



An Roinn Fiontar,  
Trádála agus Fostaíochta  
Department of Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment

# Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

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*We will make Ireland the best place to succeed in business across all regions of our country, with vibrant enterprises, more high quality employment, growing trade, fair workplaces and higher productivity.*

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# Foreword



**Leo Varadkar T.D.,**  
*Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment*

This Strategy Statement is the result of extensive consultation and is the programme for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for the period 2021 to 2023.

I have agreed it with the Secretary General and it comes at a significant time taking account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. Our focus now must be to build resilience across enterprises to ensure the economy and society fully recovers after the pandemic. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen employment rights and champion the principles of responsible free enterprise and fair competition.

Future proofing our economy and society for the twin transition to a sustainable low carbon economy and the acceleration of digitalisation is central to our mission. Our relationships internationally are crucial as a small open economy and we will continue to build close and mutually beneficial relationships globally and grow our influence in the European Union.

I have confidence in the calibre and commitment of the Department's staff that we can meet the challenges in the period ahead. Together with my colleagues; Minister of State Robert Troy, TD and Minister of State Damien English TD, I look forward to working closely with the Secretary General and the staff of the Department, its Offices and Agencies, in implementing this strategy.



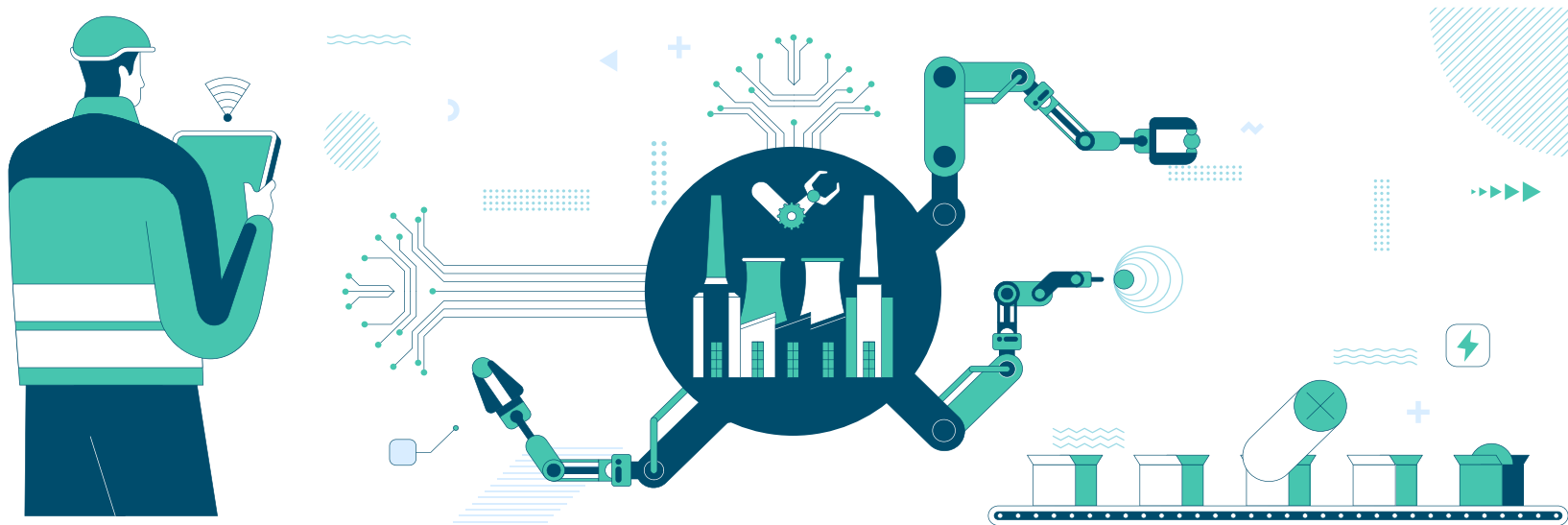
**Dr Orlaigh Quinn,**  
*Secretary General, Department  
of Enterprise, Trade and Employment*

This Strategy Statement outlines a clear and ambitious path for the Department for the next three years. It sets out our vision, our mission, our values, and six high level goals to deliver the priorities set out for us in the Programme for Government, ***Our Shared Future***, and the new responsibilities assigned to this Department including employment rights and trade promotion. Our goals are ambitious and set in the context of current challenges arising from Brexit, COVID-19 and ongoing global developments.

We will achieve our goals with detailed business planning set out by the Department and through its Offices and Agencies in our annual business planning. Progress on delivery will be monitored and reviewed by the Management Board to ensure this strategy is fully implemented.

We are focused on delivering high quality, responsive and relevant services for the benefit of all our stakeholders. As part of our planning for this Strategy, we sought input from a wide variety of stakeholders, and I would like to thank all those who made submissions, which has assisted us greatly.

We will work collaboratively with colleagues across Government, business, employer and worker representatives, other stakeholders and at EU and international level to achieve these goals. Our team of staff are our key asset and their commitment will ensure the successful delivery of our mission and ambitious goals over the period of the strategy.



## Vision

We will make Ireland the best place to succeed in business across all regions of our country, with vibrant enterprises, more high quality employment, growing trade, fair workplaces and higher productivity.

## Values

As a Department, we foster a culture of accountability, efficiency, innovation and value for money, which is rooted in a public service ethos of independence, equality, integrity, impartiality, openness, dignity and respect. As Civil Servants, we espouse the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, objectivity and quality, which are central to fulfilling our roles in serving Government, the democratic system and the public.

## Mission

We will lead on sustainable economic development and recovery through the creation and maintenance of high quality employment across all regions of our country:

- By championing enterprise
- Ensuring a competitive business base to incentivise work, enterprise, innovation and investment
- Strengthening global connections and promoting trade
- Promoting fair and competitive markets, best business practice
- Safe, flexible and decent workplaces through the regulatory and enforcement work of the Department, its Offices and its Agencies

# Introduction

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment leads in advising and implementing the Government's policies of stimulating the productive capacity of the economy and creating an environment which enables employment creation and sustainability. The Department is also charged with promoting fair competition in the marketplace, protecting consumers and safeguarding workers. Through its Offices and Agencies, the Department's remit covers a wide range of activity including:

- Leading on helping entrepreneurs and businesses create and sustain high quality employment across all regions of our country, by developing a strong indigenous enterprise base, attracting Foreign Direct Investment and increasing trade.
- Promoting quality employment, positive workplace relations, well-functioning dispute resolution mechanisms and a safe working environment.
- Creating a strong entrepreneurial culture.
- Assisting enterprise with their research and development needs to maintain and create new jobs and contribute to building a better society.
- Identifying the future skills needs of enterprise and working across Government to develop policies to meet these needs, including through upskilling.
- Leading a whole-of-Government approach to developing a competitive environment for investment, productivity and sustainable jobs.
- Ensuring our business regulation facilitates investment and development, competition in the market place, high standards of consumer protection and corporate governance, and provides Ireland with a competitive advantage in the global market.
- Working ambitiously across Government with our EU and international partners to achieve progress in EU and International fora, across a wide range of interests, including Brexit.

This strategy has been developed following changes in the functions of the Department on formation of the new Government. Trade promotion has been transferred from the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as responsibility for employment rights which transferred from the Department of Social Protection. The Department has also taken on responsibility for the Balance for Better Boards Group from the Department of Equality and the Trading Online Vouchers from the Department of Climate, Communications and Environment.

In addition, certain research and innovation functions transferred out from the Department to the newly created Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The strategy also takes into account the priorities and commitments in the Programme for Government, ***Our Shared Future***.

The strategy does not stand alone. A number of related policies and strategies will have an important role in driving the goals including the National Economic Plan, an economic framework for the next five years to drive economic recovery, along with the reviews of the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework.

In addition to COVID-19, the strategy has been developed at a time when we must also navigate the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union and the finalisation of their future trading relationship. Our connectedness to the EU agenda and internationally is fundamental to the shape of our domestic agenda. We will engage at EU level for policy and regulation that is pro-enterprise, trade and consumer and that promotes an innovation-friendly economy in the areas of digital platform and artificial intelligence policy and regulation.

Tackling climate change is a top priority and we must be cognisant of the European Green Deal which includes key policies aimed at ambitiously cutting emissions and ensuring that the EU's economy becomes sustainable. We can do this by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas that will result in economic growth and jobs. The strategy is also developed in the context of our role in contributing to progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in areas including employment, safe and secure working environments, fostering innovation and encouraging companies to adopt and report on sustainable practices.

Consultation offers the opportunity to inform and influence important policy and in this regard, we will continue to engage widely with stakeholders in identifying, understanding and developing policy responses to the issues and challenges facing the Department and its stakeholders.

# Guiding Principles

In a dynamic environment, globally and domestically, we will be guided by five over-arching principles that will permeate everything we do over the term of our Strategy:

## *Recovery and Resilience*

Our primary focus will be on economic recovery from the COVID-19 economic shock, and laying the foundations for sustainable, broadly based, regionally balanced growth.

Our overriding ambition is to return to at least pre-crisis employment levels of 2.36 million people in work by the end of 2023 - this would mean having more people at work than ever before. Across every business unit of our Department, we will seek out the enablers for business and employment growth and seek to remove barriers where they exist.

All jobs are critical to our vision of delivering sustainable full employment and higher standards of living in all regions of our country. We will ensure that all enterprises are assisted in their efforts to be more productive, innovative, competitive and, ultimately, more resilient.

## *Strengthening and Upholding Employment Rights*

We will ensure that employment rights are upheld and strengthened, recognising that we are entering a period of rapid transformation; promote better wages and more secure employment and; support work-life balance and gender equality.

## *Future-proofed Enterprise*

Ireland is committed to an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade) and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

We will ensure that enterprise plays its part in achieving these national goals. To be competitive and sustainable over the longer term, all businesses must innovate. Innovation will be central to our mission, both in terms of driving business transformation and the continuous digitisation of the economy, and through our own mode of working as a Department.

## *Impactful Relationships*

As a small open economy, our relationships across the globe have always mattered. As we embark on this Strategy, we want to maintain a close and mutually beneficial relationship with our nearest neighbour, the UK, and to grow our links in the EU and globally.

To achieve our vision for business and inclusive employment growth, we will be proactive in our domestic engagements across the Government system and with our stakeholders.

## *Responsible Enterprise*

We will continue to champion the principle of businesses operating responsibly at home and abroad; including the people they employ and work with; the community they operate in; the customers they engage with; and the environment they impact.

We will continue to build a regulatory environment to reinforce positive and responsible behaviours. As a Department we will lead by example.



# Our Strategic Goals



**Goal 1:** *Achieve a strong recovery and sustainable economic development through business growth and jobs growth, resilience and innovation.*



**Goal 2:** *Promote safety, better pay and conditions, more secure jobs and gender equality in the workplace.*



**Goal 3:** *Enhance our business regulatory environment and Ireland's attractiveness as a place to do business.*



**Goal 4:** *Deepen and extend Ireland's global business and trade in a fair and sustainable manner supportive of high labour standards and grow further the all-island economy.*



**Goal 5:** *Advance the green transition in enterprise, honouring our climate action commitments.*



**Goal 6:** *Build an innovative and agile department with a strong public service ethos driving effective and responsible policy implementation.*





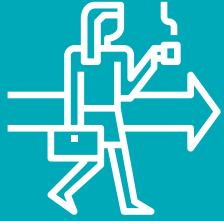
## Goal 1: Achieve a strong recovery and sustainable economic development through business growth and jobs growth, resilience and innovation.

### *How we achieve this*

- Assist viable businesses in recovering from, and responding to, the economic impacts of COVID-19 and Brexit and in transitioning to a low carbon economy, technological development and digitalisation.
- Develop policies with our enterprise agencies to create jobs, productivity growth, strong management and leadership, and drive transformation in employment intensive and locally traded sectors, with a focus on climate, digitalisation and skills.
- Support continued expansion of Ireland as a location for Foreign Direct Investment, and through growth and transformation of existing investments.
- Oversee the implementation of the national Remote Work Strategy to maximise economic, social and environmental benefits and provide opportunities for balanced regional development.
- Implement the enterprise workstreams set out in the National Economic Plan and refresh the Regional Enterprise Plans.
- Help SMEs to start up, scale up and access international markets, and to maximise productivity, regional balance and the transition to a digital and green economy.
- Develop a national clustering policy and framework to maximise the potential of clustering as a driver of business development, and to drive collaboration between multinationals and indigenous SMEs.
- Secure enhanced access to finance for SMEs, including microfinance, loan guarantees, and seed and venture capital.
- Stimulate the digital transformation of manufacturing industry to achieve a competitive, innovation-driven manufacturing hub at the frontier of the fourth industrial revolution.
- Lead the cross-Government implementation of the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy that aims to optimise socio-economic opportunities while also paying attention to ethical and societal considerations.
- Assist Ireland's enterprise base to access talent from overseas, through responsive and robust economic migration policy.

### *Outcome*

*An economic recovery, with at least 2.36 million people in work, underpinned by a competitive and conducive environment with a resilient, innovative and productive enterprise base, driving employment growth in all regions, particularly in the context of COVID-19 and Brexit, digital transformation and other global developments.*



## Goal 2: Promote safety, better pay and conditions, more secure jobs and gender equality in the workplace.

### *How we achieve this*

- Ensure that employment rights legislation, including insolvency and redundancy, continues to be fit for purpose and is updated to reflect national and international developments, including at EU, Court of Justice and International Labour Organisation level.
- Introduce a fair and affordable statutory sick pay scheme for Ireland, designed in consultation with unions and employer groups.
- Deliver positive workplace relations, well-functioning dispute resolution mechanisms and robust enforcement of employment rights.
- Ensure that the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court continue to provide a world-class workplace relations service and employment rights framework.
- Through the Construction Contracts Adjudication Service, ensure that sub-contractors can swiftly resolve payment disputes.
- Progress to a Living Wage over the lifetime of the Government and oversee sectoral wage setting in certain economic sectors.
- Provide support for the Low Pay Commission.
- Ensure that a robust and effective occupational safety and health regime is in place for workers and assists employers in operating safe, productive and competitive businesses, including the COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocol.
- Lead and coordinate through the Irish National Accreditation Board, the development of a new Accreditation Strategy for Ireland and, having regard to its expanded mandate, work to bring bodies working in the area of cyber security and data protection within the regulatory framework.
- Ensure Ireland has a strong chemical regulatory framework in place by leading across Government and working with industry.
- Work with the Local Authorities to ensure the new Dangerous Substances licensing and enforcement regime is developed and implemented.

### *Outcome*

*A policy, legislative and institutional framework which enables quality employment, good industrial relations and safe working environments, thereby assisting a strong economy and a fair society, balancing flexibility and security and providing protection for all employees.*



## Goal 3: Enhance our business regulatory environment and Ireland's attractiveness as a place to do business.

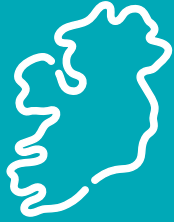
### *How we achieve this*

- Analyse and develop policy recommendations on the competitiveness and productivity performance of the economy, including the recommendations of the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council.
- Provide a progressive Intellectual Property regime that stimulates economic growth by encouraging innovation and creativity across society and which is responsive to the challenges and opportunities of a digital economy.
- Ensure that corporate and regulatory policy and legislation is responsive and reflects international best practice to facilitate enterprise and entrepreneurship, while also protecting employees, members, creditors and consumers with appropriate safeguards.
- Develop proposals to reduce the costs of doing business, including insurance market reform.
- Establish the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement as an independent corporate enforcement agency.
- Maintain strong connection between enterprise and the higher education sector to ensure that future skills needs of business are met, including through upskilling.
- Continue to work collaboratively with colleagues across Government and to engage with stakeholders to ensure that our taxation regime works for all businesses from self-employed sole traders, to local SMEs and right up to large multinationals.
- Ensure effective business regulation and reduced administrative burdens, without undermining the policy goals of regulation and the protections provided, through the development of policy that is evidence-based, employing the SME Test, stakeholder consultation and impact analysis.

### *Outcome*

*A business environment facilitating investment and development, competition in the market place, and high standards of consumer protection.*





## Goal 4: Deepen and extend Ireland's global business and trade in a fair and sustainable manner supportive of high labour standards and grow further the all-island economy.

### *How we achieve this*

- Work with our EU and international partners and build and strengthen alliances to shape emerging policies, regulation and international agreements that impact Ireland's economic and business environment.
- Advocate for new and exploit existing EU Free Trade Agreements to expand Ireland's trade into new markets.
- Ensure that Ireland's position on all trade deals supports the transition to a sustainable global economy including the aims of the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Work across Government and with our EU partners to identify and remove barriers to trade, particularly in services, to secure a fully functioning EU Single Market for the benefit of our exporters, businesses and other consumers.
- Advocate at EU level for policy and regulation that promotes an innovation-friendly digital economy.
- Assist enterprise to enter and benefit from international markets and to expand into new markets.
- Work with our agencies as part of Team Ireland abroad to promote our exports and highlight Ireland's attractiveness for investment and innovation, to capitalise on global shifts in business models and emerging disruptive technologies and attract the next wave of technology and business activity.
- Reform and re-mandate the Export Trade Council and progress Joint Economic Commissions.
- Develop a new national Strategy for Trade, Tourism and Investment, including governance structures.
- Carry out an economic and sustainability assessment of the EU/Mercosur trade agreement to inform future action.
- Ensure rigorous enforcement of export controls and trade sanctions, in support of global security and human rights.
- Strengthen important supply chains on the island of Ireland to grow cross-border trade, and foster opportunities for collaboration in the context of a Shared Island.
- Work jointly with the European Commission and EU Member States to ensure that the WTO is at the heart of a global, rules-based, multilateral trading system, delivering on its negotiating, dispute settlement and trade capacity building and outreach remits.
- Lead on Ireland's engagement with the Council of Europe in relation to the European Social Charter and the International Labour Organisation, coordinating their wide-ranging agendas across Government with a focus on employment and labour market standards.

### *Outcome*

*New enterprise opportunities in an all-island economy, in international trade and investment, and increased and new types of FDI investments. Ireland's interests strongly represented internationally and as part of the EU's strategic agenda for business, consumers and employees.*



## Goal 5: Advance the green transition in enterprise, honouring our Climate Action commitments.

### *How we achieve this*

- Contribute to Ireland's 2050 carbon neutrality ambition by developing and implementing policies to deliver on the enterprise target in the annual Climate Action Plans to abate carbon.
- Introduce financial and technical measures to assist industry and to support their competitiveness in moving to more sustainable environmental practice.
- Stimulate enterprise participation in EU value chains for Important Projects of Common European Interest in developing technologies to reduce carbon emissions.
- Develop an online carbon calculator tool for businesses to help them to plan carbon emissions reduction.
- Progress the development of new EU and global standards development.
- Embed climate action in Departmental policies and programmes and ensure it is reflected in policy and programme implementation by all agencies.
- Reflect the circular and waste economy strategies in developments in Ecodesign, production and products.
- Contribute to progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), lead on six SDG targets and share responsibility for another two targets in areas including employment, safe and secure working environments, fostering innovation and encouraging companies to adopt and report on sustainable practices.
- Lead by example in reducing emissions in our organisation by continuing with our Green Team Initiatives, implementing energy saving projects and embedding further a Green Culture in the Department. Continue work with the OPW particularly in the areas of energy conservation, waste generation and bio-diversity.

### *Outcome*

*Alignment with the EU Green Deal and the Government target of a 7% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, followed by a net zero economy by 2050, whilst minimising the competitiveness impact and fostering opportunities for growth in the green economy.*



## Goal 6: Build an innovative and agile Department with a strong public service ethos driving effective and responsible policy implementation.

### *How we achieve this*

- Develop an Innovation Strategy to implement the 'Declaration on Public Service Innovation' and encourage our team to innovate in their roles, cultivate new partnerships and incorporate diverse views when designing and delivering services.
- Maintain a supportive HR strategy and invest in learning and career development to enable all staff to grow and develop.
- Implement our ICT strategy to deliver stable, secure and scalable digital and data solutions and services, optimising the user and citizen experience.
- Take wellbeing initiatives in the Department and develop corporate social responsibility initiatives under Innovate@ETE.
- Implement our Return to Work Safely COVID-19 Response Plan, when possible to do so.
- Implement a programme of Remote Working to help staff achieve a positive work/life balance, while maintaining effective service delivery.
- Ensure a strong commitment to diversity and equality for our staff and in the services we deliver as a Department, engaging with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and in line with the Act, 2014.
- Ensure best value for money and alignment of Departmental expenditure with policy priorities, informed by data, evidence and robust evaluation.
- Continue to demonstrate excellence in corporate governance which will provide transparency and ensure value for money.
- Implement our new Digital Communication Strategy to support effective communication with our staff, stakeholders and the general public.
- Ensure compliance with the obligations on public bodies to make buildings and services accessible in line with Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005.
- Streamline and enhance our accommodation in order to optimise space, future proof our buildings and deliver savings in energy usage.
- Ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all staff and visitors to the Department in compliance with statutory provisions, through the effective implementation of a Department Safety Statement and Safety Policy.

### *Outcome*

*A Department with staff who are innovative, flexible, responsive and agile, ensuring high standards of public service and corporate governance, and optimised resources to deliver our Strategy, Mission and Goals.*





## Measuring Success and Implementing this Strategy

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Dashboard which can be accessed on [enterprise.gov.ie](https://enterprise.gov.ie) presents approximately 60 economic indicators across the areas of jobs, enterprise and innovation. A summary of UK and Northern Ireland data is also provided in the context of a focus on Brexit and its implications from an Irish trade perspective.

The data is sourced from national and international sources such as the CSO and Eurostat, as well as from Business Units across the Department and our Agencies and Offices.

The strategic objectives, actions and outcomes outlined in this Statement of Strategy will inform and be reflected in the annual business and risk management plans produced by each business area across the Department. These will contain specific targets which each business area will be expected to deliver on each year, the aggregation of which should ensure that the commitments outlined in the Statement are met. Heads of business are required to report progress on unit business plans twice each year.

The Annual Report will detail the progress achieved each year on the strategic objectives and actions contained in this Statement of Strategy.

Developed by the Department of Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment

**January 2021**