material available for export from Ireland in 2018 and the promotional plan that Bord Bia will undertake to support sales of these products in export markets, particularly in Japan.

Enterprise Ireland continued to work proactively with BIM and Bord Bia in the scaling up of companies in this sector. One collaborative project of note is the Bio Marine Ingredients project which adds value to low value commodity products such as Blue Whiting.

**Action 144:** Implement supports for the fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing sectors under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme; the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development; and the Harnessing our Ocean Wealth strategy.

**Q4 Measure:** Conduct a strategic innovation plan for a virtual multi-campus centre of excellence for seafood development. (DAFM)

**Update: Complete**

BIM has developed a Strategic Innovation Plan for seafood and the Plan is being implemented. The innovation process for BIM's seafood clients has been developed and is currently in operation with a number of clients seeking to grow the business opportunity. There is positive outlook on the creation of additional jobs within existing BIM clients as the companies enter into more value added product ranges. The virtual centre of excellence continues in formation through partnership agreements with international research bodies and third level institutions to deliver relevant commercial research. Applications have been received and funding approved for a number of commercial research projects. BIM's Seafood Innovation Hub in Clonakilty continues to build the innovation offering with market specific insights, in partnership with Bord Bia.

## Tourism

**Action 145:** Grow Dublin's international appeal and increase Dublin's competitiveness as a tourism destination.

**Q4 Measure:** Implement the Destination Dublin strategy and Grow Dublin Tourism Alliance Progress and Action Plan. The focus will be on: brand activation (Dublin – A Breath of Fresh Air); and enhancing the visitor experience. Cross-promotion, activating a suite of festivals to drive tourism business in the off-peak season and developing an engaging and distinct food story for Dublin is also a main priority. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Brand activation activity included promoting Dublin under a single brand narrative 'Dublin, a Breath of Fresh Air'. Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland delivered a Dublin overseas marketing campaign in Q4 2017.

Fáilte Ireland worked closely with individual businesses, tourism groups and others. Initiatives included networking opportunities for over 800 members of the tourism trade which enabled them to develop key business relationships and cross-promote. This coupled with the Dublin Champions Programme (which delivered 500 graduates) helped to build further on the brand promise and create more unique experiences for visitors to Dublin ensuring that the Dublin product offering remains world class.

Fáilte Ireland invested over €1.7 million in 2017 supporting both national and regional Dublin festivals such as St Patrick's Festival, Bram Stoker and Tradfest and New Year's Festival.

**Action 145:** Grow Dublin's international appeal and increase Dublin's competitiveness as a tourism destination.

**Q4 Measure:** Work with private sector stakeholders and public decision makers to encourage new quality accommodations to come on-stream, which will increase employment opportunities in the tourism sector. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

In order to inform the case for additional tourist bed stock, Fáilte Ireland published a report on the Wider Benefits of Tourist Accommodation. In addition, the agency worked with the four relevant local authority planning departments to ensure that tourism considerations were reflected in their plans.

**Action 146:** Implement the Ireland's Ancient East experience brand and build on the region's comparative advantage in built and cultural heritage, to stimulate regional growth, and to assist Ireland's South, East and Midlands to achieve international "stand-out".

**Q4 Measure:** Roll out a comprehensive Ireland's Ancient East brand strategy, with international activation, work with the domestic tourism trade and other stakeholders to ensure that they can leverage the Ireland's Ancient East brand to grow their businesses, and activate a suite of festivals that complement the experience brand proposition. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Brand activation efforts internationally included promotion of Ireland's Ancient East in all priority markets with bespoke activity in the US, GB, France, Germany, the Nordics and Spain, including marketing activity and sales promotion.

Domestically, the brand was activated by a significant above the line campaign, led by TV and supported with press and radio as well as extensive online promotion. 27 familiarisation trips delivered in excess of €20 million in equivalent advertising value globally. 273 international buyers visited on 12 familiarisation trips and delivered 51 Ireland's Ancient East branded tours, which resulted in an incremental 31,693 bed-nights for the geography.

Fáilte Ireland invested over €520,000 in 2017 in national and regional festivals across the geography, including Kilkenny Arts Festival, Wexford Festival Opera and Cork Jazz Festival. Also supported were feasibility studies to develop new and innovative festivals, e.g., Gateway Garden Festival, Halloween, Viking Fire Festival, Design and Craft and Kilkenny Illuminates. Some €150,000 in funding was allocated to the feasibility studies.

**Action 146:** Implement the Ireland's Ancient East experience brand and build on the region's comparative advantage in built and cultural heritage, to stimulate regional growth, and to assist Ireland's South, East and Midlands to achieve international "stand-out".

**Q4 Measure:** Enhance the visitor experience in the Ireland's Ancient East region, by improving the quality of the experience at the main Office of Public Works sites with a particular emphasis on developing facilities and new experiences at less visited sites to offer visitors a wider choice and grow visitor numbers in dispersed locations (thereby aiding regional growth). (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

A strategic partnership has been developed with OPW and eight projects have been approved with

an investment of €8.2 million committed. These projects are designed to improve the visitor experience at the existing sites and to increase dwell time and improve visitor flow. Projects approved are Brú Na Bóinne, Rock of Cashel, Knowth, New Grange, Ormonde Castle, King John's Castle, Glendalough and Boyne Valley Masterplan.

In addition, investment is continuing in other tourism business with 11 projects in Ireland's Ancient East being approved at stage one of the large capital grants scheme. A second small grants scheme was launched in 2017 and grants will be approved in 2018.

**Action 147:** Deliver balanced and sustainable tourism revenue, jobs growth and economic benefit to communities in the West of Ireland through the Wild Atlantic Way project.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop interpretation projects in association with local communities, the Heritage Council, Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Office of Public Works and the National Wildlife and Parks Service, which highlight the distinctive Irish Culture in destinations and communities to encourage further dispersal of visitors along the Wild Atlantic Way, and encourage additional start-up tourism enterprises. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

- **Visitor Experience Development Plans:** Complete for the Skelligs and Connemara.
- **National Parks Projects:** Masterplan completed for the following parks which includes an interpretation framework - Glenveagh National Park; Ballycroy National Park; Connemara National Park; Burren National Park; Kilarney National Park; and Coole Park.
- **Office of Public Works Projects:** Visitor experience improvement projects, or project plans, progressed for the following sites - Blasket Island; Inishmore; Carrowmore; and Céide Fields.
- **Coillte Forest Parks:** Feasibility studies underway for Ards Forest Park and Curragh Chase.

**Action 147:** Deliver balanced and sustainable tourism revenue, jobs growth and economic benefit to communities in the West of Ireland through the Wild Atlantic Way project.

**Q4 Measure:** Deliver innovation supports for experience providers along the Wild Atlantic Way and capture innovations at a range of levels to share with other providers. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Business supports delivered focused on increasing the capability of the industry on international sales and identifying sales opportunities to maximise international bed-nights and visitors along the Wild Atlantic Way. In 2017, 1,471 individuals from 945 businesses along the touring route received business supports.

**Action 147:** Deliver balanced and sustainable tourism revenue, jobs growth and economic benefit to communities in the West of Ireland through the Wild Atlantic Way project.

**Q4 Measure:** Activate a suite of festivals that complement the experience brand proposition, and work with private operators to encourage new quality accommodation to come on stream in rural areas of the Wild Atlantic Way. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

All festivals in the Wild Atlantic Way delivered on the brand promise and promoted the Wild Atlantic Way as part of their offering. In 2017, 132 regional festivals were grant-supported to the value of €382,750 and 17 national festivals received grants totalling €766,500.

**Action 148:** Deliver a new suite of business supports to enable the tourism industry to maximise its potential in growing tourism export earnings.

**Q4 Measure:** Work with clusters of circa 150 tourism businesses to enhance their skills and ability to generate international sales in key source markets (Great Britain, France, Germany and the US), and target new leads to secure an increase in programming of Ireland by travel agents and tour operators. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017, to improve industry performance and competitiveness, Fáilte Ireland worked with close to 3,000 businesses and 5,000 individuals. Specifically, a set of business supports were rolled out to help tourism businesses improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their international sales activation efforts.

**Action 148:** Deliver a new suite of business supports to enable the tourism industry to maximise its potential in growing tourism export earnings.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop strategies for seasonal spread of tourism demand and regional dispersal, to drive additional sales to areas where there is under-utilised capacity, thereby stimulating regional tourism growth. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Fáilte Ireland worked with approx. 1,200 international buyers who sell tours and experiences to Ireland to increase their sales of tourist trips to Ireland, increasing trips (a) outside of the peak season and (b) to the less visited parts of the country.

**Action 150:** Develop heritage tourism initiatives, including a programme of trailway development in National Parks and Nature Reserves, in partnership with key stakeholders, and to enhance Ireland's competitiveness as a tourism destination.

**Q4 Measure:** Develop the plan and the initiatives. (DTTAS)

**Update: Complete**

Fáilte Ireland has established a strategic partnership for investment with DCHG/ National Parks and Wildlife Service with a view to enhancing the visitor experience within Ireland's National Parks and Nature Reserves. A number of priority projects around interpretation, signage and in particular trail development have been identified under this partnership.

**Action 152:** Work with Fáilte Ireland, the OPW and other strategic partners to develop heritage tourism initiatives, based on Ireland's built and natural heritage and the enhanced management and presentation of collections held by the National Cultural Institutions and other bodies, to contribute to the implementation of the growth objectives set out in People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025.

**Q4 Measure:** Support investment in regional arts and cultural centres nationwide and the application of good heritage practice to the management of places, collections or objects (including buildings). (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

Through the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) the Heritage Council continues to benchmark and promote professional standards in the care of collections and to recognise through accreditation the achievement of those standards within the Irish museum sector.

## Retail

**Action 155:** Identify skills challenges facing the retail sector, along with practical proposals to address a number of specific skills challenges.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Retail Consultation Forum established a Retail and Skills Working Group to identify the skills challenges in the Retail Sector. The Retail and Skills Group held four meetings during 2017 and they have identified the current skill challenges for retail including digital skills and the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018. The Group also discussed Brexit and its effect on the Retail Sector. The Retail Ireland Skillnet is delivering a range of programmes for the sector, with training 50% funded from the National Training fund through DES. A Retail Practice apprenticeship is currently in development through the national apprenticeship system.

## International Financial Services

**Action 158:** Implement the IFS2020 Strategy Action Plan 2017.

**Q4 Measure:** As per headline action. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The IFS2020 Action Plan 2017 outlined 40 measures to be actioned in 2017. Jobs growth in IFS for 2017 was announced at the third annual European Financial Forum on 31 January 2018. In 2017, over 2,300 net new jobs were created across IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland client firms. This growth brings the overall number employed in the IFS sector in Ireland to just under 42,000.

The IFS2020's Public Sector High Level Implementation Committee has considered the Q4 2017 Progress Report at its quarterly meeting. The Progress Report will be brought to Government in the near future and published thereafter.

## **Ongoing Measures**

## Responding to Brexit

**Action 1:** Provide additional market expertise and initiatives, including measures to drive increased company innovation, and additional staffing in Dublin, the UK and third markets, to support companies dependent on the UK market, to sustain existing market share and drive growth.

**Ongoing Measure:** Place 39 additional staff in the UK and in Dublin to sustain clients' existing business, and open up new opportunities for companies in the UK market. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland is increasing its resources within Ireland, the UK and other strategic markets to support both increased competitiveness and scale in the UK and the diversification of clients' export markets. The additional 39 sanctioned Brexit related staff were allocated to strategic target zones and new sector and market pathfinders were appointed. Working with Enterprise Ireland's existing staff in Ireland and internationally, the additional resources will assist Enterprise Ireland's drive to sustain clients' existing exports to the UK and open up new opportunities to them in both the UK and other international markets.

**Action 1:** Provide additional market expertise and initiatives, including measures to drive increased company innovation, and additional staffing in Dublin, the UK and third markets, to support companies dependent on the UK market, to sustain existing market share and drive growth.

**Ongoing Measure:** Work with those companies most exposed to Brexit to develop growth plans which will help them to consolidate and grow exports in the UK. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

EI has significant engagement with its Brexit exposed client companies. EI has identified those client companies most exposed to the impact of Brexit, and continues to monitor theirs' and the exposure of other companies to Brexit. Being identified as a Brexit exposed client is followed by intense and proactive interaction by Enterprise Ireland with these clients to understand, inter alia, their exposure to the UK market, critical issues facing the company, what supports Enterprise Ireland could offer, what other external supports were important to the client and an action plan to address the issues.

An information booklet for Irish exporters was published following the UK's decision to leave the EU. This booklet outlines some of EI's plans to assist clients using a variety of supports, including: Information and Guidance; Market Diversification Supports; International Sector Clustering Strategy; UK In-Market Supports; Competitiveness, and Market Development Supports.

The *Be Prepared* Grant was launched to encourage companies to develop specific plans to respond to Brexit. This new initiative provides support of up to €5,000 towards the costs associated with preparing a Brexit Action Plan. To date, 70 *Be Prepared* Grants have been approved.

EI ran a series of Prepare for Brexit Breakfast Roadshows throughout the year. The focus of these events was on identifying exposure companies to Brexit, winning international sales and other strategies to address Brexit challenges and opportunities. A number of invited sectoral speakers, panelists and clients participated in the Roadshow events.

During the second half of 2017 a particular focus was placed on three key areas: Financial and Currency Management; Strategic Sourcing, and Transport and Logistics (including customs procedures). In September, as part of EI's International Market's Week, a dedicated "Brexit Zone" was set up where clients had the opportunity to hold one to one meetings with independent experts on these three key topics. Over 100 companies availed of this opportunity.

EI also ran a regional series of its Brexit Advisory Clinic. In addition to the Brexit specific supports EI has also launched its new Agile Innovation Fund, which aims to encourage companies new to R&D to invest in innovation.

EI is continuously developing its Brexit supports and to this end a Financial Consultant Intervention Pilot was carried out. Enterprise Ireland, subject to the findings of this pilot, plans to scale and roll it out to Brexit exposed clients across three key areas.

**Action 1:** Provide additional market expertise and initiatives, including measures to drive increased company innovation, and additional staffing in Dublin, the UK and third markets, to support companies dependent on the UK market, to sustain existing market share and drive growth.

**Ongoing Measure:** Continue to collaborate closely with Bord Bia to identify potential sub-sector markets and new collaboration opportunities for food companies, both within and outside of the UK. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

EI continues to work collaboratively on a pilot scheme with Bord Bia to support market diversification for a number of food companies. Further collaboration opportunities will be explored following the completion of the pilot.

**Action 2:** Intensify work with companies to grow export opportunities and diversify into markets outside the UK.

**Ongoing Measure:** Work with those companies most exposed to Brexit to develop growth plans to diversify their exports to other geographies, particularly in the Euro Area, Northern Europe and US and Canada. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

EI is maintaining contact with companies significantly exposed to Brexit and, where relevant, work programmes have been agreed. EI's key focus, for those clients exporting to the UK, is on providing support to them to drive competitiveness, innovation, export diversification and scale. Where clients have a significant exposure to the UK, EI is focusing on helping them to develop and address their Brexit plans, consolidate and grow exports in the UK, and also to look at diversifying their exports to other geographies, especially in the Eurozone, Northern Europe and North America.

EI continues to monitor each of its six strategic business pillars (Strategy, Finance, Operations, Innovation, Sales & Marketing Capability, Management Capability) and internationalisation support to ensure its improved understanding, as they evolve, of the nature of the exposure, the mitigating actions underway, and the kind of supports companies require.

In addition to providing individual company supports, EI has undertaken other initiatives to advance its diversification agenda. These activities included:

- the doubling of EI's international trade events - A number of events were held in Ireland focusing on opportunities and how to address specific markets;
- the introduction of Enterprise Ireland's Brexit Scorecard; and
- the roll out of Enterprise Ireland's Brexit roadshows.

In September as part of its International Market's Week, a dedicated "Brexit Zone" was set up where clients had the opportunity to hold one to one meetings with independent experts. Over 100 companies availed of this opportunity. The Brexit Zone addressed a variety of export related challenges including the three key themes: Sales & Marketing Capability – (Starting to export outside the UK), Currency, Transport & logistics -Supply chain.

A series of Sales & Marketing capability workshops targeted the most exposed client base during H2, 2017, and a number of other workshops and initiatives specifically targeting Brexit challenges and the strategic responses available (diversification, operations, innovation, finance) were also undertaken.

**Action 2:** Intensify work with companies to grow export opportunities and diversify into markets outside the UK.

**Ongoing Measure:** Work with clients and other relevant stakeholders to allow ongoing analysis of, and where appropriate devise responses to, the likely impacts and opportunities posed by Brexit on a sector-by-sector basis. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

EI has been liaising directly with both clients and other stakeholders to gather relevant company-by-company and sector-by-sector data which is being continuously updated and analysed. To date significant analysis has been carried out by EI in Ireland and within its network of Overseas offices. The data collected as part of this research is being used by EI's Brexit unit, who are working with EI's Overseas Regional Directors to develop an operational plan, to consolidate and grow exports to the UK while also increasing our reach in other International markets.

**Action 2:** Intensify work with companies to grow export opportunities and diversify into markets outside the UK.

**Ongoing Measure:** Work with pre-HPSUs and HPSUs as early as possible as they develop their product-market fit to encourage a focus on non-UK markets. (DBEI)

**Update:** On 15 May, the Taoiseach, and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, launched Enterprise Ireland's new Eurozone Market Strategy 2017 – 2020, which aims to shift the global footprint of Irish Exports from the UK to Eurozone, increasing exports to Eurozone by 50%, and increasing exports by +€2bn.

To support this EI is working with pre-HPSUs and HPSUs as they develop their product-market fit to encourage a focus on non-UK markets. A key focus for EI is expanding the reach in the Eurozone of "Eurozone Start" companies, namely to build awareness of Eurozone opportunities; enhance capabilities and innovation supports to prepare for the Eurozone; increase Eurozone market research supports; increase funding for Eurozone growth and identify new market and sector opportunities.

Throughout 2017 EI has worked with pre-HPSUs and HPSUs, as early as possible, as they develop their product-market fit to encourage a focus on non-UK markets.

In addition, EI rolled out a new client engagement model which focuses on working closely with individual companies, identifying their needs and supporting them in overcoming the obstacles to growth. A key focus has been to work on the value proposition and route to market so as to determine whether there is a sustainable business model which applies equally to high margin opportunities inside or outside the UK.

**Action 2:** Intensify work with companies to grow export opportunities and diversify into markets outside the UK.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop a structured approach to the 'Go-to-Market' programme planning that will be delivered across Enterprise Ireland's overseas network in 2017. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland has developed a structured engagement process to drive a consistent approach across its network. The Go-to-Market planner is a toolkit that provides a structure for more productive interactions between EI and its clients, and bridges clients' capability gaps. The Go-to-Market planner is being used to support companies with their Market Validation; Sales & Marketing Resources; Value proposition; Sales Process; Market and Competitor intelligence and to Channel their export strategy.

**Action 3:** Roll out Enterprise Ireland's Global Ambition Campaign to raise awareness and encourage Irish exporters to grow their business globally. This will include sectorally focused messaging targeted at international buyers.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland has launched the third phase of its Global Ambition communications campaign focusing on innovation and its new fast-track 'Agile Innovation Fund'. The fund will allow companies to access up to 50% in support for product, process or service development projects with a total cost of up to €300,000. It is designed to aid companies in the development of these projects for new market opportunities and to maximise export performance. The campaign features a variety of Irish SMEs from a range of sectors which have embraced innovation to accelerate their business performance, processes and product ranges. This Innovation campaign will continue to be rolled out in 2018.

The Irish Advantage global export digital marketing campaign was launched at EI's International Markets Week in Q3 which featured over 2,000 meetings between 600 Irish companies and EI's overseas team. The Irish Advantage digital campaign is being piloted in three key Eurozone markets which provide over €1bn in exports for Irish companies – France, Germany, Netherlands - and focuses on high-tech construction and Medtech buyers. The campaign promotes Irish companies to international buyers in key sectors/subsectors in a targeted way to stimulate demand for Irish products and services and will be rolled out globally in 2018. The campaign has also been promoted on key trade missions to: Australia; Singapore/Japan; USA; and UAE across key sectors including Construction, Aviation, Tech, Agritech and at key trade events for the Agritech and Medtech sectors (Agritecnica and Medica) as well as at Med in Ireland, EI's flagship Medtech/ Life sciences inward buyer showcase which saw over 300 international Medtech buyers come to Dublin to meet Irish Medtech companies and generate new business.

**Action 4:** Run an enhanced programme of trade promotion events and study visits in 2017.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In line with its international events programme for 2017, EI organised 145 events in Ireland and overseas to support Irish exporters. Of these, 57 were Ministerial-led Trade Missions and events. Included in the series of Trade Missions were those to Canada, Singapore and Japan, the UAE, and Oman, as well a comprehensive trade and investment programme during the State visit to Australia in which 55 Irish companies participated. In addition, EI coordinated sector-specific trade visits to the Eurozone, North America, Asia Pacific, and Nordic region with an emphasis on Construction, Medtech and Agritech.

**Action 5:** Deliver an international 'in-market' clustering strategy promoting Irish sectoral cluster capabilities to international buyers in priority markets and sectors.

**Ongoing Measure:** Scope out new sectoral and geographic opportunities across markets to support clients' scaling agenda through a clustering approach. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland is undertaking a preparatory project to inform the development and delivery of an international 'in-market' clustering strategy. This strategy will aim to promote Irish sectoral cluster capabilities to international buyers in priority markets and sectors. The aim of the preparatory project is to scope out new sectoral and geographic opportunities across markets to support clients' scaling agenda through the area of connectivity. The project has been broken down into three stages:

- Stage 1: CEO initiative – Outsourced Network. This network brings together CEOs to investigate potential shared opportunities and will follow on from the completion of stages 2 & 3 of the project.
- Stage 2: Online Portal. Through this online portal companies can share their experiences and develop opportunities for new international growth opportunities.
- Stage 3: LinkedIn Network: Similarly, this network is being used to connect companies, with the ultimate aim of developing shared growth opportunities.

The project is progressing and to date the terms of reference have been developed for both stages 2 & 3. The LinkedIn Network has over 200 users interacting on the site, and will continue to be monitored and reviewed.

EI has approved funding for the proposed online portal and the objective is to go to tender in H1, 2018. In developing the terms of reference, software providers, thought leaders and experts in this space have been met to review the potential of the initiative.

**Action 5:** Deliver an international 'in-market' clustering strategy promoting Irish sectoral cluster capabilities to international buyers in priority markets and sectors.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop and implement a programme of sectoral clustering initiatives to be rolled out in overseas markets. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

As part of the development and delivery of an international 'in-market' clustering strategy which will promote Irish sectoral cluster capabilities to international buyers in priority markets and sectors. Enterprise Ireland has, as part of its programme of sectoral clustering initiatives, established a LinkedIn Network which is operational for a targeted cohort of EI clients. In addition, EI has developed its terms of reference for a portal aimed at creating a functional connectivity portal for EI client companies. The implementation of the CEO initiative - outsourced network will follow on from the completion of stages 2 & 3 of the project.

As stated in the previous measure under Action 5, stages 2 and 3 are being developed and while stage 3 has been completed, stage 2 will be completed in Q3 of 2018.

This proposed CEO initiative network brings together CEOs to investigate potential shared opportunities. This initiative will follow on from the completion of stages 2 and 3 in Q2 2018.

**Action 6:** Enhance the Sales and Marketing Unit within Enterprise Ireland which will act as a centre of excellence for sales and marketing capability working with its clients at each stage of development.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Sales and Marketing Unit of Enterprise Ireland assists client companies to identify and address marketing and sales capability gaps inhibiting their international sales growth. The unit has carried out over 100 significant client engagements over the course of 2017. In addition, 55 client companies have been supported with intensive Sales & Marketing Reviews enabling them to develop actionable marketing strategies to drive sales growth.

**Action 7:** Engage with State agencies supporting exporting SMEs in their development and tailoring of supports and information in relation to Brexit.

**Ongoing Measure:** Engage with State agencies supporting exporting SMEs in their development and tailoring of supports and information in relation to Brexit. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

DoF is part of a working group, membership of which includes DBEI, DAFM, SBCI, and EI. The working group was tasked with developing a working capital loan product to support SMEs impacted by Brexit. Following on from the work of this group, DBEI obtained Cabinet approval to proceed with a €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme. It is expected that the Scheme will be launched in March 2018. DoF also prepared an issues paper on a Business Advisory Hub for the consideration of the wider SME State Bodies Group. Additionally, DoF has engaged the ESRI to conduct analysis of whether there is a potential investment gap in respect of Irish SMEs. Two working groups will also be established by DBEI, one to examine if there is need for a longer-term Brexit Business Investment/Development Loan Scheme and the second to consider the Business Advisory Hub further.

**Action 8:** Actively promote opportunities arising from Free Trade Agreements with the agencies and business organisations, including improved market access, broader supply channels, greater predictability in the trading environment and less red tape.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) is an example of a recently concluded trade agreement. Over the course of 2017 DBEI worked with our agencies and business representative groups to ensure that Irish firms take early advantage of the terms of the Agreement. A Ministerial-led trade mission to Canada took place in May/June.

The aim of the trade mission was to support Irish companies in furthering relationships with new and existing Canadian customers and target new opportunities in Canada across a range of growth sectors with particular emphasis on the potential opportunities arising from CETA. DBEI also developed a dedicated CETA exporter information area on its website to highlight the new opportunities for Irish business and professionals to work and provide services in Canada.

DBEI implements a strategy in promoting opportunities arising from Free Trade Agreements through an extensive programme of trade missions with partner countries, via outreach and awareness activities working closely with our exporter organisations, and finally in actively promoting information on the EU's FTA's and opportunities directly to business and through our information platforms and through social media.

**Action 9:** Provide information to businesses on the importance of certification to international product and management standards.

**Ongoing Measure:** Roll out an information campaign to SMEs promoting use of updated international business management standards to support competitiveness and create market access. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

NSAI held eight information Roadshows during February and March 2017 on the new versions of ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015 with the aim of encouraging and assisting businesses to update their management systems to the new standards. During the sessions, a number of NSAI clients presented their experiences with the standards to the wider business community. A second workshop on ISO 13485 for Medical Devices featured in two of the events.

**Action 10:** Deliver Brexit specific workshops to clients as part of the Finance 4 Growth Series.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland ran its Finance 4 Growth series of monthly workshops throughout 2017. These workshops are primarily for exporting SMEs, and seek to address the key issues facing the finance function in the current environment. The objective is to demonstrate how financial information could be used to assist in strategic decisions that will help grow the business and the practical implications for implementing. The Brexit theme was specifically addressed in several of the Finance for Growth workshops. Brexit is highlighted within these workshops as something that is creating an

external environment factor that companies need to be aware of and plan for accordingly. In addition to the Finance 4 Growth workshops' focus on Brexit, EI hosted a number of regional discussions to assist companies in preparing and planning for Brexit. The Brexit roadshows were the first in a series of events and will be followed with further workshops to support capability building to help companies strengthen their resilience in the face of Brexit.

**Action 11:** Increase the competitiveness of clients in those sectors and regions most impacted by Brexit through the proactive engagement of our competitiveness, management development and innovation supports.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Brexit continues to feature as a high priority in the design and delivery of all leadership and management development programmes including Leadership4Growth (L4G), International Selling programme (ISP), Innovation4Growth (I4G), and Platform4Growth(P4G). An offer aimed at middle management is under development within Enterprise Ireland. EI has been and will continue to be proactive in ensuring Brexit relevant content in all of its Management development offers. In addition, EI's Lean awareness programme is running regionally and respective departments within EI are adapting competitiveness and innovation supports to help increase uptake.

EI's International Selling Programme was realigned ensuring its content and all programme elements including advisory supports reflect the changing needs of companies, in light of Brexit. In addition, EI also ran three Brexit Scenario Planning Workshops to encourage companies to scenario plan. These workshops were designed to specifically address the identified areas of exposure.

**Action 12:** Deliver a range of initiatives to assist LEO client companies in meeting the challenges posed by Brexit, including awareness-raising, mentoring, training, developing internationalisation opportunities and Lean.

**Ongoing Measure:** Implement a range of awareness-raising and information sharing measures, including through mentoring and training on topics such as market diversification and financial management issues. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Throughout 2017 the network of Local Enterprise Offices implemented a range of awareness-raising and information sharing measures, including mentoring and training on topics such as market diversification and financial management issues. These were supported and underpinned with individual tailored mentoring and products such as technical marketing assistance for market diversification. Financial Management remains a core business development pillar and each LEO conducts a range of specific financial management programmes, topics covered include: Cash Flow Management, Cost and Credit Control.

The LEOs have developed a competitive tool kit for its clients with the aim of assisting LEO clients to cope with the challenges of Brexit. The toolkit includes the following supports:

- Brexit Scorecard – online diagnostic to provide a quick situational analysis;
- Technical Assistance for Micro-Enterprise (TAME) – a package of supports assisting companies to diversify markets;
- Trading on Line Vouchers (TOVs) – a grant to support companies to commence trading on line and to provide them with access to international markets;

- Mentor Panels – both EI and LEO panels are available to provide specialist input to the different challenges faced by companies;
- Information Seminars – LEO individual and shared with EI creating awareness and a framework for action, and
- LEO Innovation Investment Fund (LIIF) – a package to support the stimulation of investment within micro-enterprise.
- LEO clients wishing to address competitive issues and implement lean practices, can access relevant supports through EI.

The LEOs continue to strengthen and deepen their relationship with InterTrade Ireland with co-operation at awareness and information sessions and making InterTrade Ireland financial supports for Brexit available to LEO clients.

**Action 13:** Recognising the importance of cross-border economic links on the island of Ireland and the role of InterTradeIreland and other North South bodies in the area of cross-border business development and job creation, particularly in the light of the UK referendum decision, maintain a focus on economic growth and job delivery through the North South Ministerial Council and continue outreach activities, including at Ministerial level, to the Northern Ireland business community.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DFAT)

**Update: Complete**

Economic outreach activity has been maintained by DFAT, building North South networks and enabling discussions around the all-island economy and Brexit. Meetings have been facilitated between business representative bodies North and South. The Taoiseach's visit to Derry in October 2017 included a keynote speech to the Chamber of Commerce and the Tánaiste's visits to Belfast included engagement with the Northern Ireland business community, addressing issues around NI political progress, Brexit and the all-island economy. DFAT continues to participate in meetings of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership. NSMC has not been meeting in the absence of a NI Executive but North South Bodies are operating effectively.

**Action 14:** Fund the development of a programme of initiatives to increase the awareness and capacity of SMEs to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit for cross border trade.

**Ongoing Measure:** Operate a programme of initiatives to increase the awareness and capacity of SMEs to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The additional funding which DBEI is providing to InterTrade Ireland (ITI) for this initiative was put in place and a new executive was recruited by ITI to lead this programme. ITI has rolled out their planned full range of initiatives to drive Brexit awareness for companies. These include a series of information events in locations both North and South, attended by over 1,200 companies to date; the provision of 'Brexit Readiness Vouchers', (value €2,000) which companies can use to fund specific expert advice; and the provision of other specialist assistance.

**Action 16:** Maximise the opportunities presented by ongoing global developments in front, middle and back office activities in banking, payments, insurance, reinsurance, funds and asset management plus financial market infrastructure arising from Brexit in the context of the Government's IFS2020 strategic measures.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

There was significant activity undertaken by IDA in promoting Ireland as a location for financial services in the main international financial services centres in Europe, North America and Asia. Market engagements focused on a combination of regulated activities driven by Brexit, and technology and operations investment opportunities. This resulted in a number of high profile investments including Yapstone (Payments) creating 200 new roles in Drogheda; Fidelity International (Asset Management) creating 250 new jobs in Dublin; Kroll (Ratings Agency) creating 100 jobs in Dublin; and both Toronto Dominion Bank and XL Insurance choosing Ireland as their post-Brexit location. In H2 2017, Met Life and Pramerica officially opened their new technology and operations campuses in Galway and Letterkenny respectively.

## Growing and scaling enterprise

**Action 22:** Implement the new Enterprise Ireland strategy to target the creation of 15,000 new jobs and to support clients to achieve €23 billion in exports in 2017.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Despite the uncertainty of Brexit, Enterprise Ireland supported companies created over 19,000 new jobs in 2017, a net increase of over 10,300 new jobs, the highest net increase in the history of the agency. Consequently, the number of people directly employed in EI backed companies is now at a new record of 209,338 employed. Delivering on EI's ambition to drive scale in regions outside of Dublin, two-thirds (64%) of the new jobs were created in regions outside of Dublin and there were job increases in every county in Ireland.

EI launched both its overarching Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2017 – 2020 and more recently its Eurozone 2017 – 2020 Strategy. Through the implementation of these strategies EI is working to support clients to achieve €23 billion in exports in 2017.

**Action 23:** Drive scale in Irish based enterprises through a package of targeted interventions to meet their specific needs.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support Irish companies to expand their reach in international markets, by assisting EI clients to secure over 1,000 new overseas contracts. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland through its network of 32 overseas offices continues to support Irish companies to expand their reach in international markets. A particular focus in 2017 was placed on assisting Enterprise Ireland's client companies to secure over 1,000 new overseas contracts. Over 1,390 such contracts were secured in 2017.

**Action 25:** Enhance leadership capability and address skills gaps by delivering significant Leadership and Management Development programmes to 650 managers and to support the scaling of Irish companies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Deliver leadership and management development programmes to 650 managers. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland's customised long and short management development programmes, delivered in collaboration with leading international providers, aim to inspire business leaders, to equip them with the tools and techniques to operate more effectively and to build international scale. These programmes help build the capabilities companies need and deliver real and lasting impact, and results for businesses. In 2017 there were 976 participants on Enterprise Ireland short programmes and 622 participants on long programmes.

**Action 26:** Implement tailored mentoring programmes for the benefit of over 300 Enterprise Ireland supported companies.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017 EI has appointed 443 mentors to Enterprise Ireland clients as part of its tailored mentoring programmes. The Mentor Network programme has over 400 business mentors, who give client companies, through their various stages of development, strategic advice and guidance on business development opportunities in Irish and overseas markets.

**Action 28:** Target a significant increase in graduate talent into the Enterprise Ireland client base through Graduates 4 International Growth and Grad-Hub.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland's fourth Graduates 4 International Growth (G4IG) programme, is currently being run in partnership with the Irish Management Institute (IMI). The programme launched on 31 August with 27 graduates placed in 21 companies. This cohort of graduates will spend six months in various international markets in 2018.

Enterprise Ireland is also using its Grad-hub website to attract graduate talent into Enterprise Ireland's client base. The website facilitates easy access for graduates for recruitment onto Enterprise Ireland's Graduates 4 International Growth (G4IG) and Graduate Business Growth Initiative (GBGI) programmes. The site launched its new recruitment facility in Q2 allowing jobs in Enterprise Ireland client companies to be advertised on the site.

**Action 29:** Generate closer links and business opportunities between Irish-owned and foreign-owned enterprises to achieve increased global sourcing sales.

**Ongoing Measure:** Increase business links between MNCs and SMEs in key growth sectors and increase the supply opportunities to large companies by leveraging mixed MNC and SME client company membership of Enterprise Ireland Technology Centres and through other cross-agency global sourcing activities. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland work closely together to increase business links between MNCs and SMEs. A two-day (17 – 18 May) Trade and Investment Mission to Dublin, Cork and Galway was a joint EI and IDA 'Global Sourcing' initiative. The aim of the mission was to create business opportunities for Irish-owned companies with Multinationals (MNCs) based in Ireland. The May event was the fourth national Trade and Investment Mission in Ireland.

As part of this mission over 470 one-to-one meetings were scheduled between 167 EI clients and 115 IDA companies over the course of the two days. This was the biggest, most ambitious mission to date and provided MNCs with direct access to potential suppliers, as well as raising awareness of the innovative capabilities of Irish SMEs across a range of sectors. These meetings were also invaluable to Irish companies seeking credible access to procurement teams in global MNCs.

The Global Sourcing agenda continues to form an important part of Enterprise Ireland's work programme. Enterprise Ireland has dedicated a specific unit to progressing this agenda item.

The investment in Technology Centres is a joint initiative between EI and IDA allowing Irish companies and multinationals to work together on research projects in collaboration with research institutions.

**Action 31:** Actively engage with enterprise to facilitate SME participation in public procurement, including training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop guidance and information notes on Public Procurement to bring about a more consistent approach to procurement throughout the State making it easier for SMEs to deal with procurers. (DPER)

**Update: Complete**

The Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services were published on 5 July 2017. These guidelines will foster and encourage improved best practice, standardisation and consistency among practitioners and help ensure that public procurement is conducted in a manner which is business friendly. Further information notes on procurement policy are currently in drafting stage.

**Action 31:** Actively engage with enterprise to facilitate SME participation in public procurement, including training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.

**Ongoing Measure:** Hold quarterly meetings with SME representative bodies, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and InterTradeIreland through the SME working group to identify further measures to assist public sector procurement. (DPER)

**Update: Complete**

Quarterly meetings of the SME Advisory Group were held in February, May and September and December. Significant work has been carried out, by members of this group, on developing an integrated communication strategy to better target SMEs to help increase their awareness of Public Procurement opportunities and enable them compete in future competitions.

**Action 31:** Actively engage with enterprise to facilitate SME participation in public procurement, including training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.

**Ongoing Measure:** Publish a schedule of contracts and frameworks on a quarterly basis on <http://www.procurement.ie> to inform SMEs of opportunities that will arise during the year. (DPER)

**Update: Complete**

The OGP pipeline of procurement activities (Schedule of Frameworks and Contracts) is published on [www.ogp.gov.ie](http://www.ogp.gov.ie) on a quarterly basis so that a rolling nine month forward view is always visible. The OGP also releases a mid-quarter update of the Schedule, with a view of project progress. This advanced notice of forthcoming tendering processes can assist SMEs in planning and preparing to compete in public procurement contracts.

**Action 31:** Actively engage with enterprise to facilitate SME participation in public procurement, including training and information events and the development of guidance and information notes.

**Ongoing Measure:** Continue the operation of the Tender Advisory Service and review it during 2017. (DPER)

**Update: Complete**

The Tender Advisory Service is currently operational. Terms of Reference for an external review of the service were agreed with SME Advisory Group members and the external review has been completed.

## Promoting Trade

**Action 39:** Develop and implement a programme of Ministerial-led trade missions and other trade, tourism, investment and education events focused on key target markets, and growing existing and new markets.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop and implement a programme of Ministerial-led trade missions and other trade, tourism, investment and education events. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In March 2017, the Government published a new trade strategy, *Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World* which supports an extensive programme of Ministerial-led trade missions, as part of a major drive towards market diversification.

The programme of trade missions and trade events for 2017 included a substantive focus on the EU and third country markets. DBEI with EI delivered a programme of international trade events in 2017, giving Irish companies the opportunity to meet with potential buyers and network with key influencers in countries around the world. In total, 57 internationally focused trade events were organised by Enterprise Ireland in 2017, including ministerial-led trade missions to Canada, Singapore and China, the UAE and Oman, and a major trade programme as part of the State visit to Australia.

**Action 40:** Advance and promote participation in EU and multi-lateral Free Trade Agreements to encourage market-deepening and expansion to new markets for Irish firms.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Ireland will continue to support the EU's ambitious programme of negotiating new Free Trade Agreements, giving Irish firms expanded market access and a predictable trading environment in third countries. The EU Japan Economic Partnership Agreement was concluded in December 2017. The conclusion of this Agreement is an important milestone as the biggest bilateral trade agreement ever negotiated by the EU. The Agreement will open market opportunities for Irish exporters, particularly in the agri-food and medical sectors. The European Commission is currently negotiating Free Trade Agreements with Mexico, Mercosur and Chile. In addition, mandates to open negotiations with Australia and New Zealand are currently under discussion with Member States. DBEI will work with the European Commission and colleagues across the EU to ensure the best possible outcome for Ireland in any future negotiations.

**Action 41:** Actively manage the Global Irish Network, in cooperation with Government Departments and State agencies to implement the recommendations stemming from Global Irish Economic Fora and to ensure that the Global Irish Network remains a key partner in identifying and delivering actions across the economy that support jobs.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DFAT)

**Update: Complete**

DFAT continues to work actively to build on *Global Irish: Ireland's Diaspora Policy*, the work of the Global Irish Network and the recommendations stemming from Global Irish Economic Fora, to actively engage with the global Irish and Irish business networks abroad to identify and deliver actions that support market access and contacts, investment and innovation. In addition, the current emphasis is building effective engagement with more recent Irish emigrants, the new generations of our diaspora and the affinity diaspora, including by improving connections between these groups and existing Irish organisations and networks abroad, including by exploring ways in which enhanced data on recent emigration trends and Irish university alumni can be developed and connections improved.

**Action 42:** Deliver focused events and supporting actions to support a deepened economic engagement with Africa, under the banner of the Africa Ireland Economic Forum.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DFAT)

**Update: Complete**

DFAT continues to work with Irish Embassies in Africa, through targeted support from the Africa Strategy Implementation Fund, to assist Irish companies seeking to operate in African markets. DFAT also worked with state agencies and other business groups during 2017 to support and promote activities in Ireland to increase awareness of economic and trade opportunities available in Africa.

**Action 44:** Enhance the coordinated approach to international messaging across Government, including through the regular updating of key messages and their communication by Ireland's Embassy network and update, on a regular basis, key messages for international audiences on Ireland's economic progress and our trade, tourism and investment strengths.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DFAT)

**Update: Complete**

DFAT coordinated and issued three sets of international key messages to the Embassy network and overseas State agency offices in 2017 (March, July, November).

## Supporting Entrepreneurship

**Action 46:** Provide business developmental and financial supports to 180 High Potential Start-Ups and early stage start-ups and develop new and different sources of future High Potential Start-Up companies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Provide business developmental and financial supports to 180 high potential and early stage start-ups. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland's engagement with both post-Competitive Start Fund (CSF) funded and post-HPSU funded start-ups involves working with them to develop their business, build their team and build their capabilities to scale their businesses internationally.

In 2017, EI provided development and financial support to 181 high potential and early start-ups.

**Action 46:** Provide business developmental and financial supports to 180 High Potential Start-Ups and early stage start-ups and develop new and different sources of future High Potential Start-Up companies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Increase the number of scalable start-ups by targeting new and different sources of HPSU companies e.g. HPSU spin outs from research and HPSUs led by experienced professionals, and disruptive HPSUs. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Within EI, the HPSU start department are closely engaged with the R&I team to identify and progress potential HPSU projects from research, led by experienced professionals, and disruptive HPSUs projects. Enterprise Ireland supported 181 high potential and early start-ups in 2017.

**Action 46:** Provide business developmental and financial supports to 180 High Potential Start-Ups and early stage start-ups and develop new and different sources of future High Potential Start-Up companies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Launch targeted Competitive Start Funds aimed at experienced professionals, graduates and overseas entrepreneurs. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland's Competitive Start Fund aims to accelerate the growth of start-up companies that have the capability to succeed in global markets.

There were nine Competitive Start Funds completed in 2017. Two of these were aimed at regional and international entrepreneurs, to encourage startups from outside of Dublin and outside Ireland respectively.

There were three calls open to all sectors. (one focused on ICT; one on Agtech, Manufacturing, Lifesciences and Renewables, and one focused specifically on the Fintech sector).

In addition to the above there were four funds which target entrepreneurs from specific underrepresented groups (Graduate Entrepreneurs; Female Entrepreneurs (2), and Experienced Business Professionals Entrepreneurs).

In total, 91 start-ups were approved support under the nine Competitive Start Funds in 2017.

**Action 46:** Provide business developmental and financial supports to 180 High Potential Start-Ups and early stage start-ups and develop new and different sources of future High Potential Start-Up companies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Partner with key providers to provide training and capability development for early stage and established business innovators. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland's engagement with both post-Competitive Start Fund (CSF) funded and post-HPSU funded start-ups involves working with them to develop their business, build their team and build their capabilities to scale their businesses internationally. This work involves both one to one engagement as well as master classes, networking and peer to peer learning. Enterprise Ireland provided financial and developmental supports to 181 early stage companies in the 2017, of which 90 were High Potential Start Ups companies and a further 91 were Competitive Start Fund approvals.

**Action 47:** Deliver a new approach to the promotion of entrepreneurship at local level.

**Ongoing Measure:** Build an increasingly higher quality pipeline of LEO funded start-ups by developing deeper relationships with the New Frontiers programme across the country. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Following the appointment of a New Frontiers Programme Manager in Enterprise Ireland, relationships will be strengthened and deepened and the LEO engagement process will commence. There is ongoing integration between the New Frontiers Programme and Enterprise Ireland's regional offices with a particular focus on recruitment, interviewing and client progression.

**Action 47:** Deliver a new approach to the promotion of entrepreneurship at local level.

**Ongoing Measure:** Undertake a comprehensive review of the Start Your Own Business programme offered by the LEOs to promote best practice higher quality start-ups in each area. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Following the completion of a comprehensive review of the Start Your Own Business programme, offered by the LEOs to promote best practice higher quality start-ups in each area, recommendations will be piloted in H1 2018 to focus on pre-screening, standardisation and a new longitudinal evaluation methodology to provide more analytical evidence based conversion rate analysis.

**Action 48:** Promote and facilitate increased provision of education and training opportunities related to entrepreneurship and identify best practice education and training on entrepreneurship within further education and training provision.

**Ongoing Measure:** Work with Education and Training Boards to promote and facilitate increased provision of education and training opportunities related to entrepreneurship. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Research on 'Best practice in Entrepreneurship Education and Training in the Further Education and Training sector' commissioned by SOLAS has been published on SOLAS website. The 2017/2018 Annual SOLAS Service Planning process will incorporate recommendations of the report as appropriate including increasing the provision of further education and training opportunities related to entrepreneurship.

**Action 52:** Further develop female centred entrepreneurial and start up initiatives.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support and publicise female specific entrepreneur awards and events. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland is helping to build the visibility of successful female entrepreneurs and to encourage other women to consider entrepreneurial careers. Enterprise Ireland is working with key stakeholders in the eco-system such as Network Ireland, the LEOs, The Entrepreneurs Academy, WITS Ireland, iWish and programme providers such as Going for Growth, DCU Ryan Academy, DBIC and CIT Exxcel to connect with and encourage as many existing and potential female entrepreneurs as possible.

EI has supported and publicised a number of female specific entrepreneur awards and events to date in 2017. These include the €750,000 Competitive Start Fund (CSF) for Female Entrepreneurs.

EI also ran workshops and initiatives with Google and Intel on Supplier Diversity Procurement initiatives. The Intel Supplier Diversity workshop on 29 May targeted EI clients specifically. Other female specific EI events in 2017 included Fuelling Ambition 'Steps to Success' Roadshow for female entrepreneurs and EI's Female Leadership and Ambition Conference.

EI and Network Ireland, in conjunction with the LEOs and the Entrepreneurs Academy, launched the 2nd nationwide Fuelling Ambition "Steps to Success" Roadshow targeting existing and potential female entrepreneurs.

A new Elevator Pitch competition was introduced in 2017 with a prize package worth €4,000 at each location. The Female Leadership and Growing Ambition Conference hosted by EI in co-ordination with DCU Business School and supported by Bank of Ireland took place on International Women's Day (9 March 2017).

**Action 52:** Further develop female centred entrepreneurial and start up initiatives.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support women in business networks to establish female specific peer learning. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland's Female Entrepreneurship Unit supports ambitious women grow scalable businesses and to address the key challenges impacting on the growth of female led business opportunities.

EI also continues to sponsor programmes targeting the creation of more female led start-ups and supporting companies to get to the investor ready stage faster. These programmes include DCU Ryan Academy High Fliers, Going for Growth, Continuing Momentum, and CIT Exxcel. Enterprise Ireland is also running the Accelerate Programme with DBIC. This accelerator sponsored programme is a dedicated 12-week female accelerator programme, the only one in Ireland at present. Enterprise Ireland part-funds Going for Growth, which is a peer-to-peer learning community for women entrepreneurs who are serious about growing their businesses. In 2017, 90 companies took part in Going for Growth or the community called Continuing the Momentum, of which 22 are Enterprise Ireland client companies. CIT Rubicon's Exxcel programme is a part-time programme for early stage STEM entrepreneurs while DCU's Female High Fliers is a 13-week long programme which supports female entrepreneurs develop key business skills and grow their business. The programme targets pre-HPSU Start stage and supports Enterprise Ireland pipeline development. there were 11 companies participating on the programme during 2017, of which five have become EI clients.

**Action 52:** Further develop female centred entrepreneurial and start up initiatives.

**Ongoing Measure:** Publicise and encourage participation by females in start-ups including a targeted Competitive Start Fund. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland continues to encourage female participation in start-ups and in May 2017 held a Competitive Start Fund call specifically targeting Female Entrepreneurs or female-led start-ups, active in the Manufacturing & Internationally Traded Services sectors. 173 applications were received and 29 start-ups pitched directly to the evaluation panel of which 17 were selected for funding. In addition, 12 of the start-ups received €50k Competitive Start Fund and secured a place on the EI Innovate Programme which is delivered by Dublin BIC's INNOVATE accelerator programme.

## Ensuring Finance for Growth

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Maintain close co-operation and collaboration with other National Promotional Financial Institutions. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The SBCI is a member of the Network of European Financial Institutions for SMEs (NEFI), the European Association of Long-Term Investors (ELTIA), and most recently became a member of European Association of Guarantee Institutions (AECM). Through these Networks the SBCI maintains close co-operation with National Promotional Financial Institutions (NPBIs) across Europe with on-going engagement in discussion forums and attendance at meetings (by SBCI representative(s) where relevant). The SBCI is party to information flows from a number of sectoral focused workgroups within these Networks which provide new insight into European regulation, law and research which would otherwise be unavailable to a small national promotional institution (NPB/I) such as the SBCI. This brings a valued platform for the SBCI, as a small NPB/I, to share views through the Network associations and to leverage off the knowledge and experience of more established NPB/I's.

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Work on the potential for use of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The SBCI is looking at ways of utilising European Financial Instruments to optimise the funding available to Irish SMEs and provide supports to the SME finance market, as required. The first legal agreement under the Innovfin Counter Guarantee facility has been signed with EIF and will be used to support the Brexit Loan Scheme. The SBCI have negotiated additional capacity under COSME (Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) to enable the SBCI to develop risk sharing products for market failures. The roll out of this project will progress in line with market needs and requirements around Brexit related schemes which remain the near term priority delivery with the launch of Brexit Loan Scheme expected to be end March 2018.

The Open Call for financial institutions was announced 21 November 2017 which sought applications from banks and other financial institutions for designation as lending partners under the Scheme. The closing date for receipt of applications was 8 December 2017 and applications are going through a Due Diligence process currently with the successful applicants to be announced in due course.

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Maintain strong relationships with the EIB Group and the Council of Europe Development Bank. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The SBCI is engaging closely with both the EIB Group and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). In Q4 2016, the SBCI put in place a €200 million funding arrangement with the CEB. The SBCI has been granted an extension to the COSME facility and the first legal agreement under the Innovfin Counter Guarantee facility has been signed with EIF and will be used to support the Brexit Loan Scheme.

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop and roll out a COSME Counter Guarantee facility to support a €150 million Cash Flow Support Loan Fund for Farmers with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

As announced in Budget 2017, the SBCI in conjunction with DAFM, rolled out a €150 million Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan scheme to provide support to farmers experiencing short-term financial pressure due to price and income volatility. This financing is made possible by the

Guarantee that has been provided by COSME and the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) set up under the Investment Plan for Europe. In addition, the Scheme was supported by €25 million being provided by DAFM, including €11 million in 'EU exceptional adjustment aid' and was supported by SBCI capital and a €100 million COSME counter guarantee facility. The Scheme was launched on 31 January 2017 and has now been fully utilised.

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Pursue an application to the European Investment Fund for the Innovfin Counter Guarantee Scheme. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The first legal agreement under the Innovfin Counter Guarantee facility has been signed with EIF and will be used to support the Brexit Loan Scheme.

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Maximise engagement with the relevant elements of the Multiannual Financial Framework. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The SBCI has secured and utilised a €100 million COSME counter guarantee facility from the EIF and has been granted an extension to the COSME facility. The first legal agreement under the Innovfin Counter Guarantee facility has been signed with EIF and will be used to support the Brexit Loan Scheme. The SBCI is in regular contact with EIB/EIF on potential adoption and adaptation of product offerings such as Investment platform structures for use by the SBCI under its mandate or in the wider Irish economic context - seeking to address the best approach to put the necessary conduit framework in place to optimise funding and risk capital available under the EFSI Juncker plan.

**Action 56:** Deliver, through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, effective financial supports to SMEs that address failures in the Irish credit market by sourcing additional funding from international organisations and securing new on-lenders, while driving competition and innovation.

**Ongoing Measure:** Participate in the development of the European Investment Advisory Hub. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The EIAH Open Call for financial and technical support provision on advisory services launched in late December 2017.

**Action 57:** Examine ways to support non-bank alternative providers of finance to SMEs in the Irish market both directly as part of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund's SME strategy, and also indirectly via other strategies including food and agri, real estate and venture capital.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) continues to deploy capital to support new and existing non-bank alternatives and other providers of finance as part of its strategy.

In May 2017 the ISIF committed €45m to the Muzinich Pan-European Private Debt Fund. The fund lends to SME/lower middle market companies providing a mix of senior stretch term loans (c. 70%), mezzanine loans (c. 20%) and equity (c. 10%). Muzinich has committed to invest 1.5x (€67.5m) in Irish deals, of which at least €36.7m will be invested in deals of €10m and below. Muzinich has also hired a private debt specialist to lead origination efforts in Ireland and has opened a Dublin office.

In June 2017 the ISIF completed a £10m investment in Draper Esprit plc as part of a £100m placement and subscription. This is a follow-on to ISIF's cornerstone investment in the IPO in June 2016. As a result of ISIF's new investment, Draper has committed to investing at least an additional £20m into Irish companies over the next five years on a reasonable endeavours basis. This brings Draper's total planned investment in Irish companies to £50m by 2022.

In September 2017 the ISIF launched the Ireland Ag-Tech Fund in partnership with Finistere Ventures. This €20m fund will invest in start-up and early stage AgTech companies that can generate significant economic impact in the Irish Agriculture and Food sectors.

In October 2017 the ISIF announced a major new investment to support the Irish SME software sector. The partnership, with Insight Venture Partners, a leading global investor focused exclusively on growth stage software, sees ISIF committing \$100m (€85m) to a new global fund managed by Insight. To date, Insight has attracted co-investment from separate investors of more than €2m for every €1m it has invested in Irish companies. ISIF's commitment to the Insight fund is aimed at filling an existing funding gap for established, growing Irish SME software businesses requiring investments above €20m.

In November 2017 the ISIF announced a new commitment with BGF that launched the largest ever growth capital fund dedicated to Irish small and medium-sized companies. The fund which will have up to €250 million to invest is also backed by AIB, Bank of Ireland and BGF's existing shareholders. BGF Ireland will provide initial investments of between €2 million and €10 million in return for a minority stake, with additional funding to investee companies as needed.

In December 2017 the ISIF completed a \$29.5m (€25m) investment into a specialist financial technology private equity fund.

**Action 58:** Enhance and target direct company equity and grant supports to support Enterprise Ireland's client companies to enhance their competitiveness.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support and monitor investment activity with Irish SMEs by Enterprise Ireland supported angel, seed, venture and development capital funds. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland progressed the establishment of a number of equity funds which received commitments under the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2013-2018). Under the first call for Expressions of Interest €109.5m was committed to funds targeting Series A funding in the general technology and Lifesciences sectors. Additionally, the European Angels Fund (a €20m co-investment fund) was launched and is actively investing.

Under the second call for Expression of Interest of the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2013-2018), €65m was committed to funds targeting the early stage of company development.

In February 2017 the Suir Valley Ventures Fund was launched bringing to eight the number of new funds successfully launched under this Scheme, which will make a further €662m of venture funding available in the market.

A third call for Expressions of Interest under the (2013-2018) Scheme was launched in 2017 and in September 2017 a total of €44m was committed to four funds targeting the Seed & Early Stages of company development.

To date, €175m has been approved to funds under the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2013-2018). This has resulted in total funds under management of €667m (this total is expected to rise to circa. €860m on the successful closing of the funds approved under the third call).

EI continues to work with key players in the wider business ecosystem to ensure there is an array of funding options available to SMEs. For example, Enterprise Ireland's €75m commitment to the Development Capital scheme has resulted in the creation of three funds which have a combined total fund size of €492m.

EI is also working to develop an improved system of reporting to build on the existing economic impact analysis of the Seed & Venture Capital Funds. A process to commission a review of the most recent Seed & Venture Capital Scheme has commenced recently.

**Action 61:** Enhance awareness amongst SMEs and entrepreneurs of State business supports to raise their financial capacity in either starting a business, or in growing and expanding an established business.

**Ongoing Measure:** Deliver a revised integrated communications strategy to improve SME knowledge of the range of State supports for their businesses. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The SME Communications Group met on 18 October 2017 to discuss the draft of the revised integrated communications strategy. The revised integrated communication strategy has been adopted by the group. The Group met again on 6 December 2017 to discuss the progress made in 2017 and the promotion of Online Tool in 2018. The Group is currently exploring new types of marketing materials and advertisement.

**Action 65:** Promote and monitor improved prompt payment practices in Ireland.

**Ongoing Measure:** Deliver and monitor enhanced reporting requirements on prompt payments for public sector bodies. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Government Decision S29296 regarding the enhanced reporting requirements for public sector bodies came into effect on 28 March 2017. DBEI will continue to monitor, on an ongoing basis, compliance with the requirements set out in the Government Decision.

**Action 66:** Engage and collaborate with other bodies and policy analysts to leverage their expertise and draw on international best practice for developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policy initiatives that will provide SMEs access to appropriate finance to meet their enterprise needs.

**Ongoing Measure:** Engage with the OECD through the Working Party for SMEs and Entrepreneurs. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

DoF submitted the final draft of the Ireland chapter for 2018 edition of the OECD Scoreboard on SME and entrepreneurship financing in September. Officials attended the 51st Session of the OECD WPSMEE in April, the WPSMEE Informal Steering Group on SME and entrepreneurship financing and country experts in September, and the 52nd Session of the OECD WPSMEE in October.

## Delivering Skills for a Growing Economy

**Action 68:** Support and strengthen the apprenticeship and traineeship systems through enhancing the range of courses and providing 4,947 apprenticeship places and 2,600 traineeships.

**Ongoing Measure:** Implement the Government's Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Implementation of the measures set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship are being carried out on an ongoing basis. A key action from the plan was the announcement of a second call for proposals which closed on 1 September with 77 proposals received from a range of sectors and occupations. 26 successful proposals were approved for further development in December 2017.

In Q4, 11 new apprenticeship programmes have been formally validated. Nine of these programmes are underway. There is a strong pipeline in place for the 2018 target of 1,500 new apprenticeship registrations with an accumulative total of 25 new apprenticeship programmes by the end of 2018.

A new Five-Step Guide to traineeship was launched on 16 November aimed at employers seeking practical information on how to develop a traineeship within their company.

As part of expansion of traineeship nationally, the eligibility requirements have been expanded to include a broader group of potential participants, including those who are in employment.

**Action 70:** Deliver the skills for a growing economy and increase labour market participation through the Skillnets programmes for ICT, bio-pharma, life sciences and med tech.

**Ongoing Measure:** Enhance industry input into programme content, through provision of work placements and promotion of ICT programmes as part of the implementation of Skillnets ICT conversion programmes. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Skillnets ICT Conversion Programmes are progressing very well. Four dedicated Skillnet networks have been engaged in the design and delivery of ICT Conversion Programmes with enterprise. The four networks are Technology Ireland ICT Skillnet, Technology Ireland Software Skillnet, ITAG Skillnet and Animation Skillnet.

By leveraging their network infrastructure, the networks engaged closely with employers in the process of identifying the programme content and relevance of the specific courses to ensure programmes are up-to-date and are addressing the skills gaps of the ICT sector. These intensive training programmes all include work placements within ICT companies, and have consistently resulted in employment progression rates of up to 85%. The companies who have provided work placements on the programmes include HP, Ericsson, IBM, Cisco, VM Ware and a range of animation companies including Treehouse Republic and Brown Bag Films.

16 ICT conversion programmes commenced in 2017 to over 257 unemployed individuals, providing 11,673 training days. Work placements were provided post training in a variety of companies as outlined above. Previous conversion programmes have resulted in high levels of employment progression.

**Action 70:** Deliver the skills for a growing economy and increase labour market participation through the Skillnets programmes for ICT, bio-pharma, life sciences and med tech.

**Ongoing Measure:** Deliver training courses in bio-pharma, life sciences and med tech to industry through Skillnets bio-pharma sectoral networks, with enhanced industry input into programme content and provision of work placements as part of the implementation of Skillnets bio-pharma conversion programmes. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Skillnets networks operating in Bio Pharma, Life Sciences and Medtech include Pharmachem Skillnet and Irish Medtech Association Skillnet, these networks have delivered programmes for over 200 companies within the industry in 2017. Member companies within the sector actively input into programme design covering areas such as Validation, Supply Chain, Quality / GMP, Manufacturing & Operations and New Technologies.

Recent new programmes designed under Skillnets Future Skills Needs programme include an MSc in Regulatory Affairs, Benchmarking Models in Operational Excellence & Product Development (MÓR Model and Product Development Best Practice Assessment Model), Driving Operational Excellence Through Lean Leadership L9, Fundamentals in Validation and Design for Medical Technologies L8, Certificate in Science in Bioanalysis and Laboratory Practices L8 and Certificate in Science in Bio Manufacturing and Laboratory Practices L8.

Irish Medtech Skillnet delivered two conversion programmes in Process Validation and Quality Engineering to 36 unemployed trainees with a manufacturing background to upskill them for career progression opportunities within the Medtech industry in Q2.

**Action 70:** Deliver the skills for a growing economy and increase labour market participation through the Skillnets programmes for ICT, bio-pharma, life sciences and med tech.

**Ongoing Measure:** Deliver Skillnets ICT programmes to industry through its ICT sectoral training networks, including regionally-based ICT networks to stimulate regional growth. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

Six dedicated Skillnets are engaged in the design and delivery of ICT training programmes for the sector, supported by member companies across the ICT and Software sectors nationally. Network activities are congruent with the three goals outlined in Skillnet's Statement of Strategy which include delivering training excellence, providing new and relevant skills for new sectors, and increasing the levels of engagement with member companies. The networks delivered specialised programmes to over 2,600 employed trainees in 2017. These networks include Technology Ireland ICT Skillnet, Technology Ireland Software Skillnet, ITAG Skillnet, it@cork Skillnet, Animation, and Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) Skillnet.

Regional clusters include the following networks ITAG Skillnet and it@cork Skillnet

While the two networks listed above have a specific regional focus, the other ICT networks operate on a national basis and contribute to workforce development in the regions. Their areas of focus are Innovation & Management, Software Engineering, Cyber Security, Big Data, Cloud and Advanced Skills.

New Programme Development - Skillnet networks place great emphasis on the development of new training programmes that are relevant, required by industry to address skills gaps and support the competitiveness of companies. All new programmes are developed in consultation with enterprise

and the relevant academic institutions through enterprise working groups to determine the programme objectives and design. Companies participating in the various working groups include Ericsson, IBM, Fidelity Investments, Cisco, Email Laundry, Smart Tech, Ward Solutions, Force Point & Trilogy Technologies amongst many more.

**Action 81:** Develop and publish the 2017 Further Education and Training Services Plan which will provide detail of all SOLAS funded FET provision and funding provided to agencies and bodies to support the FET sector. The skills needs at national level will be informed by the recommendations of the National Skills Strategy and the regional skills needs identified by the Regional Skills Fora.

**Ongoing Measure:** Implement the 2017 FET Services Plan. (DES)

**Update: Complete**

The 2017 FET Services Plan has been developed, published and implemented. It can be accessed on the SOLAS website.

## Promoting Innovation

**Action 82:** Enhance and support business RDI investment and capacity of both Irish and foreign owned enterprise to achieve the Innovation 2020 targets; this will include optimising, simplifying and rebranding Enterprise Ireland's in-company support, rolling out a new Business Innovation Initiative and by enterprise agencies working with companies to ensure they are equipped to exploit disruptive and emerging technologies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Target Enterprise Ireland client SMEs working with "disruptive technologies" in order to help them leverage early stage financing opportunities available in Horizon 2020's SME instrument. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The EU's Horizon 2020's SME instrument offers Irish companies valuable opportunities to participate in high quality collaborative research projects with other companies and research institutions across Europe. Enterprise Ireland targets disruptive technologies client to support them benefit from early stage financing opportunities available in Horizon 2020's SME instrument and in turn to help develop competitive industries.

Irish SMEs have won a total of €62.44 million in the Innovation actions, SME Instrument and Fast Track to Innovation. This is broken down as €54.33 million in the SME Instrument and €8.11 million in the Fast Track to Innovation programme. Additionally, this has resulted in 86 individual participants engaging in 84 different projects (5 projects in FTI and 79 projects in the SME Instrument). To date, 30 individual SMEs have secured funding of more than €1 million.

**Action 84:** Drive innovation procurement activities through the implementation of a new Small Business Innovation Research initiative and by identifying and developing a systematic approach to innovative public procurement.

**Ongoing Measure:** Drive the implementation of the new Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) initiative for Ireland working in partnership with willing Public Bodies and deliver five SBIR collaborative projects in 2017. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Ireland is the national innovative pre-commercial procurement initiative, administered by EI. In 2017 Enterprise Ireland successfully launched seven SBIR projects (5 in Dublin, 2 in Cork).

**Action 84:** Drive innovation procurement activities through the implementation of a new Small Business Innovation Research initiative and by identifying and developing a systematic approach to innovative public procurement.

**Ongoing Measure:** Identify and develop a systematic approach to Innovative Public Procurement in Ireland. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017, Enterprise Ireland launched seven Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) projects and is embedding a systematic approach to Innovative Public Procurement in Ireland through the SBIR process that can be used by participating public bodies in the future. Enterprise Ireland has procured an external resource to provide advice to public bodies participating in innovative procurement through the framework of SBIR.

EI's Public Procurement Unit is mapping on an ongoing basis the progress of the UK models of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland & Wales) across all sectors and noting emerging trends as well as success stories.

**Action 85:** Provide advice through the newly established Innovation Office on regulatory requirements and general guidance on technical or scientific issues to any individual or organisation that may be developing innovative health products or technologies, with a particular focus on academic researchers and early stage developers in start-up companies and SMEs.

**Ongoing Measure:** Publish general updates and information about regulatory and scientific issues related to innovation. (DoH)

**Update: Complete**

Since its establishment in November 2016, the HPRA's innovation office has provided regulatory guidance to approximately 50 individuals or organisations involved in the development of innovative health products. More than half of the requests for guidance originated from SMEs or academic researchers. An innovation day was held in May 2017 which included presentations from speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds and attracted over 250 registrations. An overview of this event has been published on the HPRA website where additional innovation office guidance is also available. The HPRA's innovation office has also participated in other events aimed at providing supports for SMEs such as the Taking Care of Business event organised by DBEI.

The HPRA has actively raised awareness of the innovation office through its outreach activities including the innovation day. The HPRA website includes important information in relation to a broad range of areas that fall within the HPRA's remit, which also require appropriate prominence on their website. The approved product information for medicinal products (which is important information for both healthcare professionals and patients) would be one example of information that needs to be readily accessible from the HPRA's homepage. The HPRA has also sought to ensure that the Innovation Office is prominent on their homepage and can be accessed via three separate locations.

**Action 88:** Drive increased collaboration between enterprise and the public research system by increasing the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland, supporting over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects, developing a cadre of "industry ready researchers" to increase SME capability, and enhancing the skills of PhD students to meet the demands of industry and academia.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects to drive innovation across all stages of company development in order to help companies scale and grow. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Enterprise Ireland supported 1,065 Collaborative Research projects in 2017. Enterprise Ireland's Industry-led collaboration supports helps companies to find other companies with similar research agendas and help them to collaborate to share resources and knowledge. The programmes EI offers to support collaborative research with other companies include Technology Centres, Technology Gateways, Research & Development (R&D) Fund, Innovation Partnerships and Innovation Vouchers.

**Action 88:** Drive increased collaboration between enterprise and the public research system by increasing the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland, supporting over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects, developing a cadre of "industry ready researchers" to increase SME capability, and enhancing the skills of PhD students to meet the demands of industry and academia.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop a cadre of "industry ready researchers" to increase SME capability to innovate through the EU Marie Curie Programme and other Enterprise Ireland funded assets (Technology Centres and Technology Gateways). (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The aim of the Marie Sklodowska Curie Career-FIT Programme is to bring up to 50 high-caliber international post-doctoral scientists and engineers to Ireland to research areas with potential to deliver commercial outcomes that tackle client company-defined challenges. The program targets SMEs, with a focus on mid-caps, and large companies and is open to Technology Centre members and non-members.

To date, the Marie Sklodowska Curie Career-FIT Programme has recommended funding for 23 scientists in its first call. The total number of applications received in call one was 50 of which 49 were brought through an eligibility check and an international evaluation process. The programme is currently at the grant agreement stage and it is hoped that three fellows will commence their fellowships before year end while the majority will commence in February 2018. Call two is open and will remain opened for a duration of 6 months closing on 30 April 2018 whereby we would hope to fund a further 27 scientists and engineers.

**Action 88:** Drive increased collaboration between enterprise and the public research system by increasing the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland, supporting over 850 industry-led collaborative research projects, developing a cadre of “industry ready researchers” to increase SME capability, and enhancing the skills of PhD students to meet the demands of industry and academia.

**Ongoing Measure:** Provide advice and support for research and innovation to Enterprise Ireland client companies and research institutions in the defence sector through the Defence Enterprise Initiative. (DoD)

**Update: Complete**

Three White Paper projects are progressing in the Defence Organisation to further develop the Defence Enterprise Initiative. These projects include developing a strategy for the Initiative and an Intellectual Property Policy, as well as setting up a Security and Defence Enterprise Group with Enterprise Ireland.

Meetings continue to take place between the Defence Organisation and EI in the form of the Defence Enterprise Committee; the Defence Organisation continued to provide assistance to EI and EI companies throughout 2017.

The Defence Forces are currently participating in three Horizon 2020 projects – ROCSAFE, GAP and CAMELOT.

The Department will continue to ensure that all interested parties are kept abreast of EDA, EU Commission and Horizon 2020 developments, in order to ensure that the Defence Organisation’s involvement in collaborative projects are fully supported, thus ensuring their best possible chance of success.

**Action 90:** Implement specific actions in Innovation 2020 which will support the development of excellent researchers, world-leading research teams, equipment and facilities across the public research system.

**Ongoing Measure:** Roll out regional SME innovation networks ensuring that innovative SMEs’ skills and innovation needs are met by the HEIs in their region. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Spotlight on Skills initiative was launched by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on 14 December. EI’s Spotlight on Skills is a nationwide series of one-day workshops to empower companies to identify the skills they require to support their business growth plans. The 2017 workshops targeted the North East, Midlands, North West, and Dublin. A further 15 workshops are scheduled to take place in 2018 and will take place across the regions.

**Action 93:** Drive research and innovation in advanced manufacturing by developing the necessary research skills and capacity and by progressing the identified need for Research Technology Organisation support.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop proposals in the area of advanced manufacturing delivered through a Research Technology Organisation model for the benefit of both indigenous and multinational companies. (DBEI)

**Update:** An updated Business Plan is being prepared by IDA and will be submitted to DBEI once completed.

**Action 94:** Drive EU and international research collaboration to maximise the impact of investment in research and innovation including through new international research partnerships, securing €12 million in product development contracts for Irish based companies from the European Space Agency, and by Enterprise Ireland continuing to lead the national drive to secure €1.25 billion in funding for Irish companies and academics by 2020.

**Ongoing Measure:** Continue to lead the national drive to secure €1.25 billion (€150 million in 2017) in research funding from Horizon 2020 for Irish companies and academics by 2020. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Horizon 2020 (H2020) is the EU's financial instrument aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. Horizon 2020, has been running since 2014 with a budget of €80 billion to 2020. The latest European Commission data published in October 2017 shows Horizon 2020 funding to Ireland at €139m against the target of €150m. This brings Ireland's total funding in Horizon 2020 to €475m. To date more than 1,100 applications have been successful for 536 higher education researchers and 430 companies, placing Ireland's success rate above the EU average.

**Action 94:** Drive EU and international research collaboration to maximise the impact of investment in research and innovation including through new international research partnerships, securing €12 million in product development contracts for Irish based companies from the European Space Agency, and by Enterprise Ireland continuing to lead the national drive to secure €1.25 billion in funding for Irish companies and academics by 2020.

**Ongoing Measure:** Secure €12 million in product development contracts for Irish based companies from the European Space Agency from which next generation commercial products can be generated. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

Ireland has been a member of the European Space Agency (ESA) since its foundation in 1975. Irish industry is benefitting from Ireland's ESA membership through supporting in-company product development for the space market and commercial spin-out of space technologies into non-space markets. In 2016, €12.56m was secured in contracts from ESA, and it is anticipated that the 2017 target of €12m will be reached by year end - the final outturn figures for 2017 will not be verified by ESA until Q2, 2018.

## Stimulating Regional Growth

**Action 97:** Support all eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs and provide investment of up to €60 million over the period to 2020 to support collaborative approaches to boost enterprise and job creation across the regions. This competitive funding is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional strengths.

**Ongoing Measure:** Roll out the Regional Accelerator Scheme 2015-2017 following the first call for expressions of interest in 2016. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Regional Accelerator Scheme is part of Enterprise Ireland's overall strategy for increasing the

number and quality of start-ups that have the potential to employ more than 10 persons and achieve €1 million in export sales within three years. The Scheme is funded under the €40m Fund established by Government to support regional economic development.

As part of an open competitive call for expressions of interest, EI made commitments totaling €3m to a number of regional accelerators. The successful teams have been securing their balance of funding, developing and launching their programmes.

The Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and Enterprise Ireland, launched the NDRC at PorterShed Accelerator in Galway on 2 May 2017, to further enhance the High Potential Start-up (HPSU) eco-system and develop start-up capability, infrastructure and capital investment within the region. The accelerator is open to applications from potential teams or individuals both in Ireland or overseas, in all technology sectors.

This accelerator programme will provide intensive commercial support and expert mentoring to high potential startup businesses with a digital focus. There is a very strong culture of technology entrepreneurship and innovation within Galway and its environs which can be leveraged to build strong digital companies with global potential. The accelerator programme is an important addition to the vibrant start-up eco-system in Galway and the West of Ireland.

On 26 July 2017, Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection launched the Propeller Shannon Start-Up accelerator, supported by EI to further enhance the aviation and the aerospace Start-Up ecosystem within Ireland.

The Propeller Shannon Start-Up accelerator, a partnership between Shannon Group's International Aviation Services Centre (IASC), DCU Ryan Academy for Entrepreneurs, Boeing, and Datalex, and supported by Enterprise Ireland, aims to drive the development of innovative Irish and international Start-Up companies in the aviation sector.

On 26 September 2017, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation launched the BioExel accelerator to be based in NUI Galway to further augment and enhance the Irish MedTech Start-Up scene and attract global talent to the Galway region.

Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development announced the establishment of the NDRC@ArcLabs Start-up Accelerator programme, supported by Enterprise Ireland on 1 December 2017, to further enhance the start-up ecosystem within Ireland.

The investors and supporters of NDRC@ArcLabs, in addition to EI, include Suir Valley Ventures, Bank of Ireland Seed and Early Stage Equity Fund, South East BIC, and Local Authorities of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford, Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Centres. There are 10 slots available within the 'NDRC@ArcLabs' Accelerator Programme with the first cohort to commence in early 2018.

**Action 99:** Support the creation of 500 new jobs in 2017 and continue to help maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprises sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.

**Ongoing Measure:** Invest in training and skills development interventions in support of building and improving the skills-base amongst local enterprises and those seeking employment. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

The target of 500 newly created jobs was achieved with Údarás na Gaeltachta creating 630 new jobs in 2017. Údarás approved funding in support of the implementation of its training and skills development programme during 2017. The multi-faceted programme contains targeted measures focusing on local enterprise and economic development interventions. This investment will improve skills and qualifications and will assist in the maintenance of the employment base; the creation of new enterprises and additional employment.

**Action 99:** Support the creation of 500 new jobs in 2017 and continue to help maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprises sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop advanced property solutions for new and existing innovative companies. (DCHG)

**Update:**

During 2017 Údarás na Gaeltachta approved a capital budget which prioritises facilities that require refurbishment for client companies who are in a development phase. These projects are at various stages: pre-planning, planning application (where required), tendering and construction.

## Supporting Jobs for Rural Communities

**Action 100:** Launch and implement the Action Plan for Rural Development, with over 200 actions across Government which will maximise the potential for jobs and economic and social progress in rural areas.

**Ongoing Measure:** Implement the Action Plan for Rural Development. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

*Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development* was launched on 23 January 2017. The Action Plan contains 276 actions for the delivery across Government, State agencies and other bodies over the next three years to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

The Action Plan states that progress reports will be published every six months and the first formal progress report was published in August 2017. The Report outlined the progress in relation to all the actions due for implementation in the first six-months of the Action Plan and showed that delivery was well on track. Of the 276 Actions in the Action Plan, 227 were either due for delivery in the first half of 2017, or highlighted activity taking place in the first half of 2017. 220 of these 227 actions were either completed on schedule or were in progress. A further seven actions due for delivery in the first half of 2017 were delayed. The next formal round of monitoring is now underway and a further progress report will be published early in 2018.

**Action 101:** Provide EU LEADER programme funding in support of the enterprise priorities identified in the Local Development Strategies produced by Local Action Groups in every county, including through focused investment in enterprise development and rural tourism.

**Ongoing Measure:** Put in place funding agreements with Local Action Groups in all rural areas in Ireland. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

Funding Agreements are now in place with 29 LEADER Local Action Groups covering all rural areas in Ireland. Almost 600 projects were approved for LEADER funding of over €16 million in 2017. The total public and private investment in these projects to approximately €30 million.

**Action 101:** Provide EU LEADER programme funding in support of the enterprise priorities identified in the Local Development Strategies produced by Local Action Groups in every county, including through focused investment in enterprise development and rural tourism.

**Ongoing Measure:** Provide targeted capacity building sessions with Local Action Groups to identify strategic opportunities. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

In addition to hosting three targeted capacity building events, a LEADER Forum was also hosted with LEADER stakeholders to explore areas where the programme could be improved and simplified. In response to suggestions at the Forum, DRCD identified 31 Actions to facilitate improved programme delivery and the majority of these have now been implemented.

## Enhancing Competitiveness

**Action 104:** The National Competitiveness Council's priority issues for sustainable competitiveness over the short to medium term will be brought to Government. Individual Government departments will respond and bring forward proposals as appropriate to enhance competitiveness. This work will be overseen by the relevant Cabinet Committees.

**Ongoing Measure:** Respond and bring forward appropriate proposals to address priority issues identified by the NCC to enhance competitiveness and productivity. (DoT)

**Update: Complete**

Priority issues and proposals identified by the NCC have been brought forward through the Cabinet Committee A. This included Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2017 report which focused on policy challenges and recommendations to address both immediate and medium term competitiveness issues. The report was published in December 2017

**Action 105:** Implement the Cost of Motor Insurance Action Plan.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

The relevant Government Departments and Agencies are continuing to implement the recommendations in the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance. The recommendations in the Report's Action Plan have detailed timelines for implementation.

There is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations and four such updates have been published on the Department's website.

The fourth quarterly update contains a summary from each Department/Agency outlining the key achievements/work completed during 2017 overall in respect of implementing the Report's recommendations.

## Improving the ease of doing business

**Action 106:** Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017.

**Ongoing Measure: Complete**

Provide regular updates through the appropriate Cabinet Committee structures on progress by all Departments to achieving compliance with the requirement of making all licensing and authorisation procedures available online by November 2017. (DBEI)

**Update:** Throughout 2017, DBEI brought issues surrounding compliance of Action 106 to the attention of Cabinet Committee A via the Action Plan for Jobs mechanism.

**Action 111:** Work to increase recognition among businesses of the value of sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility in boosting employment, fostering social cohesion and protecting the environment, in particular through the Corporate Social Responsibility Stakeholder Forum.

**Ongoing Measure:** Roll out a regional campaign to promote the Corporate Social Responsibility SME online Tool. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The CSR on-line tool for SMEs was launched by Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection in December 2016. The SME tool has been promoted via the csrhub.ie, Twitter, CSR ezine, CSR Stakeholder Forum and its working groups. Information about the CSR online tool for SMEs has also been included in Ministerial speeches and in presentations given by CSR Ambassadors. The CSR Stakeholder Forum held its most recent meeting in Doolin, Co. Clare, which included an SME focused event to raise awareness of the benefits of CSR for the SME sector as well as the SME Online Tool.

**Action 111:** Work to increase recognition among businesses of the value of sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility in boosting employment, fostering social cohesion and protecting the environment, in particular through the Corporate Social Responsibility Stakeholder Forum.

**Ongoing Measure:** Publish the quarterly e-zine on Corporate Social Responsibility starting in Q1 2017. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

The Ezine is part of a wider social media initiative operated by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the CSR Stakeholder Forum, aimed at increasing awareness of the competitiveness value of CSR to business and for society as a whole.

During 2017, the Ezine, which is free to subscribe to online, was published on a quarterly basis. In addition to being available on CSRhub.ie, the ezine was also issued to members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum and posted to @csrhubirl and the DBEI's Twitter account. During 2017, the newsletter was also made available at various events, including the SME CSR event arranged in conjunction with the CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting in Doolin, Co Clare. The next edition will be published in March 2018.

## Realising the Digital Economy Opportunities

**Action 114:** Establish Ireland as a European leader in the digital economy by ensuring a coordinated whole of Government approach to pursuing the economic opportunities.

**Ongoing Measure:** Progress the specific enterprise opportunities arising from the digital economy. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

DBEI has completed a study on the 'Digitalisation of the Manufacturing Sector and the Policy Implications in Ireland'. This study was guided by a Steering Group made up of firm representatives across a mix of sectors, indigenous and foreign-owned firms, academics and agencies of DBEI. The study highlights that there is a vast range of opportunities across both indigenous and multinational manufacturing firms in Ireland arising from adoption of digital technologies. However, the study also indicates a series of challenges that need to be addressed in order to realise these opportunities. It is considered that it is a necessity for firms in the Irish manufacturing base to digitally transform for Ireland to remain globally competitive in this sector and the State has a role to play in driving this digital transformation. Key areas in which action are required include awareness raising regarding the applications and value of digitalisation, standards development, skills for deployment of digital applications, and building of digital capabilities in firms.

**Action 116:** Develop proposals in consultation with other stakeholders on the establishment of unique business identifiers and an access and authentication portal which will follow a prototype Government Digital Service Access Gateway to facilitate the development of business in Ireland by ensuring Ireland is well placed to actively participate in the developing European Digital Single Market.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action (DPER)

**Update: Complete**

The OGCI is working with the Government Strategic Communications Unit on the implementation of the Digital Service Access Gateway service, gov.ie. The group tasked by Civil Service Management Board to develop options for business identification continues to meet. The focus is on problem scoping and on identifying the benefits and potential nature of a business identifier. OGCI is actively involved in the EU discussions in this area, including the Digital Single Market plan, the E-Government Action Plan, and the eIDAS and Single Digital Gateway initiatives.

**Action 118:** Roll out a further 1,000 Trading Online Vouchers through the LEOs and identify further initiatives to enable businesses to maximise the opportunities of the digital economy and trading online in international markets.

**Ongoing Measure:** Administer and drive the rollout of a further 1,000 Trading Online Vouchers to assist small businesses to trade online. (DCCAE)

**Update: Complete**

Preliminary end of year figures indicate that the target for 2017 has been exceeded with 1,189 businesses successfully applying for a trading online voucher in 2017.

## Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy

**Action 129:** Deliver policy supports to develop Ireland's indigenous renewable energy and further decrease our dependence on imported fossil fuels, including new support schemes for heat and electricity.

**Ongoing Measure:** Continue the initial development of the Ocean Power Innovation Network in 2017 to build an international collaboration network for Ocean Energy with Scotland and Northern Ireland. (DCCAIE)

**Update:** SEAI and partners from Scotland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands have applied for Interreg funding to extend the network and opportunities further throughout Europe.

**Action 129:** Deliver policy supports to develop Ireland's indigenous renewable energy and further decrease our dependence on imported fossil fuels, including new support schemes for heat and electricity.

**Ongoing Measure:** Continue the development of Ireland's smart grid value proposition. (DCCAIE)

**Update:** All of the parties are engaging under the national Smart Grid Implementation Group with the close out of the work plan for 2017 and preparation for 2018 to promote Ireland as a Smart Grid test bed and encourage test bed pilot project. The group will continue the review of the Smart Grid Roadmap to 2050 with a view to complete this in 2018.

## Addressing New Labour Market Challenges

**Action 131:** Develop and reform the State's public employment services to help ensure that the number of people on the Live Register is reduced as the economy recovers and the labour market responds flexibly and efficiently to employment growth. Under Pathways to Work 2016-2020, this will include consolidation of previous reforms as well as continued prioritisation of long-term unemployed and young unemployed people; as well as expansion of services to currently inactive working age adults with a capacity and a desire to work, that will include lone parents, qualified adults and people with a disability.

**Ongoing Measure:** Consolidate previous reforms and continue prioritisation of long-term unemployed and young unemployed people; as well as expanding services to currently inactive working age adults with a capacity and a desire to work, that will include lone parents, qualified adults and people with a disability. (DEASP)

**Update: Complete**

The Action Plan for Jobless Households (APJH) was published in September. It focuses on improving employment rates of households with children – both the traditional 'nuclear' family and the lone parent family. A number of key policy initiatives/actions to achieve that goal are identified; most notably:

- Extend active engagement with the Intreo employment service to additional groups of economically inactive working age adults.
- Improve incentives and remove barriers for people transitioning from welfare to employment.
- Pilot a family focused employment service/case management approach in five geographical areas.

While led by the employment service, this intervention would also allow for the involvement of other public services (or referral to such services) where the engagement process identified wider social issues in the household that affected its members' employment prospects. Work is now proceeding on each of these strands. Measures addressing incentives issues were included in Budget 2018, including changes to income disregards for recipients of certain welfare payments. The pilot family approach will be implemented in five locations in Q2 2018.

**Action 134:** Implement the Government's Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DJE)

**Update: Complete**

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group is responsible for overseeing and monitoring implementation of the Strategy and is independently chaired by Mr. Fergus Finlay. The first report of the chair was published in February 2017.

The Implementation Group had six meetings in 2017, focussing on the following themes and areas of activity:

- Implementation of the Make Work Pay Report;
- Alternative paths to employment and special public service competitions, including a presentation by the Public Appointments Service
- Supporting persons with disabilities in transitioning from school, higher education and training to employment;
- Engaging employers

The second Report will be published in early 2018.

**Action 135:** Implement the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which, as the primary social inclusion programme of Government, will have a strong focus on community activation, social inclusion and community development, while also focusing on those hardest to reach.

**Ongoing Measure:** Address any issues affecting programme implementation that emerge at the 2016 end of year and/or 2017 mid-year review stage to ensure the programme is reaching its target groups. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

SICAP is meeting, and regularly exceeding, all its targets and working effectively with its target groups.

**Action 135:** Implement the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which, as the primary social inclusion programme of Government, will have a strong focus on community activation, social inclusion and community development, while also focusing on those hardest to reach.

**Ongoing Measure:** Consult with key Departments and agencies i.e. Department of Social Protection, Department of Education and Skills etc. to agree and manage referral protocols. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

DHPLG consults with key Departments on an ongoing basis to agree and manage referral protocols.

**Action 136:** Through the Dormant Account Funds, support disadvantaged groups in rural and urban communities through measures that assist their access to employment.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DRCD)

**Update: Complete**

A new Disbursement Scheme for 2017-2019, which set out the objectives to be achieved by making disbursement from the Dormant Accounts Fund, was approved by Government on the 26 April 2017. The Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2017 was subsequently adopted by the Minister for Rural and Community Development in July 2017. The Action Plan contains details of the specific programmes and projects which will be delivered across Government Departments with the aid of Dormant Accounts funding.

The Department this year also ran a Social Enterprise measure with the support of Dormant Accounts funding. Projects totaling €1.65m have been approved under the measure which will support social enterprises that provide services to or employment opportunities for, disadvantaged people, particularly in rural areas.

DRCD has also been liaising on an ongoing basis with other Government Departments in relation to the continued rollout of the suite of projects and programmes set out in the Action Plan.

## Strengthening Clusters

### Tourism

**Action 151:** Develop the impact of investment in the Irish arts sector both at home and abroad to identify new markets for Irish work, and build awareness of the range and quality of work produced by Irish artists and working with other State bodies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support up to 300 events worldwide through Culture Ireland in 2017, generating the equivalent of up to 200 full-time jobs for Irish artists and art organisations abroad. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

In 2017, Culture Ireland created 475 full time jobs through the presentation of 450 Culture Ireland supported events presented in over 50 countries by Irish artists. A total of 169 presenters and programmers were supported to visit Ireland and experience Irish arts performing at home, generating international touring contracts for Irish artists. Culture Ireland's international profile focus is ongoing with a special focus on Great Britain for 2018.

**Action 151:** Develop the impact of investment in the Irish arts sector both at home and abroad to identify new markets for Irish work, and build awareness of the range and quality of work produced by Irish artists and working with other State bodies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Support up to 300 individuals and over 500 organisations across a wide range of arts venues, festivals, arts organisations and touring initiatives around Ireland in 2017. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

The Arts Council's festival and events scheme opened for applications including both the multi-disciplinary festivals and single artform festivals during 2017. The Council provided supports to 561 individual artists and 499 Arts Organisations, excluding Aosdána. Delivery of these supports is ongoing.

**Action 151:** Develop the impact of investment in the Irish arts sector both at home and abroad to identify new markets for Irish work, and build awareness of the range and quality of work produced by Irish artists and working with other State bodies.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop cultural digitisation initiatives to enhance Ireland's roots tourism offering. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

A Genealogy Working Group has been established with DCHG, NLI and NAI to develop an updated National Genealogy Policy. DCHG continues to work with the GRO and has made historical GRO records available on the [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie) website since 2016. There were 720,000 online visitors to the Irish genealogy website to the end of December 2017.

In October, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht approved over €2 million for a number of digitisation projects by National Cultural Institutions and other cultural organisations.

**Action 152:** Work with Fáilte Ireland, the OPW and other strategic partners to develop heritage tourism initiatives, based on Ireland's built and natural heritage and the enhanced management and presentation of collections held by the National Cultural Institutions and other bodies, to contribute to the implementation of the growth objectives set out in People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025.

**Ongoing Measure:** Invest in construction/refurbishment works at the National Gallery, National Library, the National Archives, and Cork Event Centre. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

The National Gallery historical wings reopened in June 2017 after extensive refurbishment.

Phase one of the National Library of Ireland development plan and the National Archives Warehouse development plan are due to go to tender shortly.

Cork City Council are continuing to work with their preferred bidder to progress Cork Event Centre. Over the year, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht launched and announced a number of grant awards under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018. The total amount invested so far under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is over €10.2m supporting 134 arts facilities across the country.

**Action 152:** Work with Fáilte Ireland, the OPW and other strategic partners to develop heritage tourism initiatives, based on Ireland's built and natural heritage and the enhanced management and presentation of collections held by the National Cultural Institutions and other bodies, to contribute to the implementation of the growth objectives set out in People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025.

**Ongoing Measure:** Collaborate with the relevant Departments and agencies to ensure that National Parks, Nature Reserves, National Monuments and historic buildings contribute as signature experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East routes. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

A Formal Strategic partnership was entered into with Fáilte Ireland and OPW to develop key national monuments located along Ireland's Ancient East Routes covering the period up to 2022.

Ongoing funding of historic buildings is through various grant initiatives operated by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, including the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Structures at Risk Fund (SRF), and through the Heritage Council. It is anticipated more than 560 heritage projects nationwide will share in a €4.8 million investment package as part of the BHIS and

SRF Funding framework for 2017. The funding will allow for the conservation and repair of protected structures across the country and it is expected the schemes will leverage more than €11 million in private funds and will generate significant employment in the conservation and construction industries.

The Department (NPWS) launched a formal Strategic Partnership with Fáilte Ireland with the aim of enhancing the tourism offering at Ireland's National Parks. As part of this partnership the Department has commissioned the production of a Tourism Interpretation Masterplan for all six National Parks, Coole Park, and a Visitor Management Plan for Glenveagh National Park.

Work on the Tourism Masterplan is advanced with workshops having already been held at six of the seven locations covered. A strategy will be put in place for the phased improvement of visitor centres and facilities in the parks ensuring there is a consistency of approach, style and theme throughout. This will feed into the development of signature experiences for Fáilte Ireland's two brand propositions, The Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East. The completed final report is due to be finalised by Q1 2018.

The Glenveagh Visitor Management Plan has been advertised and will be awarded shortly.

**Action 152:** Work with Fáilte Ireland, the OPW and other strategic partners to develop heritage tourism initiatives, based on Ireland's built and natural heritage and the enhanced management and presentation of collections held by the National Cultural Institutions and other bodies, to contribute to the implementation of the growth objectives set out in People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025.

**Ongoing Measure:** Develop and promote Blueways (multi-purpose activity trails on or beside water) on the Royal, Grand and Barrow Canals and on the Shannon Navigation to expand the recreational and tourism offering. (DCHG)

**Update: Complete**

Work is continuing on Royal Canal Blueway which will provide 22km of Blueway around Mullingar, 140km of walking from McNeed's Bridge in Westmeath to Richmond Harbour in Longford, along with 60km of cycling. Infrastructural requirements are currently being assessed and capacity building workshops are being organised prior to formally launching the Blueway. Recreational Hubs in Mullingar and Richmond Harbour are also being established as part of the Blueway. 'Capacity building' among the private sector, public sector and the community and voluntary sectors will take place in Q1 2018 with the Blueway projected to be launched before Summer 2018.

The Lough Allen Board Walk was completed and opened in August 2017

Infrastructure has been put in place along Lough Derg for the establishment of a canoe trail. Work is also on-going in association with the Local Authorities, with the assistance of REDZ funding, for the development of a Lough Derg Blueway.

Waterways Ireland is progressing the development of a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Fáilte Ireland to develop heritage and tourism marketing initiatives on and along the inland navigable waterways. The initiatives will centre on the visitor destination experiences of Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin – A Breath of Fresh Air and will tell the stories of the heritage of the waterways and how they have developed through time.

The Dublin Docklands team are actively working with private sector organisations, community and voluntary organisations and other public sector agencies in order to market and promote the docks area and the urban canals as a 'must place to visit'. A number of capital projects are also at feasibility stage including a 'floating market', the 'dock mile' and the '12th to 12th lock cycle' route – a 42km looped cycle route encompassing the Royal and Grand Canals with Grand Canal Dock at the centre. All projects will be further developed in 2018.

## Design

**Action 157:** Maximise the potential of the design sector to drive innovation and competitiveness.

**Ongoing Measure:** Promote Irish design internationally through activities such as trade fairs and missions in order to develop export opportunities and enhance Ireland's international reputation for design. (DBEI)

**Update: Complete**

In early 2017 the Executive and Board of Enterprise Ireland approved eight significant recommendations which focus on existing financial supports and programmes to further demonstrate its commitment to supporting design in EI's client companies. EI is currently working to embed these recommendations. Key recent EI developments include:

- Supports for design being included in Enterprise Ireland's offer. The new RD&I offer includes reference to support for "Design" throughout the application documentation.
- EI is developing its staff to support the design agenda. In September, EI staff participated in a Design focused workshop at which the key note speaker Russell Beck focused on the role design will play in future proofing jobs and the impact this will have on EI's clients who embrace a design driven agenda.
- EI also participated in the UXDX\* Conference held in Dublin from the 4 – 7 October. This conference targeting IT product-management to support start-ups and established enterprises to design and build better products more quickly was attended by over 800 national and international delegates. Delegates included designers, developers, product managers, chief technology officers and chief executives. EI also held a Pilot workshop in November on "*How to use Design to improve your Customer Experience*". The pilot will be used to develop a series of similar workshops to be rolled out in 2018.
- Other activities during the year included: EI's support of Showcase, Ireland's International Creative Expo returned to the RDS in January 2017. EI approved a series of recommendations to better support Design Driven Innovation in both EI and LEO client companies and has been supporting the implementation plan to embed these plans operationally within EI.

In addition, a new Inward Buyer event targeting the Museum & visitor attraction sector was held in June 2017 involving 20 buyers from the UK, targeted EU markets, and the USA - promoting the very best of Irish Design. The event received positive feedback from participants.

(\*UXDX: User eXperience (UX), eXperience Design (XD) and Developer eXperience (DX))

## Construction and Housing

**Action 159:** Implement Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, providing monthly updates on activity levels and quarterly progress reports.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DHPLG)

**Update: Complete**

The implementation of **Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness**, is overseen by Cabinet Committee D, chaired by the Taoiseach. Monthly Housing Activity Reports are in place and clearly show that the key indicators of housing activity (i.e. planning permissions,

commencement notices and ESB connections to the National Grid) all point to an increase in housing supply, albeit from a very low base. Quarterly Progress Reports are also published outlining the key steps taken by relevant Departments, Agencies, Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in fulfilment of their commitments against individual actions. Both sets of reports (monthly and quarterly) are available on the dedicated website [www.rebuildingireland.ie](http://www.rebuildingireland.ie) established to keep the public informed of key developments.

**Action 160:** Progress funding the delivery of 20,000 residential units, on a commercial basis and subject to commercial viability, by the end of 2020.

**Ongoing Measure:** As per headline action. (DoF)

**Update: Complete**

Section 10 of the NAMA Act requires NAMA to obtain the best achievable financial return for the State, deal expeditiously with the assets acquired by it and protect or otherwise enhance the value of those assets. In line with this, NAMA is working with debtors and receivers to identify, where commercially feasible, opportunities to bring forward new residential development. In this respect, NAMA aims to facilitate the delivery, through the provision of funding and otherwise, of up to 20,000 new residential units in Ireland by 2020, subject to commercial feasibility.

Since 2014, NAMA has funded the construction of an estimated 7,200 new residential units in Ireland on residential development land securing its loan portfolio. As at end-December 2017 an additional c.2,500 units were currently under construction by NAMA-funded developers and receivers. Planning permission has been granted for an estimated additional 7,000 units and planning applications have been lodged, or will be lodged within 12 months, for an additional c.8,500 units.

## Glossary of Terms

<b>APJ</b>	Action Plan for Jobs	<b>DTTAS</b>	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
<b>BAI</b>	Broadcasting Authority of Ireland	<b>DRCD</b>	Department of Rural and Community Development
<b>BIM</b>	Bord Iascaigh Mhara	<b>EGFSN</b>	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
<b>CIF</b>	Construction Industry Federation	<b>EI</b>	Enterprise Ireland
<b>COSME</b>	EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs	<b>ERC</b>	European Research Council
<b>CRO</b>	Credit Review Office	<b>ETB</b>	Education and Training Board
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility	<b>ETBI</b>	Education and Training Boards Ireland
<b>Daa</b>	Dublin Airport Authority	<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>DAFM</b>	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>DBEI</b>	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation	<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>DCCAIE</b>	Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment	<b>FP7</b>	Framework Programme 7
<b>DCHG</b>	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	<b>GNP</b>	Gross National Product
<b>DCCoI</b>	Design and Craft Council of Ireland	<b>GRO</b>	General Register Office
<b>DCYA</b>	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	<b>HEA</b>	Higher Education Authority
<b>DEASP</b>	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>DES</b>	Department of Education and Skills	<b>HICP</b>	Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	<b>HIHI</b>	Health Innovation Hub Ireland
<b>DHPLG</b>	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	<b>HPRA</b>	Health Products Regulatory Authority
<b>DoF</b>	Department of Finance	<b>HPSU</b>	High Potential Start-Ups
<b>DJE</b>	Department of Justice and Equality	<b>HRB</b>	Health Research Board
<b>DoH</b>	Department of Health	<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>DoD</b>	Department of Defence	<b>IDA</b>	IDA Ireland
<b>DPER</b>	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	<b>IFB</b>	Irish Film Board
		<b>IFS</b>	Irish Financial Services
		<b>IFSC</b>	International Financial Services Centre
		<b>IP</b>	Intellectual Property
		<b>IRC</b>	Irish Research Council
		<b>IRDG</b>	Industry Research and Development group

<b>ISIF</b>	Ireland Strategic Investment Fund	<b>Q</b>	Quarter
<b>ITI</b>	InterTrade Ireland	<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>IUA</b>	Irish Universities Association	<b>RDI</b>	Research, development and innovation
<b>KDB</b>	Knowledge Development Box	<b>RSF</b>	Regional Skills Fora
<b>KTI</b>	Knowledge Transfer Ireland	<b>SBCI</b>	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland
<b>LAs</b>	Local Authorities	<b>SBIR</b>	Small Business Innovation Research
<b>LEADER</b>	Liaisons entre actions de developpement de l'économie rurale	<b>SEAI</b>	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
<b>LEO/s</b>	Local Enterprise Office/s	<b>SFI</b>	Science Foundation Ireland
<b>LGMA</b>	Local Government Management Agency	<b>SFSI</b>	Sustainable Food Systems Ireland
<b>LPC</b>	Low Pay Commission	<b>SI</b>	Statutory Instrument
<b>Mbps</b>	Megabytes per second	<b>SICAP</b>	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
<b>NAI</b>	National Archives of Ireland	<b>SLMRU</b>	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
<b>NAMA</b>	National Asset Management Agency	<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprise
<b>NCC</b>	National Competitiveness Council	<b>SOLAS</b>	An tSeribhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
<b>NCCA</b>	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
<b>NCDAF</b>	National Civil Aviation Development Forum	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>NLI</b>	National Library of Ireland	<b>naG</b>	Údaras na Gaeltachta
<b>NPF</b>	National Planning Framework	<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax
<b>NSAI</b>	National Standards Authority of Ireland	<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>NSC</b>	National Skills Council	<b>WRC</b>	Workplace Relations Commission
<b>NTMA</b>	National Treasury Management Agency	<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development		
<b>OGCIO</b>	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer		
<b>OGP</b>	Office of Government Procurement		
<b>OPW</b>	Office of Public Works		
<b>PAYE</b>	Pay As You Earn		
<b>PEIL</b>	Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning		
<b>PPP</b>	Public Private Partnership		







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