
ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS

2017

First Progress Report



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Commentary

This is the first report of 2017 from the Monitoring Committee established by Government to monitor and drive implementation of the measures contained in the Action Plan for Jobs 2017. It outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the first quarter of 2017.

The Government published the sixth in its multi-annual Action Plan for Jobs series in February this year. This Plan, which contains 164 actions and circa 430 measures to be implemented in 2017 by all 16 Government Departments and by 46 agencies under the remit of these Departments, will build on the progress made since 2012 to improve supports for job-creating businesses and remove the barriers to employment creation across the economy. These actions are additional to the over 2,800 actions already implemented under Action Plan for Jobs 2012-2016, cumulatively, and reported on by the Monitoring Committee in its previous quarterly reports (see www.djei.ie).

The latest official statistics on employment and unemployment in Ireland (CSO QNHS Quarter 4 2016) show that total employment increased by 65,100 in the year to Q4 2016, bringing total employment to 2,048,100. There was an increase in full time employment of 71,900 and decrease in part-time employment of 6,800. Over the period since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs in quarter 1 2012, over 200,000 jobs have been created in the Irish economy. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March 2017 was 6.4%, down from a high of over 15% in 2012.

In the first quarter of 2017, Departments and agencies were to deliver 68 measures under the Action Plan. 13 of the measures due in Quarter 1 of 2017 have not been delivered, giving a completion rate of 81%.

Measures not delivered as planned in Q1

As stated above, 13 of the Q1 measures outlined in the Plan have not been delivered on schedule:

- *Lead and implement an integrated communications plan for enterprise supports that increases awareness among all businesses of the broad suite of supports that are available and how to access them.; Develop an integrated communications plan. - Action 21.* Following a review of the wide range of communications and awareness activities underway through various agencies and departments, an assessment of options for how best to integrate and coordinate activities is being progressed. DJEI is considering how best to resource such an activity.
- *Develop and run a pilot Training Needs Analysis Workshop to provide companies with the framework to identify their training needs.; As per headline action. – Action 27.* Enterprise Ireland, DJEI, DES and other stakeholders have developed a pilot-skills need analysis workshop which aims to provide companies with the framework to identify their training needs. Enterprise Ireland is in the process of identifying a service provider to run the pilot. Subject to a successful tendering process it is anticipated that the workshops will be rolled out in Q2 2017.
- *Promote and facilitate increased provision of education and training opportunities related to entrepreneurship and identify best practice education and training on entrepreneurship within further education and training provision.; Publish a research report and disseminate findings and recommendations. - Action 48.* The report on ‘Best Practice in Entrepreneurship Education and Training in the Further Education and Training Sector’ is complete, however publication of the report on the SOLAS website has been delayed into Q2.
- *Introduce a new Counter Guarantee Scheme to support the leveraging of greater funds for Irish SMEs from EU risk sharing financial instruments.; As per headline action. - Action 54.* The Counter Guarantee Scheme will be delivered through the introduction of a Statutory Instrument as per the Credit Guarantee Amendment Act 2016. This Statutory Instrument will be finalised shortly after the introduction of the new Credit Guarantee Scheme mentioned under Action 53 above. It is likely that this will be delivered in Q2.
- *Develop a Further Education and Training policy framework for employee development to guide Education and Training Board activity to support skills development for those in employment, in consultation with partners, aligning with the National Skills Strategy.; Publish the Further Education and Training (FET)*

policy framework for employee development. - Action 69. The Further Education and Training Policy Framework for Employee Development has been completed. However, its publication has been delayed into Q2 to allow for the development of an Implementation Plan which will be published with the Policy Framework.

- *Support knowledge transfer by implementing a successor to the current Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative, delivering on targets for the transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise, from all publicly-funded research, through the knowledge transfer infrastructure supported by Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), reviewing the operations of KTI, finalising and implementing a 2017-2021 strategy for KTI, and by establishing a KTI Industry Connectors group to increase quality engagement and collaboration between companies and publicly funded research and technology in the higher education sector.; Finalise and implement a 2017-2021 Strategy for Knowledge Transfer Ireland to ensure companies continue to benefit from access to Irish expertise and technology through simple connection to and engagement with the Higher Education research base, in turn supporting employment.* - Action 95. Enterprise Ireland is currently reviewing Knowledge Transfer Ireland's Strategy 2017-2021, which aims to ensure that companies continue to benefit from access to Irish expertise and technology through simple connection to and engagement with the Higher Education research base, in turn supporting employment. It is anticipated that the strategy will be finalised and implementation commenced in Q2.
- *Support all eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs and provide investment of up to €60 million over the period to 2020 to support collaborative approaches to boost enterprise and job creation across the regions. This competitive funding is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional strengths.; Launch and roll out the scheme across the regions, with a focus on larger scale, regionally strategic projects.* - Action 97. The scheme document has been developed and approved by Enterprise Ireland and DJEI. It is currently awaiting final clearance by DPER before a launch date with Minister Mitchell O'Connor is agreed. This is dependent on clearance and Ministerial scheduling in Q2.
- *Support all eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs and provide investment of up to €60 million over the period to 2020 to support collaborative approaches to boost enterprise and job creation across the regions. This competitive funding is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in every part of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional strengths.; Launch and roll out a Competitive Local and Community Enterprise Initiatives call for Proposals.* - Action 97. A scheme document for the Competitive Local and Community Enterprise Initiatives has been

developed by Enterprise Ireland and approved by DJEI. It is currently awaiting final clearance by DPER before a launch date with Minister Mitchell O'Connor is agreed. This is dependent on clearance and Ministerial scheduling in Q2.

- *Support the creation of 500 new jobs in 2017 and continue to help maintain existing jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Gaeltacht, including through supports for post-research and pre-commercialisation units in the life sciences, food and business support services and creative enterprises sectors, as well as for community development initiatives.; Commence the development of a Marine Innovation Park which will facilitate both research and commercial activities in Cill Chiaráin, Co Galway by: Preparing and completing Full Master Plan, Undertaking and completing an Environmental Impact Study and Preparing and submitting a planning application - Action 99.* In order to enable the development of the proposed Marine Innovation Park an advisory committee has been put together with key stakeholder representation. A project executive has been appointed to coordinate the development and preparatory work is being undertaken on the development of a masterplan and EIS.
- *Through the Rural Recreation Scheme, provide funding for new recreation infrastructure and the maintenance of existing infrastructure to support the creation and retention of jobs in rural areas.; Launch call for proposals under the Rural Recreation Scheme. - Action 103.* The Government published a new Action Plan for Rural Development, Realising our Rural Potential, on 23 January 2017. The Plan contains 276 actions, primarily for delivery across Government, including commitments to launch a number of rural development schemes such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the CLÁR programme and the Rural Recreation Scheme. Each of these schemes will be delivered through the Local Authorities. The launch of the CLÁR programme was prioritised and launched in Q1 (€5m allocation for 2017), followed by the launch of the Town and Village Renewal scheme in early April. The launch of Rural Recreation Scheme has therefore been re-scheduled for Q2, given the heavy reliance on the Local Authorities to operate all three schemes.
- *Establish Ireland as a European leader in the digital economy by ensuring a coordinated whole of Government approach to pursuing the economic opportunities.; Establish an interdepartmental steering group to ensure a coordinated approach to addressing policy areas identified through the stakeholder summit. - Action 114.* Insights from the digital economy roundtable will inform the most appropriate arrangements to ensure a coordinated approach to maximising opportunities in the Digital Economy.

- *Develop and roll out a strategy for eHubs for entrepreneurship, eWorking and business growth as part of county development plans, linking effectively with local enterprise stakeholders and enterprise agencies and support the development of ambitious and sustainable proposals for success in competitive calls for funding.; Audit and review current and potential Hubs by county. - Action 124.* The audit is currently underway and is expected to be completed in Q2.
- *Maximise the potential of the design sector to drive innovation and competitiveness.; Publish the report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs on Design Skills for Enterprise and consider its recommendations. – Action 157.* The report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs on Design Skills for Enterprise is awaiting approval by the EGFSN and the National Skills Council before it can be published.

Quarter 1 Measures

Responding to Brexit

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

Q1 Measure: Leverage third party research to access the potential impacts of changes in sterling on both domestic and exporting SMEs. (SBCI, DJEI, DoF, SME State Bodies Group)

Update: The Strategic Bank Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), in conjunction with and on behalf of DJEI, have been involved in the compilation of SME research through third party engagement. The focus of this research is on the Impact of the Brexit vote for Irish SMEs. The intention is that the research will serve to inform any potential market failure arising as a result of the Brexit vote.

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

Q1 Measure: Develop supports to facilitate micro-enterprise to identify and develop new internationalisation opportunities. (LEOs/EI, DJEI)

Update: In line with Enterprise Ireland's Brexit strategy, the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) have been briefed by Enterprise Ireland's Brexit team to address the Brexit related challenges being faced by LEO Clients. Enterprise Ireland's Brexit team, Enterprise Ireland's regional teams and the LEOs will continue to work closely together to provide a cohesive coordinated response.

LEO clients have been provided access to Enterprise Ireland's Export Mentor Panel and the LEOs have been sanctioned to provide financial support to exported focused LEO clients. The focus of this funding support is on product and market diversification. These supports are now available to LEO clients.

Q1 Measure: Roll out a Lean for Micro programme nationally to help micro-enterprises achieve targeted business improvement measures tailored to suit their situation. (LEOs/EI, DJEI)

Update: Following the successful completion of a pilot programme in 2016, a national Lean for Micro offer is now underway, with specific events in each Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) area highlighting the benefits of the lean programme. The LEOs have been given a specific budget allocation to fund the programme at a local level.

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

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DAFM and agencies)

Update: DAFM have carried out the following:

- A dedicated Brexit Unit and Brexit Response Committee has been established to co-ordinate all activities;
 - A Stakeholder Consultative Committee has been established and excellent input has been made by farm and industry organisations, which is informing other Department actions;
 - Close consultation with Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Enterprise Ireland is ongoing - significant additional resources were allocated to Bord Bia (an additional €1.6m in 2016 and €2m in 2017) and BIM in Budget 2017 in order to provide Brexit-related supports to affected companies;
 - Other Budget 2017 supports for the sector include a new €150 million Agriculture Cash Flow Support low-cost loan scheme, agri-taxation measures, and increased funding under the Rural Development Programme and Seafood Development Programme;
 - The Department is feeding into the overall Government response being co-ordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach;
 - Brexit has been added as a standing item to the agenda of the Food Wise 2025 High Level Implementation Committee, allowing ongoing monitoring and response to Brexit in the context of the implementation of FW2025.
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- Minister Creed has hosted two All-Island Civic Dialogues for the agri-food sector, to which interested stakeholders (including the Food and Drinks Industry) from both sides of the border were invited. Additionally the Minister also hosted one on Fisheries;
 - DAFM officials are engaging closely with their NI counterparts through the NSMC and bilateral meetings, including on specific areas of co-operation;
 - DAFM has held a number of meetings with key officials in the Commission, the UK and other Members States, and this process will continue in the coming months;
 - Political engagement with NI and UK counterparts has also increased, including through Minister Creed's recent meetings with NI Minister Michelle McIlveen and UK SoS Andrea Leadsom;
 - At EU level, Minister Creed has had regular contact with counterparts at AgriFish Council meetings, and arrangements are currently being made for formal bilateral meetings with key Member States – eight bilateral meeting were held in March;
 - Minister Creed has also spoken regularly to Commissioner Hogan, and officials have taken part in meetings with the Commission and the Barnier Task Force.
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- On the market front, Minister Creed has met with the CEOs of major UK retailers and has provided an additional €1.6m for Bord Bia in 2016 and €2m in 2017 to assist in its efforts to promote Irish food in the UK and other European markets, and to provide advice to Irish companies;
 - DAFM is also active on third country markets with a view to developing new business opportunities for Irish food companies. In that context, Minister Creed recently led a successful trade mission to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
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- DAFM's network of agriculture attachés is also engaged as appropriate in agri-food-related Brexit follow-up, through the Embassies in London, Paris and Geneva, and the Perm Rep in Brussels. Bord Bia in conjunction with PwC has developed a Brexit Barometer, an assessment toolkit for the industry that will assist individual companies assess the impact and their readiness for Brexit. The barometer identifies six key topics that will likely effect companies and approx. 100 questions form the basis of the assessment. Each company on completion will receive an assessment based on a

traffic light system and a supporting document will provide suggested actions to mitigate risk. Bord Bia personnel will meet with companies on an individual basis to bring them through the barometer. The Brexit Barometer was formally launched at the Bord Bia Brexit seminar in March.

BIM has engaged Deloitte, consulting and financial advisors to provide insights and guidance to BIM on potential impacts of Brexit upon the seafood sector. They are working on a report (due Q2) that will provide guidance on how companies and the seafood sector can build business planning and future strategies in relation to this.

Teagasc has established a Brexit Working Group to provide to stakeholders and to identify the actions to be adopted to support the long-term competitiveness of the food processing sector. Enterprise Ireland established a Brexit Unit in October 2016 to ensure the right actions are taken to deliver sustainable growth through and beyond the Brexit process.

- EI are working one to one with exposed clients to help them address challenges and opportunities through a suite of supports.
- The focus of EI's response is the strengthening of companies in several key areas including:
 - o Competitiveness (including LEAN programmes leadership and management development programmes);
 - o Innovation programmes within client companies and in collaboration with higher level research institutes; and
 - o Expanding reach in collaboration with Bord Bia (Internationalisation Pilot programme underway).
- EI has a full trade mission and events schedule for 2017 to support this response in conjunction with DAFM and Bord Bia.

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

Q1 Measure: Complete a new strategy to increase overseas visitor numbers and revenue from developing tourism source markets. (Tourism Ireland, DTTAS)

Update: Tourism Ireland have developed a new strategy for developing tourism markets.

Driving Enterprise Growth

Growing and scaling enterprise

Action 24: Strengthen the potential of Local Enterprise Offices to support jobs and start-ups at local level.

Q1 Measure: Establish a Customer Relationship Management Project Steering Group to prepare a business case in consultation with stakeholders. (LEOs/EI)

Update: In Q1 Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and Local Government Management Authorities (LGMA) established a Customer Relationship Management Project Steering Group. This group is developing the business case for a new IT solution for the delivery of a comprehensive customer service tool, which will allow the LEOs to track all client engagements and ensure that the

appropriate solutions are being provided to LEO client companies in a consistent manner across the LEO network, with the overarching objective of strengthening the potential of LEOs to support jobs and start-ups at local level.

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

Q1 Measure: Develop a response to support clients to develop middle management capabilities. (EI, DJEI)

Update: Enterprise Ireland's response to the enhancing the leadership capabilities of middle management is focused on addressing the scaling / growth capabilities client companies.

Research has been carried out with Enterprise Ireland client companies to understand the role of middle management in supporting company growth and to ascertain company needs building on this. Work is underway to investigate building an appropriate set of EI supports to assist companies seeking to build middle management capability.

Action 35: Assess the potential and conditions necessary for the strategic development of Ireland's bio-economy across all sectors.

Q1 Measure: Establish a baseline assessment of the current level of bio-economy activity and opportunities across the various sectors in Ireland. (D/Taoiseach with relevant sectoral Departments)

Update: The bio-economy encompasses the production and use of renewable biological resources and their conversion into food, feed, bio-based products, and bioenergy. In Ireland, the bio-economy has the potential to contribute to decarbonisation, sustainable economic growth and job creation. An Interdepartmental Group chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach has been established to assess the potential and conditions necessary for the strategic development of Ireland's bio-economy. This group first met on 22 November 2016. A scoping exercise was conducted with Departments to gather information on the current activities and potential opportunities in this area. The group met again on 25 January 2017, where colleagues from the Teagasc BioEire project gave a presentation on the emerging results of their bio-economy mapping exercise, identifying prioritised value chains and the related opportunities and concerns. The group met again on 28 March 2017.

The Department of the Taoiseach and Teagasc jointly hosted a bio-economy workshop on 9 February 2017. The workshop brought together stakeholders from a wide range of sectors with an interest in the bio-economy. The outcomes of the workshop were presented at the March meeting of the Interdepartmental Group and will feed into the preparation of a national policy statement.

Q1 Measure: Hold a consultative seminar on the bio-economy with key stakeholders, including the development agencies and the private sector. (D/Taoiseach with relevant sectoral Departments)

Update: As Above.

Supporting Entrepreneurship

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

Q1 Measure: Report on 2016 progress. (DJEI)

Update: The second annual progress report of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship (2016) has been finalised and will be published in Q2 2017.

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

Q1 Measure: Include parameters on education and training for entrepreneurship in the 2017 service planning process. (SOLAS, ETBs, DES)

Update: Parameters on education and training for entrepreneurship have been included in the 2017 service planning process.

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

Q1 Measure: Select projects, draw up contracts and commence funding. (DJE)

Update: Following an Open Call for Proposals, 4 projects have been selected for funding. Projects are due to commence activity in Q2

Ensuring Finance for Growth

Action 53: Introduce a new Credit Guarantee Scheme to encourage additional lending to SMEs by commercial finance providers.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI, SBCI)

Update: S.I. No 70 of 2017 (Credit Guarantee Scheme) was laid before the Oireachtas on the 10 March 2017. It is expected that following further discussions between SBCI and the main banks the new Scheme will be available to SMEs in Q2 2017.

Action 59: Conduct a review of the Credit Review Office to ensure its statutory base allows it to effectively accomplish its objective of ensuring viable businesses can access credit.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DoF)

Update: A review of the CRO was completed by end-Q1.

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

Q1 Measure: Collate and monitor data on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources and report on this issue to the relevant Cabinet Committee.(DoF, SME State Bodies Group)

Update: The SME Funding Dashboard is prepared. This will report on SME Lending to end-December 2016 (H2 2016).

Q1 Measure: Collate and examine detailed data from AIB, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB on a monthly basis. (DoF, CRO)

Update: SME Credit and Lending data to end 2016 has been received from AIB and Bank of Ireland. A letter has issued from the Minister to extend the reporting by the banks to end 2019. Both banks have already agreed in principle to agree to this. A submission is going to the Minister in relation to PTSB (which accounts for around 1% of the SME lending market).

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

Q1 Measure: Roll out a prompt payments campaign. (DJEI)

Update: A public campaign to raise awareness of the Prompt Payment Code (PPC) was launched on 28 February 2017. As part of the campaign, all stakeholders involved in the development of the PPC, SFA, Ibec, Chambers Ireland, ISME and the Banking Payments Federation of Ireland are also promoting the PPC within their own organisations.

Delivering Skills for a Growing Economy

Action 72: Implement the ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 – 2018 through strengthened collaboration between Government, the education system and industry and as part of the goal of making Ireland the most attractive location in the world for ICT skills and ability.

Q1 Measure: Issue a competitive call for a new round of ICT skills conversion programmes and ICT upskilling courses as part of Springboard+ 2017. (HEA, DES)

Update: A Call issued to all higher education providers during February, seeking course proposals to be funded under Springboard+ 2017. The ICT skills conversion programme is incorporated into Springboard+. The closing date for receipt of proposals was 24 March 2017. Course proposals will now be evaluated by an independent expert panel with industry and educational expertise. Springboard+ 2017 will be launched in Q2 2017.

Action 73: Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school through competitive calls for Springboard courses.

Q1 Measure: Issue a competitive call to HEIs for proposals for Springboard+ courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.(HEA, DES)

Update: A Call issued to all higher education providers during February, seeking course proposals to be funded under Springboard+ 2017. All proposals must focus on priority areas identified by the EGFSN. The closing date for receipt of proposals was 24 March 2017. Course proposals will now be evaluated by an independent expert panel with industry and educational expertise. Springboard+ 2017 will be launched in Q2 2017.

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

Q1 Measure: Complete and publish the 2016 end of year review. (DES)

Update: Action Plan for Education 2016 review completed and published on the Department of Education and Skills website on 6 February 2017.

Q1 Measure: Complete and publish the Action Plan for Education 2017. (DES)

Update: The Action Plan for Education 2017 was launched and published on the on 6 February 2017, and is available on the Department of Education and Skills website. Copies of the Plan were circulated throughout the Department, to agencies, other Departments and to Oireachtas members.

Promoting Innovation

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

Q1 Measure: Roll out a new Business Innovation Initiative to help companies develop financially important non-technological innovations such as new delivery methods or business models. (EI, DJEI)

Update: The new business innovation initiative was rolled out on a pilot phase to companies in 2016 and is now fully offered under Enterprise Ireland's R&D Fund and its Investment Committee as part of the agency's research, development and innovation (RDI) offer.

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

Q1 Measure: Select and support successful projects emerging from competitive open and focused calls. (HIHI, DJEI)

Update: As part of the official launch of Health Innovation Hub Ireland in September 2016, the first calls for proposals were issued. There were 65 applications in total, 48 in respect of the Open Call (any healthcare need) and 17 in respect of the Focused Call (older persons). Both calls were further split into two categories: **Innovation In** (where companies provide innovative solutions to the healthcare sector) and **Innovation Out** (where innovative solutions come from within the healthcare sector). Following the application process a review process was initiated.

In respect of **Innovation In**, 15 successful projects were selected; with four additional projects showing strong potential subject to further clarification on some issues from the applicants.

In respect of **Innovation Out**, meetings are taking place with each applicant, both successful and unsuccessful, to provide feedback and guidance on direction for the projects.

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

Q1 Measure: Maintain enrolment of postgraduate researchers in partnership with enterprise/employers to address economic demands:

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

Update: Employment Based Programme (EBP)

- The 2017 Call closed on 16 February 2017, resulting in 68 eligible applications.
- The international assessment panel and chairperson have been put in place with the panel meeting taking place in Q2.

Enterprise Partnership Scheme (EPS):

- The 2017 Enterprise Partnership Scheme Call (postgraduate and postdoctoral) opened in March with an applicant deadline of 8 June 2017. No numbers are available as of yet.

Frontiers Research Programme:

- A new Frontiers Research competitive fund which will enable the next generation of researchers transition to Principal Investigator status has been established and launched.

Action 95: Support knowledge transfer by implementing a successor to the current Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative, delivering on targets for the transfer of economically valuable research outputs to enterprise, from all publicly-funded research, through the knowledge transfer infrastructure supported by Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI), reviewing the operations of KTI, finalising and implementing a 2017-2021 strategy for KTI, and by establishing a KTI Industry Connectors group to increase quality engagement and collaboration between companies and publicly funded research and technology in the higher education sector.

Q1 Measure: Implement a successor to the current Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative. (EI with IUA, DJEI)

Update: On 17 January 2017, Minister Halligan, announced approval for the third phase of Enterprise Ireland's Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI) which serves to bolster the capability within the knowledge transfer system in Ireland. This phase of the programme will see €34.5m invested over five years to further embed the transfer of knowledge from within the public research system to industry in Ireland and vice versa. It will also help sustain capacity to support the process of knowledge transfer and commercialisation of research from Irish research performing organisations (RPOs) around the country.

The programme, first introduced in 2007 by Enterprise Ireland, is managed and administered by Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI). It allocates funding across eight consortia comprising 26 RPOs including Universities, Institutes of Technology and state research bodies. The programme provides funding to the technology transfer offices (TTOs) that support these institutions around the country and it catalyses development of the knowledge transfer profession and the work it does. In doing so, the programme acts as an accelerator for commercialisation of research that would not otherwise be possible.

As a result of the programme to date, latest annual figures show;

- 748 research agreements signed;
- 31 Spin-Out companies created;
- 206 Licensing Agreements signed.

Phase three of the programme runs from 2017 – 2021 and provides sustainability for the TTOs. It enables an interface of skilled and experienced people within RPOs whose job it is to work with industry. The TTOs support industry engagement across areas such as research collaboration, consultancy, licensing of new technologies and the creation of new spin-out companies. The TTSI funding ensures the ongoing commercialisation of publicly funded research with a focus on quality over quantity, including the development of richer & more attractive industry-investor IP portfolios.

Stimulating Regional Growth

Regional Enterprise Development

Action 96: Progress the implementation and monitoring of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, including promotion of cross regional collaboration and of best practice exemplars. In particular the Regional Action Plans for Jobs will respond proactively to economic developments that have specific impacts on regions, such as Brexit and the Border region, through facilitating and encouraging the development of collaborative initiatives in the areas of entrepreneurship, capability development and mentoring, together with sector and cluster initiatives that could be successful in competitive calls for funding.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI, other relevant public bodies)

Update: Each Regional Action Plan for Jobs is overseen by an Implementation Committee, comprised of enterprise champions from the region, local authorities, LEOs, other key stakeholders, and agencies. The Implementation Committees work closely with the Regional Skills Forums to deliver the employers' skills requirements in the regions.

The first progress reports to June 2016 were published in December 2016 and reflect the work to date within the regions in driving collaboration and creating a supportive environment for jobs growth in the regions. The second progress reports, covering the second half of 2016, are being finalised and will be published in Q2 2017.

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

Q1 Measure: Complete construction in Sligo. (IDA, DJEI)

Update: The new advance technology building in Sligo is now in the final commissioning stages. The commissioning programme takes approximately two to three weeks. On completion of same, the buildings will be ready for occupation.

Q1 Measure: Complete construction in Castlebar. (IDA, DJEI)

Update: The new advance technology building in Castlebar is now in the final commissioning stages. The commissioning programme takes approximately two to three weeks. On completion of same, the buildings will be ready for occupation.

Supporting Jobs for Rural Communities

Action 100: Launch and implement the Action Plan for Rural Development, with over 200 actions across Government which will maximise the potential for jobs and economic and social progress in rural areas.

Q1 Measure: Launch the Action Plan for Rural Development. (DAHRRGA)

Update: Realising our Rural Potential, the Action Plan for Rural Development was launched on 23 January 2017 in Ballymahon, Co. Longford. The Plan contains 276 actions to be delivered by a range of Departments, agencies and other bodies, over a three year period, to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

Each action has been assigned to a lead body which will be responsible for implementation of the action within a definite timescale. A Monitoring Committee has been established, chaired by Minister Humphreys and which includes representatives of relevant Government Departments, other public bodies and key rural stakeholder interests. The first meeting of the Monitoring Committee took place on 23 March 2017. Progress reports on the Action Plan will be published every 6 months, with the first report due to be published in July.

Action 101: Provide EU LEADER programme funding in support of the enterprise priorities identified in the Local Development Strategies produced by Local Action Groups in every county, including through focused investment in enterprise development and rural tourism.

Q1 Measure: Finalise the protocol on LEOs and LEADER between both Departments. (DJEI, DAHRRGA)

Update: The final draft protocol has been agreed and is being considered by both Departments. It is expected to be signed off in Q2.

Enhancing Competitiveness

Improving the ease of doing business

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

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DAFM, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DAHRRGA, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DCCA, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DCYA, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Finance towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DoF, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-

taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Health towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DoH, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DHPCLG, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Justice and Equality towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DJE, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DJEI)

Update: The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has identified 45 licences, authorisations, certifications and permits which are provided to business. 15 of these are available online. In relation to the remaining 30, detailed plans to put 14 services online by November 2017 have been developed. Development has completed on two further licences and these are expected to be online in Q2 2017, pending agreement on the MOU with the online payment service provider. The Department is continuing to liaise with the service providers in its business units, offices and agencies to address progress on 16 other services which, due to legislative restrictions prevent provision of the service online (for example, a statutory requirement for a hard copy signature), or due to current requirements for hearings in person (for example, copyright and trade mark disputes).

Q1 Measure: Provide updates each quarter on progress achieved by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport towards the Government's commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online on a progressive basis by November 2017. (DTTAS, DJEI)

Update: Department continuing to liaise with DJEI to ensure delivery of the Government's

commitment to make all licensing, authorisation, certification, permit application, and payment-taking procedures for business fully available online.

Action 110: Create awareness of the benefits of standards to Irish businesses particularly in relation to improving competitiveness, and reach out to industry and researchers to engage in international standardisation activities related to future manufacturing technologies for businesses of all sizes.

Q1 Measure: Publish the study on the Economic Contribution of Standards in Ireland. (NSAI, DJEI)

Update: In March 2017 on its website, NSAI published the report it commissioned from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) on the *Economic Contribution of Standards in Ireland*. The report was accompanied by an infographic for ease of user assimilation.

The report is referenced in the NSAI Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and draft Annual Report 2016. In addition, the publication is being promoted on social media through LinkedIn.

Action 111: Work to increase recognition among businesses of the value of sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility in boosting employment, fostering social cohesion and protecting the environment, in particular through the Corporate Social Responsibility Stakeholder Forum.

Q1 Measure: Implement Pilot 2 of the Corporate Social Responsibility Voluntary Mentorship Programme for SMEs. (DJEI, CSR Stakeholder Forum)

Update: The Corporate Social Responsibility Voluntary Mentorship Programme has been developed and circulated to the mentor companies participating in Pilot 2. A training provider was appointed and training began in April, and will continue through May 2017. The exercise to match mentor and mentee companies will also take place during this period and full implementation of the programme will be scheduled in the week following training, following consultation with all participants.

Realising the Digital Economy Opportunities

Action 114: Establish Ireland as a European leader in the digital economy by ensuring a coordinated whole of Government approach to pursuing the economic opportunities.

Q1 Measure: Host a stakeholder summit to identify policy challenges and opportunities arising from the digital economy. (D/Taoiseach, DJEI, other relevant Departments)

Update: Advanced preparations are in place for a digital economy roundtable event - 'Realising the Digital Economy - Enterprise Opportunities' - which will be held very shortly, organised jointly by D/Taoiseach and DJEI.

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

Q1 Measure: Develop the pilot for the localised UNESCO ICT Competency Framework and ensure that the eLearning planning resource reflects the framework's requirements. (DES, Aegis Bodies)

Update: An Implementation Advisory Group progressing these objectives and a working group have been established and work is ongoing. This measure will be ongoing during 2017 and is on schedule to be completed by end-Q4.

Q1 Measure: Improve broadband services to schools, allocate grants for ICT equipment and make available advice and support materials for schools. (DES, Aegis Bodies)

Update: Work ongoing, ICT infrastructure Grant of €30m distributed to all schools in respect of the 2016-2017 school year. A Planning Group for Support Services has been established to progress objective to expand advice and support materials for schools. This measure will be ongoing during 2017 and is on schedule to be completed by end-Q4.

Q1 Measure: Upgrade primary schools to higher broadband speeds - some 800 by end 2016, and at least a further 300 by end of 2017. (DES, Aegis Bodies)

Update: A roll out of new routers to schools, which will facilitate higher speeds is ongoing. This measure will be ongoing during 2017 and is on schedule to be completed by end-Q4.

Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy

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

Q1 Measure: Initiate a national dialogue to consider key issues to be addressed in the long-term transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy and society. (DCCAIE)

Update: On 1 March, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment announced his intention to initiate the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). The Dialogue will run initially for a period of 2 years with an immediate focus on ensuring that a steering group is established and that the necessary arrangements are put in place to provide secretariat support to the Dialogue. DCCAIE is also working on a number of relevant projects that will fall under the NDCA umbrella such as sponsoring the 2017 Tidy Towns 'Our Community Climate Action Award' and establishing a National Climate Change Action and Awareness Programme. The latter is currently being developed in conjunction with An Taisce's Green Schools.

Addressing New Labour Market Challenges

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

Q1 Measure: Select projects, draw up contracts and commence funding. (DJE)

Update: Following an Open Call for Proposals, 14 projects have been selected for funding. Projects are due to commence activity in Q2.

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

Q1 Measure: Confirm the annual allocation for the programme and ensure Local Community Development Committees are notified of their lot specific allocations. (DHPCLG)

Update: The annual allocation for the programme has been confirmed and each Local Community Development Committee has been notified of their lot specific allocation(s).

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

Q1 Measure: Set SICAP targets. (DHPCLG, LCDGs)

Update: The annual allocation for the programme has been confirmed and each Local Community Development Committee has been notified of their lot specific allocation(s).

Strengthening Clusters

Agri-Food and Marine

Action 141: Contribute to attracting and developing graduate talent to the agri-food sector through programmes such as Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship and Food Marketing Graduates; the Origin Green Ambassadors programme; and the undergraduate Language Bursary Programme.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (Bord Bia, DAFM)

Update: The recruitment for the next cohort of Marketing Fellows and Origin Green Ambassadors commenced in January 2017 with a view to identifying 20 Marketing Fellows and 10 Origin Green Ambassadors that will commence their programmes during the summer of 2017. In addition Bord Bia currently supports over 20 Food Marketing Graduates that are based with Irish food and drink exporters in overseas locations for an 18 month period. The retention rate of graduates from Bord Bia's Talent Development Programmes stands at over 80% and helps provide new talent for client companies that can help drive the future development of their business. Over the last three years Bord Bia's programmes have catered for almost 200 participants.

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

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (Bord Bia, EI, Teagasc, DAFM)

Update: The recruitment for Food Works 2017 has commenced with scheduled 1:1 meetings. To date the three partner agencies Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland and Teagasc have met with 15 entrepreneurs who have expressed an interest in Food Works. A full marketing and PR campaign commenced at the end of March, which will raise further awareness of the programme. 1:1 meetings will continue through the country in Q2. The first alumni event of the year took place on 28 March.

Retail

Action 153: Launch a Town Centre Revival Framework to support towns and villages, through their local authorities, to address the challenges of creating a vibrant and viable town centre.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI, Retail Consultation Forum, LAs, DAHRRGA, DHPCLG)

Update: The Town Centre Renewal Framework was finalised by the Retail and Town Centre Renewal working group and presented to the Retail Consultation Forum. It was formally launched by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on 25 April 2017.

Design

Action 157: Maximise the potential of the design sector to drive innovation and competitiveness.

Q1 Measure: Establish a national design consultative forum to bring all the relevant parties together to develop a national design strategy, and priority actions. (DJEI)

Update: On 2 February, Minister Mitchell announced the establishment of the National Design Forum. Terms of Reference have been drawn up and relevant stakeholders have been invited to participate. The first meeting of the Forum will take place in Q2.

Construction and Housing

Action 163: Develop proposals to offer competitive financing on a commercial basis to developers to meet on-site and other infrastructure requirements on large development sites.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (NTMA, DoF)

Update: Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) is exploring opportunities to support the delivery of housing-related enabling infrastructure in large scale priority development areas with a view to kick-starting the development process, provided such financing can be done on the basis of appropriate risk and a commercial return for the risks taken.

ISIF is actively engaging with the Department of Housing, local authorities in the main urban centres and with project promoters in priority locations where planning permission for new homes on a

significant scale is not possible until strategic infrastructure deficits, such as roads, water and drainage, are addressed.

This ISIF funding would complement any central Government funding contribution to enabling infrastructure (e.g. Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)), such as in instances where there is a financing gap between the identified infrastructure cost and the current resourcing available to the planning authority and/or developer, or where early investment from ISIF would resolve a potential time delay in the delivery of necessary infrastructure, for which other funding sources cannot yet be brought forward.

ISIF continues to work on two initiatives, one with a private sector partner and one with a local government partner.

Glossary of Terms

APJ	Action Plan for Jobs	DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
BAI	Broadcasting Authority of Ireland	EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara	EI	Enterprise Ireland
CIF	Construction Industry Federation	ERC	European Research Council
COSME	EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs	ETB	Education and Training Board
CRO	Credit Review Office	ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	EU	European Union
daa	Dublin Airport Authority	FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	FET	Further Education and Training
DAHRRGA	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	FP7	Framework Programme 7
DCCAIE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	GNP	Gross National Product
DCCoI	Design and Craft Council of Ireland	GRO	General Register Office
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	HEA	Higher Education Authority
DES	Department of Education and Skills	HEI	Higher Education Institution
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	HICP	Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices
DoF	Department of Finance	HIHI	Health Innovation Hub Ireland
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	HPRA	Health Products Regulatory Authority
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	HPSU	High Potential Start-Ups
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality	HRB	Health Research Board
DoD	Department of Defence	ICT	Information and Communications Technology
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	IDA	IDA Ireland
DSP	Department of Social Protection	IFB	Irish Film Board
D/Taoiseach	Department of Taoiseach	IFS	International Financial Services
		IFSC	International Financial Services Centre
		IP	Intellectual Property
		IRC	Irish Research Council
		IRDG	Industry Research and Development Group
		ISIF	Ireland Strategic Investment Fund
		ITI	InterTradeIreland

IUA	Irish Universities Association
KDB	Knowledge Development Box
KTI	Knowledge Transfer Ireland
LAs	Local Authorities
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LEADER	Liaisons entre actions de developpement de l'économie rurale
LEO/s	Local Enterprise Office/s
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
LPC	Low Pay Commission
Mbps	Megabytes per second
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NAMA	National Asset Management Agency
NCC	National Competitiveness Council
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCDAF	National Civil Aviation Development Forum
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NPF	National Planning Framework
NSAI	National Standards Authority of Ireland
NSC	National Skills Council
NTMA	National Treasury Management Agency
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
OGP	Office of Government Procurement
OPW	Office of Public Works
PAYE	Pay As You Earn

PEIL	Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning
PPP	Public Private Partnership
Q	Quarter
R&D	Research and Development
RDI	Research, development and innovation
RSF	Regional Skills Fora
SBCI	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland
SBIR	Small Business Innovation Research
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SFSI	Sustainable Food Systems Ireland
SI	Statutory Instrument
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SLMRU	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
UN	United Nations
naG	Údarás na Gaeltachta
VAT	Valued Added Tax
WEF	World Economic Forum
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission
WTO	World Trade Organisation

APJ Notes

