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Action Plan for Jobs 2015
First Progress Report

Commentary

This is the first report of 2015 from the Monitoring Committee established by Government to monitor and drive implementation of the measures contained in the *Action Plan for Jobs 2015*. It outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the first quarter of 2015. The Monitoring Committee comprises representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach, the Office of the Tánaiste, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The high-level goal of the Action Plan for Jobs, first introduced in 2012, is to create the environment where the number of people at work will have increased by 100,000 by 2016 (from 2012 base). It also contributes to the medium-term goal of having 2.1 million people in employment by 2018.

The Government published the fourth in its multi-annual *Action Plan for Jobs* series in January this year. This Plan, which contains 382 actions to be implemented in 2015 by all 16 Government Departments and by 46 agencies under the remit of these Departments, will 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 900 actions already implemented under *Action Plan for Jobs 2012, 2013 and 2014* cumulatively, and reported on by the Monitoring Committee in its previous quarterly reports (see www.djei.ie).

The latest official statistics on employment and unemployment in Ireland (from CSO QNHS Quarter 4 2014) show that total employment increased by 29,100 in 2014 bringing total employment to 1.938 million (seasonally adjusted 1.927 million). There was an increase in full time employment of 39,600 in the year and a decrease in part-time employment of 10,500. This points to a significant strengthening of the labour market and increased confidence on the part of employers in their recruitment. Over the period since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs at the beginning of 2012, 90,000 net additional jobs have been created in the Irish economy. The rate of unemployment (using the CSO Standardised Unemployment Rate) was 10.0% in March 2015, down from a high of 15.1% in February 2012.

Actions due in Quarter 1

In the first quarter of 2015, Departments and agencies were to deliver 113 measures relating to 85 of the Action Plan's 382 actions. 101 of the measures due in Quarter 1 of 2015 have been delivered, giving a completion rate of 89%.

In delivering 101 first quarter measures under the Plan, the Government has, for example:

As part of Disruptive Reform on National Talent Drive

- Progressed the development of a new model of apprenticeship training in Ireland, in partnership with industry, through a Call for Proposals from industry and education providers – proposals will now be evaluated and recommendations made to the Minister for Education and Skills.
- Completed the Call for Proposals under Springboard 2015 and commenced evaluation of the proposals under this programme as well as finalising programme design with the ICT sector to train 240 trainees across four Skillnets networks, the delivery of which is now being rolled out.
- Provided additional Employment Permits in areas of critical skills needs, including ICT skills. The total number of permits issued to end Q1 2015 (1,323) shows a 19% increase over the same quarter in 2014 (1,104). The total number of ICT permits issued to end Q1 2015 was 807 compared to 472 for Q1 2014, which represents a 71% increase over last year. In all, 61% of the total permits issued in Q1 2015 were in respect of ICT professionals and can be attributed to the success of the employment permits system in helping to fill key ICT shortages in the Irish labour market.

As part of Disruptive Reform on Delivering Regional Potential

- Committed to the completion of Regional Enterprise Strategies (or Regional Action Plans for Jobs) for each of 8 regions. Regional strategies, which will be based on the strengths and enterprise assets of each region, will be completed for six regions by mid-2015. The remaining strategies (for Dublin and Mid-East) will be completed in the second half of the year.
- In the context of the Regional Enterprise Strategies under development, announced a €150 million investment, over 5 years, through IDA Ireland, to support the development of property solutions at regional level, to support the achievement of targets set out in IDA Ireland's new strategy.
- In the context of the Regional Enterprise Strategies under development, announced investment of up to €100 million, over 5 years, through Enterprise Ireland, to support the development of local and microenterprises and SMEs through targeted initiatives at regional level.

As part of Disruptive Reform in the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

- Launched the first set of lending products under the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland making available €400 million in lending for SMEs through agreements signed with AIB and Bank of Ireland. First loans have been available since 9 March 2015.

As part of Disruptive Reform on National Health Innovation Hub

- Issued a Call for Proposals for the hosting of the National Health Innovation Hub to facilitate clinicians, hospitals, healthcare companies, researchers and other

innovators to work together for the benefit of patients and the healthcare system, whilst also supporting the growth of the lifesciences and other relevant sectors in Ireland. A decision on the hosting of the Hub is scheduled for Q3.

As part of Disruptive Reform on Big Data

- Progressed a number of measures to strengthen the resources of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC) including the decision to establish a Dublin office for the OPPC as well as establishing an Inter-Departmental Committee to ensure a coordinated approach across Government to data protection issues and the establishment of a forum for dialogue with industry and civil society on these issues.

As part of Disruptive Reform Local Enterprise Offices

- Put in place across each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) a Local Enterprise Development Plan setting out specific targets for business start-up levels, business expansions, jobs created and jobs sustained and initiatives to support enterprise and job creation in each area.
- Strengthened the resources of individual LEOs through a graduate placement programme providing increased capacity to strengthen customer service and delivery of local enterprise plan targets and to give the graduates an opportunity to gain valuable, hands-on experience in the area of enterprise development.
- Commenced preparations for the 2015 Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) competition building on the success of the 2014 competition and drawing lessons from an evaluation of the impacts and outcomes of that competition.

And more broadly, in Q1 Government has for example:

- Announced a number of enhancements to the Micro-enterprise Loan Fund through Microfinance Ireland (MFI) including removing the requirement on micro-enterprises to have a bank refusal before applying for an MFI loan, allowing the Board of MFI greater flexibility to adapt to market changes, introducing an automatic referral system to MFI when banks decline loans to micro-enterprises and developing a renewed and expanded marketing and communications strategy. The enhancements are made on foot of a review of MFI which was completed in Q1.
- Increased the number of places for young people through JobsPlus (financial incentive to employers to recruit from the Live Register) through a dedicated JobsPlus Youth scheme. By reducing the qualifying period of unemployment for persons under 25 from 12 months to 4 months, support will be provided for an additional 1,500 young people through JobsPlus Youth in the first year of its implementation.
- Published a new 5 year strategy by IDA Ireland setting out challenging goals for foreign direct investment building on the existing strong base of FDI in the country. The strategy sets out actions that will be taken to deliver a total of 80,000 gross new jobs in the

economy by 2019 and a net increase in employment by IDA supported companies of 35,000 over the period.

- Supported a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works 3, promoting market outlets for food start-up companies. Food Works 3 is supporting 18 projects from over 125 applications. Through the Food Academy initiative, support is being provided to an additional 29 companies to develop routes to market based on a partnership with the retail sector.
- Launched Calls through a number of programmes supporting research and innovation across all sectors of the Irish economy including the 2015 Irish Research Council (IRC) Call under its Enterprise Partnership Scheme.
- Established a network of the Enterprise Ireland supported Technology Gateways across the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector to ensure the easy identification and maximum utilisation of the expertise within each of the Gateways.
- Established an expert group to examine and report on recommendations to increase foreign and domestic investment in Ireland's film and TV sound stage studio infrastructure in the face of growing demand for audiovisual content across multiple platforms. The expert group has commenced deliberations and is likely to produce a proposal for Government consideration in the coming months.
- Launched a Strategy for the International Financial Services Sector setting out actions to create a net additional 10,000 jobs in the sector nationally by 2020. The Strategy includes actions to enhance the competitiveness of the Irish IFS sector including in the areas of skills, innovation, physical infrastructure, and regulation and actions to leverage Ireland's ICT strengths to become a global leader in "fintech".
- In the context of 2015 Year of Design (ID 2015), supported a range of design-led initiatives across the regions through a Design Innovation Fund exploring, promoting and celebrating Irish design and designers through events and activities. The first call has led to over 120 projects being allocated funding and a second call is now underway.

However, 12 of the 113 Q1 measures outlined in the Plan have not been delivered on schedule:

- *Devise and implement a programme around a single website portal, through industry and agencies working together, to attract international technical talent; Complete signing and issue request for tenders – Action 5.* Due to design issues and resource constraints, the Request for Tender document will not be published until early in Q2 2015.
- *Continue implementation of the British-Irish Visa Scheme allowing for travel to and around the Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK, for tourism and business*

purposes, on a single visa; In conjunction with the UK, carry out formal joint review of Phase I of the Scheme - Action 25. The evaluation of the Scheme was scheduled to take place following three months of operation in China and India. The rollout to India was delayed until February 2015 due to the need to resolve some technical issues with the deployment to China. Consequently, the evaluation has been delayed but will take place over the coming months. Further deployment will be agreed with the UK in tandem with the evaluation, thereby keeping the overall project on track.

- *Establish the Low Pay Commission (LPC), to undertake analysis and make a recommendation on the appropriate level of the national minimum wage; Publish legislation to provide for establishment of LPC on a statutory basis – Action 30.* Pre-legislative scrutiny on the Draft Scheme of the Bill took place on 24 March and a report from the Joint Oireachtas Committee is awaited. The Bill will be published in Q2 with a view to enactment later in the Quarter.
- *Develop and publish a suite of Regional Enterprise Strategies, based on consultation with key stakeholders at regional level and on the analysis of the strengths of each region, commencing with the publication of strategies for the Midlands and South East regions. The strategies will include a series of specific actions and targets for delivery by a range of public bodies to support enterprise growth and job creation in the regions and will complement the statutory Plans to be developed as part of Local Government reform; Publish Enterprise Strategy for the Midlands region - Action 34.* Significant progress has been made in preparing an Action Plan for Jobs for the Midlands, however, further consultation with stakeholders is required to ensure that the Plan fully maximises the potential for collaboration across the region. The Action Plan for the Midlands will be published in Q2.
- *Following the passing of the appropriate primary legislation implement and promote the new Credit Guarantee Scheme; Primary Legislation Enacted - Action 106.* The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) is working with the Office of the Attorney General on the drafting of the Bill to address legal issues raised.
- *Develop/procure a new employer vacancy and job-matching system - Action 220.* The tender evaluation process is now complete, and a decision on procurement will be made shortly.
- *Streamline the application procedures for Fire Safety Certificates and Disability Access Certificates as required under the Building Control Regulations; Prepare and publish amendment to Building Control Regulations - Action 235.* Draft amendment has been agreed with local authorities and will be published in April 2015.
- *Continue the implementation of actions outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation; Publish New Aviation Policy Statement - Action 265.* A National Aviation Policy is currently being finalised following an extensive consultation process and will be published later in 2015.

- *Publication of Technological University Bill* - Action 293. The Bill is currently at drafting stage and the aim now is to publish it in Q2.
- *Publish a detailed “Tourism Action Plan” to deliver initial actions required over the period 2015-2018 in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Tourism Policy Statement; Establish Tourism Leadership Group to oversee formulation and implementation of Tourism Strategy and Action Plan* - Action 316. The Tourism Policy Statement was officially launched by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport on 23 March. Arrangements are underway for the establishment of the new Tourism Leadership Group, and the details will be announced as soon as possible.
- *As part of the implementation of Construction 2020, develop proposals to bring to Government on thermal efficiency performance and consequential improvements: Q1 measures are to establish working group and invite public comment on the feasibility and impact of setting minimum thermal efficiency performance standards in properties offered for rent or lease in the residential and commercial sectors; and examine feasibility and impact of introducing consequential improvement regulations* - Action 336. A public procurement process to appoint expert assistance to support the required analysis has concluded. Over the coming months DCENR, DECLG and SEAI will work with these experts to progress the action.
- *Present to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and relevant Departments and agencies the findings of EI and IDA’s engagement with manufacturing firms to assess the need for public investment in research infrastructure and activity to support high value manufacturing* - Action 353. Following an initial presentation to the Minister, it was agreed that a full business plan would be developed, led by IDA Ireland in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland. A specific area of focus is in Manufacturing 4.0 and Additive Manufacturing. Delivery of the action has been deferred to Q3 2015, in order to collate further industry intelligence to inform a detailed business case.

Quarter 1 Measures

2. Disruptive Reforms

2.1 National Talent Drive

Action 2: Implement Cycle 2 of the Strategic Dialogue process for 2015 under the higher education performance framework 2014-2016, including monitoring of performance metrics for skills including those identified by the EGFSN and achieve a step change in enterprise engagement in higher education institutions.

Q1 Measure: Review of performance compacts agreed for 2014-16. (HEA)

Update: Complete

Strategic Dialogue meetings were held with all institutions over the period Q4 2014 and Q1 2015. An aggregate report on performance in 2014 will be finalised later in the year based on reports from all HEIs. Performance funding allocations for 2016 will be decided in Q4 2015 based on performance against the compacts agreed with HEIs.

Action 3: Through strengthened collaboration between Government, the education system and industry and as part of the goal of making Ireland the most attractive location in the world for ICT skills and ability, implement the key actions from the ICT Skills Action Plan.

Q1 Measure: Research project reviewing impact of retention interventions focused on students in ICT programmes levels 6 to 9. (National Forum of Teaching and Learning)

Update: Complete

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education is funding a research project on ICT-specific learner support retention interventions. The project has commenced and is being led by the University of Limerick.

Action 5: Devise and implement a programme around a single website portal, through industry and agencies working together, to attract international technical talent.

Q1 Measure: Complete signing and issue request for tenders. (DJEI, EI/IDA)

Update: Delayed

A national programme has been approved and will be overseen by a delivery team, which includes representatives from key stakeholders - Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and industry - and is under the direction of a Steering Committee co-chaired by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Education and Skills.

Enterprise Ireland is undertaking a competitive tendering process, on behalf of all

stakeholders, seeking to enter into a contract with a single provider or consortium to meet its requirements for the design, development, operation and effective impact monitoring of this programme.

The objective of the proposed programme is:

- To promote top tech career opportunities and job openings in Ireland.
- To brand Ireland as a recognised, exciting, accessible and attractive “Relocation” destination for talented and experienced tech professionals (targeting both non-nationals and recent emigrants), to live and work.
- To be clearly focussed/targeted on the talented and experienced professionals, together with their families, that Ireland needs.
- To provide a single, focal point for information geared to make moving simple and less stressful for those talented professionals and their families.

Due to design issues and resource constraints the Request for Tender document will not be published until early in Q2 2015.

Action 6: Enhance collaboration and engagement between enterprise and higher education providers to roll out Level 8 ICT Conversion programmes as part of the Springboard 2015 programme.

Q1 Measure: Development of proposals by HEIs and employers. (HEIs, employers)

Update: Complete

The call for proposals for Springboard 2015 programmes has closed, and proposals are currently being evaluated.

Action 7: Enhance industry input to programme content, provision of work placements and promotion of ICT programmes as part of the implementation of Skillnets ICT Conversion Programmes.

Q1 Measure: Finalise programme design with ICT sector to train 240 trainees across four Skillnets networks. (Skillnets)

Update: Complete

The programme plan for 2015 has been completed with the four Skillnets Networks, and delivery is now being rolled out. Training plans and their associated budgets have been agreed and funding agreements with each network are in place.

Q1 Measure: Commence delivery of ICT Conversion Programmes. (Skillnets)

Update: Complete

Recruitment for the programmes planned is underway across all networks. Delivery of the programmes has commenced in Q1 2015 as planned, and the programme will continue to be rolled out in Q2.

Action 10: Maintain the level of awards under the IRC Employment Based Programme to provide opportunities for MSc and PhD students to undertake a 'co-educational' experience in research and skills development while employed and embedded in a company or public organisation.

Q1 Measure: Closing date for the 2015 Employment Based Programme (launch Q4 2014). (Irish Research Council)

Update: Complete

Q1 2015 was the closing date for the IRC Employment based Scheme and applications to the 2015 Scheme are now closed.

Action 11: Continue to implement the pilot phase of the Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice to provide graduates with opportunities to develop cross disciplinary skills in STEM based sectors with enhanced engagement by employers to progress graduates to employment.

Q1 Measure: Continue to implement pilot phase. (HEA, HEIs and DSP American Chamber of Commerce and Employers)

Update: Complete

Implementation of the pilot phase of the Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice is underway and evaluation is planned for later in 2015.

Action 13: Roll out the 2015 call for proposals for Springboard courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by EGFSN including ICT; the medtech and biotech sectors; skills for enterprise to trade internationally; international financial services (IFS); entrepreneurship and business startup.

Q1 Measure: Providers and employers make competitive proposals. (HEIs, Employers)

Update: Complete

The closing date for proposals has passed and evaluation of the proposals has begun.

Action 16: Develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy.

Q1 Measure: Receipt of response from industry and education and training providers to call for proposals. (DES, SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council, Employers and Education Bodies)

Update: Complete

31 March 2015 was the closing date for receipt of proposals.

Action 19: Promote and support development of the Skills to Work brand to increase awareness of re-skilling options for jobseekers.

Q1 Measure: Consider feasibility, funding and strategy for further round of development of the awareness campaign. (DES, DSP, D/Taoiseach, SOLAS, HEA, Skillnets)

Update: Complete

It has been agreed to continue with the Skills to Work awareness campaign. Confirmation of funding is awaited and a strategy for a further campaign will be finalised once a decision has been reached.

Action 21: Publish the national employer survey of higher and further education outcomes.

Q1 Measure: Finalisation and publication of survey results. (DES, HEA, SOLAS, QQI)

Update: Complete

The survey report is finalised and arrangements for publication in the coming week are being finalised.

Action 22: Progress curricular change in the context of the phasing in of the Junior Cycle reform with the new Specification for English being implemented from September 2014.

Q1 Measure: Development work and consultation on new Junior Cycle Irish and Business specifications. (DES)

Update: Complete

In February a proposal was presented to the Minister for Education and Skills by Dr. Travers,

entitled “Junior Cycle Reform: A Way Forward”. This has been accepted and work on the Junior Cycle will be guided by the Travers Proposal.

Action 25: Continue implementation of the British-Irish Visa Scheme allowing for travel to and around the Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK, for tourism and business purposes, on a single visa.

Q1 Measure: In conjunction with the UK, carry out formal joint review of Phase I of the Scheme. (D/Justice and Equality, (INIS))

Update: Delayed

The evaluation of the Scheme was scheduled to take place following three months of operation in China and India. The rollout to India was delayed until February 2015 due to the need to resolve some technical issues with the deployment to China. Therefore, the evaluation will take place over the coming months. So as to maintain momentum in the Scheme, further deployment will be agreed with the UK in tandem with the evaluation, thereby keeping the overall project on track.

Action 26: Continue to ensure employers are able to secure Employment Permits for the critical skills they need, including ICT skills.

Q1 Measure: Review Highly Skilled Employment List in Q2 and Q4 to ensure it is aligned with the ever-evolving labour market and review employment permit data on a quarterly basis to monitor progress made by the system in helping to fill key ICT shortages in the Irish labour market. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The employment permits system is closely aligned with the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and critical skills lists are reviewed twice each year and updated as required. The Employment Permits Section is currently engaged in a review of the critical skills list with relevant stakeholders. In 2014, 5,496 employment permits issued representing a year on year increase of 1,632 or 40%. 1,112 of this increase was due to taking health professionals into the employment permits system from the Department of Justice and Equality during 2014. The total number of permits issued to end Q1 2015 (1,323) shows an increase over the same quarter 2014 (1,104) which equates to a 19% increase in the numbers of permits issued. The total number of ICT permits issued to end Q1 2015 was 807 compared to 472 for Q1 2014, which represents a 71% increase over last year. In all, 61% of the total permits issued in Q1 2015 were in respect of ICT professionals and can be attributed to the success of the employment permits system in helping to fill key ICT shortages in the Irish labour market.

Action 30: Establish the Low Pay Commission (LPC), to undertake analysis and make a recommendation on the appropriate level of the national minimum wage.

Q1 Measure: Establish the LPC on an interim basis and commence analytical work. (DJEI, Low Pay Commission)

Update: Complete

The establishment of this new body was a key commitment in the Statement of Priorities agreed by the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste last year. The new Low Pay Commission was officially launched on 26 February last by the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Ministers Bruton and Nash, and held its first meeting after the official launch. The independent body is now beginning its work with a view to advising the Government on the appropriate rate of the National Minimum Wage. The Commission has initiated a 2015 public consultation process, with a deadline for submissions of 13 April. It is expected to submit its first report to Government by the middle of July.

The Commission will take an evidence-based approach to the setting of the minimum wage. It will examine existing data, commission new research if necessary and consult directly with workers and employers in order to decide on what the National Minimum Wage should be. It is intended that the Low Pay Commission will examine the rate of the minimum wage on an annual basis from now on.

Q1 Measure: Publish legislation to provide for establishment of LPC on a statutory basis. (DJEI)

Update: Delayed

Pre-Legislative scrutiny on the Draft Scheme of Bill took place on 24 March. The Joint Oireachtas Committee Report was received, and the Bill will be submitted to Government on 6 May, to be published in Q2 with a view to enactment in Q2.

Action 31: Conduct a study on the prevalence of zero hour contracts (ZHC) and low hour contracts (contracts of 8 hours or less per week (LHC)) among Irish employers and their impact on employees, and make policy recommendations to Government.

Q1 Measure: Award contract for the conduct of the ZHC/LHC Study and commence study. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The University of Limerick was appointed following a competitive tender and the study commenced in Q1. The key objectives of the study are (i) to fill the gap in knowledge that currently exists in terms of the hard data and information that is available concerning the

prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts in the Irish economy and the manner of their use, (ii) to assess the impact of zero hour and low hour contracts on employees and (iii) to enable the Minister to make any evidence-based policy recommendations to Government considered necessary on foot of the study. The study will have a broad scope, covering both the public and private sectors, with a particular focus on the retail, hospitality, education and health sectors. A wide range of stakeholders will be canvassed to contribute to the study, which is expected to be completed within six months of commencement.

Action 32: Continue to roll out the Housing Assistance Payment.

Q1 Measure: Review Wave 1 roll out of HAP. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

There are currently seven local authorities operating as part of the Wave 1 of the pilot phase. The learning from this element of the pilot has been reviewed and is being applied to an additional group of local authorities that will operate the second Wave of the pilot, beginning in Q2.

Q1 Measure: The specification of the target operating model for HAP (including the IT solution) and associated procurement. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Process maps, which reflect the specification of the operating model for HAP, have been updated to reflect the learning from Wave 1 pilot. ICT modifications for HAP have been agreed and work has commenced on their implementation.

This work will inform procurement decisions which are also impacted by the outcome of the HAP Business Case review which is being arranged in order to take account of the implementation of the scheme to date.

2.2 Delivering Regional Potential

Action 34: Develop and publish a suite of Regional Enterprise Strategies, based on consultation with key stakeholders at regional level and on the analysis of the strengths of each region, commencing with the publication of strategies for the Midlands and South East regions. The strategies will include a series of specific actions and targets for delivery by a range of public bodies to support enterprise growth and job creation in the regions and will complement the statutory Plans to be developed as part of Local Government reform

Q1 Measure: Following on from work commenced in 2014, continue consultation process on the Midlands Enterprise Strategy and agree key actions and targets for inclusion in the

strategy. (DJEI, EI, IDA, other relevant Departments and public bodies)

Update: Complete

On 11 February 2015, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation announced details of the Regional Enterprise Strategies initiative – to be known as Action Plan for Jobs: Regional. Building on the approach to the national Action Plan for Jobs process, the Regional Action Plans will include a series of practical actions to support enterprise growth and job creation in each region, within clear timelines for delivery. This is a whole-of-Government initiative, being led by Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, but requiring input from across the widest possible range of stakeholders in the public and private sector.

Following on from an Enterprise Forum in the Midlands in December 2014, further consultation took place during Q1 with a number of key stakeholders at regional level and at national level to develop actions for inclusion in the Action Plan for the Midlands. This included meetings with the four Local Authorities in the region, the Regional Assemblies, Fáilte Ireland, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. In addition to these bodies, inputs to the Action Plan were received from Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and the four Local Enterprise Offices in the Midlands. Other proposals were received from the enterprise sector following the Enterprise Forum in December.

The consultation process has helped in identifying tangible actions for inclusion in the Action Plan for Jobs for the Midlands region.

Q1 Measure: Publish Enterprise Strategy for the Midlands region. (DJEI)

Update: Delayed

The Government announced details of an ambitious Action Plan for Jobs: Regional initiative in February 2015, which will see Action Plans drawn up for eight regions at NUTS III level.

Significant progress has been made in preparing an Action Plan for Jobs for the Midlands, based on consultations with stakeholders which commenced in 2014. However, further consultation is required with some stakeholders to ensure that the Midlands Action Plan fully reflects the Government's ambition for the regions and that the Plan maximises the potential for collaboration across the region. The Action Plan for the Midlands will be published in Q2.

Q1 Measure: Commence consultation process to develop a Regional Enterprise Strategy for the South-East. (DJEI, EI, IDA, other relevant Departments and public bodies)

Update: Complete

On 11 February, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation announced the development of Regional Enterprise Strategies (also known as Regional APJs). The Midlands and South East Strategy are among six Regional APJs due to be published by July 2015. The objective of these Regional Strategies is to strengthen and

develop regional collaboration by encouraging local authorities, regional bodies, higher education institutions (HEIs), the private sector and communities to come forward with innovative ideas to boost job creation in their area.

DJEI met with public body stakeholders from the South East region twice in Q1 with a view to:

- Reviewing the existing enterprise base in the region;
- Profiling the region's enterprise assets; and
- Identifying key opportunities for the region as a whole in order to support businesses to start-up, succeed, expand and export.

A wider forum, involving these public bodies, enterprise representatives, key Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland clients, HEIs and other interested stakeholders will take place within the region in early Q2.

Action 37: Develop a tourism brand proposition and identity for the South, East and Midlands of Ireland, that will help in scaling up the asset base and achieve international “stand-out” for the region based on its comparative advantage in built and cultural heritage.

Q1 Measure: Complete consumer testing and market research with regard to naming the destination for tourism promotion purposes. (Fáilte Ireland)

Update: Complete

Consumer testing was undertaken in Ireland’s four main source markets (UK, US, Germany and France) involving over 10,000 potential tourists.

Q1 Measure: Launch the destination brand. (Fáilte Ireland)

Update: Complete

The trade launch will be held on 14 April at Meitheal 2015 - Ireland’s largest and most successful International Travel Trade Fair.

Action 38: Prepare and implement annual Local Enterprise Development Plans for each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices, setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.

Q1 Measure: Hold LEO staff training session in relation to developing the LEDPs. (EI/LEOs)

Update: Complete

A full day training session was held on 5 February with the Heads of Enterprise to support

the preparation and implementation of 2015 Local Enterprise Development Plans (LEDPs) for each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices, which includes setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.

Q1 Measure: Finalise LEDPs. (LEOs)

Update: Complete

Each of the 31 LEOs has developed their Local Enterprise Development Plan with targets for key activities aimed at supporting entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.

Q1 Measure: Review LEO Resources to deliver LEDPs. (EI/LAs)

Update: Complete

EI undertook a review of LEO resources with a particular focus on the resources available to implement individual Local Enterprise Development Plans across the network of 31 LEOs.

Action 40: Annual Enterprise Development Plans for each Gaeltacht area will be prepared and implemented, setting out targets to support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (ÚnaG)

Update: Complete

Enterprise Development Plans have been prepared for each Gaeltacht area and are being implemented. The plans have a particular emphasis on supporting job creation, focusing on sectoral strengths such as the creative industries, food, life sciences and tourism sectors, and opportunities for micro-enterprise, in line with Údarás na Gaeltachta's strategy.

Action 41: Establish three new Regional Assemblies.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Among the local government reform measures decided by the Government in October 2012, as set out the Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First, was the consolidation of regional structures from 8 regional authorities and 2 regional assemblies into 3 regional assemblies. The first phase in this restructuring involved the dissolution of the 8 former regional authorities with effect from 1 June 2014 and transfer of their functions to the 2 existing regional assemblies. The process has been completed with the making of an order establishing a third regional assembly (Eastern and Midlands) with effect from 1 January 2015, incorporating the former Midlands Dublin and Mid East regions

and county Louth.

The 3 new regional assemblies are:

- Eastern and Midland Region
- Northern and Western Region
- Southern Region

Action 51: Continue to implement the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) on a transitional basis pending the rollout of its successor programme, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which will have a strong focus on community activation, social inclusion and community development, while also focusing on and prioritising those hardest to reach.

Q1 Measure: Confirm Programme funding allocations (for LCDP for Q1 2015 and SICAP Q2-Q4 2015) to LCDCs/Pobal. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The LCDP Q1 2015 funding allocations have been confirmed to LDCs by Pobal, and the SICAP Q2-Q4 2015 funding allocations have also been confirmed to LCDCs by Pobal.

Q1 Measure: SICAP Targets set. (DECLG, LCDCs)

Update: Complete

The SICAP target groups are:

- Children and Families from Disadvantaged Areas
- Lone Parents
- New Communities (including Refugees/Asylum Seekers)
- People living in Disadvantaged Communities
- People with Disabilities
- Roma
- The Unemployed (including those not on the Live Register)
- Travellers
- Young Unemployed People from Disadvantaged areas

Goal 1: Empowering disadvantaged communities.

To support and resource disadvantaged communities and marginalised target groups to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues.

Goal 2: Lifelong Learning.

To Support individuals and marginalised target groups experiencing educational disadvantage so they can participate fully, engage with and progress through life-long learning opportunities through the use of community development approaches.

Goal 3: Employment.

To engage with marginalised target groups/individuals and residents of disadvantaged communities who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment service provision, or who are referred to SICAP, to move them closer to the labour market and improve work readiness, and support them in accessing employment and self-employment and creating social enterprise opportunities.

Q1 Measure: Confirmation of 2014 LCDP Beneficiary Participation rates including employment activation supports. (DECLG, Pobal)

Update: Complete

The Final 2014 LCDP Beneficiary Participation Rates including employment activation supports are below (at *). The 2013 figures are in brackets for comparison purposes.

- 49,083* (49,790) persons (caseload) were assisted in 2014;
- 19,006* (17,699) beneficiaries participating in education;
- 21,159* (19,711) beneficiaries participating in labour market training; and
- 7,920* (7,419) supported into employment, including 6,287 into self-employment.

2.3 Europe's Energy Innovation Hub

Action 53: Establish a new Inter Departmental Committee to drive the development of Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub, and provide a focal point for liaison with stakeholders.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action (DJEI, DCENR, DECLG, DAFM and relevant Agencies)

Update: Complete

The IDC has been established and is co-chaired by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, at

Assistant Secretary level.

The membership of the group includes Government Departments and State Bodies that have a direct role in developing Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub and include: D/Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; D/Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; D/Environment, Community and Local Government; D/Agriculture, Food and the Marine; D/Transport, Tourism and Sport; Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland; IDA Ireland; Enterprise Ireland; Science Foundation Ireland.

The role of the IDC will be to drive the development of Ireland as Europe's Energy Innovation Hub and provide a focal point for liaison with key stakeholders.

2.4 Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

Action 66: Implement the SBCI Business Plan for SME lending over the course of 2015, including achieving key milestones as set out in the SBCI plan of: first lending to SMEs and roll-out of products in Q1 2015; bringing new non-bank lenders to the market in Q2/Q3 2015; and bringing a pipeline of other banks and non-bank lenders on board by Q4 2015 and beyond.

Q1 Measure: Reach formal agreement with on-lenders in respect to an initial €400m of SBCI funding. (SBCI)

Update: Complete

The first products were launched in February. Formal agreement in respect of €400m of lending to AIB and Bank of Ireland has been agreed and contracts have been signed. SBCI Loans to SMEs through its initial lending partners AIB and Bank of Ireland are being drawn down. The process to expand the SBCI Board was completed in March, and this took place using the new State Boards appointment process. The SBCI marketing, awareness and promotional campaign is live and involves radio, online adverts and bill boards.

3. Progressing Disruptive Reforms from 2013 & 2014 Action Plans

3.1 Manufacturing Step Change

Action 81: As part of the National Talent Drive Disruptive reform (see above), develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy.

Q1 Measure: Receipt of response from industry and education and training providers to call for proposals. (DES, SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council, employers and providers)

Update: Complete

31 March 2015 was the closing date for receipt of proposals.

3.2 National Health Innovation Hub

Action 85: Establish a National Health Innovation Hub based on a competitive process.

Q1 Measure: Finalise documentation and issue call for hosting the national HIH. (EI, Joint Agency Project Team)

Update: Complete

The National Health Innovation Hub (NHIH) is a joint initiative of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health. The initiative was included in the first Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) in 2012 and is a key disruptive reform within the 2015 APJ. The Government has approved the establishment of the NHIH, and Enterprise Ireland has issued a call for proposals from applicants who are interested in hosting the NHIH.

Enterprise Ireland is currently seeking applications from Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) in the Republic of Ireland to deliver the NHIH objective of facilitating clinicians, hospitals, healthcare companies, researchers and other innovators to work together for the benefit of patients and the healthcare system, whilst also supporting the growth of the lifescience and other relevant sectors in Ireland. The call, which opened on 23 January 2015, invites applicants to submit a proposal and a case to be the host institution for the proposed Hub. The deadline for the submission of applications was 5.00pm (GMT) on 15 April 2015.

Q1 Measure: Establish Oversight Group to ensure the ambition and appropriate direction of the National HIH. (DJEI, DoH)

Update: Complete

The call for hosting the NHIH was issued on 30 January and the Oversight Group has been established, with the first meeting held on 26 February.

3.3 Competitive Ecosystem for Big Data

Action 86: Renew the mission and focus of the Big Data Taskforce with the goal to oversee progress towards the strategic goals of the Disruptive Reform.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

At the Big Data Task Force meeting on 30 March, a renewed mission and focus for the Task Force was discussed. New draft terms of reference for the group have been drawn up which will include the “Internet of Things”. The group will be reconfigured to include additional industrial partners to assist the drive towards its new focus.

Action 87: Identify and adopt specific targets for the Disruptive Reform including measurable KPIs.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (Task Force on Big Data, DJEI)

Update: Complete

A set of KPIs with associated targets have been developed to monitor progress for the adaption of Big Data in Ireland. These were presented for discussion and adoption at a Big Data Task Force meeting on 30 March.

Action 91: Establish inter-departmental committee on data protection issues and related structures

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Taoiseach)

Update: Complete

The committee has been established, chaired by Minister of State Murphy and with representation from across Government Departments. Terms of reference are agreed, and two meetings have been held to date.

Action 92: Establish a forum for dialogue with industry/civil society on issues arising from the continuing growth in personal data usage and technology

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Taoiseach)

Update: Complete

Terms of Reference for the forum have been agreed, with expressions of interest for its membership currently being sought.

3.6 Local Enterprise Offices

Action 99: Continue to develop and promote the Local Enterprise Offices as the first-stop-shop providing advice and supports to entrepreneurs and new business in the micro and small sector.

Q1 Measure: Develop robust local enterprise development plans with targets for key activities e.g. business startups, business expansions, jobs created or sustained and initiatives to support enterprise and job creation in the area. (EI, Las, LEOs, DJEI)

Update: Complete

The 31 LEOs have developed robust Local Enterprise Development Plans with targets for key activities e.g. business start-ups, business expansions, jobs created or sustained and initiatives to support enterprise and job creation in the area.

Q1 Measure: Produce comprehensive 2015 training plan for all LEO staff. (EI, LSS)

Update: Complete

Training is an essential element in ensuring the continuous development and promotion of the Local Enterprise Offices as the first-stop-shop providing advice and supports to entrepreneurs and new business in the micro and small sector. To this end a comprehensive 2015 training plan for all LEO staff has been developed.

Q1 Measure: Begin roll out of new Graduate placement programme in the LEOs to strengthen customer service and delivery of local enterprise plan targets. (EI, LEOs)

Update: Complete

A new Graduate placement programme has been developed and business cases submitted by the LEOs have been evaluated. Assignment of graduates is on track for Q1. The objective of this programme is to strengthen customer service and delivery of local enterprise plan targets and to give the graduates an opportunity to gain valuable, hands-on experience in

the area of enterprise development.

Q1 Measure: Develop Communications Plan for LEOs, including dedicated resource, and highlighting in particular business success stories and the supports and activities available to startups and new business. (EI, Las, LEOs)

Update: Complete

A communications plan has been developed for LEOs. The plan includes dedicated resources and highlights business success stories. It also outlines the supports and activities available from LEOs to support start-ups and new business. The tender process to select the provider to implement the communications plan has commenced.

Q1 Measure: Building on the success of 2014, evaluate the impact and outcomes of Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition and develop an appropriate 2015 programme. (EI, LEOs, DJEI)

Update: Complete

Following the conclusion of the 2014 Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition, an evaluation of the impact and outcomes from the competition has been conducted. The findings and recommendations from this evaluation will be used to support the development of the 2015 programme.

4. Finance for Growth

4.1 Effective Implementation to Maximise Benefits to SMEs

Action 103: The Department of Finance and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will rollout an integrated export finance strategy in 2015 with financing products and platforms being developed by the SBCI and the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) in conjunction with EI.

Q1 Measure: Establish Steering Group and Project Working Group. (D/Finance, DJEI, SBCI, ISIF, EI)

Update: Complete

Both High Level Steering Groups and Project Group have been established and the Project Group has met a number of times. Surveys have been issued to establish market realities with both users and providers of finance for export. The surveys will close on 17 April and the customer survey has had over 600 responses to date. The results of these surveys should show where there are actual rather than perceived gaps in the market. This will allow the project group to focus its efforts and develop an appropriate strategy.

Action 104: Collate and monitor data, including Central Bank data, on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources, including the full range of state sponsored initiatives and report on this issue to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs twice yearly.

Q1 Measure: Establish Working Group on Private Sector SME Lending Data. (SME State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

A Working Group, chaired by the Central Statistics Office and attended by members of the SME State Bodies Group, has designed a survey which will garner information on private sector SME lending data. The letter of notification was sent on 10 March, the reference year is calendar year 2014. It is planned that analysis of the returns will be complete by October with publication scheduled for November.

Action 105: Detailed data from AIB and Bank of Ireland will be collated and examined, on a monthly basis ensuring a more informed understanding of the SME bank lending environment, with a particular focus on new lending.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Finance, Credit Review Office)

Update: Complete

Monthly data has been received from AIB and Bank of Ireland.

Action 106: Following the passing of the appropriate primary legislation implement and promote the new Credit Guarantee Scheme.

Q1 Measure: Primary Legislation Enacted. (DJEI)

Update: Delayed

Government approved the revision of the Credit Guarantee Act 2012 in June 2013. The Bill was on the A list of the Government's Autumn legislation programme and is now on the A list of the Spring legislation programme. The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) is working with the Office of the Attorney General on the drafting of the Bill and the legal issues being raised. Colleagues from the Department of Finance, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and Enterprise Ireland have been assisting in dealing with the queries that have arisen. A high level meeting took place to deal with issues in February and material on foot of all queries has now been supplied by DJEI. A revised draft version of the Bill was produced by the Office of the Attorney General on 13 March 2015 and DJEI has been working with that Office on the issues raised in relation to this draft of the Bill.

Action 107: Implement the recommendations of the review of the MicroEnterprise Loan Fund Scheme.

Q1 Measure: Publish review of MicroEnterprise Loan Fund. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The review of the MicroEnterprise Loan Fund and Microfinance Ireland (MFI) was published on 1 April 2015. On foot of the review, the Minister for Business and Employment with the consent of the Ministers for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform will introduce a new Scheme aimed at improving access to MFI loans by:

- Removing the requirement for microenterprises to have a bank refusal before applying for an MFI loan; and
- Allowing the Board of MFI greater flexibility to adapt to market changes.

In addition, MFI will:

- Work with the banks to introduce an automatic referral system to MFI when banks decline loans to micro-enterprises; and
- Develop a renewed and expanded marketing and communications strategy.

Work on implementing the actions to be taken as a result of the Review has commenced.

4.2 Communications – Raising awareness amongst SMEs and Entrepreneurs of supports

Action 109: Deliver the next phase of an integrated communication strategy.

Q1 Measure: Deliver new marketing and communications materials to ensure ongoing engagement with the Supporting SME campaign. (SME State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

Local Authorities' individual supports have been added to the Supporting SMEs Online Tool. Other updates are also underway, e.g. the addition of EI Green Supports, the inclusion of additional LEO supports and the SBCI. Two events have been successfully completed by the campaign team as part of the outreach to SMEs with more to follow in Q2. Work is underway on print and delivery of communications materials to key stakeholder groups, notably the start-up community.

4.5 Diversify the Range of Financing Options for SMEs

Action 119: The Department of Finance to work with the relevant stakeholders in raising awareness of the EII Scheme and promoting it as vehicle for channelling investment to grow enterprises and support employment.

Q1 Measure: SME State Bodies Group to consider efficient ways to promote the EII Scheme. (State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

The EII Scheme continues to be promoted through the Supporting SMEs Online Tool, supported by the work of the State Bodies Group (SBG) Communications Team. The SBG Communications Team attended two events in February 2015, and will attend two further events in April (in Waterford, and in Dublin).

4.7 Trade Credit and Prompt Payments

Action 123: Develop and launch the Prompt Payments Code (PPC) portal to improve cash flow between businesses and to drive a change in payment culture in Ireland.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI, IICM, BPFI & Business Representative Bodies)

Update: Complete

The Prompt Payments Code of Conduct (PPC) portal, aimed at improving cash flow between businesses, was launched by Mr. Ged Nash T.D., Minister Business and Employment on 31 March last. The PPC is a joint initiative between DJEI, the business representative bodies in Ireland, the Banking and Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI) and the Irish Institute of Credit Management (IICM).

The three main focuses of the PPC are:

- To encourage and promote best practice between businesses and their supplier;
- To improve cash flow between businesses; and
- To drive a change in payment culture.

Businesses who sign up to the Code can do so through the online portal - www.promptpayment.ie.

5. Increasing Activation of the Unemployed

Action 127: Continue the development and reform of 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 that the labour market responds flexibly and efficiently to employment growth.

Q1 Measure: Target more places and opportunities for young unemployed people and those who are long term unemployed under Strand 3 of Pathways to Work in particular by increasing the number of places available on the of the JobsPlus scheme. (DSP)

Update: Complete

The number of places available in February has been increased to 6,000 (originally 3,000). In addition, JobsPlus Youth was launched on 4 February 2015. The qualifying period for employing young people under the scheme is reduced from 12 months to 4 months. Eligible young unemployed jobseekers are identified using the jobseeker profiling tool developed with the ESRI, the application of which is now a standard feature of the Intreo process. It is anticipated that these enhancements to JobsPlus for young people will support an additional 1,500 jobs for under 25s with high barriers to employment in its first year.

6. Growing Irish Enterprise and Foreign Direct Investment

Action 137: Publish Independent Study on economic opportunities and impacts, including sectoral effects of a potential Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (EI, IDA)

Update: Complete

On 27 March last the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation published an independent study on Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) by Copenhagen Economics. The Report was formally launched by the Minister at an event in Dublin Castle attended by Cecilia Malmstrom, EU Commissioner for Trade, as well as Martin Hvidt Thelle, lead author of the report. The main findings of the report, entitled *TTIP impact in Ireland*, are that a comprehensive deal would:

- bring a 1.1% increase to Irish GDP;

- increase Irish real national income by €2.4billion, (approx 1.5%);
- create 5,000-10,000 extra jobs in exporting sectors;
- increase real wages by 1.5%, impacting all skill groups, with low skill groups seeing a higher impact (1.9%);
- increase exports by 3.8%;
- increase investment in Ireland by 1.5%; and
- increase trade with third countries as well as with the USA.

An independent study for the EU Commission in 2013 found that benefits across the EU from a comprehensive agreement would amount to 0.5% increase in GDP and 400,000 jobs – however due to our strong links with the USA, the benefits to Ireland would be proportionately much higher.

The report also finds that TTIP would have a more significant positive impact on SMEs than on other types of business. Enterprise Ireland already supports over 3000 exporting Irish SMEs, and the Agency stands ready to support Irish companies seeking to take advantage of the opportunities for extra export sales offered by TTIP, via its network of four offices in the USA, which has expanded in recent years as part of the Action Plan for Jobs.

Action 147: Publish a new 5 Year IDA Strategy to give effect to the Government's 2014 FDI Policy Statement.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (IDA)

Update: Complete

On 25 February 2015, IDA Ireland published its 5 year strategy, 'Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019'. The Agency announced ambitious targets to boost Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Ireland by over 40%, creating 80,000 new jobs in the economy over the next five years. The ambitious targets will bring total direct employment by overseas companies in Ireland to 209,000 people by 2019. This will be the highest level of employment from overseas firms in the history of the State and will deliver wide-ranging economic benefits for the people of Ireland.

IDA aims to win 900 individual projects over the next five years, including its investment target by over 40%. As part of its growth strategy, IDA has committed to itself to increasing the level of investment into each region of Ireland by between 30% and 40%. A €150m property investment plan, spread out over five years, will support the achievement of IDA's regional goals. The funding will be used to upgrade Ireland's Business and Technology parks, make investments in a number of strategic utility sites and build new advanced technology

buildings in regional locations.

IDA is targeting a 20% increase in spending by overseas firms within Ireland, bringing expenditure to €26.8bn per annum. In particular, IDA is committed to showcasing Irish industry to its client companies. A 20% increase in cumulative spend (€3bn) on RD&I is also a target of the strategy, as overseas companies place additional high value activity into Ireland.

Action 152: Establish an expert group to examine and report on recommendations to increase foreign and domestic investment in Ireland's film and TV sound stage studio infrastructure – and thereby increasing jobs - in the face of growing demand for audiovisual content across multiple platforms.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DAHG, DJEI, D/Taoiseach with relevant agencies, including IDA, EI and IFB)

Update: Complete

The Expert Group was established in January 2015 and has met three times since then. An initial draft report was prepared in January by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and a second updated report was completed for the third meeting of the group on 23 March. The Report of the Group was considered at the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs on 30 March, and it was agreed that further work should be carried out by the Group.

Action 154: Provide advice and support to EI supported companies and research institutions in the defence and security sector in the area of research and innovation.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Defence)

Update: Complete

Quarterly meetings continue to take place between the Defence Organisation and Enterprise Ireland; the Defence Organisation will continue to provide assistance to Enterprise Ireland and Enterprise Ireland Companies throughout 2015.

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

Action 168: Develop an overarching synthesis report encompassing the range of evaluation of agency programmes to inform and ensure continuing value for money.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A draft overarching synthesis report was finalised at the end of March (Q1). It is anticipated that the report will be published on the website of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation over the coming months, following consultation and receipt of observations from the Evaluations Steering Committee in mid-April and final approval.

Action 171: Take steps to establish Clinical Research Facilities (CRFs) in Dublin, Cork and Galway and provide a collaborative framework to link all CRFs by 2016.

Q1 Measure: Complete the construction of the HRB Galway CRF in conjunction with NUI Galway and GUH. (HRB)

Update: Complete

The Galway CRF building will bring much greater operational efficiencies for the team delivering clinical trials and expand the scope of clinical studies that they can take on. The team of approximately 50 staff is currently in temporary accommodation. In 2014, the team delivered a portfolio of 93 studies, with 1,125 participants.

7. Entrepreneurship

7.1 Progressing Entrepreneurship Policy Statement

Action 186: Develop an enterprise engagement strategy for higher education to include entrepreneurial education as an important part of the national framework for enterprise engagement.

Q1 Measure: Enterprise Engagement Strategy is being finalised. (HEA)

Update: Complete

The Enterprise Engagement Strategy is finalised and a consultation event with Higher Education and Enterprise representatives has been organised for 1 May to present the final version of the Strategy.

Action 187: Set out performance indicators and measures to benchmark entrepreneurial activity in Irish higher education.

Q1 Measure: Enterprise Engagement Strategy is being finalised and Strategic Dialogue process is underway for 2015. (DES, HEA)

Update: Complete

The Enterprise Engagement Strategy is finalised and a consultation event with Higher Education and Enterprise representatives has been organised for 1 May to present the final version of the Strategy. A strategic dialogue process is now underway for 2015, and a review of Entrepreneurship in Higher Education is also commencing, in partnership with the OECD and European Commission as part of their HEInnovate initiative.

Action 192: The Centre of Excellence in EI will develop a competitive fund to promote innovation within and across LEO's to enhance the support environment for startups, with a particular emphasis on regions that have struggled to achieve employment growth. EI will also publish a report each year on the startup environment across the LEOs network, identifying areas of excellence and areas for improvement and innovation.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (EI, LEOs)

Update: Complete

The Centre of Excellence in EI has developed a scheme to promote innovation within and across LEO's to enhance the support environment for start-ups, with a particular emphasis on regions that have struggled to achieve employment growth.

Action 194: Support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works 3 and promote market outlets for food start-up companies.

Q1 Measure: Entrepreneurs commence programme. (Bord Bia, EI, Teagasc)

Update: Complete

The third cohort of new food entrepreneurs started on 27 January 2015 in the Guinness Enterprise Centre, with 18 projects from over 125 applications. This started them on the feasibility phase which should culminate in plans being presented in May. There have been four workshops, including a visit to London and feedback from original consumer research.

Action 197: Continue to promote the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) and Startup Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) to leverage the potential of migrant entrepreneurs and

investors.

Q1 Measure: Engage in promotional activities for STEP in connection with 3rd level sector. (D/Justice and Equality and others)

Update: Complete

The seminar with the first group of targeted students was carried out on target, and further road show events will take place during 2015.

Action 208: Increase the usage of Equity financing by SMEs.

Q1 Measure: Re-brand the SCS scheme as 'Startup Refunds for Entrepreneurs' (SURE). (DJEI, D/Finance, Revenue, EI, LEOs)

Update: Complete

A Government decision has been made to re-brand the scheme as the "Startup Refunds for Entrepreneurs" (SURE). A promotional leaflet, Revenue's I.T. 15 guide and an online calculator that will provide an estimate of the value of the relief have been finalised. A launch date is being agreed with relevant government departments.

Action 213: Increase the level of start-up support in Ireland by supporting commercially managed accelerators.

Q1 Measure: Examine international best practice and current market activity. (EI)

Update: Complete

Building on its existing supports considerable work has been undertaken in exploring and developing a strategy for commercially managed accelerators. Enterprise Ireland's examination of international best practice and current market activity in this area will inform the agency as it tries to maximise the supports available for its clients through viable commercially managed accelerators. This will feed into the achievement of the Q4 deliverable.

Action 215: Continue the successful Food Academy initiative (which is run in conjunction with retail outlets) to nurture start up food businesses through workshop style training and assistance with routes to market launched.

Q1 Measure: Food Academy Advance Programme launched. (Board Bia)

Update: Complete

The Food Academy Advance Programme started at end-2014 with 29 companies. These companies participated in a workshop in January, which was run in conjunction with Musgraves, and which covered key aspects such as finance and included a store visit. A second workshop in March covered other aspects including promotional planning. Additionally, one-to-one sessions between the companies and the retailer were conducted on two separate occasions during this quarter. SuperValu secured the commitment of over one hundred of their stores to incorporate a Food Academy fixture in-store.

8. Competitiveness

8.1 Easier to do Business

Action 219: Roll out the new National Post Code system which will improve logistical efficiency, the accuracy of databases across both the public and private sector and planning and analysis capabilities in both sectors.

Q1 Measure: Launch of National Communications. (DCENR)

Update: Complete

The communications campaign, referred to in the Q1 measure, has started for business and, to a lesser extent, for the public. The ‘formal launch’ of Eircode will take place shortly in advance of the dissemination of the Eircode letters to each premises in Ireland, which is planned for June. There will be a formal launch event at which the online ‘Eircode finder tool’ will be unveiled. The TV and radio campaign aimed at the public will be concentrated over a 5 week period around the formal launch event.

Action 220: Develop /procure a new employer vacancy and job-matching system.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DSP)

Update: Delayed

The tender Evaluation process is now complete, and a decision on procurement will be made shortly.

Action 224: Move to an e-process for insurers to notify of motor insurance policies that are cancelled prior to their expiry, where current volumes are 72,000 and are paper-based.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DTTAS)

Update: Complete

The technical elements have been completed and the e-process is in place.

Action 226: Improve computerised applications and payment systems in the new Rural Development Programme to reduce compliance burden for farmers.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DAFM)

Update: Complete

This is an ongoing action which is linked to the roll-out of individual schemes under the RDP. To date, only the GLAS agri-environmental scheme has been launched. This is a fully computerised online system. A series of 14 regional information meetings has also been organised by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for farmers to inform them about GLAS and CAP implementation measures and to provide advice on a one-to-one basis on the new Basic Payment Scheme, National Reserve, Greening and the new GLAS scheme.

Action 235: Streamline the application procedures for Fire Safety Certificates and Disability Access Certificates as required under the Building Control Regulations, in the interests of efficient administration and furthering Government policy to make Ireland a better place to do business.

Q1 Measure: Prepare and publish amendment to Building Control Regulations. (DECLG)

Update: Delayed

Draft amendment has been agreed with local authorities and will be published in April 2015.

Action 236: Further develop the Building Control Management System (BCMS).

Q1 Measure: Prepare comprehensive user manual for industry users. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Two video guides for users have been produced and are now available on the BCMS. In addition, help and information notes have been built into the system and are available for reference by users as they progress projects through the online system.

Action 237: Review the operation of the Building Control Amendment Regulations 2014 (SI No. 9 of 2014) after 12 months of operation and report with recommendations on matters arising.

Q1 Measure: Seek industry submissions. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Terms of reference are in place, and key industry stakeholders are preparing their submissions. The Review is being prioritised and the final report will be produced by Q2 2015.

Action 245: Progress the development of e-licensing systems in areas such as archaeological excavation licensing and wildlife permits. These will improve service to both business and the general public.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DAHG)

Update: Complete

Work is continuing on the development of a detailed system to take into account the forthcoming Monuments Bill. The website www.npws.ie has migrated to a new platform and is due for redevelopment commencing in Q2 2015, to include a facility for electronic applications for licences under the Wildlife Acts. Procurement is underway for the developer role and should be concluded before end-April 2015.

8.2 Institutionalising the Drive for Competitiveness

Action 246: Following on from the action in 2014 to institutionalise the drive for competitiveness, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will continue to monitor progress on competitiveness issues identified by the National Competitiveness Council and others and consider further actions to improve Ireland's international competitiveness and consider initiatives to make it easier to do business in Ireland. The Cabinet Committee(s) will be supported by the relevant Senior Officials Group and the APJ Monitoring Committee in this work.

Q1 Measure: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will monitor progress on competitiveness issues, and consider actions to improve Ireland's performance. (Department of Taoiseach, All Departments)

Update: Complete

The work programmes of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs (CCERJ)

and of other relevant Cabinet Committees reflect the priority that the Government attaches to safeguarding, and building on, Ireland's hard-won competitiveness gains.

In March, the CCERJ was updated on the work of the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) and the timelines proposed for NCC outputs in 2015 including its flagship publications, Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard and Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge.

In Q1, the CCERJ considered the NCC's Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2015 and agreed a number of follow-up actions linked directly to issues of costs in the Irish economy highlighted through the NCC analysis.

8.6 Decreasing the Cost of Doing Business

Action 256: Encourage local authorities to exercise restraint in adopting the Annual Rates on Valuation (ARVs) for 2015, a reserved function of elected members.

Q1 Measure: Report on the extent to which restraint was exercised in setting Annual Rates on Valuation (ARVs) by Local Authorities and progress with achieving harmonisation of ARVs in 2015. (DECLG, Local Authorities)

Update: Complete

Following the reorganisation of local government structures arising from the Local Government Reform Act 2014 there are now just 31 local authorities that adopt an Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV). The Minister requested these authorities to continue to strive for reductions in commercial rates in the context of adopting the 2015 ARVs in advance of the 2015 budget process last year.

The local government reform programme requires authorities to harmonise ARVs across former rating authorities within each of the restructured 31 local authorities within a 10 year period, generally. This will ultimately result in one just ARV being in place for each of the 31 authorities. The 10 year timeframe was put in place to ensure that there would be a gradual adjustment to all businesses affected and also to minimise the impact on local authorities' funding levels.

11 local authorities are not affected by harmonisation due either to having amalgamated prior to establishment day (1 June 2014) under separate amalgamations or due to there being no former town or borough councils in the local authority area. 3 of these local authorities (Dublin City, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown and Roscommon) reduced their ARV for 2015 and 7 adopted the same ARV in 2015 as in 2014. 1 local authority (Limerick) underwent a revaluation in the last year so its 2015 ARV is not comparable with its 2014 ARV. The average decrease in ARV for these local authorities was 0.40%.

The remaining 20 local authorities are required to harmonise their rates through implementing the Base Year Adjustment (BYA) process. In 2015, the BYA process effectively neutralises any increase or decrease for ratepayers that would otherwise take effect as a result of the difference between the new ARV for 2015 and that which applied in their rating authority in 2014. In other words, ratepayers in local authorities implementing the BYA process will not pay any more (or less) in 2015 than they did in 2014 as the BYA applies an adjustment to the 2015 ARV equal to the difference between the 2015 ARV and the 2014 ARV. Exceptions apply in circumstances where there has been a change in the valuation of the premises or other circumstances affecting their liability.

There are 74 former rating authority areas within the 20 local authorities subject to the BYA. It should be noted that the setting of ARVs is a reserved function of the locally elected Members.

Action 261: Ensure swift progress of the Valuation (Amendment) Bill.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DPER)

Update: Complete

The Valuation Bill has passed both Houses of the Oireachtas and will become law, subject to signature by the President.

8.7 Regulating for a Better Future

Action 265: Continue the implementation of actions outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation in the Energy, Communications and Broadcasting sectors.

Q1 Measure: Publish New Aviation Policy Statement. (DTTAS)

Update: Delayed

A National Aviation Policy is currently being finalised following an extensive consultation process and will be published in 2015.

9. Research, Development and Innovation

Action 266: Continue to drive implementation of Research Prioritisation through the Government's Prioritisation Action Group and complete the review of the Independent Panel established to review progress.

Q1 Measure: Complete assessment of implementation to date of Prioritisation by international panel. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The independent assessment of research prioritisation was undertaken, and the report was discussed at a meeting of the Prioritisation Action Group on 20 March.

Action 272: Ensure research centres landscape offers the full continuum of support to companies from basic to applied research facilities.

Q1 Measure: Complete the study on market focussed elements of the research centre landscape and propose the necessary steps to be taken for implementation of the recommendations from the study. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A study to assess the need for, and recommend possible approaches to strengthening the market focused element of the research centre landscape in Ireland into the medium term was undertaken. This study reviews recent developments in the Irish industry facing research centre models and based on current supply, demand and international best practice, makes recommendations on what investment profile and institutional arrangements are appropriate for Ireland now and in the medium term in order to remain internationally competitive in supporting enterprise innovation. Considerable emphasis has been placed on understanding the profile of existing investments in Ireland and the industry facing research centre landscapes and centre models internationally. An assessment of current and potential enterprise demand for research capacity and services throughout the TRL scale has been completed. A final integrated report reflecting the findings of this analysis was completed by the consultant.

Action 275: Establish a Network for all EI funded Technology Gateways in order to better meet industry needs. This will ensure that there is a "no wrong door" policy throughout the network and those companies can, where appropriate, leverage the strength of the entire network for their research needs.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

The informal networks that existed between the Enterprise Ireland funded Technology Gateways were formalised in one network in March 2015. This new network will build upon the existing features like frequent Gateway manager meetings and informal good practice information sharing. The new Enterprise Ireland mandated approach will include, inter alia, a requirement that all Technology Gateways keep registers of the capabilities of all other Gateways in order to be in a position to correctly refer companies to more appropriate sources of expertise when required.

Action 279: Commence the implementation of the findings from the 2014 Campus Incubation evaluation report.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Work has commenced to implement the findings of this report. The largest recommendation relates to the expansion of the programme to Incubators that have a proven industry need in their local areas but are sub optimally sized and thus do not have enough physical space to meet the demand to house start-up companies.

Work is underway to scope out a potential competitive call to institutions to address these issues but there are significant budget constraints which will impede Enterprise Ireland's ability to address these challenges in the short term.

Action 284: Drive the national Horizon 2020 European engagement agenda.

Q1 Measure: Promote engagement by MNCs with Horizon 2020. (IDA, HLG H2020)

Update: Complete

IDA Ireland is a member of the High Level Horizon 2020 working group. As part of this process, IDA is evaluating mechanisms to improve multinational engagement. IDA is proposing to target a small number of multinationals with aligned interest in upcoming calls. IDA is also utilising Research Centres that collaborate with industry to inform relevant industry partners on upcoming and aligned calls.

Action 289: Maintain the enhanced participation of SMEs and micro-businesses in the IRC Enterprise Partnership Scheme (EPS) and thus cultivate enterprise focused researchers in

the formative years of their research careers.

Q1 Measure: Launch the 2015 EPS and continue to support individual students and postdoctorate researchers. (Irish Research Council)

Update: Complete

The 2015 call went live on 12 March 2015. The target timeframe for making the awards under the Call is Q3 2015.

Action 290: Promote quality PhD framework to relevant Institutions and track implementation of the framework at Institution level.

Q1 Measure: Launch the publication. (HEA, QQI)

Update: Complete

The development of the National Framework for Doctoral Education is complete and has been endorsed by a range of research funders and higher education institutions, and possible dates for a formal launch are being examined.

Action 293: Publication and enactment of Technological University Bill.

Q1 Measure: Publication of Technological University Bill. (Department of Education and Skills)

Update: Delayed

The Technological Universities Bill is currently at drafting stage with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel with the intention of publication in Q2.

10. Stimulating the Domestic Economy

10.1 Agri-food

Action 297: Work with the industry to implement a new beef genomic scheme.

Q1 Measure: Scheme launched subject to receipt of approval from the EU Commission. (DAFM)

Update: Complete

A new Beef Data and Genomics Programme has been finalised as part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The launch of the scheme was delayed pending receipt of the EU Commission approval /Letter of Comfort for the RDP. This letter of comfort on Irelands RDP has now been received and the roll out of the Beef Data and Genomics Programme will occur in the coming weeks as part of the phased roll-out of RDP schemes.

10.3 Tourism

Action 316: Publish a detailed “Tourism Action Plan” to deliver initial actions required over the period 2015-2018 in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Tourism Policy Statement. The Tourism Policy Statement sets a target of 250,000 people employed in the tourism sector by 2025.

Q1 Measure: Establish Tourism Leadership Group to oversee formulation and implementation of Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. (DTTAS)

Update: Delayed

The Tourism Policy Statement was officially launched by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport on 23 March. Arrangements are underway for the establishment of the new Tourism Leadership Group, and the details will be announced as soon as possible.

Action 317: Dublin, as the capital city, is the primary driver of Ireland’s tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland will work with industry and agency partners to grow the city’s international appeal.

Q1 Measure: Bring together a stakeholder group comprising private sector operators and state bodies to steer roll-out of the city’s tourism development plan. (Fáilte Ireland)

Update: Complete

The group has activated and is further refining the development plan.

Q1 Measure: Work with clusters of circa 300 tourism businesses in the capital to improve the visitor experience and create better alignment between the brand promise and tourists’ ‘on the ground’ experience. (Fáilte Ireland)

Update: Complete

Over 390 individual businesses/members of the tourism trade were engaged in Q1, and ongoing engagement is planned for Dublin’s tourism trade to help them improve the visitor experience ahead of the summer season.

Action 321: Develop further heritage tourism initiatives, including a programme of trailway development in National Parks and Nature Reserves, in partnership with key stakeholders. 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, in particular through the development of a national park trails network, so as to add to the attractiveness of these areas for tourists.

Q1 Measure: Frame of reference for collaborative project to be finalised and next actions to be agreed. (DAHG, Fáilte Ireland, National Trails Office)

Update: Complete

The frame of reference and next actions have been agreed by the parties to the project. These will include audits of trails, visitor experiences and digital interfaces in certain national parks and nature reserves, as well as developing a methodology for an assessment of national monuments that might form part of the Wild Atlantic Way 'offering'.

10.4 Retail

Action 325: Identify best practice initiatives which are being taken by Local Authorities to support retail at a local level which could serve as exemplars for consideration by other Local Authority areas.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (CCMA, reporting via DJEI)

Update: Complete

Local Authorities across the country are implementing initiatives to support enterprises and job creation in their own administrative areas. Many of these initiatives have a positive impact on the retail sector and may have the potential to be replicated in other Local Authority areas. In order to build on the work of the Local Authorities in this area, the County and City Management Association (CCMA) agreed to identify best practice initiatives that have a positive impact on the retail sector, with a view to these serving as exemplars for consideration by other Local Authority areas.

The CCMA carried out this work during Q1 and is due to present the results of the exercise to the Retail Consultation Forum in Q2.

Action 332: Commence the Living City initiative to support the rejuvenation of eligible areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway and Kilkenny.

Q1 Measure: Agree all elements of process with relevant stakeholders including local authorities, Revenue and relevant Departments. (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

Discussions have taken place with the relevant Councils and with Revenue to commence the scheme. All the processes and procedures will be made public alongside the commencement of the scheme.

10.5 Construction and Housing

Action 336: Implement Construction 2020 so as to deliver a dynamic, competitive and sustainable construction sector, capable of contributing to economic growth and job creation, and equipped to meet the future infrastructure needs of the country, including addressing the challenges in housing supply.

Q1 Measure: Develop proposals to bring to Government on thermal efficiency performance and consequential improvements as part of the Construction Strategy 2020:

- Establish working group and invite public comment on the feasibility and impact of setting minimum thermal efficiency performance standards in properties offered for rent or lease in the residential and commercial sectors; and
- Work with key stakeholders to examine feasibility and impact of introducing consequential improvement regulations.

(DCENR, DECLG, SEAI)

Update: Delayed

A Public Procurement process to appoint expert technical and economic assistance to support the required analysis of the potential impact of the actions identified above on the price and supply of property has concluded. DCENR, DECLG and SEAI are working with these experts to progress the actions.

Action 338: We will launch a public consultation and consider whether measures are required to encourage the timely development of zoned and serviced land.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The public consultation was launched on 16 February and will run for 12 weeks until 8 May.

Action 340: Progress the intake and training of 100 new Garda recruits.

Q1 Measure: Applications processed by the Public Appointments Service/An Garda Síochána and notification to recruits in time for commencement of training. (PAS/AGS)

Update: Complete

100 new Garda recruits started their training in the College in Templemore on 2 February 2015.

11. New Sources of Growth

11.1 Smart Ageing

Action 342: Bring final report and proposed action plan to develop the Smart Ageing opportunity areas for Ireland to Government for approval.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Taoiseach, DJEI and Inter-Departmental Steering group)

Update: Complete

The Report on Smart Ageing was submitted to Government along with proposals on next steps to carry forward the Report's recommendations. The Report will be published shortly.

11.2 Growing Sales Through Leadership in Design

Action 346: Develop a series of National Design Enterprise and Education initiatives including design hubs, design networks, startup and investment platforms, cross-sectoral collaborations, design challenges and funded design development programmes.

Q1 Measure: Support a range of design-led initiatives across the regions through a match funded design innovation fund exploring, promoting and celebrating Irish design and designers through events and activities. (DCCoI, ID2015)

Update: Complete

A range of design-led initiatives were developed across the regions by the ID 2015 team and the Design and Crafts Council through a match funded design innovation fund exploring, promoting and celebrating Irish design and designers through events and activities. The first round call led to over 120 projects being allocated funding during Q1 for delivery before the end of Q4. A second call was launched to address any sectoral and/or regional gaps, with funding to be allocated during Q2 for delivery before the end of Q4.

Action 347: Establish a Steering Group of relevant Stakeholders to evaluate the design and craft sector with a view to devising a Strategy for the sector.

Q1 Measure: Establish the Steering Group and agree a work programme. (DCCoI, ID2015, DJEI)

Update: Complete

A Steering Group has been established to oversee a study that will examine the role and contribution of design to the enterprise sector in Ireland. This study will feed directly into the development of a strategy for the sector (Action 348). The study will:

1. Review the impact of design (including both the design sector and users of design in other sectors) in the Irish economy.
2. Establish the importance of design for firms in Ireland and how this differs by sector e.g. manufacture, services etc.
3. Identify the skills needs of firms who engage in design.
4. Identify the barriers that inhibit the use of design.
5. Review publicly available supports that are available for firms e.g. availability of skills, research capacity, networks, direct funding etc.
6. Identify an appropriate framework of metrics for a future strategy.
7. Review public policies internationally that could be relevant to the development of future policies in Ireland.

11.3 Developments in Financial Services

Action 349: Publish a new Strategy for the International Financial Services Sector.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Finance, DJEI, D/Taoiseach, IDA, EI)

Update: Complete

The Strategy for the International Financial Services Sector was launched on 11 March 2015, and is available at: <http://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/IFS-Strategy-2011.pdf>

Action 350: Publish alongside the strategy an implementation plan setting out the actions and timelines for delivery across the Government Departments and Agencies involved in its

delivery, in association with the industry sectors.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Finance, DJEI, D/Taoiseach, IDA, EI)

Update: Complete

The Strategy for the International Financial Services Sector was launched on 11 March 2015, and is available at: <http://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/IFS-Strategy-2011.pdf>

11.5 Innovative / Advanced Manufacturing

Action 353: Present to the Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation and relevant departments and agencies the findings of EI and IDA's engagement with manufacturing firms to assess the need for public investment in research infrastructure and activity to support high value manufacturing.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (IDA, EI, SFI)

Update: Delayed

A meeting between the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (JEI) and IDA was held in February 2015 to discuss progress to date and proposed next steps. Following a presentation to the Minister, it was agreed that a full business plan would be submitted to DJEI, led by IDA in collaboration with EI and SFI. Subsequently a Buildings Subcommittee has been established to work with industry to provide infrastructural specification and costings. Additionally, an industry workshop was conducted on 6 March 2015 with representation from almost 50 companies (MNC and indigenous). The objective of this workshop was to identify companies interested in Manufacturing 4.0 and Additive Manufacturing with a view to providing industry informed information on costs and operational requirements. The areas evaluated represent priority areas identified by industry for initial consideration. Delivery of this action was projected for Q1 2015, however it is anticipated that delivery will be delayed until Q3 2015, in order to collate industry intelligence to supplement the business case.

Action 354: An Action Plan specifically dealing with innovative and advanced forms of manufacturing will be developed, setting out short medium and long term actions in areas such as skills programmes, research and manufacturing facilities, research programmes etc which would make Ireland a world class destination for existing and new indigenous and global manufacturers.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (Innovative Manufacturing Group, DJEI)

Update: Complete

All parties have contributed the required material and a completed draft has been compiled. On completion of some further editing, design/layout work, the Plan will be disseminated in due course.

11.6 Green Economy

Action 358: Contribute to the development of a European Union list of products as part of the negotiation of a plurilateral agreement liberalising trade in Environmental Goods in significant international markets (e.g. USA, China).

Q1 Measure: Consult with EI to identify relevant products for Ireland as part of the development of the EU list. (DJEI, EI)

Update: Complete

Following liaison between DJEI and EI, Irish interests are represented on the EU list of nominated goods submitted to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by the 1 April deadline. A composite list will emerge over the course of the negotiations during the next few months.

Q1 Measure: Attend Technical Export Group meetings at EU level as required. (DJEI, EI)

Update: Complete

The Department has attended meetings of experts that have taken place during Q1.

Action 360: Examine the scope for improving access to finance for cleantech companies – which often have particular difficulties in accessing capital - to allow them to expand and export. (DJEI, EI and relevant actors)

Q1 Measure: Convene initial meeting to identify particular barriers to cleantech companies accessing finance. (DJEI, EI Industry representatives)

Update: Complete

A meeting took place in January 2015 with representatives from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and industry representatives at which the industry representatives set out the difficulties that companies in the cleantech sector are experiencing in accessing finance in Ireland to develop proposals that have potential jobs impacts. These include activities in areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and waste to energy technologies.

It was agreed that, by way of follow-up to the meeting, the industry representatives would prepare a paper summarising the issues that cleantech companies are facing, including case studies of companies, the types of finance they need, as well as the jobs impact of financing were to be forthcoming to support the development of projects/proposals. It was agreed that the group would meet again to consider the paper and examine the extent to which existing financial offerings (e.g. Credit Guarantee Scheme, SBCI, etc.) can match the needs of cleantech companies, as well as any gaps in current provision.

Annex 1: Evaluations and reviews to inform future policy development

Action 371: Review and disseminate of findings of 2014 Joint HEA/SOLAS employer survey.

Q1 Measure: Finalisation and publication of survey results. (HEA/SOLAS/QQI, Insight)

Update: Complete

The survey report is finalised and arrangements are being finalised for publication in the coming weeks.

Action 372: Continue to systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of the Springboard initiative to further strengthen the contribution of the programme to supporting job creation and retention, reducing unemployment and meeting the skills needs of emerging industries.

Q1 Measure: Continue to gather the full range of quantitative and qualitative data on Springboard inputs, outputs and outcomes. (HEA)

Update: Complete

A range of data on Springboard inputs, outputs and outcomes continues to be gathered and analysis of certain aspect of this data is expected shortly.

Action 382: Develop a strategy to improve the performance of Irish business in relation to securing contracts with International Financial Institutions.

Q1 Measure: Set up a public sector group to include key stakeholders. (EI, D/Finance, DJEI, DFAT)

Update: Complete

A public sector group including key stakeholders has been established to develop a strategy to improve the performance of Irish business in relation to securing contracts with International Financial Institutions. The Group held its first meeting at the end of March.