



**An Roinn Gnó,
Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta**
Department of Business,
Enterprise and Innovation

Annual Report 2018

September 2019
Dbei.gov.ie

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Foreword

I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2018, which outlines the broad range of actions and initiatives undertaken by my Department in 2018 in delivering on its wide mandate and its commitments under the Programme for Partnership Government.

Employment continued to grow strongly in 2018 with the position in relation to regional employment being particularly encouraging. The seventh, and last, Action Plan for Jobs 2018 was published in March 2018 and, following a Government decision in July 2018, work commenced on a new economic framework, Future Jobs Ireland, to ensure our economy is resilient in the face of the challenges ahead. Future Jobs Ireland addresses a range of strategic actions arising from Enterprise 2025 Renewed, a refreshed national enterprise policy. Future Jobs Ireland was officially launched in March 2019.

We have refreshed and refocussed the Regional Action Plans Plans to ensure their continued impact and relevance to 2020. These nine new Regional Enterprise Plans will ensure that we continue to deliver jobs across the country in all regions and can be robust to address the challenges we face, including Brexit.

Preparing for Brexit has remained a key focus for the Department throughout 2018. The Department has been working assiduously to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent approach to Brexit while continuing contingency planning for a hard Brexit. This preparation has included extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders and with businesses.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and support of staff across the broad range of responsibilities of the Department, its Offices and Agencies throughout the year. I would also like to acknowledge the continuing work and commitment of my Ministerial colleagues Pat Breen T.D and John Halligan T.D.

HEATHER HUMPHREYS, T.D.
MINISTER FOR BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION

This annual report details the progress delivered on our Statement of Strategy across the diverse business areas of the Department during 2018. The report outlines the many deliverables and positive developments that took place in 2018, including a very strong job creation performance by the enterprise agencies' client companies. There was a continued focus on regional jobs growth in 2018, and this is reflected in improved employment statistics throughout the regions. During the year, we worked to put additional measures in place to prepare for Brexit and launched a comprehensive action plan setting out the actions we will take to deal with the different scenarios that could emerge. We also continued to work closely with business on Brexit awareness and preparation.

We also continued to focus on improving competitiveness and productivity, promoting innovation and growth through investment in research and development, promoting fair competition for businesses and consumers, ensuring fit for purpose, modern company law, safeguarding worker's rights including their entitlement to occupational safety and health, supporting and facilitating a positive industrial relations environment, providing appropriate and independent regulatory and enforcement capability and proactively representing Ireland's interests in relevant EU and International fora.

During 2018, we continued to work with the European Commission and Member States to ensure that Ireland's interests were promoted and safeguarded in EU trade negotiations and in bringing several trade agreements to a successful conclusion. The Department also provided significant support to our Ministers in representing Ireland's interests at the EU Competitiveness and Trade Councils. In 2018 the number of Ministerial-led Trade Missions increased once again, year-on-year. These events and the wider Trade Mission programme are part of the Department's wider commitment to diversifying Ireland's exports market, post-Brexit.

We are committed to enhancing our capacity to deliver through our staff and culture. The Department plays a central role in 'Promoting a Culture of Innovation in the Public Service' under the Public Sector Reform initiative. Within the Department, the New Ways of Working group continued to make progress on projects around mobility, recognition, skills and innovative work practices.

I would like to thank the staff of the Department and its Offices and Agencies for their ongoing commitment. I would also like to acknowledge the many stakeholders that have engaged with us positively during the year, which is greatly valued, I look forward to working further with them in the year ahead.

**DR ORLAIGH QUINN, SECRETARY GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION**

Vision

WE WILL MAKE IRELAND THE BEST PLACE TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS, DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE FULL EMPLOYMENT AND HIGHER STANDARDS OF LIVING ACROSS ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

Mission

WE WILL LEAD ON THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF HIGH QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE FULL EMPLOYMENT ACROSS ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY BY CHAMPIONING ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION ACROSS GOVERNMENT, BY SUPPORTING A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS BASE TO INCENTIVISE WORK, ENTERPRISE, TRADE, INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT AND BY PROMOTING FAIR AND COMPETITIVE MARKETS AS WELL AS BEST BUSINESS PRACTICE THROUGH THE REGULATORY AND ENFORCEMENT WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT, ITS OFFICES AND ITS AGENCIES.

Values

AS A DEPARTMENT, WE FOSTER A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY, EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY, WHICH IS ROOTED IN A PUBLIC SERVICE ETHOS OF INDEPENDENCE, 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 SUPPORTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND SERVING THE PEOPLE.

Introduction to Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation plays a key role in implementing the Government's policies of stimulating the productive capacity of the economy and creating an environment which supports job creation and maintenance. The Department also has a remit to promote fair competition in the marketplace, protect consumers and safeguard workers.

Through its Agencies and Offices, the Department's remit covers a wide range of activity including:

- Facilitating the start-up and growth of indigenous enterprises,
- Attracting foreign direct investment,
- Growing and deepening export opportunities,
- Identification, formulation and development of Ireland's international trade policies
- Improving competitiveness and productivity,
- Promoting innovation and growth through investment in research and development,
- Promoting fair competition for businesses and consumers,
- Ensuring fit for purpose, modern company law,
- Safeguarding worker's rights including their entitlement to occupational safety and health,
- Supporting and facilitating a positive industrial relations environment,
- Making evidence based policy, informed by research, analysis and robust evaluations,
- Identifying the future skills needs of enterprise,
- Providing appropriate and independent regulatory and enforcement capability and
- Representing and negotiating for Ireland's interests in relevant EU fora, including:
 - Competitiveness Council (incorporating Internal Market, Industry and Research),
 - General Affairs Council (meeting in its Trade formation)and relevant international bodies:
 - World Trade Organisation (WTO),
 - International Labour Organisation (ILO),
 - Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
 - World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

Offices & Agencies of the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation



In addition to these:

Local Enterprise Offices: The Department through Enterprise Ireland sets policy for, funds and manages the operation of 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).

InterTradelreland: The Department co-funds InterTradelreland, the North South Body that promotes cross border trade between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

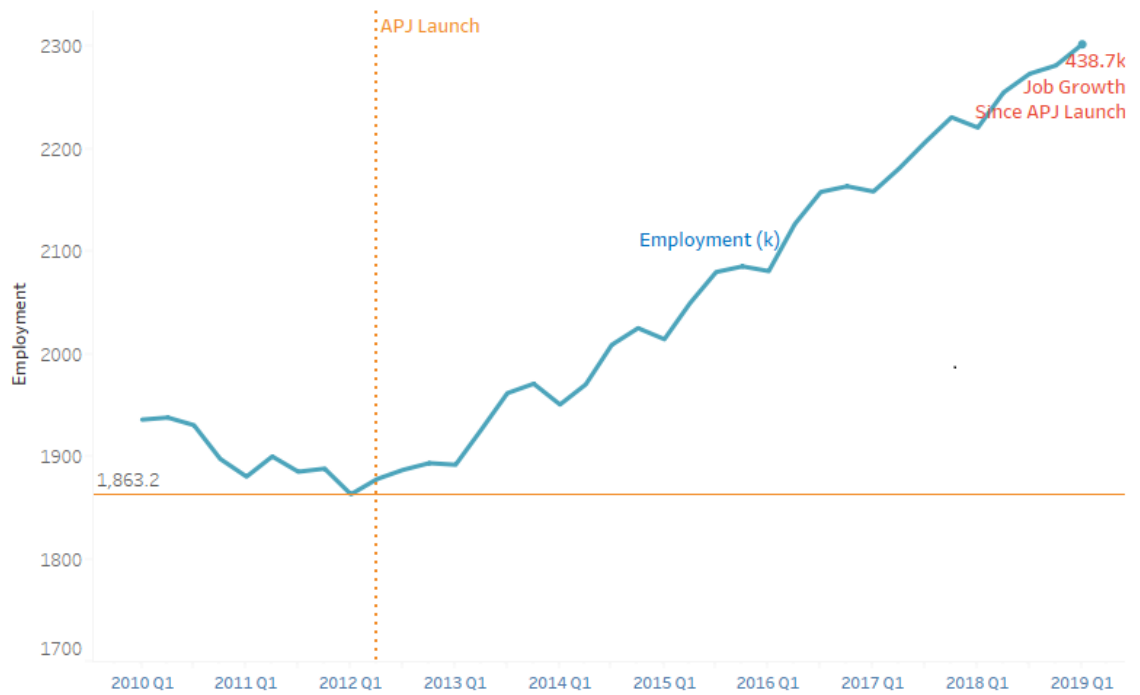
Management Board

Membership	
Dr Orlaigh Quinn	Secretary General
Clare Dunne	Assistant Secretary, Workplace Regulation and Economic Migration Division
David Hegarty	Assistant Secretary, Enterprise Strategy, Competitiveness & Evaluation Division
Declan Hughes	Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Enterprise Division
Philip Kelly	Assistant Secretary, EU Affairs, Trade Policy and Licensing Division
Dermot Mulligan	Assistant Secretary, Innovation and Investment Division
Pauline Mulligan ¹	Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services Division
Breda Power	Assistant Secretary, Commerce, Consumer and Competition Division
Michael O'Leary	Governance & Management Support - Secretary to the Management Board

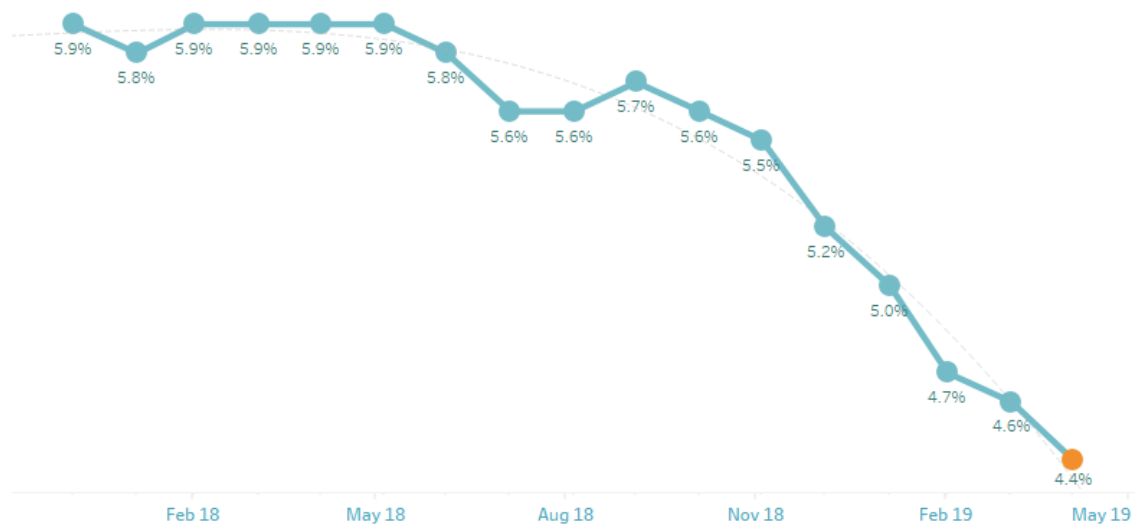
¹ Pauline Mulligan joined the Management Board at beginning of September 2018 as Head of the newly established Corporate Services Division

Central Statistics Office Employment Data

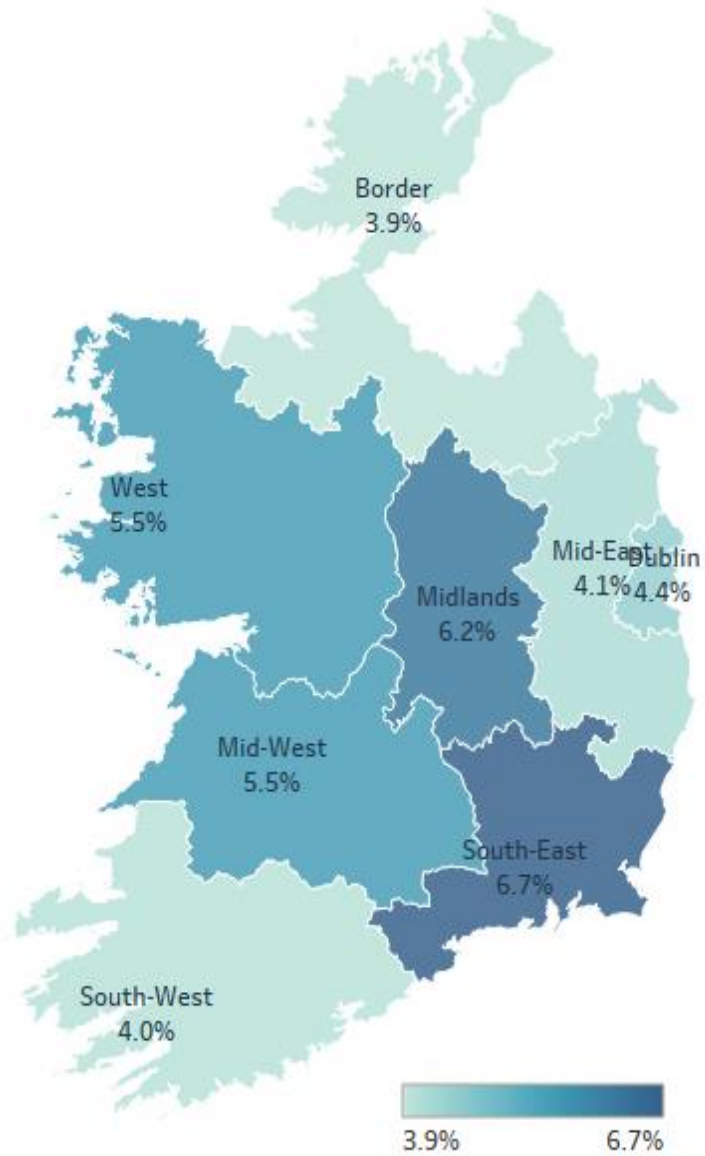
Employment Growth since APJ Launch



Monthly Unemployment Rate Source: CSO



Regional Unemployment Rates (2019 Q1) Source CSO



Key Achievements in 2018 include:

The 7th **Action Plan for Jobs** was published in March 2018, containing 55 actions and 105 measures to be implemented across Government Departments and agencies. Some 49,900 jobs were created in 2018. The results of the concerted action plan on job creation since 2012 demonstrates that the process is working. Almost 393,000 more people were at work in Q4 2018 than in 2012 when the first Plan was launched. Unemployment has declined from over 15% in early 2012 to 5.5% in December 2018 and further reduced to 4.4% in May 2019. Following a Government decision in July 2018, work commenced on a new economic framework, **Future Jobs Ireland**, to ensure our economy is resilient in the face of the challenges ahead. **Future Jobs Ireland** replaces the **Action Plan for Jobs** and focuses on a range of strategic actions arising from **Enterprise 2025 Renewed** a refreshed national enterprise policy, completed in March 2019.

2018 was a very strong year for job creation among **Enterprise Ireland (EI)** clients with 18,896 new jobs created and net job creation of 8,212. 2018 employment in EI client companies represented the highest in the history of the agency with 217,186 people now employed in companies supported by EI.

IDA Ireland clients created 14,040 net new jobs over the course of 2018, with every region in Ireland posting net gains in jobs. At the end of 2018 there were 229,057 people working in IDA Ireland client companies, the highest in IDA Ireland's history. This figure surpasses the five-year target of 209,000 which was set in 2015 in IDA Ireland's "Winning; Foreign Direct

Surveys undertaken in 2018, revealed a strong performance by **agency client companies** in 2017 with, **exports** amounting to approximately €213.8bn, up 9.1% from the previous year. These companies spent €46.4bn on payroll, Irish materials and Irish services in 2017.

The nine new **Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020**, building on the previous Regional Action Plans for Jobs 2015-2018, are crucial in meeting the Government's ambition to create by 2020 an additional 200,000 jobs, of which 135,000 are outside the Dublin region. CSO data has shown an increase of 50,500 people in employment across the State in the year Q4 2017 to Q4 2018, just under half (48.7%) of the jobs created were located outside of Co. Dublin. The number of people in employment has increased in five of the eight regions in the year from Q4 2017 to Q4 2018. By the end of 2018, just two regions (South-East, Midlands) had an unemployment rate that is more than the one percentage point above the State average.

In 2018 the **Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)** saw continued growth in jobs with a total of 8,007 new jobs created and a net job increase of 3,656. The LEOs also provided training to 34,938 people and mentoring, including one to one mentoring support to 9,625 participants across all 31 LEOs.

A significant body of research was conducted on **Brexit** and informed the development of a wide range of mitigating actions:

Publication of **Copenhagen Economics study, Ireland and the Impacts of Brexit**, commissioned by the Department, adding to the existing evidence base needed to underpin the Department's policy positions and sectoral responses in relation to Brexit. A number of presentations on the study were also delivered to stakeholders and across Government including at the launch of the study in Croke Park in February 2018

The challenges of Brexit were highlighted in research for the Copenhagen Study and actions taken to mitigate these challenges include:

Development and publication of the Department's **Brexit Preparedness Action Plan**, capturing actions necessary to prepare for both an orderly and a 'disorderly' Brexit scenario. Extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders and with businesses on Brexit, including through the Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges and the Deco-ordination structures such as the Co-ordination Group on Brexit and the Cross Divisional Brexit Senior Officials Group.

In March 2018, the Department launched the **Brexit Loan Scheme**. The €300m Scheme provides short term working capital to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees to help them innovate, change or adapt to mitigate their Brexit challenges.

The new **Future Growth Loan Scheme** was announced in the budget as part of the Government's response to Brexit. In December 2018, the European Investment Fund Agreement Act 2018 was enacted. This enabled the Minister to enter into agreements with the European Investment Fund and arrangements to establish the Scheme with the European Investment Fund and Strategic Bank Corporation Ireland were signed. The scheme will provide a longer-term facility, 8 to 10 years, of up to €300m to support strategic, long-term investment in a post-Brexit environment at competitive rates. The scheme will be available to eligible businesses, including those in the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, in 2019.

The **Irish/EU Technical Working Group on State Aid** led by the Department was established in 2017 and comprises representatives from DG Competition, DAFM and EI. Its mandate is to consider how supports for Irish companies impacted by Brexit can be designed within the State Aid Framework. During 2018, the Working Group examined and explored a range of opportunities within State Aid rules including the development of the Future Growth Loan Scheme under GBER rules, the expansion of Ireland's Rescue and Restructuring Scheme to include Temporary Liquidity aid. The Group continues to work closely with DG Agri to explore the range of opportunities under the Agriculture and Forestry State Aid Guidelines to provide support to those enterprises in the food sector who are impacted by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

In 2018 **Microfinance Ireland** approved €5.4m in funding to 384 small businesses throughout the country, supporting the creation or sustainment of 856 jobs.

In July a new **Credit Guarantee Scheme** was launched that aims to assist viable SMEs which, under normal lending criteria are unable to borrow from their bank, in accessing credit. Since the CGS first became operational in October 2012 to the end of 2018, 651 facilities totalling €103.2m have been sanctioned which have helped to support 4,387 jobs.

In Budget 2019 the announcement was made that there would be a new round of the **Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2019 – 2024)**. The new €175m Seed & Venture Capital Scheme will be broadly similar to the previous schemes in terms of the spread of SMEs that benefit from investments and will seek to maximise the impact of its funds in the regions.

On the 9 November 2018 the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Government of Ireland, through Enterprise Ireland and the European Investment Fund (EIF) announced the signing of an agreement to double the size of the existing **European Angels Fund Ireland (EAF Ireland)** to €40m. By increasing the fund to €40m, it is anticipated that up to 100 companies will be supported over the next 10 years.

In 2018, Ireland worked closely with the European Union Commission and Member States to bring several **Trade Agreements** to a successful conclusion and to ensure that Ireland's interests were promoted and safeguarded in European Union trade negotiations. The number of Ministerial-led **Trade Missions** in 2018 increased, once again, year-on-year. The Trade Missions programme is part of the Department's wider commitment to diversifying Ireland's exports market, post-Brexit. While the UK will continue to be a very important market for Irish exporters, the Department is keen to ensure that new opportunities are created for Irish companies wishing to expand their presence or indeed introduce their products to new markets. In that regard increasing Irish presence in Eurozone markets was a key priority for the Department in 2018 and will continue to be. A key objective of the Department's engagement on these missions is to highlight the importance of new market access and to promote the benefits of countries using Ireland as a launchpad into Europe.

As part of the implementation of **Innovation 2020**, the Government's Research Priorities were refreshed, Ireland's total of funding secured under Horizon 2020 increased to €630m and Ireland joined the European Southern Observatory.

In the 2018 **European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS)**, Ireland is now at 9th place in the EU, moving up one place among the 28 Member States.

The first Call under the Government's new **€500m Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF)** was implemented in 2018. 27 collaborative research projects with high commercial impact were awarded funding in excess of €70m following a competitive process based on international review. The consortia that were awarded funding represent large firms, SMEs

and higher education institutions across Ireland. A second Call under the DTIF will issue in 2019.

Science Foundation Ireland launched a new €100m programme of investment in new **Centres of Research Training (CRT)** with a special focus on Data and ICT Skills for the Future. The CRTs will provide places for 700 PhD/research masters students over four intakes, starting in 2019. The CRT programme is a response to the commitment in Innovation 2020 to increase the enrolment (and output) of high level researchers in areas aligned to the skills needs of enterprise. In 2018, Science Foundation Ireland, received a total capital budget of €180.99m, an increase of €7.89m over 2017. In addition to its new CRT programme, other key funding announcements from SFI included the renewal of 6 SFI Research Centres (AMBER - Materials Research Centre, APC Microbiome Institute, Insight – Data Analytics, IPIC – Photonics, MaREI – Renewable Energy, and SSPC – Pharmaceutical Manufacturing). These followed a comprehensive international review process and the launch of the Research Infrastructure Programme, 2018, to support the research community in building and sustaining the required infrastructural capacity to accomplish high quality, high impact and innovative research in areas of science and engineering.

Publication of **Focus on Sectors**, a series of briefings on 16 important sectors which provide an overview of international trends for the sectors concerned and information on how the sectors are developing in Ireland.

In the area of **legislation**, important developments include:

Enactment of the Industrial Development (Amendment) Act 2018 which ensures that the IDA has the statutory powers it needs to continue purchasing properties to make available to multinational companies to encourage them to locate and create jobs in Ireland, particularly in the regions.

Enactment of the Companies (Statutory Audits) Act 2018 which enhances IAASA's supervisory, investigation and sanction powers. It includes powers for IAASA to add to auditing standards and to add to the requirements of certain reports made by auditors including audit reports. It amends the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts and Friendly Societies Acts by abolishing the term public auditor and replacing it with a statutory auditor. It simplified the rules for companies filing annual returns.

Enactment of the European Investment Fund Agreement Act 2018 which enables the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to enter into agreements with the European Investment Fund for the purpose of facilitating access to finance for qualifying enterprises; and to provide for matters connected therewith. The first such agreement underpins the Future Growth Loan Scheme, launched in 2019.

The **Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2018**, was published on 13 August 2018. This important measure aims to encourage more personal injury claims to be settled within the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) process. PIAB facilitates the objective assessment of damages at a much lower delivery cost and in a far shorter timeframe than through litigation. Therefore, by encouraging more claimants to finalise their cases through the PIAB model rather than resorting to litigation should lead to cost savings in the claims environment. This is good for society as a whole as it delivers compensation more quickly, with lower costs and predictable outcomes.

In July 2018 the **Personal Injuries Commission (PIC)** completed its work with the publication in September 2018 of its Second and Final Report, following its approval by the Government. The Report makes ten recommendations, the implementation of which will be a matter for each of the bodies responsible. These recommendations are in addition to the four recommendations made in the PIC's first report.

In September 2018, the **Review of Economic Migration Policy** was published. The review found that the current employment permits system is largely robust but needs some adjustments to ensure that it continues to be responsive to changing labour market needs. An action plan has been developed to progress the implementation of the recommendations in the short to long term. Changes were made, by way of amendment to the Employment Permit Regulations, to the employment permit occupation lists which provided for the removal from the ineligible occupation list by quota the majority of chef grades and certain specific occupations in the agri-food sector. The Employment Permits section experienced a large increase in demand for employment permits throughout 2018. The number of applications received during 2018 increased by 27% compared with 2017 and the total number of employment permits that issued, at 13,398, was up 16% on 2017.

The Department leads on Ireland's engagement with the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**. As a Titulaire (speaking and voting rights) member of the ILO Governing Body Ireland played an active role at the March and November meetings of the GB. Ireland was elected to the position of Regional Coordinator for the Western European Group. The Department led a tripartite delegation to the International Labour Conference in June led by Minister of State Pat Breen, T.D., Danny McCoy (CEO of Ibec) and Patricia King (General Secretary of ICTU). President Michael D Higgins delivered the keynote address on the future of work and the role of the ILO and the multilateral system. Ireland was elected to the position of Rapporteur to the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards.

Health and Safety Authority. In 2018, the number of workplace deaths reported to the Health and Safety Authority fell to 39, the lowest number since records began 30 years ago. This is a decline in the number of workplace deaths from 2017, when 48 people lost their lives. It is also more than half the peak figure set in 1995, when 79 employees died in a workplace accident.

In 2018, the Health and Safety Authority carried out 9,830 workplace inspections and investigations. It also completed 289 chemical product market surveillance assessments in 2018. Six consumer products which were found to be in contravention were removed from the market. Action is ongoing to remove 14 jewellery items found to be in contravention with REACH.

BeSMART is the Health and Safety Authority's free online tool designed to help small business owners/managers to prepare risk assessments and safety statements for their workplace. BeSMART users increased by 9,357 in 2018, to 56,329 in total.

At the beginning of September 2018, the corporate functions which support the Department in delivering on its enterprise mission and goals were brought together into a newly established **Corporate Services Division**. This will lead to more effective and streamlined support from the corporate functions optimising synergies and efficiencies across the Department.

Statement of Strategy 2018-2021

GOAL 1: LEAD ON CREATING AND SUSTAINING HIGH QUALITY ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT ACROSS ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY BY SUPPORTING A STRONG INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE BASE, THE CONTINUED ATTRACTION OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AND A STRONG ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

OVERALL JOB CREATION

In the year to Quarter 4 2018, 49,900 jobs were created. Almost 393,000 more people were at work in Quarter 4 2018 than in 2012, when the first Action Plan for Jobs was launched. Unemployment declined from over 15% in early 2012 to 5.5% in December 2018.

PERFORMANCE OF CLIENT COMPANIES OF ENTERPRISE AGENCIES

The Department undertakes annual surveys of the client companies of the enterprise development agencies (Enterprise Ireland and IDA) to provide evidence based research to inform enterprise policy.

Annual Employment Survey of Client Companies of Enterprise Development Agencies

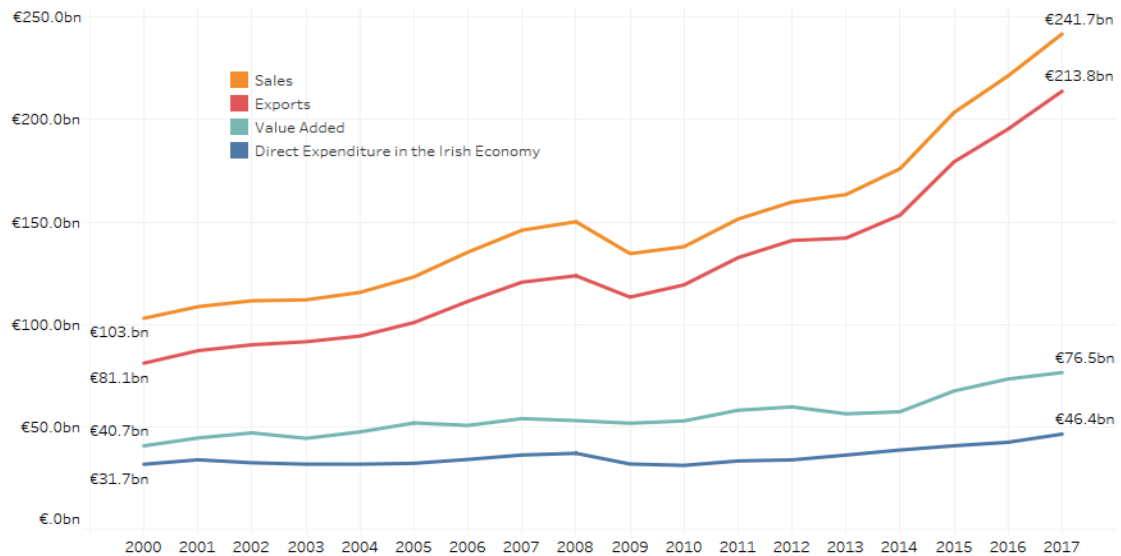
This survey is a census of employment in approximately 8,000 client companies of the enterprise development agencies. The latest available headline results for 2018 was that total employment (full-time and part-time) reached 446,243. This was a net increase of 22,252 in EI and IDA Ireland clients in 2018, an increase of 5.3% on 2017.

ANNUAL BUSINESS SURVEY OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF AGENCY CLIENTS

This is an annual survey of agency client companies with 10 or more employees (approximately 4,200 companies). End of year results for 2017 were collected in 2018:

- Total sales amounted to €241.7bn in 2017, an increase of 9.2% since 2016
- Total exports amounted to €213.8bn in 2017, an increase of 9.1% since 2016
- Value added increased to €76.5bn in 2017 from €73.3bn in 2016
- Direct expenditure in the Irish economy (Payroll, Irish materials and Irish services) increased by 9.2% to €46.4bn in 2017.

KEY BUSINESS INDICATORS ALL AGENCY FIRMS, 2000-2017, SOURCE ABSEI



ENTERPRISE IRELAND

Reflecting the strength of the Irish economy and of global markets in 2018, Enterprise Ireland (EI) client companies reported strong employment performance. EI's 2018 employment survey reported the highest employment in the history of the agency with 217,186 people employed in EI supported companies; 8,212 new jobs were created after losses are taken into account with employment growth across all regions.

Job creation was evenly spread across the country, with every county seeing job increases. EI'S clients play an important role in the regional economy, for example:

- In 2018, 64% of employment was in client companies located outside of Dublin;
- 61% of new jobs reported were created in companies located outside of Dublin;
- Enterprise Ireland supported companies sustain approximately 380,000 direct and indirect jobs nationwide; and
- The total spend of Enterprise Ireland clients in the Irish economy across payroll and goods and services purchased reached €26.79bn in 2017.

This strong performance by Irish businesses can be attributed to the continuing growth of an entrepreneurial climate for start-ups, allied to strong jobs growth in the Construction (8% increase), Engineering (5% increase), Lifesciences (8% increase), Digital Technology (6% increase), Electronics (7% increase), Food (3% increase) and ICT sectors (3% increase).

In 2018, Enterprise Ireland scheduled 215 trade events in Ireland and overseas. Of these, 62 were Ministerial led Trade Missions and trade events. This extensive programme of international trade events is central to achieving an increase in exports to the Eurozone and global markets. In 2018, Enterprise Ireland continued to scale its international export

marketing campaign through “The Irish Advantage” which is a digital export promotion campaign focused on stimulating awareness of Irish products and services in international markets and encouraging buyers to source from Ireland. The campaign is live in 17 markets and 10 sectors / sub-sectors and will be further expanded in 2019 to new markets and key growth sectors where opportunities for Irish exporters to diversify in the context of Brexit have been identified and prioritised on the basis of their capabilities.

Details of EI’s strategic response to Brexit is included under Goal 6.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICES

The 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the ‘first-stop-shop’ for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own business. During 2018:

- A total of 8,007 new full and part-time jobs (gross) were created by LEO clients overall;
- Taking into account losses in the client company portfolio, there was a net increase of 3,656 jobs (full and part-time); and
- The LEO portfolio in 2018 consisted of 7,164 client companies, with an employment total of 36,666 (full-time and part-time jobs).

Key to the delivery of these jobs has been the provision of a range of development supports aimed at building company capacity and performance among the micro-enterprise sector:

- In 2018, the LEOs paid out direct financial assistance to 1,259 business projects, to the value of €18.2m. Of these, 273 were priming grants for start-up companies of almost €6m.

In addition to direct financial assistance, the LEOs supported an even wider cohort of entrepreneurs and small businesses in 2018 through other soft supports:

- Start Your Own Business (SYOB) Training – 3,944 participants on 250 programmes;
- 2,029 business development training programs (including SYOB) involving in total 34,938 participants;
- Provision of tailored one-to-one mentoring support to 9,625 participants;
- 326 referrals to Micro Finance Ireland (158 grant applications approved) supporting the creation of 295 jobs; and
- Promotion of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVS) with 1,107 businesses.

A very positive outcome of LEO investment and support is the progression of some LEO client companies to the Enterprise Ireland portfolio. During 2018, 171 LEO client companies progressed to Enterprise Ireland. These clients are among the best performing companies in the LEO client portfolio (and because of the transfer to EI their performance is not reflected in the 2018 outturn above).

Details of LEO Brexit supports are included under Goal 6.

LEO Communications

The LEOs delivered several promotional events nationally during the year which include:

- A Showcase Pavilion at the National Ploughing Championships;
- The Student Enterprise Awards;
- Local Enterprise Week;
- The National Enterprise Awards; and
- National Women's Entrepreneurship.

The LEO Communications Unit launched its 'Making it Happen' advertising campaign in 2018. This is a first step in developing a strong national brand for the LEOs which will aid businesses identify the range of supports and services available to anyone interested in starting, growing or expanding their business.

Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) supported by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)

The initiative, aimed at young entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 35, has an overall investment fund of €2m. The IBYE was set up to support a culture of entrepreneurship among young people in Ireland, to promote entrepreneurship as a career choice and to encourage Ireland's young people to set up new businesses which will ultimately create jobs. Over 5,700 young entrepreneurs have entered since the programme commenced in 2014.

IDA IRELAND

IDA Ireland performed strongly in 2018 with client companies creating 22,785 gross new jobs on the ground. IDA Ireland client companies now account for almost 10% of employment in the State.

IDA Ireland's 2018 results show that the Agency exceeded the job creation targets set out in its current strategy "Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019". Since 2015 the Agency has been working towards the objectives of this strategy including the creation of 80,000 new jobs and 900 new investments. Total FDI employment in Ireland at the end of 2018 stood at 229,057, meaning the Agency has already achieved its net job target of 209,000 jobs.

The IDA is continuing to work towards other objectives set out in its five-year strategy, especially that of increasing the level of investment by between 30% and 40% in each region outside Dublin by 2019. Strong progress was made in this respect in 2018, with 56% of IDA Ireland supported jobs created located outside Dublin and every region in Ireland posting net gains in jobs. Through its Regional Property Programme (RPP), the IDA is also developing appropriate property solutions in designated regional locations to help attract overseas investment.

Details of IDA Ireland's strategic response to Brexit is included under Goal 6.

INTERTRADEIRELAND (ITI)

ITI is one of the six North/South Implementation Bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Since then, ITI has been helping small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services, grow their business and become investor ready. The Body's suite of programmes and services aim to help businesses to build competitive advantage in the crucial areas of trade and innovation, all backed by evidence-based economic and business research.

ITI's activities in 2018 included:

- Providing opportunities and financial resources for North/South technology transfer projects to develop new innovative products and services which can drive exports;
- Scoping new areas for co-operation between firms North and South;
- Providing sales and marketing opportunities to help firms find new cross-border markets; and
- Providing access for SMEs to the €12bn all-island public procurement market.

Main outputs delivered by ITI in 2018:

- Job creation was 2,043 against a target for the year of 1,450;
- First time innovator companies were 73 against a target of 62; and
- First time exporters companies amounted to 135 over double the target.

NATIONAL STANDARDS AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) is the State Agency responsible for standardisation, conformity assessment and measurement. NSAI aims to improve the performance of Irish business and protect consumers by developing standards, inspecting measuring instruments used in trade and conducting audits and issuing certificates on the application of standards to goods, services and measurements.

NSAI published 1,318 standards during 2018, including the I.S 465 Pyrite and Mica Protocol standard. The total number of standards available in NSAI's catalogue now exceeds 23,000. The number of standards downloaded by Irish users exceeded 136,500 and the number of new registered users to the Agency's 'Your Standards, Your Say' portal increased by 219.

NSAI provided a wide range of certification services to enable Irish industry improve quality, efficiency and placement of goods on the market with:

- 1,420 companies certified to ISO9001 Quality Management Standard; and

- Product certification in accordance with the EU requirements for: Automotive (9,000); Construction (1,000) and Medical Devices (136)

During 2018, NSAI certified companies successfully made the changeover to the updated ISO9001 Quality and ISO14001 Environmental Management Systems by the 15 September deadline.

A dedicated Brexit Unit was established in NSAI in September 2018 with the aim of making sure that Irish industry is adequately prepared for Brexit, particularly in the area of product certification. The Unit has been engaging extensively with businesses and trade organisations throughout Ireland, holding a series of roadshow events and issuing factsheets on specific sectoral areas.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

SME Credit Guarantee Scheme

The revised Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) was made by Statutory Instrument in 2017 and launched in July 2018. Under the scheme the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), on behalf of the Minister, is rolling out new financial products and loans for SMEs other than traditional bank loans and involving other financial providers, beyond the three main banks.

During the first half of 2018, 57 facilities were sanctioned worth €8.99m which allowed 234 jobs to be created and 142 jobs to be maintained. The old scheme has now closed.

During the second half of 2018, under the revised scheme 64 facilities were drawn down worth €9.86m which allowed 233 jobs to be created and 1,213 jobs to be maintained.

Since the CGS became operational in October 2012, 651 facilities totalling €103.2m have been sanctioned which have helped to support 4,387 jobs.

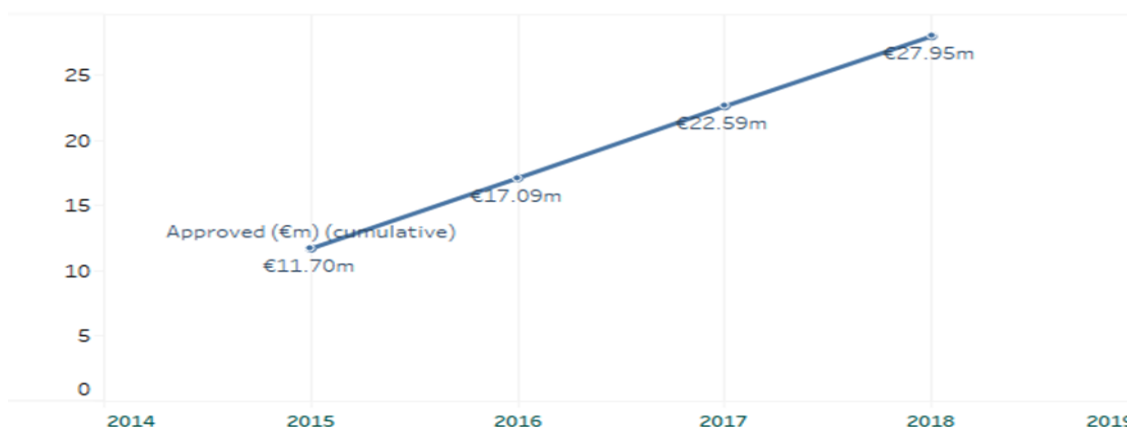
Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme

The Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme was introduced in 2012. The purpose of the fund is to provide loans to microenterprises which are defined as businesses with less than 10 employees and/or turnover of less than €2m.

In 2018, Microfinance Ireland approved €5.4m in funding to 384 small businesses throughout the country, supporting the creation or sustainment of 856 jobs. 81% of loans going to microenterprises outside of Dublin. 26% of MFI loans are provided to female promoters of microenterprises.

Since the Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme became operational in 2012 to the end of 2018, 1,951 loans totalling €28m have been drawn which have helped to support 4,808 jobs.

MICROFINANCE IRELAND, SOURCE DEPARTMENT BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION



Seed and Venture Capital Scheme

The Enterprise Ireland Seed and Venture Capital Scheme has been in operation since 1994 and was established to increase the availability of risk capital for SMEs. To date EI has committed more than €510m, which, using a co-investment model has raised a total of €1.19bn in Seed & Venture capital funding.

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLANS (REPS)

In 2018 the Department embarked on a significant exercise to refresh and refocus the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. The purpose of the refresh and refocus was to further build on the positive regional collaboration fostered by the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, taking account of the changed and improved economic circumstances nationally, the emergence of new challenges to enterprise development and competitiveness both domestically and internationally in origin, including Brexit.

The new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 provide perspective and ideas from the 'ground-up' and are crucial in meeting the Government's ambition to create an additional 200,000 jobs, of which 135,000 are outside the Dublin region, by 2020. CSO data has shown an increase of 50,500 people in employment across the State in the year to Q4 2017 to Q4 2018, just under half (48.7%) of the jobs were located outside of County Dublin, with 84% of newly employed people, in this period, located outside of Dublin. The number of people in employment has increased in five of the eight regions in the year from Q4 2017 to Q4 2018.

To further stimulate regional growth to 2020, in 2018 the Department announced a further 21 projects funded under the competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund, administered through Enterprise Ireland. In total, 42 projects have been awarded funding totalling just under €60m over two completed calls, with projects supported in every region.

ENGAGEMENT WITH SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) is the EU's flagship policy initiative to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It comprises a set of policy measures organised around 10 principles ranging from entrepreneurship and 'responsive administration' to internationalisation. The SBA fact sheets, published annually, aim to improve the understanding of recent trends and national policies affecting SMEs.

Ireland's performance in 2018 was above or well above the EU average in five SBA areas:

- entrepreneurship;
- 'second chance';
- responsive administration;
- single market; and
- skills & innovation.

It was in line or broadly in line with the EU average in four other SBA areas:

- state aid & public procurement;
- access to finance;
- environment; and
- internationalisation.

Ireland's SBA profile continues to be competitive overall. During 2018, the Department continued to further its delivery of the SME Test through a pilot on the European Council's proposal on the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market.

The Test promotes the SBA's "Think Small First" Principle to the heart of policy making. It is a component of the European Commission's Better Regulation guidelines. The test encourages each Member State to include an appraisal of the burden on SMEs for relevant legislation and regulation.

The Irish SME Test asks policymakers to consider the following when designing regulation and legislation:

1. Consultation of SME stakeholders;
2. Identification of affected businesses;
3. Measurement of the impact on SMEs; and
4. Assessment of alternative mechanisms and mitigating measures through exemptions, deadline flexibility or simplification of regulation.

The Department's Advisory Group on Small Business (AGSB) provides a platform for structured engagement between small business owners and the Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection. The Advisory Group actively engaged with Minister of State Pat Breen, T.D. and the Department throughout 2018, providing valuable input into a variety of topics such as pre-budget submissions, GDPR, PAYE Modernisation and the OECD Review of SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland.

At European level, the Department's representatives continue to be active members of the SME Envoy Network. During 2018, four meetings of the SME Envoy took place. In addition, participation has been active in the OECD's Working Party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship. Relationships have been fostered and continued to be developed through the Department's active role in both. One such relationship leading to the engagement of the OECD in 2018 to conduct a review of SME and Entrepreneurship Policies in Ireland.

OECD COUNTRY REVIEW OF SME AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP POLICY IN IRELAND

To further reinforce the overall commitment of Government to the future growth of small and medium enterprises in Ireland, the Department commissioned the OECD to undertake a review of Ireland's SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland.

This review was launched in March 2018 by Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D., Minister of State Pat Breen, T.D. and Secretary General Gurría of OECD. The aim of the review is to provide tailored analysis and recommendations to the Department and the Irish government on how to improve the design and implementation of national SME and entrepreneurship policies and programmes, based on an assessment of the country's current SME and entrepreneurship performance, framework conditions and policies based on international comparisons.

This is a collaborative body of work involving considerable input from wider Government and stakeholders. Significant engagement took place throughout 2018 with the completion of relevant questionnaires, additional submissions and engagement through the process of three stakeholder events. This prominent level of participation facilitated the OECD Secretariat, experts, colleagues from across the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, other Government departments, agencies, third level institutions and wider business community to broadly discuss the current SME ecosystem. This engagement enabled the OECD to gain a global understanding of the Irish Ecosystem, leading to the delivery of a first draft report in Q4 of 2018.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF DATA CENTRES TO IRELAND'S ENTERPRISE POLICY

In June 2018, Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D., published the 'Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Policy' which sets out the strategic importance of data centres to Ireland's overarching enterprise policy and attracting foreign investment in the ICT sector. The Statement was developed by the Department in consultation with other Government Departments including the Department for

Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, following an agreement of the Government, in October 2017, to create a strategic policy framework to support the continued development of data centres in Ireland.

The Government Statement highlights that Data centre presence in Ireland raises our visibility internationally as a technology-rich, innovative economy, which, in turn, places Ireland on the map as a location of choice for a broad range of sectors and activities that are increasingly reliant on digital capabilities including manufacturing, animation, retail, medical devices and financial services and including Irish and foreign owned enterprises. Data Centres are capital intensive, tend to have long life spans and have generated a deep expertise in our Irish construction enterprises that now export their services internationally.

The 'Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Policy' set out a planned approach to managing the challenges that data centre development can present, such as significant electricity demand, along with the opportunities for Ireland's enterprise base.

THE NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP (NPSE)

Ireland's first National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship was launched in 2014 a five-year plan developed to foster and promote an entrepreneurial spirit in the SME and entrepreneurship ecosystem. The 96 actions set out in the NPSE, were reviewed for progress in 2018, all of which were either ongoing or completed.

The NPSE covers six key elements which impact on start-ups and entrepreneurs and acts as a signpost for future policy direction.

1. Culture, human capital and education;
2. Business environment and supports;
3. Innovation;
4. Access to finance;
5. Networks and mentoring; and
6. Access to markets.

NATIONAL DESIGN FORUM

Like R&D or new technological applications, design innovation is a key business differentiator and source of international competitiveness. The Action Plan for Jobs 2017 set out a number of actions for the ongoing development of the design sector in Ireland and to maximise its contribution to the overall economy. This led to the establishment of a National Design Forum.

The Forum, which is chaired by Minister Humphreys, T.D., met on a number of occasions during 2018. The forum brings together relevant stakeholders including businesses,

Government agencies, third level colleges, design practitioners and design organisations, providing a platform for a structured engagement focused on promoting the design agenda. The Forum has endorsed the establishment of a National Design Centre and this is now a commitment in the National Development Plan.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY STAKEHOLDER FORUM

2018 was a busy year for the Corporate Social Responsibility Stakeholder Forum. The Forum, which is enterprise led with the secretariat provided by this Department, was established to oversee implementation of the actions in the national plan - *Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's second National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020*. The CSR Stakeholder Forum is currently chaired by Catherine Heaney, Managing Director, DHR Communications. It met on three occasions and the September 2018 meeting held in Cavan included a SME outreach event.

The first CSR CEO/Leaders' Breakfast meeting was held in June 2018 and the 'CSR Check 2018', progress report on the CSR national plan, was launched at that meeting. During 2018, the Department, through the CSR Forum, has built up a growing repository of interesting case studies which document CSR in a range of businesses from large multinationals to small businesses from around the country. Forum members act as 'CSR Ambassadors' raising awareness about the benefits of the CSR to business.

RETAIL CONSULTATION FORUM

Two Retail Consultation Forum meetings were held in 2018 and agenda items included Brexit, Online Trading, Town Centre Renewal, Insurance and Skills. In April 2018 an information session was held for the Retail Consultation Forum on the impacts of Brexit on the Irish Retail sector. The Forum is chaired by Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D.

In December 2018, Minister Humphreys convened a Brexit workshop with key players in Grocery Retail and Distribution as part of her continuing engagement with the sector. Distribution chains within the retail sector are highly integrated across Ireland and the UK and the Minister's continued dialogue with this sector reflects the importance that Government attaches to the sector and its recognition of the challenges that it faces.

A new pilot Online Retail Scheme was launched in October 2018 with a total available fund of €1.25m. Delivered by Enterprise Ireland, the scheme is intended to support the retail sector to develop their online capability and enhance their competitiveness. A second call is due to issue in 2019 and will support retail businesses of 10 employees and over under the areas of (research, strategy development, implementation and training) who are ready to strategically grow their online capability.

The Retail Forum's Skills working group has been focused on the introduction of retail specific training in the areas of Digital and Brexit.

GOAL 2: LEAD A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE MOST COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR INVESTMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND SUSTAINABLE JOBS

FUTURE JOBS IRELAND

In July 2018, the Irish Government agreed to the development of Future Jobs Ireland, a framework of ambitions for 2019 and thereafter, which will form a key part of Ireland's economic agenda over the medium term. This is a whole of government, multi-annual framework designed with the aim of integrating innovation and resilience into our economy. It will ensure our enterprises and workers are well positioned to adapt to the technological and other transformational changes our economy will face in the years ahead.

The development and implementation of Future Jobs Ireland is being led jointly by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The work included extensive consultation, the highlight of which was the National Summit on 22 November 2018 which saw over 200 participants engage directly with eight Government Ministers on Future Jobs Ireland's five pillars namely:

1. Improving SME Productivity;
2. Embracing Innovation and Technological Change;
3. Enhancing Skills and Developing and Attracting Talent;
4. Increasing Participation in the Labour Force; and
5. Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy.

The Future Jobs Ireland 2019 was officially launched in March 2019.

ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS 2018

The seventh, and last, Action Plan for Jobs 2018 was published in March 2018 and contained 55 actions and 105 measures to be implemented in 2018. Of the 105 measures to be delivered in 2018, 91 were delivered during the year, giving an overall implementation rate of 87%. Remaining measures are being progressed in 2019. The Action Plan for Jobs 2018 - Second Progress Report will be published online in Q1 2019.

ENTERPRISE 2025 RENEWED

Enterprise 2025, Ireland's national enterprise strategy, published in 2015 was reviewed to ensure that Ireland's enterprise policy framework and priorities remain robust in light of significant global challenges including Brexit, increasing trade protectionism, international tax developments and the continuing advances in disruptive technologies. This review, entitled Enterprise 2025 Renewed, was published in March 2018.

The review found that the fundamentals of Ireland's enterprise policy remain valid, with a focus on export led growth, underpinned by innovation and talent to drive economic growth and deliver quality jobs. Enterprise 2025 Renewed, places increased importance on building

resilience in Ireland's enterprise base and accelerating the speed of implementation of change. It emphasises development of Irish owned enterprise and harnessing distinctive characteristics of Ireland's enterprise mix through collaboration and clustering; focusing on innovation and talent; leveraging Ireland's strengths in disruptive technologies; and realising the full potential of Ireland's regions; and sets out a range of actions in each of these areas to realise these goals.

DELIVERING SKILLS FOR A GROWING ECONOMY

The following reports were published by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), the secretariat for this expert group is based in this Department:

Forecasting the Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017-2022

In 2018, a refresh of the ICT Skills Demand Forecast previously undertaken in 2013 was completed. This study "Forecasting the Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills in Ireland, 2017-2022" was published in March 2019. The report is a qualitative and quantitative overview of the market, technology and service trends and demand for High level ICT Skills in Ireland over the period 2017 to 2022. The study was a key input into the development of the new ICT Skills Action Plan, *Technology Skills 2022*. The Department is centrally involved in the implementation of this new ICT Skills Action Plan, forming the joint Secretariat to the Plan's High Level Steering Group with the Department of Education and Skills. The Department's enterprise agencies, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland, as well as Science Foundation Ireland's Smart Futures, are members of this High Level Group.

Digital Transformation Report

In December 2018, 'Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce' was published. This study focused on the impact of the adoption of digital technologies over the years 2018 to 2023. It provides insights on the impacts that the adoption of digital technologies will have on workers in Ireland by sector, occupation and region. It also highlights the opportunities and challenges that this will present.

Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit

Following publication, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation began working with the relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors to implement the recommendations. The Department has established a Brexit Implementation Oversight Group, consisting of a number of Government Departments and enterprise agencies, to actively pursue and monitor the implementation of the recommendations in the EGFSN study and to maintain a watching brief on Brexit-related skills needs more generally.

As part of the implementation process, the Department is also engaging separately and bilaterally on a quarterly basis with stakeholders within the private representative and education and training sectors, to implement and monitor any recommendations that fall within their remit and to elicit any feedback on Brexit related skills issues that should be considered in the Government's Brexit response. The findings from these engagements are being fed back into the work and deliberations of the Brexit Implementation Oversight Group.

COMPETITIVENESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Research, analysis and the secretariat role for the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) is undertaken by the Department. The Council reports to the Taoiseach and the Government, through the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on key competitiveness issues facing the Irish economy and offers recommendations on policy actions required to enhance Ireland's competitive position.

In accordance with the European Council recommendation on the establishment of National Productivity Boards by Eurozone countries, in March 2018, the Government mandated the National Competitiveness Council as the body responsible for analysing developments and policies in the field of productivity and competitiveness in Ireland.

The Department places a high priority on ensuring that the key enterprise competitiveness issues are identified and prioritised for action across the government system. Our Enterprise Policy priority is that Ireland achieves a top-five competitiveness ranking (relative to high income countries with a similar population) by 2020. On this basis, Ireland is currently ranked 6th.

During 2018, research was undertaken into a granular approach to understand aggregate productivity growth in Ireland. The research confirmed that productivity shocks to the five largest firms, in terms of value-added, in Ireland, account for about one third of aggregate productivity growth. These empirical results shed light on the origins of Irish productivity fluctuations, the consequences of economic concentration on resilience and the importance of diversification policies aimed at broadening Ireland's enterprise base of productive firms.

The NCC published the following reports during 2018:

- Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2018
- Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard 2018
- Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2018
- Productivity Statement 2018
- Competitiveness Bulletins 2018

ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURES

Throughout 2018 the Department highlighted the main issues and priorities for business users across each infrastructure area drawing on analysis carried out by the Enterprise Strategy, Competitiveness & Evaluation Division, focussing on the competitiveness of Ireland's business environment.

The Department engaged with stakeholders on water services for non-domestic users, on energy infrastructure and the development of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies that support the National Planning Framework.

The Department developed and published the 'Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy' in June 2018. The Department has also worked closely with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in its development of the Renewable Energy Support Scheme. Analysis on infrastructure needs, as part of achieving our national population and employment ambitions, also informs the Department's engagement with the Ireland 2040 Delivery Board.

In parallel, the Department engaged on an ongoing basis across the public and private sectors to advocate for policy measures to improve the availability and quality of economic infrastructure to support enterprise development and maintain the competitiveness of our business environment.

EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Department's Evaluation Unit worked closely with the Department's development agencies and other Government Departments to undertake robust evaluations in 2018. The Evaluation Unit provided input into the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform led Comprehensive Review of Expenditure completing a Focused Policy Assessment of Start-Up and Equity Supports. The paper provided a top down analysis of total Department funding of Start-up and Entrepreneurship expenditure and reviewed that investment by its main activities, outputs and impacts across the main themes of investment.

The Evaluation Unit also published the review of the Economic Appraisal Model which is a Cost Benefit model used by the Departments development agencies to appraise project proposals at an ex-ante stage. The review of the Economic Appraisal Model made recommendations to amend current parameters and to include new parameters in the appraisal of project proposals based on best practice in Cost to Benefit analysis.

TAXATION

The Tax Policy Unit liaised widely with enterprise representative groups and worked closely with the Department's development agencies in a joint agency Pre-Budget Submission 2019. The primary purpose of the submission was to ensure that Budget 2019 continued to support enterprise and that the views and needs of enterprise were taken into consideration.

The submission touched on a wide range of taxation issues with a focus on some of the main incentives aimed at stimulating innovation such as the R&D tax credit and measures aimed at rewarding entrepreneurial risk such as the CGT Entrepreneurs Relief. In addition, the submission made a number of proposals with regards to our personal taxation system and highlighted the importance of reviewing schemes where take-up was less than anticipated.

The Department also maintains a watching brief on international tax developments and keeps abreast of potential implications and to inform national priorities.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In October 2018 the Department presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action. The Committee was established to consider the third report and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly entitled "How the State can make Ireland a Leader in tackling Climate Change". At the meeting and in written submissions to the Committee, the Secretary General set out how climate change is factored into the Department's core enterprise and innovation policies and outlined the departmental and agency programmes and activities that deliver on these policies and the agency schemes that support companies to improve their environmental performance, drive environmental efficiencies and achieve improved sustainability.

Throughout the year the Department provided analysis and policy input into matters relating to climate change policy and targets as they pertain to the enterprise sector and ensured consideration of competitiveness impacts in policy options.

DATA COLLECTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The Department produces official statistics on R&D in the Government and Higher Education sectors.

Research & Development (R&D) Budget

While Ireland's innovation system is relatively nascent we have made significant strides and have gained international recognition in a number of areas. National and international evaluations demonstrate the clear value for money and economic impact derived from investment in R&D by the State and by enterprise. The quality of Irish research has gone from 36th (2003) to 11th (2017) according to Thomson Reuters' InCites Essential Science Indicators.

In Ireland's case, for every €1 of state investment in R&D, business expenditure on R&D is almost €2.5 (i.e. 29% total R&D investment is made by the State with 71% made by business), compared to the EU norm of one third: two thirds. On this measure, Ireland ranks alongside Belgium and Sweden, slightly behind Japan and Korea.

Amongst Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland client companies, R&D activity is a characteristic of firms that have been driving growth in sales, exports and value added. R&D grant-aid is associated with greater levels of employment growth in firms and greater resilience in employment during the recession.

Ireland's future economic growth and prosperity will depend in large measure on our continued investment in Research, Development and Innovation. This investment is targeted at developing a high productivity, knowledge based economy and society, driving innovation in enterprise, building human capital and maximising the return on R&D investment for economic and social progress.

Dashboard Statistics

The Dashboard Statistics published monthly on the Department's website are a compilation of data from the Department, CSO, ONS and other external sources relating to early indicators of change that bear on enterprise policy.

SECTOR BRIEFS AND FOCUS ON SECTORS

The Department developed a suite of 16 Sector Briefs that provide an overview of key sectors of the Irish economy. Developed in consultation with the development agencies and other stakeholders, the briefs provide:

- early insights into structural shifts and trends within sectors that may require focused policy analysis and/or responses;
- insights into emerging areas of opportunity for Ireland;
- a set of potential actions, at a sectoral level, validated by key stakeholders that can inform policy development; and
- succinct, easily accessible information on sectors for use as briefing materials and to inform policy development across the Department and wider government system.

Each brief sets out:

- a full-page infographic providing a snapshot of the sector;
- headline global and national data;
- a description of the sector globally and global developments;
- the sector in Ireland and the sectoral ecosystem, including supporting R&D infrastructures, networks, etc.;
- opportunities and possible sector specific actions to accelerate growth and remove barriers; and
- recent investment and jobs announcements relating to the sector.

The Sector Briefs were adapted for publication and published on the Department's website. The adapted Sector Briefs are called 'Focus on Sectors' and each Focus on Sector includes a useful infographic, provides an overview of international trends for the sector concerned and information on how the sector is developing in Ireland.

DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET (DSM)

In line with the Department's goals of developing a competitive environment to boost trade, improve productivity and create and sustain jobs, work on delivering the digital transformation agenda continued throughout 2018.

The Department leads whole of Government activity and cross Government coordination of the DSM agenda at national and EU levels as well as intensifying work and alliances with likeminded Member States and EU institutions.

Pat Breen, T.D., Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection chaired five meetings of the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on the Digital Single Market (DSM) during the year. The IDC is a cross-Governmental group comprising several Units within the Department along with representatives from other Departments, that is leading the whole-of-Government activity in addressing and negotiating the initiatives emerging from the European Commission under the Digital Single Market Strategy.

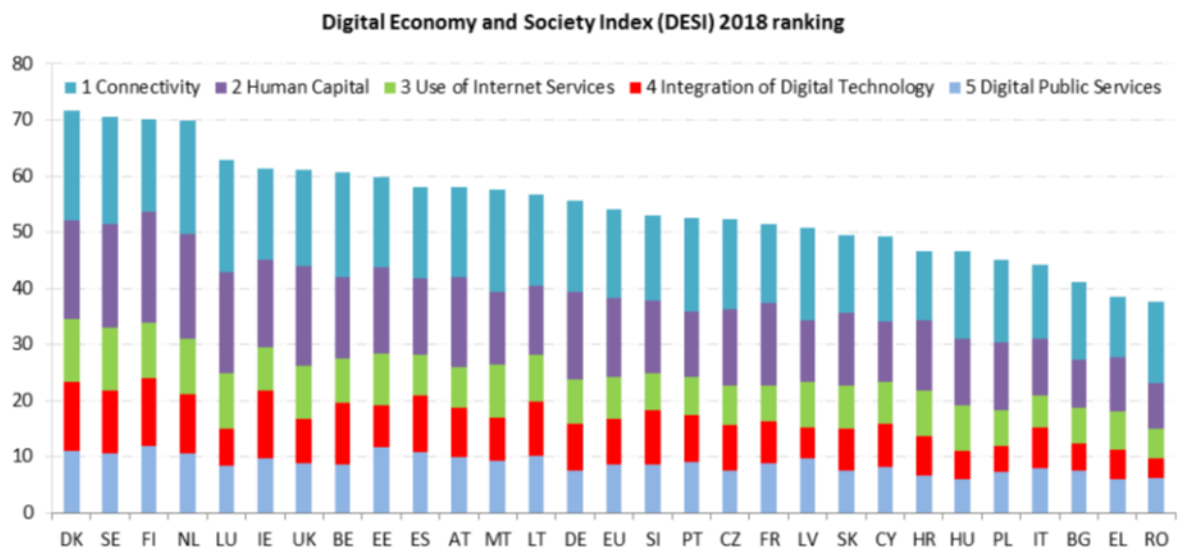
As the DSM agenda continues to be delivered, some of the Department's notable successes for consumers include the introduction of geo-blocking regulations, consumer protection cooperation across agencies, more access to digital content, portability of online content across borders and an improvement in the distance sales of goods. On the business side, the Department led Ireland's negotiations on the Platform to Business (P2B) Regulation, which aims at creating a fair, transparent and predictable business environment for businesses when using online platforms to trade. This Regulation is to be agreed in 2019.

The Department is a member of the steering group for the development of the new National Digital Strategy and is leading on the Innovation and Economy pillar. Two roundtable consultations were held during the year with business representative agencies and bodies as part of the strategy development process.

Ireland signed a Declaration on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Digital Day in April 2018 and subsequently the Department led Ireland's participation in the development of the EU Coordinated Plan on AI published in December. The Department also participated in the consultation on the development of EU Ethical Guidelines for the deployment of this innovative and disruptive technology.

Other work carried out to progress the digital agenda in Ireland includes a study carried out by the Department in conjunction with the European Investment Bank to examine the barriers to the digitalisation of SMEs in Ireland, namely, financial and knowledge and outline appropriate policy responses. The study is to be completed in early 2019.

Of note during the year was Ireland's 6th place ranking in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) for 2018, up from 9th place in 2017.



GOAL 3: LEAD A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO POSITION IRELAND AS A GLOBAL LEADER, DRIVING AN INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, CREATING AN INNOVATIVE ENTERPRISE BASE AND BUILDING A BETTER SOCIETY

INNOVATION 2020

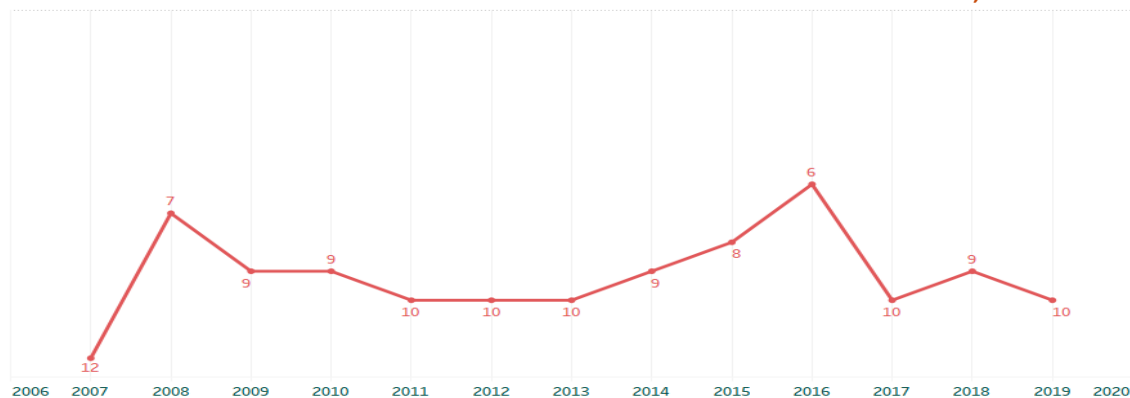
Innovation 2020, Ireland's national strategy for research and development, science and technology, sets a vision for Ireland to become a Global Innovation Leader.

Key actions in 2018 included:

- As committed to in Innovation 2020, the Research Prioritisation areas were refreshed in March 2018;
- €630m secured under Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for R&D;
- Open Science policy development is ongoing by the National Open Research Forum;
- The launch of the €500m Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund;
- Ireland joined the European Southern Observatory;
- Through Budget 2018, the Department allocated €5.5m to start addressing the PhD/Research Masters enrolment challenge. The funding was allocated to SFI, which has made awards through existing SFI programmes that will support c.110 postgraduate research places;
- That budget will be increased further in 2019 to €15m to allow for commencement of dedicated Centres for Research Training (CRTs). The programme will deliver a world-class, student-focused postgraduate experience which will contribute to the goal of positioning Ireland as a leader in postgraduate researcher training and education; and

In the 2018 European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS), Ireland is now at 9th place in the EU, moving up one place among the 28 Member States. Ireland has retained 10th place in the 2018 Global Innovation Index, a significant jump from 21st place just ten years ago.

IRELAND'S RANKING IN THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION SCOREBOARD, 2007-2019



RESEARCH PRIORITISATION

The Department conducted a rigorous exercise including extensive consultation to develop the evidence base to inform the refresh of Research Prioritisation exercise. While the evidence demonstrated that for many of the priority areas, the focus remains as relevant in 2018 as it was for the 2012–2017 cycle, there have been several revisions and updates to both the themes and the priority areas to reflect changing circumstances in that period.

The resulting report, “Research Priority Areas 2018 to 2023” was agreed by Government and published in March 2018. It is available on the Department’s website: [Research Priority Areas 2018-23](#). Implementation of the report will be driven through the Innovation 2020 Implementation Group.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES INNOVATION FUND (DTIF)

2018 saw the launch and final call for funding under the DTIF – one of the four major funds awarded as part of the NDP 2040. The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, was announced in the context of the National Development Plan under Project Ireland 2040. This confirmed the establishment of a €500m challenge-based Fund that was implemented through the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and its agencies, working with other Government Departments and agencies.

The aim is to address the development, deployment and commercialisation of one or more disruptive technologies to deliver new solutions through investment in the development and implementation of new products and services. Ultimately, the projects funded will create the jobs of the future.

Over 300 initial Expressions of Interest (with industry co-funding) were received by August 2018 deadline indicating the very strong appetite in the Irish Research Development & Innovation ecosystem for a Fund such as this. It is the first Fund of its kind to support company-to-company collaborations working with public research bodies.

The first tranche of successful projects was announced in December 2018.

- 27 Projects were approved for funding with many led by SME’s and start-ups;
- The successful projects will receive over €70m to 2021 and represent the health, food, ICT and manufacturing sectors in Ireland;
- Each project is a collaborative partnership that will develop, deploy and commercialise disruptive technologies to transform business and each is focused on “industrial research”
- SME participation was an essential requirement in every consortium.

HEALTH INNOVATION HUB IRELAND (HIHI)

Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI) is a joint initiative of this Department and the Department of Health. The aim of the initiative is to drive collaboration between the health service and the enterprise sector leading to the development and commercialisation of new healthcare technologies, products and services.

In June 2018 HIHI launched their double national call – both focused and open – to Irish industry. The focused call – “Enabling positive ageing”, was prompted by a strategic need for the health service highlighted by HIHI’s partner, the HSE. The open call was aimed at companies, start-ups, SMEs, who have innovative products or services that are at pre-commercial, demonstration or late development phase and have the potential to significantly impact healthcare. The call closed at the end of August 2018, with a 58% increase in HIHI national call applications, with almost half being connected health solutions.

The second branch of HIHI at St. James’ Hospital Dublin was officially opened by Minister Harris and Minister of State John Halligan, T.D., in October 2018. The opening coincided with the announcement of HIHI’s education workshop programme.

EU FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION- HORIZON 2020

Ireland continued its excellent performance in Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Ireland won €630m in competitive, EU funding from the programme over the period 2014 to November 2018. Higher Education Institutes accounted for €382m, or 60.1 %, of the total. Companies won €238m, or 37.8%, with €161.9m of this going to SMEs. Enterprise Ireland leads the Irish Horizon 2020 Network.

The European Commission published its proposal for the 9th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, to be called Horizon Europe in June 2018. Negotiations began the following month and a Partial General Approach was successfully reached on 30 November 2018.

EU COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

During 2018, Minister of State John Halligan, T.D., represented Ireland’s interests at the Competitiveness Council meetings on research and innovation related issues. There were three formal and two informal meetings of the Competitiveness Council (Research).

The Council agenda was dominated by the proposed Framework Programme on research and innovation for the period 2021 to 2027. Council adopted the Partial General Approach in November 2018. Negotiations on the new framework programme are ongoing.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

During 2018, the Department signed a new MOU on scientific, technological and innovation cooperation with South Africa and hosted the first meeting of the Joint Committee to implement the MOU in Dublin. The Department also agreed a revised MOU on science, technology and innovation with China.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS (IROS)

The Department continued to strengthen Ireland's participation in international research collaborations and in October 2018, Ireland joined the European Southern Observatory (ESO). ESO is the foremost intergovernmental astronomy organisation in Europe and the world's most productive astronomical observatory

Through the Department, Ireland is now a member of 9 IROs – ESO, the European Space Agency, the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, the European Molecular Biology Conference, Eureka, COST, CECAM, ELIXIR and LOFAR.

In October, Ireland became a founding member of the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC). A European Union initiative, EuroHPC is a new legal and funding structure which will pool resources from 25 European countries, build supercomputing and data infrastructure and support research and innovation in the domain.

EURAXESS AND RESEARCH MOBILITY

The EU's Third Country Researchers Directive provides for a fast track procedure to facilitate researcher mobility from outside of the European Economic Area. During 2018, the Department concluded a new service level agreement with the Irish Universities Association (IUA), which manages the day to day operation of the scheme on the Department's behalf. For details of the researcher mobility scheme: <https://www.euraxess.ie/>.

US-IRELAND R&D PARTNERSHIP

The US-Ireland R&D Partnership is a product of the peace process and involves the governments of the USA, Ireland and Northern Ireland working together to advance scientific progress by awarding grants for research on a competitive basis. Areas funded include health, telecommunications, energy, nanotechnology, sensors, agriculture and collaboration at the level of individual Research Centres.

A Steering Group co-chaired by the three jurisdictions guides the collaboration across the three administrations with secretariat support from InterTradeIreland. A meeting of the Steering Group was hosted by Northern Ireland in May 2018. At this meeting it was agreed to expand the scope of the partnership to include cooperation between health and agriculture.

49 projects have been successfully funded under the partnership across key sectors including agriculture, health, science and engineering, telecommunication energy and sustainability. Funding raised to December 2018 is valued at over €73m.

SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

During 2018 Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) continued to play a key role in supporting the government's vision for Ireland to become a Global Innovation Leader, as outlined in Ireland's strategy for research and development, science and technology - Innovation 2020,

as well as implementing a number of actions in the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 and other national strategies.

Programme activity

2018 was a year of significant accomplishment across all areas of SFI's activity. 323 new awards were approved in 2018 across 28 programmes with a value of €132m. Total payments to research bodies and organisations in 2018 were €181m.

Key areas of progress in 2018 included:

SFI has delivered significant investments in 2018, including: growth in SFI Research Centres, support to early career researchers including a comprehensive PhD programme and investments that include considerable reserve lists of strong, fundable proposals including the Research Infrastructure and Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) programmes.

Awards

- Five SFI Research Centres were officially launched in 2018 – I-Form advanced manufacturing; Vistamilk the largest agri-tech centre covering the entire dairy production chain with support from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM); BEACON Bioeconomy centre; FutureNeuro centre for chronic and rare neurological diseases; and CONFIRM - a 'smart manufacturing' research centre;
- SFI Research Centres had significant success in Horizon 2020 – total draw down was more than €111m and SFI Research Centres have drawn down >50% of funding to Irish Higher Education Institutes;
- The first seven SFI Research Centres underwent review for Phase two funding. Six will commence transition to a new model in June 2019;
- SFI awarded €26m to six research infrastructure awards;
- €10.8m in research funding for 20 projects through SFI Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG). With awards ranging from €376,000 to €425,000 over four years, the projects funded will support 20 researchers and a further 20 PhD students; and
- SFI Research Professor Programme - University College Cork (UCC) appointed world-leading experimental quantum physicist Professor Séamus Davis to spearhead a pioneering research programme to study Quantum Materials for Quantum Technology, in a joint appointment with the University of Oxford.

Careers, Education Support, Informal Learning

- A new Smart Futures website was launched and a new national advertising campaign was designed for STEM Careers, developed with the support of the Department of Education.
- SFI's Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme gave awards to 641 primary schools across Ireland recognising their achievements in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) over the 2017/18 school year.
- Science Week included over 1,400 events; this was a new record for the largest number of events.

ENTERPRISE IRELAND (EI) INNOVATION INVESTMENT AND ACTIVITY

EI provides R&D supports for companies to develop new technologies and processes that will lead to job creation and increased exports. EI does this through three main actions:

- Strengthening existing in-company R&D capacity
- Driving increased collaboration between industry and academia
- Commercialisation

Strengthening existing in-company R&D capacity

In providing support for Research Development and Innovation (RDI) the State recognises a market failure where companies (particularly SMEs) do not invest enough in R&D or that when they do invest they tend not to invest in enough large or ambitious projects. Enterprise Ireland's role in this regard is to de-risk such RDI so that companies will develop new and improved products and services. In 2018 Enterprise Ireland approved over 140 R&D Approvals over €50,000 to client companies. In 2018 work progressed on proposed legislative changes to address barriers to the take-up of the EI RD&I funding.

Driving increased collaboration between Industry and Academia

During 2018, 1,048 collaborative projects between companies and Irish Higher Education Institute (HEIs) were supported by Enterprise Ireland. This figure includes 558 small €5k Innovation Vouchers projects, 435 industry funded Technology Gateway Industry projects completed at Institutes of Technology across Ireland and 55 large and potentially transformative Innovation Partnerships. These projects provide companies with new commercial opportunities, cost savings or increases in their innovative capability.

Technology Centre Programme: During 2018, 844 companies engaged with the network of EI Technology Centres solving in-house collective /sectoral problems. The Technology Centre programme has helped to create €134m of turnover to date in participant firms in 7 of the centres and the projected turnover is expected to rise to €766m.

Technology Gateway Programme: The 2018-2022 Technology Gateway Programme was launched with an announcement of €26.76m funding through Enterprise Ireland over the 5 years. This programme funds 15 Gateways operating across the 11 Institutes of Technology. In 2018 a new Technology Gateway Cluster was launched. The Irish Food Tech cluster is the 3rd cluster within the network and brings together 7 Technology Gateways. The aim is to market the joint capabilities of the food related Gateways as one provider.

HPSU Spinouts: 15 new High Potential Start-ups (HPSUs) were created from research outputs from the Higher Education System in 2018. This figure includes 18 HPSUs led by female entrepreneurs (22%).

COMMERCIALISATION

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR): In 2018, 11 challenges were launched by a wide range of public sector bodies to address challenges and seek innovative solutions through engagement with technology rich companies.

In late 2018, for the first time, Enterprise Ireland partnered with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop technology enabled solutions to address challenges in chronic disease - with diabetes being identified as a key area of concern.

Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI): Helps business to benefit from access to Irish expertise and technology, by making it simple to connect and engage with this research base in Ireland. During 2018 work continued by KTI on a review of the National IP Protocol. The 3rd edition of this National IP Protocol with accompanying IP Resource Guide is due for publication in early 2019. The updated edition will include policy direction on the formation of spin-out companies.

In 2018, KTI worked with the Higher Education Authority to convene a working group leading to the development of guidelines on the Management of Intellectual Property and Conflicts of Interest for adoption by the Higher Education Institutes.

PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH IN THIRD-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS (PRTLII)

The Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLII) was launched in 1998, with five cycles of expenditure to date. In addition to supporting the provision of top-class research infrastructure (buildings, laboratories and cutting-edge equipment), PRTLII has seen significant investment in human capital development, through Structured PhD/Emergent Technology programmes across Ireland's Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The final stages of PRTLII Cycle 5 administration continued to be overseen by the Department in 2018.

A new programme of funding for structured PhD places was announced in 2018 through a new €100m programme of investment in SFI Centres for Research Training. Meanwhile, the Department of Education and Skills is addressing the need for physical space for research in the higher education sector through further investment in higher education infrastructure over the period to 2027 (in the region of €3 billion) as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

During 2018, 27 companies secured ESA contracts, 7 of which were first-time ESA contractors. The total value of industry contracts placed by ESA in Ireland in 2018 was €19.28m. A further €1.7m contract were secured by the Irish research community, bringing the total value of ESA contracts placed in Ireland in 2018 to €20.98m, demonstrating the progression of Ireland in this developing sector. In 2018, Ireland invested €17.8m in its membership of ESA.

Total employment in participating companies in Ireland was recorded to have grown to 2,000 in 2014 and has been projected to exceed 4,500 by 2020. Additionally, 8 new start-ups were approved for the Irish ESA BIC in 2018. The ESA BIC works with entrepreneurs to turn space-connected business ideas into commercial start-ups companies

In January 2018, the Department announced the development of a National Space Strategy for Enterprise to enable Ireland to maximise the benefit of its investment in space for industry, researchers, citizens and the wider economy. During 2018 the Department ran a public consultation and a stakeholder event to identify the opportunities and challenges within the evolving international space sector and inform the development of the National strategy. It is anticipated that the National Space Strategy for Enterprise will be published in Q1 2019.

EU SPACE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

On 6 June 2018 the European Commission proposed a Regulation establishing the space programme of the Union. The proposed Regulation sought to implement the Union's 2016 space strategy by putting the Union's space programme on a stable footing during the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, with a budget of [€16bn] to carry out the space activities within these programmes. The space proposal included two main parts: (i) the unification of existing and new space programmes; and (ii) the enhanced role of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) Agency.

During the Competitiveness Council held in November 2018, Ministers took part in an exchange of views regarding governance, access to space and the development of SMEs and start-ups companies.

A Coreper mandate in respect of the articles of the proposal for a Regulation to establish the space programme of the Union was achieved on 19 December 2018, enabling trilogues to begin in early 2019.

TYNDALL NATIONAL INSTITUTE

Tyndall National Institute (Tyndall) is Ireland's largest dedicated research centre, specialising in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) hardware and systems. Tyndall leveraged the core grant provided by the Department of €4.5m in 2018 to generate a total research budget of some €36m.:

COPYRIGHT

Progress was made during the year in advancing copyright issues at both domestic and EU level. The Copyright and Other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Bill 2018 was published on 13 March 2018. The Bill will amend the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 to take account of certain recommendations contained in the "Modernising Copyright" report published by the Copyright Review Committee in 2013 and to make better provision for copyright and other intellectual property (IP) protection in the digital era.

The Bill commenced its passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas in March 2018, completing Committee Stage in Seanad Éireann on 7 November 2018.

At EU level, the European Commission launched a series of legislative proposals in December 2015 and September 2016 as part of the Digital Single Market Strategy aimed at modernising EU copyright law. The proposals are designed to allow wider online access to copyright works by users and consumers across the EU. Several of the proposals were completed in 2017 with the following legislative proposals coming into force in 2018:

The Portability Regulation

EU Regulation 2017/1128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2017 on cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market come into force in all EU Member States on 1 April 2018. This regulation enables consumers to access their online content services e.g., Netflix, RTÉ Player when travelling temporarily within the EU in the same way they access them at home.

A Directive and a Regulation to implement the Marrakesh Treaty in EU law

EU Directive 2017/1564 and EU Regulation 2017/1563 were adopted to implement the Marrakesh Treaty (an international copyright agreement) into EU law. The treaty facilitates access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled.

The European Union (Marrakesh Treaty) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 412 of 2018) transposed into Irish law EU Directive 2017/1564. These Regulations came into force on 11 October 2018 and allow for copies of copyright protected works (books, e-books, journals, newspapers, magazines and other kinds of writing) to be made available in accessible formats (e.g. Braille, large print, e-books or audiobook) for the blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print-disabled, without the permission of the rightsholder.

The accompanying EU Regulation 2017/1563 has direct effect across the EU and does not require transposition into national legislation. It provides for the cross-border exchange of accessible format copies between EU Member States and third countries that are parties to the Marrakesh Treaty.

Directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market

A further legislative proposal under the Digital Single Market strategy is the EU Copyright Directive. The proposed Directive, published by the European Commission in September 2016, is intended to harmonise copyright exceptions in the areas of research, education and cultural preservation and will improve the position of rightsholders to negotiate and to be remunerated for the exploitation of their content online. Since its publication, Department officials have been actively engaged in negotiations on the Directive, including consultation with stakeholders on an ongoing basis to inform Ireland's negotiating position on the various proposals in the Directive.

In May 2018, a compromise text on the Directive was agreed within the EU Council and the Bulgarian Presidency got approval for a mandate to commence negotiations with the European Parliament. In October 2018, triilogue negotiations, aimed at finalising the Directive, commenced between the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

SUPPLEMENTARY PROTECTION CERTIFICATES

The European Commission's proposal on Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPC) seeks to introduce an export manufacturing waiver aimed at strengthening EU-based manufacturing and competitiveness in the pharma sector. This proposal is designed to allow EU based manufacturers to make generic and biosimilar medicines in the EU while the SPC protection is still valid for the sole purpose of export to non-EU countries where the SPC protection never existed or has expired. It was discussed at Council Intellectual Protection Working Party meetings during 2018 and is expected to be finalised in 2019

TRADE MARKS

The EU Trade Mark Directive 2015/2436 was transposed into Irish law in conjunction with the European Trade Mark Regulation (EU) 2017/1001 in December 2018. The Directive aims to foster innovation and economic growth by making trade mark registration systems all over the EU more accessible and efficient for business in terms of lower costs and complexity, increased speed, greater predictability and legal certainty. The four Statutory Instruments, (S.I. 561, 562, 563 and 564), giving effect to the EU reform package introduce new provisions and amend certain existing provisions in Irish trade mark law. They come into effect on 14 January 2019.

SECONDARY LEGISLATION IMPLEMENTED IN THE AREA OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

1. European Union (Protection of Trade Secrets) Regulations (S.I. No 188 of 2018)

These Regulations provide protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (trade secrets) against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure. The Regulations provide for civil redress measures and remedies in the event a trade secret is unlawfully acquired, used or disclosed.

2. European Union (Marrakesh Treaty) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No 412 of 2018)

These are Regulations on the certain permitted uses of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled.

3. European Union (Trade Marks) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 561 of 2018)

These Regulations amend and extend certain provisions relating to trade marks.

4. Trade Marks (Amendment) Rules 2018 (S.I. No. 562 of 2018)

This Statutory Instrument amends and extends certain provisions of secondary Irish trade mark legislation namely, the Trade Marks Rules 1996.

5. European Union (Trade Marks Act, 1996) (Community Trade Mark) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 563 of 2018)

These amendments are for the purpose of giving effect to technical changes in certain provisions and changes in terminology arising from European Union Trade Mark.

6. Patents, Trade Marks and Designs (Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2018 (S.I. No. 564 of 2018)

This Statutory Instrument introduces amendments to the Patents, Trade Marks and Designs (Fees) Rules 2001 including the introduction of a new fee of €125 for the division of a trade mark registration.

STANDARDISATION

In 2018 NSAI was selected to host two International Organisation for Standards (ISO) standards plenary meetings in 2019 on:

- ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 42: Artificial Intelligence;
- ISO/TC 307: Blockchain and distributed ledger technologies.

Consequently, NSAI will host a global network of industry professionals in Dublin on these evolving fields.

GOAL 4: DELIVER POSITIVE WORKPLACE RELATIONS SUPPORTS, WELL-FUNCTIONING DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS, ROBUST ENFORCEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In addition to workplace supports, including safe and healthy places of work, dispute resolution and the enforcement of rights, the Department is also responsible for Economic Migration Policy and for managing the Employment Permits regime.

ECONOMIC MIGRATION

During 2018 as the economy continued towards full employment, labour as well as skills shortages were beginning to emerge. To ensure that the State's employment permits system remains sufficiently flexible to react to changes in the labour market and be fully supportive of emerging labour needs, a fundamental review of the economic migration policies underpinning the employment permits system was undertaken. The Report, published in September 2018, found that the current employment permits system is largely robust but needs some adjustments to ensure that it continues to be responsive to changing labour market needs. An Action Plan has been developed to drive recommendations in the short to medium term.

During 2018, changes were made, by way of amendment to the Employment Permit Regulations, to the occupation lists to adjust for skills needs. The changes provided for the removal from the ineligible categories of employment list by quota, certain specific occupations in the food and agri-food sector and a number of occupations in the design and animation industry.

Employment Permits

In support of the Department's objective to improve service to businesses, the Employment Permits Online System (EPOS), which was launched in September 2016, is firmly established as the preferred method of submitting applications. Currently, over 99% of employment permit applications received are being submitted online.

The increased demand for permits led to delays in processing applications in 2018. However, through a combination of increased resources, staff working overtime and ICT and operational improvements, processing times began reducing towards the end of 2018 with further improvements anticipated in 2019.

The success of the employment permits system in responding to emerging skill shortages and delivering enhanced administrative efficiencies during 2018 is evident in the following statistics:

- processed 16% more employment permits compared to 2017;
- processed more permits in Q4 2018 than any other quarter in last ten years;

- 44% of all employment permits issued in 2018 were in respect of Critical Skills Employment Permits, the employment permit designed to target shortages in highly skilled occupations in high demand; and
- 30% of employment permits issued were to ICT professionals.

Year	Applications Accepted ²	Total Issued	Total Refused	Total Withdrawn	Awaiting processing
2018	16,735	13,398	1,396	543	2,625
2017	13,333	11,354	1,516	320	1,300
2016	11,317	9,383	1,651	207	1,238

Throughout 2018 the section has been proactively engaging with customers to notify them of any relevant changes to the employment permits system by way of email, meetings, targeted mailshots and regular updates on the Employment Permits section of the Department's website.

WORKPLACE RELATIONS COMMISSION (WRC)

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is an independent, statutory body which was established on 1st October 2015 under the [Workplace Relations Act 2015](#) (No. 16 of 2015). All first instance complaints are now dealt with by the WRC. The Labour Court also assumed new responsibilities as part of the workplace relations reform under the 2015 Act, and now has sole appellate jurisdiction in all disputes under employment rights enactments. This is in addition to its original role as the Court of last resort in industrial relations dispute resolution

In 2018, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) received 15,451 specific complaints. This represents more than a 10% increase in the number of specific complaints being lodged with the WRC over the previous year. Despite this increase in volume, 90% of adjudication hearings were scheduled within 6 months of receipt of complaint where no requests for postponement are received where all parties are available and submissions are received in a timely manner.

² Previous annual reports included the number of applications received rather than applications accepted. The 'applications received' figure included applications that were later rejected as being incomplete. EPOS has largely eliminated the instances of incomplete applications, so the table above uses the more accurate heading of "Applications Accepted".

The Inspection service undertook a total of 5,753 workplace inspections resulting in €3.1m in unpaid wages recovered during 2018. The Conciliation Service chaired some 1,145 conciliation conferences and 500 facilitations in relation to collective disputes during 2018.

LABOUR COURT³

In 2018 the Labour Court received 1,169 referrals, representing a 7% increase on the number of referrals (1,093) received in 2017.

SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT ORDERS (SEO)

The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 provides the legal basis for Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs). An SEO can set the pay, pension or sick pay scheme for workers in an economic sector.

A Sectoral Employment Order for the Mechanical Engineering Building Services Contracting Sector was commenced in March 2018.

Two new applications for a SEO were submitted to the Labour Court in late 2018. One is a request for an amendment to the existing SEO for the Construction sector and the other is for a SEO for the Electrical Contracting and Construction sector. Labour Court recommendations are expected in 2019.

EMPLOYMENT REGULATION ORDERS (EROS)

An Employment Regulation Order (ERO) is an instrument drawn up by a Joint Labour Committee (JLC), adopted by the Labour Court and given statutory effect by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The ERO fixes minimum rates of pay and conditions of employment for workers in specified business sectors: employers in those sectors are then obliged to pay wage rates and provide conditions of employment not less favorable than those prescribed.

In line with legislation, a review of JLC's took place in March 2018 and one national Catering JLC was established. This reduced the number of JLCs from 8 to 7.

³ Since the enactment of the Workplace Relations Act 2015, the Labour Court is now the single appellate body dealing with all appeals under employment rights legislation. This is in addition to its original role as the Court of last resort in industrial relations dispute resolution.

WORKING GROUP ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS STRUCTURES FOR AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

The working group was set up to progress the legislative amendments necessary to facilitate access by An Garda Síochána and their representative bodies to the industrial relations machinery of the State. The Group operated as a sub group of the wider working group examining industrial relations structures for An Garda Síochána.

The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2018 was published on 20 July 2018. It passed Second Stage in October. When enacted it will amend the Industrial Relations legislation to allow access to the services of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and the Labour Court for the Garda representative associations.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ENVIRONMENT

There was a continuing low level of industrial dispute activity in the economy throughout 2018. There was a very significant decrease in the number of days lost to industrial disputes in 2018 compared with the figures for 2017. There were 4,050 days lost to strike action in 2018, whereas there were 50,191 days lost in 2017. A number of disputes during 2018 involved claims for increases in pay, reflecting the improved economic environment. It has been the approach of the Labour Court to examine each case on its merits and recommend increases in pay where this was justified and sustainable, having regard to the circumstances of the employments concerned and the strength of the case advanced.

SAFETY, HEALTH AND CHEMICALS POLICY

The Department with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is responsible for formulating and developing policy at national, EU and international levels in relation to occupational safety and health and the manufacture and use of chemicals by Irish industry.

In 2018 a new Chief Executive Officer was appointed to the Health & Safety Authority and a new Strategy Statement 2019–2021 was approved by the Board and the Minister.

During 2018 the Department liaised with colleagues in the EU institutions in supporting the adoption of 2 new Directives to minimise the exposure of workers to carcinogenic or mutagenic substances. Discussions on a possible new (3rd) Directive are well advanced and it is envisaged that all 3 Directives will be transposed into Irish law by 1st January 2020. In addition, a new Code of Practice 2018 on the use of Chemical Agents was introduced. This sets maximum occupational exposure limits (or safety standards) for people working with hazardous chemicals and supports companies in complying with best practice chemical safety regulations.

In 2018, the Department also worked closely with other Departments and Agencies on the drafting of legislation to give effect to the amended EU Rotterdam and Detergents Regulations under the Chemicals Acts 2008 & 2010. It is envisaged that this process will be completed in early 2019 subject to assistance from the Attorney General's Office (OPC).

NOTIFYING AUTHORITY ROLE

Product safety has been largely regulated through EU harmonised law (legislation that applies throughout the EU as a whole) which covers about 70% of products on the EU market. A Notified Body in the European Union is an organisation approved by an EU Member State to assess the conformity of certain products before being placed on the market. In order to become a Notified Body and carry out conformity assessments throughout the European Union, an organisation must be approved by a Notifying Authority.

The Department is a Notifying Authority under several EU Directives and has specific responsibility for Directives concerning Machinery; Personal Protective Equipment; Transportable Pressure Equipment; Pressure Equipment; Lifts and Safety Components for Lifts and, also, Equipment for Use in Potentially Explosive Atmospheres (ATEX).

Following the UK Referendum result on Brexit, a number of UK Notified Bodies are now establishing in Ireland have applied to be appointed as a Notified Body in Ireland. This will allow them to continue to operate within the European Union post-Brexit.

CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

Work continued to work with the Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS and the Health and Safety Authority in relation to modernising the delivery of training supports to the construction sector by SOLAS.

The Department also participated on the Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (CSPAC) which acts as a consultative and advisory forum to the Board of the Health and Safety Authority.

FARMING SECTOR

Notwithstanding an overall drop in the number of fatalities in the farming sector in 2018 compared to 2017 the farming sector remains the sector with the highest rate of accidents and fatalities, a Farm Safety Task Force was convened during 2018 with representatives from a number of Government Departments and Agencies.

DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES LEGISLATIVE REGIME

In 2018, the Department commenced work on the modernisation of the regulations for the petroleum section. This significant project will enable a new regulatory regime to be developed during 2019 and support the sector in maintaining the highest health, safety and environmental standards. Initial work focused on a review of the 1972 Dangerous Substances Act and 1979 Petroleum Retail and Storage Regulations (SI 311 of 1979 & SI 313 of 1979) and identifying the changes required to the regulatory regime.

A steering committee was established to oversee the project comprising of officials from other Government Departments, Local Government and relevant Agencies and a stakeholder engagement consultation event took place in November 2018 bringing together

approximately 40 stakeholders from across the public and private sector to provide input into the development of draft new Regulations and a new licensing and regulatory regime for the sector. The feedback from all stakeholders is currently being complied and drafting of new draft Regulations will be further developed and published in 2019.

GOAL 5: ENSURE THAT OUR BUSINESS REGULATION FACILITATE BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, COMPETITION IN THE MARKETPLACE, HIGH STANDARDS OF CONSUMER PROTECTION AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND PROVIDES IRELAND WITH A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE GLOBAL MARKET

COMPANY LAW, COMPETITION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

During 2018, the Department built on work previously done on the successful development of a stable, transparent and modernised company law framework in Ireland and continued to develop and shape responses to new and emerging challenges in company law, competition and consumer policy at EU and national level. A key focus is working in collaboration with stakeholders, the Department's offices and agencies and other Government Departments to achieve the best outcomes in line with our high level goal.

PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE ON CONSUMER CONTRACTS FOR THE SUPPLY OF DIGITAL CONTENT

The proposal aims to contribute to the proper functioning of the Internal Market while providing for a high level of consumer protection by laying down certain requirements on matters such as the conformity of digital content and digital services with the contract and the remedies available to consumers in the case of a lack of conformity of, or a failure to supply, digital content and digital services. Following the Council's approval of a general approach in 2017, trilogue meetings on the proposal commenced between the Estonian Presidency, the European Commission and the European Parliament in December 2017. Trilogues continued throughout 2018 under the Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies and a final agreement on the proposal is expected in the first quarter of 2019.

AMENDED PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE ON CONSUMER CONTRACTS FOR THE SALES OF GOODS

The European Union Commission published an amended proposal covering all consumer sales contracts on 31 October 2017. Apart from the extension of its scope to all consumer sales contracts, it was similar in substance to the original online sales proposal. During working party meetings through 2017 and 2018 subsequent European Union Presidencies sought to address concerns raised by Member States about aspects of the proposal that would reduce existing consumer protections in Member States. This included concerns expressed by Ireland about the implications for the long-established right of Irish consumers to reject goods that do not conform to the contract. A general approach to the proposal was agreed at the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 6-7 December 2018. Trilogue discussions between the Presidency, European Parliament and European Commission commenced on 12 December 2018 with a view to reaching agreement on the proposal in the first quarter of 2019.

PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION ON ADDRESSING GEO-BLOCKING AND OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON CUSTOMERS' NATIONALITY, PLACE OF RESIDENCE OR PLACE OF ESTABLISHMENT

The Minister signed regulations into force to give effect for consumers to Regulation (EU) 2018/302 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 February 2018 on addressing unjustified geo-blocking and other forms of discrimination based on customers' nationality, place of residence or place of establishment within the internal market and amending Regulations (EC) No 2006/2004 and (EU) 2017/2394 and Directive 2009/22/EC.

Geo-blocking is the practice of using technology to restrict access to online cross-border sales based upon the user's geographical location. The regulation on Geo-blocking of consumers will ensure that Irish consumers will now have the same rights to access a trader's goods and services on the same terms as other EU consumers, irrespective of their location. The regulation applies to transactions which have a cross-border element.

The Minister designated the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) as the relevant enforcement authority for disputes between a consumer and a trader and ECC Ireland was designated as the body responsible for rendering assistance to consumers under the regulation.

NEW DEAL FOR CONSUMERS PACKAGE

A package of measures titled the "New Deal for Consumers" was launched on 11 April 2018 by the European Commission and aims to facilitate coordination and effective action from national consumer authorities at EU level and reinforce public enforcement action and better protection of consumer rights. It follows on from the results published in May 2017 by the European Commission of its Fitness Check of a number of the most important pieces of consumer protection legislation and a separate evaluation report on consumer rights. The evaluation report found in particular, that there was a need for improved enforcement and enhanced redress options for consumers. The evaluations concluded also that there was a need to reduce the regulatory burden on traders in some areas.

The "New Deal for Consumers" package is composed of proposals for two new Directives.

1. A proposal on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers and repealing the Injunctions Directive 2009/22/EC. This proposal aims to improve tools for stopping illegal practices and facilitating redress for consumers where many of them are victims of the same infringement of their rights, in a mass harm situation.
2. A proposal to provide for a number of substantive amendments to Directive 2005/29/EC on unfair consumer practices and Directive 2011/83/EU on consumer rights as well as for more effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for infringements of these two Directives, Directive 93/13/EEC on unfair contract terms and Directive 98/6/EC on the indication of the prices of products offered to consumers.

Both of the proposed new Directives commenced technical scrutiny by Member States in 2018 and this work will continue into 2019.

DIRECTIVE TO EMPOWER COMPETITION AUTHORITIES OF THE MEMBER STATES TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE ENFORCERS

Directive (EU) 2019/1 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 to empower the competition authorities of the Member States to be more effective enforcers and to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market was published on 14 January 2019. The Directive must be transposed into Irish law by 4 February 2021. The transposition of the Directive will improve the decentralised system of enforcement of EU competition rules put in place by Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 and boost the effective enforcement of EU competition rules by giving national competition authorities more effective investigative and decision-making tools. It will further underpin close cooperation in the European Competition Network.

The Directive has the following specific objectives:

1. ensuring NCAs have effective investigation and decision-making tools
2. ensuring that NCAs are able to impose effective deterrent fines
3. ensuring that NCAs have a well-designed leniency programme in place which facilitates applying for leniency in multiple jurisdictions, and
4. ensuring that NCAs have sufficient resources and can enforce EU competition rules independently.

REGULATION LAYING DOWN RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF UNION HARMONISATION LEGISLATION ON PRODUCTS

On 19 December 2017, the European Union Commission published a proposal for a Regulation to strengthen compliance and enforcement of EU product safety rules by intensifying compliance checks and promoting cross-border cooperation. The Regulation will merge the rules on market surveillance of Regulation (EC) 765/2008 and many sector-specific pieces of Union harmonisation legislation into a single legal instrument that applies horizontally across all sectors. The Regulation will help ensure consumer safety when products are placed on the market. It will also help economic operators better understand product safety requirements. In addition, it strengthens cooperation among market surveillance authorities and economic operators, setting up general principles of market surveillance organisation as well as powers and duties of market surveillance authorities. It addresses issues of testing capacities within the Union, while also laying down procedures for cross-border mutual assistance and establishes a Union Compliance Network. The Regulation is expected to be published in 2019 and will enter into force two years from the published date.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION ON THE RESALE OF TICKETS

Following the public consultation on ticket resale launched in January 2017, the Department held follow-up discussions with stakeholders with a view to assessing possible options aimed at helping to ensure that ticket markets would work better for consumers. Officials also engaged with authorities in EU and EFTA Member States with legislation on ticket resale with a view to assessing the experience with and effectiveness of, such legislation. The Government agreed to support the Private Members' Bill, Prohibition of Above-cost Ticket Touting Bill 2017, introduced in Dáil Éireann on 31 January 2017.

The Bill provides that it would be an offence to sell, or offer for sale, tickets for major sporting, musical or theatrical events for a price in excess of the officially designated price. The Government also approved the drafting of a number of amendments to the Bill and noted the intention of the Minister to propose changes to the Bill at Committee or Report Stage. The proposed amendments would prohibit the use of bot software for the purchase of tickets and implement a commitment given to UEFA to ban the unauthorised transfer of tickets for matches during the EURO 2020 championship. In December 2018, the Department submitted a number of amendments to the Bill to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

CONSUMER PROTECTION (GIFT VOUCHERS) BILL 2018

On 12 June 2018, the Government approved drafting of the Unfair Contract Terms (Gift Vouchers) Bill. This Bill provided that gift vouchers must be valid for a minimum of five years. It additionally gave the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation power to set fees for the replacement of gift vouchers and for inactive balances on gift vouchers. A public consultation on gift voucher fees and expiry dates was launched on 19 July 2018.

Following legal issues that arose during drafting, and to ensure consumers would still benefit from greater protection, the Minister decided to omit the regulation of fees from the Bill. On 18 December 2018, the Government approved the publication of the Consumer Protection (Gift Vouchers) Bill 2018, which was initiated in Seanad Éireann on 19 December 2018. This Bill provides that gift vouchers supplied by a trader to a consumer should be subject to an expiry date of not less than five years. It also prohibits any contract term that requires that gift vouchers be spent in full in a single transaction and the cancellation of vouchers or the imposition of fees where the name of a gift voucher recipient does not correspond exactly to his or her name on specified documentation such as a passport.

HALLMARKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016

The Bill has completed all stages in the Dáil and is scheduled for all stages in the Seanad in early 2019. The Bill provides for a number of amendments such as; provisions to allow for the hallmarking of multi-metal articles and responsibility for the approval of sponsor's marks to remain with the Assay Master.

ENTRY INTO FORCE OF REGULATIONS TO AMEND THE CASUAL TRADING ACT 1995

The Minister signed the European Union (Casual Trading Act) Regulations 2018 (S.I No. 308 of 2018) into force with effect from 1 January 2019. The purpose of the Regulations is to amend the Casual Trading Act 1995 in three specific areas in order for it to comply with the Service Directive (Directive 2006/123/EC).

The Casual Trading Act provides for a control and regulatory system for people trading in public places and involves the issuing of licenses to traders by local authorities.

Simultaneous with the signing of the Regulations, the Department conducted a public consultation exercise with interested parties and local authorities to check that both the Casual Trading Act 1995 and the Occasional Trading Act 1979 are still fit for purpose given the length of time both pieces of legislation have been in force.

PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE (EU) 2017/1132 AS REGARDS THE USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS AND PROCESSES IN COMPANY LAW

The European Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive amending Directive (EU) 2017/1132 on digital tools and processes in April 2018. The proposal is part of the EU Company Law Package: making the best of digital solutions and providing efficient rules for cross-border operations. The objective of the proposal is to apply digital solutions to allow online access to business registers, for companies registering and providing information, as well as access to such information for third parties. Negotiations on the proposal commenced at the Working Party on Company Law in mid-2018 and continue into 2019.

COMPANY LAW REVIEW GROUP (CLRG)

The Company Law Review Group (CLRG) is an expert advisory group charged with advising the Minister on company law matters. A new work programme for 2018-2020 was determined by the Minister. The Group was reconstituted in June 2018 with a new Chairperson appointed. The Group also adopted a new Code of Practice, which is in keeping with the Department's commitment to transparency and high ethical standards. The secretariat is provided by the Department.

The CLRG completed a substantial piece of work from its work programme in 2018 in making its recommendations as to whether the adoption of the UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-border Insolvency was desirable for Ireland. This is now being considered by the Department.

The CLRG is also conducting a review on the enforcement of company law which is being progressed by its Compliance and Enforcement subcommittee. There is a strong focus on insolvency in the [CLRG Work Programme 2018-2020](#) and consideration of the area is

ongoing. The Corporate Insolvency subcommittee of the Group is also considering the regulation of receivers as an additional item to the work programme.

PROPOSAL FOR AN INSOLVENCY DIRECTIVE

The European Commission proposal seeks to harmonise aspects of national insolvency laws – both for companies and for individuals. It is focused on specific areas of insolvency law – ‘early restructuring’ opportunities (for businesses in financial difficulties which may not, or not yet, be insolvent) and ensuring a ‘second chance’ for ‘honest entrepreneurs’ who become insolvent without any fraud or malpractice.

The proposal is expected to be formally adopted in the spring of 2019.

ENACTMENT OF THE COMPANIES (STATUTORY AUDITS) ACT 2018

The Companies (Statutory Audits) Act 2018 was enacted and commenced on 21 September 2018. The Act introduces some practical changes to the conduct of oversight of audit in Ireland and is one of the Department’s actions in the Government’s package of Measures to enhance Ireland’s corporate, economic and regulatory framework.

GENERAL SCHEME OF THE COMPANIES (CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY) BILL

The General Scheme of the Companies (Corporate Enforcement Authority) Bill was published on 4 December 2018. The General Scheme gives effect to 2 of the 14 measures in the Government’s package of “Measures to enhance Ireland’s corporate, economic and regulatory framework”, which is subtitled ‘Ireland combatting “white collar crime”’ and was published on 2 November 2017. Those 2 measures are:

- establishing the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement as an agency that is better equipped to investigate increasingly complex breaches of company law; and
- implementing recommendations of the Company Law Review Group on corporate governance.

The General Scheme also incorporates some additional provisions, such as –

- implementing recommendations of the Company Law Review Group on shares and share capital;
- new ground for the restriction of company directors;
- measures with respect to the conduct of liquidations and oversight of liquidators; and
- transparency measures with respect to companies and the Register of Companies.

PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE (EU) 2017/1132 AS REGARDS CROSS-BORDER CONVERSIONS, MERGERS AND DIVISIONS

The European Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive amending Directive (EU) 2017/1132 on cross-border conversions, mergers and divisions in April 2018. The proposal is part of the EU Company Law Package: making the best of digital solutions and providing efficient rules for cross-border operations. The objective of the proposal is to make it easier for companies to merge, divide or move within the Single Market and to safeguard employees, creditors and minority shareholders rights. The Department held a public consultation on the proposal in May 2018. Negotiations on the proposal commenced at the Working Party on Company Law in mid-2018 and continue into 2019.

REVIEW OF THE INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACTS

The Department continued a review of the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1893-2018 to consolidate and modernise the existing legislation and ensure an effective cooperative legislative framework suitable for the diverse range of businesses operating the cooperative model in Ireland. As part of this review, the Department held a public consultation on the proposed legislative reform and published the responses on the Department's website in April 2018. The Department will bring forward proposals for comprehensive, consolidated and modernised legislation in 2019.

PERSONAL INJURIES ASSESSMENT BOARD

In August 2018, the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) (No 2) Bill 2018 was published. The Bill is an important measure to encourage more personal injury claims to be settled within the PIAB process. PIAB facilitates the objective assessment of damages at a much lower delivery cost and in a far shorter timeframe than through litigation. In 2018, PIAB processed claims within 7.2 months compared to several years for litigation.

Therefore, by encouraging more claimants to finalise their cases through the PIAB model rather than resorting to litigation should lead to cost savings in the claims environment. This is good for society as a whole as it delivers compensation more quickly, with lower costs and predictable outcomes. The Bill has completed all stages in the Dáil and is scheduled for all stages in the Seanad in early 2019.

PERSONAL INJURIES COMMISSION

The Personal Injuries Commission (PIC) completed its work with the publication in September 2018 of its Second and Final Report, following its approval by the Government. The Report makes ten recommendations, the implementation of which will be a matter for each of the bodies responsible. These recommendations are in addition to the four recommendations made in the first report. As the PIC was established following a recommendation in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance published in January 2017, it is intended that progress on implementation will be monitored through the Cost of Insurance Working Group Quarterly Progress Reports.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

The Better Regulation Unit, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, held a Taking Care of Business event in the Mid-West in September 2018 at which more than 200 members of the business community – including SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurs – could engage face to face with almost 30 state and public-sector agencies, offices and services to get advice and find out what help is available. The event was also supported by a number of private-sector representative bodies. Almost 2,700 people have attended the series of these events around the country since 2013.

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS ACT, 2013 – REGULATION OF PAYMENTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS AND STATUTORY ENTITLEMENT TO ADJUDICATION

During 2018 there were 27 applications made to the Construction Contracts Adjudication Panel, for the appointment of an Adjudicator under section 6(4) of the Construction Contracts Act, 2013.

Dr. Bunni submitted the second Annual Report on the implementation of the Construction Contracts Act, 2013 to Minister of State Pat Breen, T.D., in August 2018 and this report is available on the Department's website.

NATIONAL METROLOGY

The demand for calibration services remained steady for 2018, with 4,600 calibration certificates being issued during the year.

LEGAL METROLOGY

In 2018, legal metrology inspectors visited 4,260 premises and inspected 15,660 instruments, an increase of 20% and 6.1% respectively, on the same figures for 2017. At an average compliance rate of 88%, a high level of industry compliance is evident. In total, 450 warnings for non-compliance were issued.

MEDICAL DEVICES CERTIFICATION

Medical Devices achieved full recognition as an Auditing Organisation for the Medical Device Single Audit Programme (MDSAP) and are now one of only 14 bodies internationally to have such a status.

TRADE LICENSING AND CONTROL

The Department implements EU and national measures to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to support regional stability and to protect human rights. This regime is a key component of the business regulation framework for companies trading internationally from Ireland. A robust and efficient regime helps provide Ireland with a competitive advantage in the global market.

In 2018, the Department administered 565 export licences for controlled goods, with a total value of €3.6bn. The Department also enacted 20 Statutory Instruments to give full legal effect to new EU sanctions. The Department is responsible for enforcing trade elements of EU sanctions.

The Department implements EU surveillance requirements for imports of certain steel and aluminium products from third countries. In 2018, 1,500 import licences were issued.

The Department represents Ireland at EU and other international fora with responsibility for trade controls and actively contributes to the updating of relevant legislation, both national and EU.

GOAL 6: 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

ENGAGEMENT AT EU LEVEL

During 2018, Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D., Ministers of State Pat Breen, T.D. and John Halligan, T.D., represented Ireland's interests at the Competitiveness and Trade Councils respectively. There were four Formal and two Informal meetings of the Competitiveness Councils, as well as two Formal and two Informal Trade Council meetings held during the course of 2018 under the Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies.

Issues progressed by the Competitiveness Council during 2018 included the future of the Single Market, Making EU Trade in Services work for all; the future of industrial policy, including artificial intelligence and robotics; digitalisation of the EU economy; the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027; Implementation of the Digital Single Market e-commerce initiatives; Regulation on Mutual Recognition; Regulation on Platforms to Business Relations; Regulation on the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Committee (2019-2020) complementing the Horizon 2020 Framework for Research and Innovation and Regulation establishing the space programme of the Union.

Issues progressed by the Trade Council during 2018 included a proposal for a Framework Regulation on the Screening of Foreign Direct Investment on security or public order grounds; Negotiations on free trade agreements with a number of third country partners, Horizontal Bilateral Safeguard Regulation; approval of the signing of Trade Agreements with Japan and with Singapore, in July and October 2018 at the EU/Japan and EU/ASEAN summit events respectively; approval of negotiating directives (mandates) to commence formal trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand; finalisation of the EU-Mexico Association Agreement; ongoing trade negotiations with Mercosur and Chile. In addition, discussions also took place on EU-US trade relations & the WTO Reform agenda.

In addition to representing the Department's and Ireland's strategic interests at Council, the Department's key EU interests were also pursued at the cross-Government level via the Department of Foreign Affairs EU Senior Officials Group and the Interdepartmental Group on EU Affairs and Brexit, as well as, bilaterally through engagements with like-minded Member States and the European Commission.

The Department continued to engage at EU Committee and Working Party level to communicate Ireland's position on issues of Trade, to ensure that the open, free and rule based multi-lateral trading system is supported and upheld. In that regard, between Dublin and Brussels we service multiple Committees and Working Groups, including Geneva insofar as the World Trade Organisation is concerned. We also take the lead role for Ireland

in other international organisations' fora (UN, WTO) through its Permanent Representation Mission in Geneva, as well as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD).

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO)

The Department leads on Ireland's engagement with the ILO⁴. Ireland is serving a three year term as a Titulaire member (with speaking and voting rights) of the Governing Body. National positions on the Governing Body (GB) agenda are coordinated through an Interdepartmental Group, which brings together Departments with policy responsibility for items on the GB's wide-ranging agenda. A key feature of the work of the Group is the involvement of the Social Partners, to reflect the fact that the ILO is a tripartite organisation.

In addition to participating in the March and November GB meetings, the Department led a tripartite delegation to the International Labour Conference in June 2018, where President Higgins delivered a keynote address.

TRADE AGREEMENTS AND TRADE MISSIONS

In 2018, the Department, on behalf of Ireland, worked closely with the European Union Commission and Member States to bring several trade agreements to a successful conclusion.

The EU-Japan Economic Partnership (EPA) was adopted by Council on the 29 June 2018 and signed in Tokyo on the 17 July 2018. The European Parliament voted to ratify this EPA on 12 December 2018 with the agreement scheduled for entry into force on 1 February 2019. This ambitious trade agreement is a landmark achievement for the EU and Japan, who together account for more than one third of the world's GDP.

The EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed by Member States' Ministers at Council in October 2018. The FTA was signed along with the Investment Protection Agreement (IPA), by the EU and Singapore at the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit on 19 October 2018. The deal goes beyond many other free trade accords in committing to open up public procurement, an area where the EU has many leading suppliers and agreeing on technical standards in areas such as motor vehicles, electronics and green technologies. In July 2018, the EU and Vietnam agreed to split their Agreement to form a separate Free Trade Agreement and Investment Protection Agreement (IPA). The European Commission is aiming to sign both Agreements with Vietnam at the G20 Summit in June 2019 with the aim to have them ratified by the European Parliament during 2019. On the 21 April 2018, the EU and Mexico reached Political Agreement in their negotiations to

⁴ In June 2017, Ireland was elected as Titulaire member of the ILO Governing Body (GB) for the period 2017-20. This is the first time Ireland has been elected to a Titulaire seat (one with speaking and voting rights) since we joined the ILO in 1923. Ireland is also Regional Coordinator of the ILO Western European Group.

modernise the existing EU-Mexico Global Agreement to broaden its scope to include regulatory cooperation, additional trade in agriculture and public procurement. The Agreement will provide a platform to increase Irish exports to Mexico, this will be significant for Ireland's important Agri-food sector especially for dairy, pork and beef products. Negotiations for separate Free Trade Agreements with Australia and New Zealand began in July 2018 following approval of the negotiating mandates by Council in May 2018.

The Department also continued to work with the European Commission and Member States to ensure that Ireland's interests are promoted and safeguarded in EU trade negotiations, such as the newly established FTA negotiations with Australia and New Zealand, as well as in concluding the Singapore FTA/IPA and Vietnam FTA/IPA. This is in addition, to ongoing EU negotiations with Mercosur, Chile and Indonesia, the development of new EU trade defence legislation and a European framework for the screening of foreign direct investments coming into the EU.

In 2018, the Department initiated a study on the impact of recent and perspective EU Free Trade Agreements for Ireland which will assess their economic impact and provide recommendations to maximise gains and mitigate challenges that can arise in their implementation.

The number of Ministerial-led Trade Missions in 2018 increased once again, year-on-year, 62 Ministerial led Trade Missions and trade events took place. The Trade Mission programme is part of the Department's wider commitment to diversifying Ireland's exports market, post-Brexit.

Trade Missions are just one part of a comprehensive programme of international trade events delivered the Department's Enterprise Agencies, giving Irish companies the opportunity to meet with potential buyers and network with key influencers in countries around the world. In total, 62 internationally focused trade events were organised throughout the year.

While the UK will continue to be a very important market for Irish exporters, the Department is keen to ensure that new opportunities are created for Irish companies wishing to expand their presence or indeed introduce their products to new markets. In that regard increasing Irish presence in Eurozone markets was a key priority for the Department in 2018 and will continue to be. A key objective of the Department's engagement on these missions is to highlight the importance of new market access and to promote the benefits of countries using Ireland as a launchpad into Europe.

SUPPORTING THE EU INTERREG PROGRAMME

The INTERREG VA Programme is one of 60 EU funding programmes across the EU which have been designed to help overcome issues that arise from the existence of a border. It embraces the six Border counties of Ireland, all of Northern Ireland and part of Western Scotland.

The Department co-funds the Research and Innovation strand (R&I) of the INTERREG VA Programme, together with the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland. Total funding available for this R&I strand (from the EU and National Governments) is €71m over the period up to 2022.

The R&I strand comprises two distinct elements: an initiative to increase the number of SMEs engaged in cross-border research and innovation activity (€18m) and a more research-oriented initiative to increase the level of cross-border business and industry-relevant research and innovation capacity within the Health and Life Sciences and Renewable Energy sectors (€53m).

Third level institutions within the geographical area have a strong role in the Programme, including the three Institutes of Technology in the border counties. A total of 514 PhD years' worth of research is involved over the life of the Programme (over 135 years' worth has been achieved so far) and selected companies from the relevant sectors are also participating, which will result in the development of enhanced expertise, as well as new products and or processes. Both elements of the Programme are underway with individual projects having been formally launched during 2017.

EU STATE AID REGIME

Adherence to state aid rules remained a priority for the Department in 2018. The Department, in its capacity as the National Contact Point for overarching State Aid policy, continued disseminating information and providing training on the state aid regulations across Government Departments and the Department's enterprise agencies. In addition, as the liaison point for all communications issuing to and from DG Competition, the Department coordinated Ireland's position on State aid issues during the course of 2018.

The objectives of the EU's State Aid Modernisation initiative are to foster growth in a strengthened, dynamic and competitive internal market, to focus enforcement on cases with the biggest impact on the internal market and to streamline the state aid rules, including the speed of decision-making by the Directorate General for Competition.

A key reform in the modernisation process has been clarification from the European Commission and exempting state aid from prior control via the General Block Exemption Regulation. The General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) plays a crucial role in simplifying and clarifying state aid rules, cutting red tape and allowing for investments to go ahead as fast as possible. This also allows the European Commission to focus its State aid control on the potentially most distortive cases.

Brexit State Aid Response– working group

In 2017 a Working Group on State Aid was set up comprising representatives from the Directorate General for Competition, the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The objective of the

Group is to scope and design schemes to support enterprises impacted by Brexit in line with State Aid rules. The Irish delegation is led by the Department.

Much has been achieved to date by the Group including the development of the Future Growth Loan Scheme under GBER rules, the expansion of Ireland's Rescue and Restructuring Scheme to include Temporary Liquidity aid and the Group continues to work closely with the Agricultural Directorate (DG Agri) to explore the range of opportunities under the Agriculture and Forestry State aid guidelines to provide support to those enterprises in the food sector who are impacted by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

EU DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET STRATEGY

In April 2018, the Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection represented Ireland at the EU Digital Day where he signed up to three Declarations; Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and an Innovation Radar.

The European Commission announced an initial 16 initiatives under the EU Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy in 2015 and has since added a further 14 initiatives, including 10 following Digital Day in April 2018. The DSM initiatives are aimed at supporting three key pillars: simplifying access for consumers and business; shaping the environment for digital networks and services to flourish; and maximising the growth potential of the digital economy. The Department has responsibility for DSM initiatives in relation to Platforms for Business; Copyright; and e-Commerce (including Geo-blocking). The European Commission drove progress across the full range of initiatives and 21 of the 30 initiatives had been agreed by the end of the year.

A meeting of the D9+ countries in May 2018 took place in The Digital Hub, Dublin under the theme of Artificial Intelligence. The D9+ is a Ministerial level meeting of like-minded countries who meet to discuss DSM issues. A number of Ministerial representatives attended underscoring Ireland's leadership of the digital agenda. The D9+ comprises the nine top-ranked European countries in the European Commission Annual Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). Ireland also attended a meeting of the D9+ in Estonia in November, where the focus was on the future of the Digital Single Market in the context of the upcoming European Parliament elections and the new European Commission taking up office in 2019.

BREXIT PREPARATIONS

In 2018, the Brexit Unit worked to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to Brexit across the Department and its Agencies and to maximise our influence in negotiations on the UK exit from, and the framework for the UK's future relationship with, the EU.

To ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to Brexit across all areas of the Department in 2018, and to take into account the movement into a new phase in the negotiations on the UK exit from the EU, the Brexit Unit managed and supported regular:

- meetings of the Co-ordination Group on Brexit, chaired by the Minister and re-established with a broader based membership including all relevant Agencies of the Department, to oversee implementation of our response to the emerging national, UK and EU developments;
- meetings of the Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges, also chaired by the Minister, which enables the Department to engage with and hear the views, concerns and suggestions of the enterprise sector. Membership includes representatives from some thirteen enterprise groups;
- meetings of the Department's Cross Divisional Brexit Senior Officials Group, chaired by the Secretary General, Dr Orlaigh Quinn, comprising senior officials in relevant policy areas across the Department. This group serves to coordinate our approach to Brexit across the Department and to update on negotiations and the Department's Brexit Research; and
- engagement across Government led by the Department of An Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Department also continued to lead the Inter-Departmental Brexit Trade & Investment Working Group to inform the development of policy positions to negotiations, with two meetings taking place in 2018.

The Copenhagen Economics study, *Ireland and the Impacts of Brexit*, commissioned by the Department, was published in February. This study examines the implications and quantifies the impact of possible new barriers to trade which might emerge as a result of Brexit, adding to an already extensive evidence base that underpinned the development of our response to Brexit throughout 2018. This evidence base also continued to inform Ireland's policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK's future relationship with the EU and further mitigation measures, including sectoral mitigation measures to respond to Brexit.

Engagement with external stakeholders continued to be an important pillar of the Government's domestic response to Brexit. A Department stakeholder event - 'Trade Implications of Brexit' - was held in February in Croke Park, with over 200 key stakeholders, to discuss the results of the Copenhagen Economics study.

In June 2018, the Department published "Findings and insights of the firm-level impact of Brexit on most exposed sectors". The research engaged with firms based in Ireland, representing large, medium and small employers in those sectors deemed most exposed in a 'hard' Brexit scenario. The study demonstrates that the nature and extent of the impact will be primarily firm-specific.

The Department jointly hosted a seminar, *Building Stronger Business – Responding to Brexit*, with the ESRI and Enterprise Ireland in July 2018 to present the findings of a series of reports on potential impacts of Brexit on issues which include UK imports used by Irish-based firms, the skills requirements arising from potential impacts of Brexit, firm-level impacts of Brexit and details of Irish-UK trade in services.

- The key findings of the report 'Intermediate Goods Inputs and the UK Content of Irish Goods Exports' report, commissioned by the Department was that Irish-owned firms, while having a lower reliance on imported inputs than foreign-owned firms, had a greater overall reliance on the UK as their source of imports, with over 20% of their imports either completely/very highly reliant on the UK.
- The ESRI research on Irish-UK Services Trade, commissioned by the Department, examined the determinants of international trade in services between countries and an estimate of the contribution to services trade flows associated with EU membership. A strong impact arising from EU membership was identified for trade in financial and business services, particularly in direct insurance

In line with preparation for Brexit across Government, the Department stepped up its preparatory work during 2018 under the central case scenario (Withdrawal Agreement & Transition Period to end of 2020) while continuing contingency planning for a hard Brexit. This work included the development of a comprehensive Department *Brexit Preparedness Action Plan* with contributions from Divisions across the Department.

Further work undertaken on Brexit preparedness included coordinating the Department's enterprise and regulatory requirements to develop a suite of additional business and regulatory supports that may be necessary to help ensure that businesses are Brexit ready. The Department also prepared the Brexit critical legislative requirements arising in the event of a hard Brexit.

To support stakeholder preparations and awareness across the Department and its Agencies, the Copenhagen Economics Study and *Building Stronger Business* report were widely disseminated through internal and external meetings and presentations. A *Getting Brexit Ready* leaflet was widely distributed and European Commission Brexit Preparedness Notices and UK Government 'No-Deal Notices' were also examined and distributed to relevant officials, promoted amongst Agencies and key stakeholders and published on the Department's website.

BREXIT & CHEMICAL IMPORTS

Throughout 2018 the Department, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority, supported the Government's "Getting Ireland Brexit Ready" initiative to highlight the potential impacts for Irish industry arising from the withdrawal of the UK from the EU in March 2019. In particular, potential impacts arising for industry in relation to the sourcing of chemicals and the importing of products were highlighted throughout 2018 as industries might face increased regulatory duties and obligations.

Brexit Research

Over the course of 2018, the Department published a number of other studies that add to our understanding of the impact of Brexit on sectors and regions.

- Export Participation and Performance of Firms on the Island of Ireland (September 2018): This study takes an in-depth look at small firms participating in cross-border

exporting and provides a comprehensive picture of cross border trade and the international activities of firms in both economies.

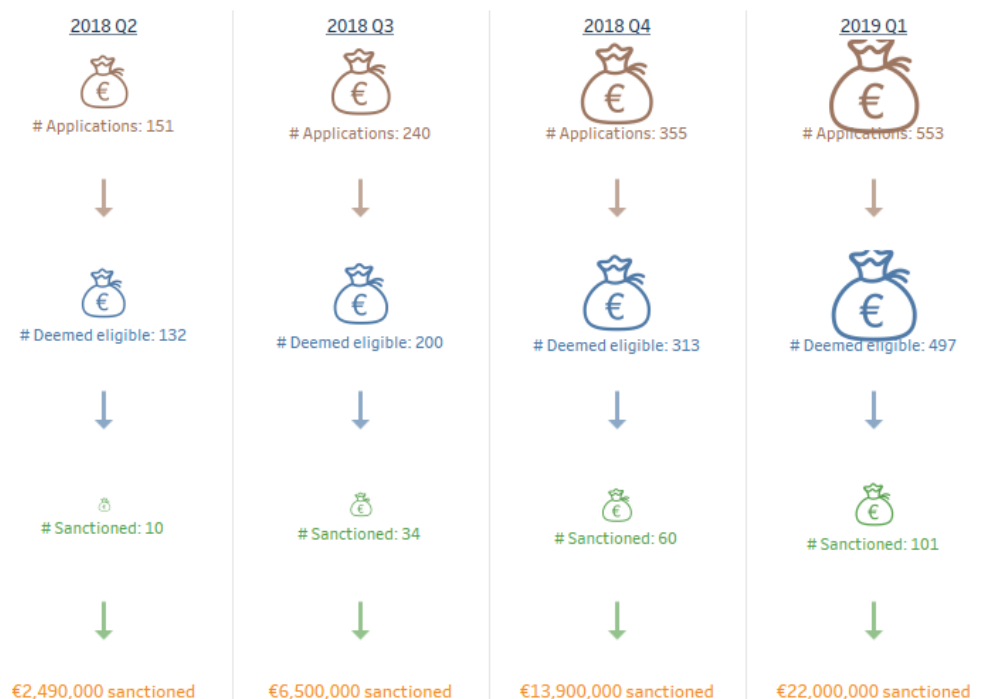
- **Intermediate Goods Inputs and the UK Content of Irish Goods Exports (July 2018):** Intermediate Goods Inputs and the UK Content of Irish Goods Exports, an ESRI report sponsored by the Department and Enterprise Ireland, examining the reliance of Irish imports on the UK, and identifying the extent of exposure to potential disruptions post-Brexit.
- **Irish-UK Services Trade and Brexit (July 2018):** This report was produced by the ESRI research and sponsored by the Department and Enterprise Ireland. It estimates the contribution of EU membership to services trade flows and examining the exposure of Irish services sectors to potential disruptions post-Brexit.
- **Addressing the skills needs arising from the potential trade implications of Brexit (June 2018):** This Expert Group on Future Skills Needs study identifies the skills needs required for enterprise to mitigate the impacts of Brexit on Irish goods trade and outlines a suite of recommendations that can be drawn upon to meet this objective.
- **Findings and insights of the firm-level impact of Brexit on most exposed sectors (June 2018):** This report details the findings and insights of the firm-level impact of Brexit on most exposed sectors, through quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing on 15 sectors.
- **Brexit and Irish Consumers (March 2018):** This research undertaken by the ESRI and commissioned by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) assesses the potential impact of Brexit on Irish households.
- **Cross-border trade and supply chain linkages (March 2018):** This report by InterTradeIreland examines the patterns of cross-border trade on the island of Ireland, focusing on the role of supply chain links, measured by the extent of trade in intermediate products and the contribution to overall trade of two-way trading firms (those simultaneously importing and exporting).
- **Ireland and the Impacts of Brexit (February 2018):** This report by Copenhagen Economics examines the implications and quantifies the impact of possible new barriers to trade which might emerge as a result of Brexit.

BREXIT MITIGATING MEASURES FOR SME'S

Brexit Loan Scheme

The Brexit Loan Scheme was launched in March 2018, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Scheme provides affordable financing to eligible Irish businesses with up to 499 employees that are either currently impacted by Brexit or will be in the future. Through a combination of State and EU guarantees, the Scheme leveraged up to €300m of lending to eligible Irish enterprises at a maximum interest rate of 4% with a cost to the Exchequer of €23m. The Scheme is open both to State Agency clients and those businesses that do not have any relationship with State Agencies. The Scheme is delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders to get working capital into Irish businesses.

BREXIT LOAN SCHEME, SOURCE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION



Future Growth Loan Scheme

The Future Growth Loan Scheme, announced in Budget 2019, is a €300m loan fund available to eligible Irish businesses and the primary agriculture and seafood sectors to support strategic long-term investment. Finance provided under this scheme is easier to access, more competitively priced, and offered at more favourable terms than other lending for such businesses. Loan amounts are offered of between €100,000 (€50,000 for agriculture) to €3m with unsecured loans up to €500,000. Loans are for terms of between 8 and 10 years – addressing a gap in the market for longer term finance. The scheme is jointly funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The scheme opened for eligibility application through the SBCI on 17 April 2019.

Business Finance Advisory Hub

Development of a Business Finance Advisory Hub which would support financial planning and general financing needs of SMEs continued in 2018. The proposed Hub will assist businesses to make more informed financial decisions, building on existing supports available from bodies such as Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices. It will primarily be an online offering, which will provide standardised information and tools and act as a signpost to appropriate Government supports and resources.

Rescue & Restructuring (R&R) Scheme

A Rescue & Restructuring scheme was approved by the Directorate General for Competition in November 2017. Under this scheme, Enterprise Ireland can offer restructuring support to small and medium sized companies (SMEs) who are in severe financial difficulty and would almost certainly to go out of business without the intervention of the State.

While it is not expected that there will be a need for the State to provide rescue/ restructuring aid to companies, given the supports already in place and those being developed (i.e. the Brexit Loan scheme and the Future Growth loan scheme, along with the EI supports and Local Enterprise Office and InterTradeIreland supports) it is considered prudent to have contingency measures in place so that we can respond swiftly to changing circumstances as necessary.

In May 2018, this scheme was extended to include temporary restructuring aid for enterprises experiencing acute liquidity needs. The aid is granted in the form of loans repayable over a period of 18 months. Together with the Brexit Loan Scheme, this temporary restructuring aid will provide valuable stabilisation to businesses as they respond to the immediate and long-term impacts of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

BREXIT PREPARATIONS ACROSS THE ENTERPRISE AGENCIES

The Department led and coordinated the Brexit response across our Agencies. This response focussed on maintaining sustained awareness and preparedness of companies to Brexit and in supporting firms to start exporting, to grow their exports in existing markets and to diversify into new markets. Specific highlights include;

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland's Strategy 2017-2020 represents a strategic response to Brexit aiming to grow more resilient Irish companies by building scale and expanding reach. To support client companies navigate potential emerging challenges, Enterprise Ireland has engaged in a programme of:

- building resilience in Irish exporting companies focused on innovation, market diversification and competitiveness, and
- addressing the awareness and preparedness of companies to Brexit.

In 2018, Enterprise Ireland:

- introduced the new Market Discovery Fund to provide supports to businesses to research viable and sustainable new market entry strategies. 167 companies have been approved to date under this Fund;
- launched a new Operational Excellence Offer to grow opportunities through a transformation project;
- Brexit Advisory Clinics - in 2018, 16 Clinics have been run throughout the country; These clinics focus on 3 key areas: Financial and Currency management; Strategic

Sourcing; Transport and Logistics. This series included one-to-one meetings with consultants in parallel with seminars. 1,200 client companies have participated to date.

- Act On Programme, provided an independent consultant to companies for a course of two half day sessions focusing on (1) Financial and Currency Management (2) Strategic Sourcing and (3) Customs and Logistics;
- launched an online customs-training course;
- ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’ events – participated in these Government organised these workshop events around Ireland to inform and advise about Brexit preparedness and the range of support measures across agencies. 6 events were held in Cork, Galway, Monaghan, Dublin, Limerick and Letterkenny.
- Other supports such as the Enterprise Ireland Customs Insights Online Course and the Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund (which provides rapid fast-track access to innovation funding) are also designed to support firms as they diversify.

IDA Ireland

Brexit has remained an area of considerable focus for IDA Ireland and the Agency has continued to engage directly with its with existing clients to help address the challenges while also working to capitalise on new Brexit-related opportunities.

During 2018, the IDA sought to reinforce its overseas footprint in order to strengthen its Brexit response. The Agency’s continental European business is now managed from Frankfurt and the UK is treated as a separate territory. In addition, IDA has appointed a Sales & Marketing Executive in Toronto in advance of opening a new office in that city. A Pioneering Markets Team has been established that specifically targets new investment opportunities from Turkey, the Middle East and South Africa. The IDA also undertook marketing trips to locations in those regions, including Israel, South Africa, UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Turkey.

The Agency has continued to analyse the risks and opportunities for FDI associated with Brexit and has, in addition to developing its range of both financial and non-financial supports, evolved its marketing strategies in order to best highlight Ireland’s suitability for companies seeking to maintain EU market access into the future. At the turn of the year, IDA Ireland had reported winning approximately 55 Brexit-related investments with employment potential of more than 4,500 roles over the next two to three years. IDA Ireland will continue to work to capitalise on any FDI opportunities that may arise as a consequence of Brexit.

Local Enterprise Offices

Brexit supports through the 31 Local Enterprise Office throughout the country are focused on information and awareness, market diversification, increased competitiveness and promoting innovation. As well as Brexit, related mentoring and training the LEOs have also delivered specific Brexit initiatives for micro-enterprises, including:

- 4,054 participants attended Brexit Information events aimed at core and non-core clients;
- encouraged clients to participate in the Enterprise Ireland Brexit Roadshows;
- included Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Export to the suite of grants to incentivise clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. 433 clients were approved assistance under this measure totaling an overall investment of €758,651; and
- developed a Lean4Micro offer for micro enterprise clients. €853k was allocation to LEOs in 2018 which delivered 221 LEO client participants in the programme.

InterTradeIreland

As the SMEs assisted by ITI may be significantly impacted by Brexit, the Department provided additional funding to ITI in 2018. This enabled ITI to further enhance the:

- Brexit Advisory Service which provides a range of tailored supports. In total the Brexit Advisory Service engaged directly with over 4,000 SMEs across the island
- 'Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers' valued at €2,250, to enable companies to obtain specialist advice on issues such as currency planning, tariffs and customs, regulatory requirements and taxation issues. In 2018, ITI received over 600 applications for "Start to Plan" Vouchers for SME's.

ITI also completed the evaluation for the next phase of their voucher Scheme to be launched in early 2019. These "Start to Act" vouchers will be valued at €5,625 and will be used to support SMEs to implement an action which has been identified as a requirement in their Brexit action plan.

BETTER REGULATION UNIT (BRU)

The Better Regulation Unit has continued to engage positively in various international groups such as the European Union's REFIT Platform, looking at regulatory fitness, the European Council's Better Regulation Working Group, the Directors and Experts of Better Regulation Group, the Better Regulation Network and the OECD's Regulatory Policy Committee.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS⁵

In April 2018, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment published Ireland's "Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020". The plan provides for a whole-of-government approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁵ In 2015, 193 United Nations Member States, including Ireland, adopted the Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 goals cover the social, economic and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.

Ireland's first Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review report was presented to the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2018. The Voluntary National Review report considers Ireland's performance against each of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals and includes a statistical annex using Eurostat indicators.

The Department has lead role and stakeholder responsibility for the implementation of a number of targets under the plan in areas, such as, Corporate Social Responsibility, scientific research, innovation and the management of chemicals. Monitoring their implementation is a key priority for the Department' and its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals is reflected in its Statement of Strategy.

SMALL ADVANCED ECONOMIES INITIATIVE (SAEI)

The Small Advanced Economies Initiative is a group of 7 countries (Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Singapore and Switzerland) that brings together officials and experts to consider policy issues of common interest where the perspective of being a small advanced economy influences policy choices.

The annual meeting of Principals took place in Wellington in 2018 and the Irish Delegation, led by the Secretary General, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, included senior executives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser to Government.

The Department presented to delegates its work on the economic impact of dominant cities. Other presentations from the members and areas for discussion included research collaboration for small economies, challenges to the rules based international trading system, piloting new policy approaches, higher education & university based research and competition policy and regulation in the face of digital disruption.

EUROPEAN METROLOGY PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH

NSAI's National Metrology Laboratory (NML) is a partner in the European Metrology Programme for Innovation and Research (EMPIR) which coordinates research projects to address large scale challenges in health, energy, environment and industry.

In 2018, NML was co-author on two scientific papers that were presented at the IMEKO world congress on metrology held in Belfast. The papers related to research projects on radiation thermometry and humidity measurement.

On 16 November, leading figures in metrology from 60 nations, including Ireland, voted to change one of the pillars of science, the kilogram. With the new definition, an 'electronic kilogram' will be the new baseline measure of mass.

GOAL 7: INVEST IN AND SUPPORT OUR STAFF TO FURTHER ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE CAPACITY ENSURE HIGH STANDARDS OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND OPTIMISE ALL OUR RESOURCES TO DELIVER OUR STRATEGY, MISSION AND GOALS

In 2018, a new Corporate Services Division was created in the Department which brought together the cross departmental areas of Governance, Human Resources, IT, Finance, Communications and Business Services.

STATEMENT OF STRATEGY 2018-2021

A new Statement of Strategy for 2018-2021 was published in April 2018. It sets out seven overarching high-level goals capturing strategic priorities across the broad range of areas for which the Department has responsibility.

The Strategy aims to build on the progress achieved in recent years and sets a vision of making Ireland the best place to succeed in business, delivering sustainable full employment and higher standards of living across all regions of the country. Achieving the goals set out in our Strategy will be the focus of the Department in the period ahead, and the Strategy will be an important reference and guiding document.

ORGANISATION CAPABILITY REVIEW

The Civil Service Renewal Plan (Action 20) provides for a programme of capability reviews across Government Departments. The Department was selected by the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB) to undergo such a review during 2018.

An independent Capability Review Team undertook the review in conjunction with staff of the Department, its Offices and Agencies and a range of external stakeholders. The review methodology focuses on 4 key areas of Leadership, Strategy, Delivery and Organisational Capability.

The Department's Capability Review was completed in late 2018 and it, along with the Department's Implementation Plan in response to the findings, was noted by Government in April 2019.

The main findings of the review are very positive. It acknowledges that the Department has a strong record of delivery across its various strategic and business objectives over recent years and that the Department is well regarded across Government. As with any large organisation there are areas where there are challenges and through the Implementation Plan the Department will pay particular attention to address these over the short and medium-term. Both documents are published on the Department's website.

HUMAN RESOURCES

During 2018, the HR unit continued to enhance our capacity to deliver through our people, through active participation in the Civil Service Renewal Plan, the creation of a new Connected HR Strategy (2018-2020) which focusses on workforce planning and people analytics, launching a new HR Business Partner initiative and through our internal New Ways of Working initiative

People and Capability

Amidst a very challenging and fluid labour market, the Department worked closely with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and training providers to both recruit staff to fill critical vacancies and to develop and strengthen our workforce. There continues to be a significant number of staff working in new assignments due to the level of churn in the Civil Service and labour market in general. The Department is working to manage this through its Workforce Planning process. In this regard, the process is being further refined in light of the Department's age profile which was highlighted as a significant risk in the Organisational Capability Review process.

The Department undertook a series of engagements across its Divisions and Offices to capture an up-to-date understanding of the strategic priorities and the requirements these placed on the workforce. On foot of this engagement, the three-year Workforce Plan (2017-2019) was updated and reported to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which will both inform central bodies on the Departments requirements and also target HR interventions and supports to close skills gaps and strengthen our workforce, according to our specific demographics. Learning and Development produced an 18 month plan which is aligned to our strategic and business remit.

New Ways of Working

The New Ways of Working Steering Group (NWW) continued to be a focal point for staff engagement. The group progressed projects within five subgroups looking at:

1. mobility and career development;
2. reward and recognition;
3. skills;
4. communication; and
5. innovative work practices.

More collaborative working opportunities were provided through the roll out of a new intranet and improvements were made to processes and systems in a number of areas including employment permits and the annual employment survey.

As part of the NWW work programme the Department also launched a new Internal Mobility Policy. The Innovation sub group also made plans to roll-out the Department's first ever Innovation Week, which will take place in early 2019.

CIVIL SERVICE RENEWAL

A series of Staff Engagement Fora commenced for each grade to better understand the issues impacting on their engagement, particularly those themes impacted by manager behaviour and public perception of the Civil Service, following the results of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey, 2017.

The Department participated in the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards and was very pleased that the Patents Office was shortlisted under the Digital Excellence Category, for their application on “e-Business and Tools”.

In relation to the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey 2017 (CSEES) the Department’s response rate increased substantially to 64% from 46%. The results were analysed and a series of Staff Engagement Fora for each grade began in November, with further sessions planned for January 2019.

The Department commitment to a CSEES Action Plan includes:

- HR Business Partner engagements with Line Managers;
- HR workshops on Disciplinary Code & Underperformance Guidelines
- exploring PMDS deepening a coaching style within the organisation;
- facilitating the Department’s Innovation Week;
- exploring the establishment of Grade or Theme based networks;
- communicating Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey results;
- celebrating and communicating the work of the Department through coordination of the Department’s nominations for CSEIA and Lunch & Learns;
- implementation of the Department’s Internal Mobility Policy;
- facilitation of transfers through the Civil Service Wide Mobility Scheme; and the
- introduction of Secondment Opportunities to relevant organisations.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM (OPS 2020)

Action 6 of ‘Our Public Service 2020’ aims to ‘Promote a Culture of Innovation in the Public Service’. The Department are playing a central role in progressing this Action with Secretary General Dr Orlaigh Quinn and Enterprise Ireland CEO Julie Sinnamon acting as designated leads. Assistant Secretary Pauline Mulligan is the Action’s Sponsor and is responsible for chairing the Action 6 team, established in May 2018 and comprising sectoral experts across the Public Service, including Defence and Health sectors, UCD, An Garda Síochána, Enterprise Ireland and Civil Servants from the Departments of Education, Public Expenditure and Reform, Defence, Health, Youth and Children Affairs.

The group’s initial scoping exercise led to a work programme with 12 initiatives, of which four were prioritised for progression:

1. Baseline the current innovation culture of the public service and barriers to innovation;
2. Declaration on public service innovation;
3. Establish an Irish Public Service Innovation Network; and
4. Identify and invest in Innovation Skills and Skills gaps

Progress in 2018 included a comprehensive assessment of the current culture of innovation in the public service, conducted by Deloitte and benchmarked against internal counterparts; a draft declaration on Public Service Innovation in Ireland, based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's work in this area; the commissioning of an options paper to determine the most appropriate form for a Public Service Innovation Network and the commencement of a mapping exercise of the range of available opportunities for innovation training.

OPTIMISING OUR ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY

During 2018 there were some significant accommodation related moves which saw the Department further reduce its physical footprint whilst modestly increasing its staffing cohort. The Department vacated premises at Davitt House, Adelaide Road and in the process relocated over 100 staff and appropriate fixed assets to the existing offices in the Earlsfort Centre and Kildare Street buildings and to newly renovated premises on Dawson Street.

Energy Performance

In December 2018 the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) published the 2018 annual report on public sector energy efficiency.

The 2018 report shows that the Department is in joint first place with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs at 41% in energy savings achieved since the baseline year (2009). According to SEAI data the level of energy savings equates to saving c. 1,250 trees per annum.

Over recent years, the Department/its Offices and Agencies have undertaken many significant reforms which have contributed to the energy savings including:

- Consolidating and downsizing our physical footprint and moving into more energy efficient buildings; and
- ICT Unit has also contributed significantly through the installation of more energy efficient equipment (servers, PCs etc) and initiating a "power down/log off" protocol from certain times in the evening each day.

Whilst the latest SEAI data shows that we are amongst the leading departments, the Department acknowledges that it has scope to further improve and a newly constituted and expanded "Green Team" was established in early 2019 to help to contribute to Ireland's Climate Action targets. The focus of the of the Green Team spans across four primary pillars of energy, water usage, waste management and ecology/plant life.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO SEEK EFFICIENCIES AND IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Department completed a number of new ICT initiatives during the year to enhance the delivery of services to our customers. These included the launch of new services for the Registry of Friendly Societies and the inspection and enforcement functions of the Workplace Relations Commission. Enhancements were also delivered to the Employment Permits Management Service to optimise processing efficiency.

Internally, a number of initiatives were undertaken to improve the effectiveness of internal operations, including the launch of a new corporate intranet to support more collaborative working and the establishment of an enhanced ICT project oversight function for monitoring progress on ICT projects. Enhancements were also made to the Department's employment survey system, to increase efficiency of the annual employment survey process. Projects were also completed to deliver greater security oversight of the Department's systems and to deliver greater system resilience.

COMMUNICATIONS

In 2018, the Department established a Communications Unit to serve both its internal and external communications requirements. Led by a Head of Communications at PO level, the Unit's purpose is to communicate how the Department is delivering on its Strategic Objectives as set out in its Statement of Strategy.

The work of the Unit falls into four strands: internal communications; strategic communications; digital & social media; and media relations and campaigns. Its establishment has seen staff building up skill sets across a broad range of media platforms in order to support the work of the Minister, Ministers of State and Departmental colleagues.

The Unit's focus on campaign planning aimed to enhance the communication of the Department's strategic priorities. During 2018 these priorities included: communicating the range of Government led supports available to businesses preparing for Brexit; promoting the Department's newly established Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund to key stakeholders; and organising a major stakeholder event around the Government's new Future Jobs Ireland policy.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI)

In 2018 the Department received 230 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and these were processed in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Governance Framework

During 2018, the Management Support Unit completed a full review of the Framework, with inputs from relevant business units across the Department. The Framework was approved by the Management Board in December 2018 and published on the Department's website.

The Department's Governance Framework is aimed at providing assurance that good governance policies and practices are embedded in the Department. It sets out what we mean by governance, why it is important, how the Department does its work and how it operates to deliver on its mandate and functions. It ensures that the way the Department takes decisions and implements policies is more transparent to the public and, of equal importance, to the staff within the Department.

Compliance Framework

The Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service proposed that, as an accompaniment to the Governance Framework, Government Departments should develop a Compliance Framework.

A Compliance Framework was developed during 2018 and was approved by the Management Board. This Framework provides an overview of all compliance assurance activity in the Department and identifies where responsibility for each compliance obligation lies.

INTERNAL AUDIT

Based on internationally accepted standards adopted by the Civil Service by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Internal Audit Unit functions provided assurance to the Secretary General and advice regarding the Department's financial and other internal processes and procedures during 2018.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR) & DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018

The new General Data Protection Regulation (the "GDPR") came into force on 25th May 2018. It provides enhanced data privacy rights for individuals (i.e. data subjects) while emphasising the importance of transparency, security and accountability in all data processing activities involving Personal Data. The GDPR significantly increases the obligations and responsibilities for organisations and businesses in how they collect, use and protect Personal Data.

In preparation for the additional compliance requirements the Department upgraded its existing Data Protection Officer (DPO) role to a full-time position from early 2018. Throughout 2018, the DPO has been involved in working with Business Units across the Department and its Offices in reviewing their Personal Data practices, assisting in the formulation of new policies and protocols providing training and information sessions to staff and providing information and dealing with queries from members of the public in relation to data protection.

In 2018, the Department received 21 Subject Access Requests (SARs) and these were processed in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.

REGULATION OF LOBBYING ACT, 2015

The Lobbying Act is designed to provide information to the public about who is lobbying whom about what. A list of our Designated Public Officials under this Act was updated in 2018 and is published on our website.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT, 2014

The Department published its Annual Report on Protected Disclosures for 2017 in June 2018.

PROMPT PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS ACT, 1997

During 2018 the Department published on its website quarterly payment performance reports for both the Department and for the bodies under its aegis.

IRISH LANGUAGE SCHEME 2019-2022

The Department's Third Irish Language Scheme was developed in 2018 and, following a formal agreement by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, came into effect on 18 February 2019. The new Scheme which covers the period 2019-2022, builds on the Department's Second Irish Language Scheme and sets out the extent to which services are currently available through Irish and identifies areas for future development. It also includes a commitment to assess, on an ongoing basis, the level of demand for services through Irish to ensure that the Department continues to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way.

CUSTOMER CHARTER AND CUSTOMER SERVICE ACTION PLAN 2019-2021

In Q4 of 2018, the Department's Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan were updated in accordance with the D/PER framework document *Our Public Service 2020* which requires public service organisations "*to review their customer charters with a view to ensuring that they are ambitious and reflect commitments to continual improvement in service delivery*".

The Department's updated Customer Charter 2019-2021 is a public statement which sets out the standards and level of service customers can expect when dealing with our Department. The Customer Service Action Plan 2019-2021 details the ways in which the Department will implement the key actions outlined in the Charter.

IRISH HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY COMMISSION ACT, 2014

In line with our obligations under this Act, the Department is committed to proofing its wider policies, procedures and services across its business areas to ensure the Department complies with its requirements in the area of human rights and equality:

Workplace Relations Commission

The WRC is the independent body set up by law to investigate or mediate complaints of discrimination. The WRC is covered by the European Convention on Human Rights. Discrimination happens when a person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be treated. Victimisation is also covered by the legislation.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Department provides the secretariat for the enterprise led CSR Stakeholder Forum which oversees the implementation of the actions in the National Corporate Social Responsibility Plan. CSR is a concept whereby businesses and other organisations integrate their social and environmental responsibilities into their mainstream business operations and business decisions are made with reference to wider sustainability issues.

National Women and Girl's Strategy

The Department is represented on the Strategic Committee of the National Women and Girls Strategy 2017-2020. We contributes to the common actions such as the development of in-house expertise in gender mainstreaming activities and considering gender impact in the development of new strategies.

We also have specific actions under the strategy including the requirement to publicise and encourage participation by women in start-ups, support and publicise women specific entrepreneur awards and events through EI and the LEOs. The WRC are tasked with increasing awareness among employers and women of employment rights and redress mechanisms.

National Disability Inclusion Strategy

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities both in a practical sense and also in creating the best possible opportunities for people with disabilities to fulfil their potential.

The Department is represented on and is progressing actions under both the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 and Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024.

In 2018, the Department put in place a Disability Consultative Committee (DCC) which met three times during the year. Membership of the DCC is comprised of representatives from the Disability Stakeholder Group, the National Disability Authority and staff from across the Department and its Offices and Agencies.

Innovation 2020

Ireland's cross Government strategy for research and development, science and technology, recognises the importance of gender equality in research.

The strategy notes that Ireland has the opportunity to build its international reputation for gender equality through improved participation of women in research and innovation activities and sets out actions to address gender issues relating to career progression in research and innovation.

Other Relevant Legislation

In addition to the above, the Department operates within employment law and other relevant legislation that seek to ensure, amongst other things, human rights and equality, such as:

Civil Service Regulation Act, Public Service Management Act, Paternity Leave and Benefit Act, Equality Act, Industrial Relations Act, Workplace Relations Act, Data Protection Act, Employees (Provision of Information and Consultation) Act, Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, Maternity Protection Act, Carer's Leave Act, Organisation of Working Time Act, Unfair Dismissals Act.

Appendix 1 Bills published or enacted in 2018

- Industrial Development (Amendment) Act 2018 was enacted on 19 September 2018
- Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2018 was published on 20 July 2018
- Companies (Statutory Audits) Act 2018, No 22 of 2018 was enacted on 25 July 2018
- Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018 was published on 13 August 2018
- General Scheme of the Companies (Corporate Enforcement Authority) Bill 2018 was published on 4 December 2018
- Consumer Protection (Gift Vouchers) Bill 2018 was published on 19 December 2018
- European Investment Fund Agreement Act 2018 was enacted on 20 December 2018

Appendix 2 Statutory Instruments made in 2018

- S.I. No. 1 of 2018 Legal Metrology (Measuring Instruments) Act 2017 (Commencement) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 2 of 2018 Legal Metrology (European Conformity Assessment of Measuring Instruments) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 40 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 41 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Suda Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 42 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Venezuela) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 43 of 2018 European Communities (Measuring Instruments and Metrological Control) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 44 of 2018 European Union (Measuring Instruments) (Revocation) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 47 of 2018 European Union (Non-Automatic Weighing Instruments) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 70 of 2018 Employment Permits (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 95 of 2018 Companies Act 2014 (Forms) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 126 of 2018 European Union (Appliances Burning Gaseous Fuels) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 133 of 2018 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Mines) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 134 of 2018 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (Commencement) Order 2018

- S.I. No. 136 of 2018 European Union (Personal Protective Equipment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 163 of 2018 Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 188 of 2018 European Union (Protection of Trade Secrets) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 197 of 2018 European Communities (Carriage of Dangerous Goods By Road and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 210 of 2018 Trade Union Act 1941 (Revocation of Negotiation Licence) (No 1) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 211 of 2018 Trade Union Act 1941 (Revocation of Negotiation Licence) (No 2) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 212 of 2018 Trade Union Act 1941 (Revocation of Negotiation Licence) (No 3) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 243 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Syria) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 244 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Central African Republic) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 245 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Sudan) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 246 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 247 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Republic of Guinea-Bissau) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 248 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Tunisia) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 249 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning South Sudan) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 250 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Venezuela) (No.2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 251 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Zimbabwe) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 252 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 254 of 2018 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Diving) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 295 of 2018 European Union (Safety of Toys) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 318 of 2018 Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2018

- S.I. No. 319 of 2018 The European Communities (Extra-territorial Application Legislation Adopted by a Third Country) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 324 of 2018 Friendly Societies (Fees) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 325 of 2018 Industrial and Provident Societies and the European Cooperative Society (Fees) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 326 of 2018 Trade Union (Fees) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 356 of 2018 Control of Exports (Brokering Activities, Goods and Technology) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 357 of 2018 Control of Exports (Dual Use Items) (Amendment) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 358 of 2018 European Communities (Control of Trade in Goods That May B Used for Torture) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 361 of 2018 Industrial Development (Amendment) Act 2018 (Commencement) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 362 of 2018 Friendly Societies (Forms) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 363 of 2018 Industrial and Provident Societies (Forms) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 364 of 2018 Trade Union (Forms) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 366 of 2018 The Companies (Statutory Audits) Act 2018 (Commencement) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 367 of 2018 European Union (Third-Country Auditors and Third-Country Audit Entities Equivalence Transitional Period and Fees) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 388 of 2018 Competition Act 2002 (Section 27) Order 2018
- S.I. No. 410 of 2018 European Union (Disclosure of Non-Financial and Diversity Information by Certain Large Undertakings and Groups) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 412 of 2018 European Union (Marrakesh Treaty) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 457 of 2018 Control of Exports (Appeals) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 458 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 459 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Central African Republic) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 460 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (No. 3) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 461 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Iran) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 462 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Iran) (No. 2) Regulations 2018

- S.I. No. 463 of 2018 European Union (Restrictive Measures concerning Syria) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 502 of 2018 Dangerous Substances (Retail and Private Petroleum Stores) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 550 of 2018 Employment Permits (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 561 of 2018 European Union (Trade Marks) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 562 of 2018 Trade Marks (Amendment) Rules 2018
- S.I. No. 563 of 2018 European Union (Trade Marks Act, 1996) (Community Trade Mark) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 564 of 2018 Patents, Trade Marks and Designs (Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2018
- S.I. No. 570 of 2018 Companies Act 2014 (Prescribed Professional Bodies) Regulations 2018
- S.I. No. 590 of 2018 Catering JLC (Abolition Order) 2018
- S.I. No. 591 of 2018 Catering JLC (Establishment) Order 2018