



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

# Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum 22 February 2023

## Discussion of Work Programme 2023 and GovTech

### Attendees

Barry O'Brien – IBM  
Edward McDonnell – CeADAR  
Eoin Costello – DigitalHQ  
Erik O'Donovan – Ibec  
Kieran McCorry – Microsoft  
Ross Elwood – Digital Business Ireland (attending on behalf of Lorraine Higgins)  
Patricia Scanlon – Soapbox Labs/AI Ambassador  
Terri O'Donovan – J&J  
Ryan Meade – Google Ireland (attending on behalf of Kathryn O'Donovan)

### Remote Attendees

Allan Beechinor – Altada  
DC Cahalane – Dogpatch Labs  
Fiona Bourke – Department of the Taoiseach  
Shona D'Arcy – Kids Speech Labs

### Officials

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation, Dara Calleary TD  
Jean Carberry, Gráinne O'Carroll, Marc McEntegart, Máire O'Connor, Ciara O'Sullivan (DETE)  
Ruairí Ó hAilín (Enterprise Ireland)  
Gerry O'Grady (Local Enterprise Offices)  
Barry Lowry (OGCIO)  
James Farrell, Donal Flavin – IDA Ireland

## Introductory discussion

Jean Carberry opened the meeting by welcoming members and setting out the agenda for the day's discussion:

1. Approval of minutes of the last meeting of the EDAF
2. EDAF Work Programme Discussion – including presentations from members
3. Presentation on GovTech, Barry Lowry, Government CIO
4. Update on Digital matters, including National Digital Strategy and EU digital files
5. AOB

## Approval of minutes of last meeting of the EDAF

Minutes of the previous meeting of the EDAF were approved.

## EDAF Work Programme Discussion

Jean Carberry of DETE introduced the topic by running through the draft Work Programme circulated ahead of this meeting, setting out four proposed work streams:

- Awareness-raising and communication
- Leveraging the European Digital Innovation Hubs
- Advancing AI in Ireland
- Digital Inclusion, Skills, GovTech and Cybersecurity

## Responses/Proposals from forum members:

Members presented material that had been submitted in advance of the meeting, which included the below topics:

1. A proposal that a national portal/resource in relation to AI be developed
2. The need to arrive at a standardised assessment of “Digital Maturity” (acknowledging that there are several in the field, would be beneficial to define one for use as a yardstick, would facilitate measurement by sector/region)
3. The value of immersive technology from an ecommerce point of view, with specific reference to the use of Augmented Reality (AR) to enhance customer experience for ecommerce businesses
4. The regulatory framework as a key enabler for investment and innovation, in particular its impact/implications for investment in digital enterprise
5. Proposed focus on driving adoption of AI by SMEs, potentially a survey on the topic
6. Rural Ireland and the impacts of digitalisation and of recent developments in AI on existing businesses (particularly retail) and business models in towns around Ireland

7. Regarding Workstream 1: The need to reach micro-enterprises in particular was highlighted
8. It was noted that the proposals are broadly aligned, though they may be grouped/arranged differently. Three areas for attention were highlighted:
  - a. Driving readiness, both for digitalisation and AI,
  - b. Working with Enterprise on adapting to new regulation, and
  - c. Strengthening the ecosystem that enables enterprise digital readiness
9. It was emphasised that there is a need for the forum to have tangible outputs

Discussion followed and the work programme was agreed.

As part of the broader discussion regarding Workstream 3, it was proposed that the Forum prepare some input/guidance for companies and organisations in Ireland ahead of the introduction of the AI Act, helping businesses to parse what it will mean for them. IDA Ireland also noted the role of Ireland as a regulator, and the expectation that this will receive more focus in the year ahead.

DETE also noted that one of the points made in submissions was around the forum providing advice to Government. Indicated that it is content to continue drafting advice for circulation and input in this regard.

Minister Calleary thanked the group for their submissions and noted that the increase in public discourse around AI in recent weeks would bring a focus to awareness-raising and communication around AI. The Minister also noted that the one-year anniversary of the forum would be an opportunity to refresh the membership of the EDAF.

## **Presentation from OGCIO**

Government Chief Information Officer Barry Lowry presented on the topic of GovTech. Began by outlining the European Digital Decade, the National Digital Strategy and the targets set out under its four dimensions, and the Connecting Government Strategy.

Described GovTech in terms of a partnership of public sector organisations with innovative SMEs and startups to solve societal problems. Noted that the process now is about thinking not in terms of digitalising existing processes, but in terms of things that users need.

Set out two ambitions:

1. For Ireland to be the best place in Europe to transact digitally with Government, and
2. For Ireland to be the best place in Europe to be a tech startup.

In discussion, the forum noted the pace of change made possible in the area of digital public services during the pandemic and raised the need for consistency across Departments.

The forum also discussed the potential for Ireland to develop its reputation in the area of ethical AI, to drive research in ethical AI, as well as startups known to have ethical AI foundations. DETE noted that this is aligned with the work of the Working Group on Ethical AI in the Public Sector, whose output will be a charter to bring to Government committing to ethical use of AI in Ireland.

Members highlighted the role that Government can have as a catalyst in this area. GovTech offers particular opportunities in areas like funding frameworks, communications, talent, exemplars, and branding. All of these touch on the work of the forum.

## **Update on digital matters, including the National Digital Strategy and EU Digital Files**

Jean Carberry updated on the Digital Services Act, including the need for a Digital Services Coordinator to be in place by the time the act comes into force (17 February). Work under way on that.

Gráinne O'Carroll provided an update on the AI Act and the Data Act. Also provided a brief update to the forum on the implementation of the Data Governance Act, working towards a September deadline.

## **AOB**

1. CeADAR has offered to host the next meeting of the EDAF
2. It was also noted that DETE continues to work with DFHERIS on the National Training Fund issue identified at a previous meeting of the Forum
3. In response to a query from Google Ireland, Minister Calleary notes that Ireland will have the chair of the D9+ during the implementation of the DSA, may be worthwhile to put the D9+ Programme on the agenda for the Forum at some stage this year

**EDAF Secretariat**

**February 2023**