



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

# Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum

## 13 June 2023

### Attendees (in-person)

Edward McDonnell – CeADAR  
Kieran McCorry – Microsoft  
Terri O’Donovan – J&J  
Ross Elwood – Digital Business Ireland  
Ryan Meade – Google Ireland

### Attendees (on-line)

Allan Beechinor – Altada  
Barry O’Brien – IBM  
Barry O’Sullivan – Insight SFI/UCC  
DC Cahalane – Dogpatch Labs  
Erik O’Donovan – Ibec  
Eoin Costello – DigitalHQ  
John Clancy – Galvia  
Tanya Thompson – Sluamor/ISME

### Officials

Minister of State for Trade Promotion and Digital Transformation, Dara Calleary TD  
Jean Carberry, Gráinne O’Carroll, Toby Sainsbury, Ross Church, Marc McEntegart, Ciara O’Sullivan (DETE)  
Claire Hayes Curtin (Department of the Taoiseach)  
Ruairí Ó hAilín (Enterprise Ireland)  
Gerry O’Grady (Local Enterprise Offices)  
James Farrell, Donal Travers (IDA Ireland)

## **Introductory discussion**

Minister Calleary opened by welcoming members, thanking CeADAR for hosting this meeting, and setting out the agenda for this meeting of the forum:

1. Approval of minutes of the last meeting of the EDAF
2. Presentation from CeADAR
3. Artificial Intelligence discussion
4. AOB

## **Approval of minutes of last meeting of the EDAF**

Minutes of the previous meeting of the EDAF were approved.

## **Presentation from CeADAR**

Edward McDonnell, head of CeADAR, gave a brief presentation on the centre's work as Ireland's National Centre for Applied AI and its role as Ireland's National AI Hub as part of the European Digital Innovation Hub network. CeADAR works to support businesses pursuing AI across four pillars:

- Test before invest
- Support finding investment
- Innovation ecosystem and networking
- Skills and training

This presentation also included an overview of CeADAR's work on an "AI Global Newshub."

## **Artificial Intelligence Discussion**

DETE opened the discussion on AI by outlining the foundations and building blocks that have been put in place under the National AI Strategy that will enable a greater take-up of AI by businesses, ensuring that this is done in line with an ethical, human-centric approach. DETE also outlined where the Department sees the benefits for businesses that use AI. DETE will be seeking expressions of interest for an AI Advisory Council which will provide independent advice to Government on AI related matters.

DETE also outlined the work that is under way on a communications campaign to raise awareness of AI, its opportunities and risks. The key message is that AI is a robust and flexible tool, but that there is a need for "AI awareness."

Ahead of this meeting, the following questions were circulated to forum members for their consideration.

Discussion was broadly along the lines of the questions raised:

1. What further policy actions can Government take to address concerns around AI developments?
2. Are there elements of the national AI Strategy that need to be added or adjusted?
3. Given the pace of change in recent months, what messages do you think could usefully be included in a communication campaign on AI?
4. How can we increase the uptake of AI tools by the wider enterprise sector?

**Discussion:**

- Question 1:
  - The Forum noted the recent UK Government activity re: models for increased transparency; it will be interested to see what that entails.
  - The Forum also warned that there is an impression emerging that AI is Large Language Models (LLM) and there may be a need to address that (this point was reiterated in relation to Question 3).
- Question 2:
  - It was noted that both the National AI Strategy and the EDAF Work Programme propose development of an action plan to drive implementation of the Strategy. The Forum may be able to feed into that process.
  - Regarding the existing National AI Strategy, the feedback from the Forum was positive. It was acknowledged that, given the pace of change, some specific actions may require revision.
- Question 3:
  - Acknowledging the tenor of recent coverage of AI in the media, Forum members stressed the need to communicate the positives of AI. The campaign should also be careful not to give the sense that there are two distinct types of AI (“trustworthy” and “innovative”) – there is only one type of AI, and we would like it to be trustworthy.
  - The communications campaign should reiterate commitment to ethical AI, introduce risk of complacency.
  - It was noted that the communications campaign should be developed along with the development of case studies and other supports.
- Question 4:
  - Forum members discussed the potential for some support/scheme/resource to be put in place for startups to reward/incentivise investment in AI.
    - As part of this discussion, it was noted that the NDRC has recently closed a round of applications, highlighting that 45% of approx. 400 applications identified an AI element.

- Forum members noted that there is a need to increase the level of AI knowledge/awareness of SMEs; it may be necessary to allay existing fears around AI.
- It was proposed that businesses be identified that could act as “lighthouses” for the use of AI in Ireland.

The Minister thanked the forum for their contributions and DETE indicated that it would follow up so that the forum could feed into an action plan to push AI adoption through EI and the LEOs.

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

DETE updated the group on relevant EU digital files, including the DSA (and implementation), the DMA (and implementation) and described both the voluntary Code of Conduct for AI and proposed AI Pact.

DETE provided an update on the Data Act and the Data Governance Act. There was some discussion of the work ongoing around the publication of an implementation report for the National AI Strategy, and the Trustworthy/Ethical guidelines for the use of AI in the public sector.

It was also noted that the “Expressions of interest” process for new members of the Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum has now begun.

### **AOB**

1. Forum members noted that:
  - a. The upcoming Dargan Conference (16 July) will focus on the possibilities of technology and how to leverage it for towns, localities and communities around Ireland. Conference will be held 16 July.
  - b. This year’s McGill Summer School will focus on AI and the current moment, including geopolitically.

**EDAF Secretariat**

**June 2023**