

ACTION PLAN FOR JOBS

2015



Second Progress Report

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Commentary

This is the second report of 2015 from the Monitoring Committee established by Government to monitor and drive implementation of the measures contained in the *Action Plan for Jobs 2015*. It outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the second quarter of 2015. The Monitoring Committee comprises representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach, the Office of the Tánaiste, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The high-level goal of the Action Plan for Jobs, first introduced in 2012, was to create the environment where the number of people at work will have increased by 100,000 by 2016 (from 2012 base). We reached, and indeed exceeded this target in Q1 2015, and have since added a new target to restore all the jobs lost in the recession by 2018 and to get unemployment down to 6% by 2020.

The Government published the fourth in its multi-annual *Action Plan for Jobs* series in January this year. This Plan, which contains 382 actions to be implemented in 2015 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 900 actions already implemented under *Action Plan for Jobs 2012, 2013* and *2014* 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 (from CSO QNHS Quarter 2 2015) show that 57,100 extra jobs were created in the past 12 months, with 19,000 jobs created in Q2 alone, bringing total employment to 1,958,700. There was an increase in full-time employment of 56,800 in the year and an increase in part-time employment of 300. Over the period since the launch of the Action Plan for Jobs at the beginning of 2012, 126,000 additional jobs have been created in the Irish economy. The rate of unemployment (using the CSO Standardised Unemployment Rate) was 9.4% in September 2015, down from a high of 15.1% in February 2012.

Actions due in Quarter 2

In the second quarter of 2015, Departments and agencies were to deliver 109 measures relating to 54 of the Action Plan's 382 actions. 94 of the measures due in Quarter 2 of 2015 have been delivered, giving a completion rate of 86%.

In delivering 94 second quarter measures under the Plan, the Government has, for example:

As part of Disruptive Reform on National Talent Drive

- Introduced a Springboard work placement portal to connect graduates and employers with job opportunities, and launched Springboard+ 2015, providing for 9,000 free part-time and full-time higher education re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities for jobseekers, across 285 courses in 42 colleges throughout the country, including funding of 34 ICT skills conversion programmes (Actions 3, 6 and 13).
- Rolled out the Smart Futures STEM Careers Roadshow at SciFest events to raise awareness of STEM career opportunities for post-primary students, reaching an estimated 2,500 secondary school students (Action 8).
- Launched the Science Foundation Ireland Industry Fellowship Programme to develop and support academic partnerships with industry, by facilitating the bi-directional movement of academic and industry researchers (Action 12).
- Published the 2015 Further Education and Training (FET) Services Plan, on 8 July (Action 14).
- The Apprenticeship Council issued a report to the Minister for Education and Skills, which makes recommendations on a number of pilot proposals for new apprenticeships (Action 16).

As part of Disruptive Reform on Delivering Regional Potential

- Launched 'Ireland's Ancient East', a new brand identity for the South, East and Midlands of Ireland, to 270 international buyers to very positive feedback, and held brand socialisation workshops sharing the brand with over 400 industry/stakeholders (Action 37).
- Commenced consultations with the public and organisations in the public, business and community and voluntary sectors on drawing up a six year Local Economic and Community Plan for their area (Action 48).
- Launched the Rural Economic Development Zones Pilot Scheme and held an Information Seminar, as part of the Government's work progressing the recommendations of the CEDRA Report to promote rural development (Action 50).

As part of Disruptive Reform on Intellectual Property in Enterprise

- Completed a public consultation process as part of the work to introduce a 'Knowledge Development Box', during which 40 written submissions were received and meetings were held with approximately 100 companies; all of these submissions have fed into the legislation for the Knowledge Development Box which will be published with the Finance Bill in October 2015 (Action 78).

As part of Disruptive Reform Manufacturing Step Change

- Launched a pilot Capital Investment Initiative Fund of €10 million to address the gap in supporting capital investment by providing grants to eligible SMEs, and approved 5 proposals to date (Action 83).

As part of Disruptive Reform Local Enterprise Offices

- Launched a LEO Client survey targeting 7,000 LEO clients from the 31 LEOs to strengthen customer service in the LEOs, completed a survey evaluating the quantity of staffing resources in the LEOs, and filled vacancies at Head of LEO level in a number of locations (Action 99).
- Launched a €10 million initiative, comprising two funds of €5 million each, to support more start-up businesses in every county, and to strengthen the entrepreneurship and enterprise environment at a local and regional level (Action 99).

And more broadly, in Q2 Government has for example:

Under Finance for Growth:

- Completed a review of the 'Finance4Growth' initiative, in order to explore how best to support SMEs in building their financial capabilities. The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) is considering options to support lending in amounts of less than €10 million to SMEs through non-bank platforms, as well as considering how it can best support lending through peer-to-peer and alternative lending platforms (Actions 115 and 117).
- Significant progress has been made by Enterprise Ireland (EI), working closely with the European Investment Fund, to progress the establishment of a European Angel Fund in Ireland, and the full operation launch of the Angel Fund will take place in Q3 (Action 118).
- Announced a second Competitive Call for expressions of interest under the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018, under which up to €65 million (of an overall fund of €175 million) is being made available for co-investment in seed funds, to stimulate job creation and support the funding requirements of young innovative Irish companies (Action 120).

Under Increasing Activation for the Unemployed:

- Progressed the Government's new JobPath service, which involves contracting additional resources to provide services to people who are Long-Term Unemployed; contracts were signed with the two companies involved, Seetac and Turas Nua, and the first referral cases have been provided to the companies from the Department of Social Protection (Action 127).

- Finalised a new Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, which was approved by Government in June, and which will be published shortly (Action 128).
- The Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education, following an extensive consultative process, and informed by research and evidence of best practice, submitted a Report to Government in July, setting out a series of options for future investment in childcare in Ireland (Action 135).

Under Growing Irish Enterprise and Foreign Direct Investment:

- Developed a framework to progress the implementation of a new Global Sourcing Strategy across both IDA Ireland and EI to increase global sourcing sales by EI client companies by €100 million over 3 years, and €30 million in 2015 (Action 141).
- Developed a national enterprise policy, Enterprise Policy 2025, informed by research, analysis and extensive consultation, which will set out the vision, strategic objectives and a suite of cross-government actions to achieve a longer term ambition for enterprise that will orient our policies toward fostering a better, sustainable future and building a new economy founded on enterprise, innovation and talent (Action 167).
- Published a Knowledge and Information Strategy, in June 2015, which sets out a plan for the delivery of priority eHealth projects in the context of the overall eHealth strategy. The Strategy outlines how integrated information and enabling technology will support innovative, safe and high quality patient care, and it sets out an indicative timeframe for key deliverables over the next 6 years (Action 170).

Under Entrepreneurship

- Each LEO has developed its own Local Enterprise Development Plan with targets for key activities aimed at supporting entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation; as part of these plans each LEO has identified ways to facilitate start-up hubs which will support and accommodate the next cohort of emerging enterprises (Action 191).
- Under Food Works 3, which supports a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs, 10 projects have been chosen to proceed to the final investor and launch-ready phase, which will involve workshops, 1-to-1 business advisor sessions, Food Works retailer meetings and a market study visit to Milan, including a visit to EXPO (Action 194).
- Expanded technology sourcing opportunities for SMEs and other interested parties through the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) database, which connects 600 partner organisations in 54 countries to engage with business, technology and research partnering; this supports the objective of delivering more new Irish spinout company opportunities (Action 198).

Under Competitiveness:

- Launched the new National Post Code system, which will improve logistical efficiency, the accuracy of databases across both the public and private sector, and planning and analysis capabilities in both sectors (Action 219).
- Published the National Competitiveness Council's (NCC) 'Costs of Doing Business In Ireland 2015' report (Action 247).
- Completed a review of the operation of the Building Control Amendment Regulations 2014 (SI No. 9 of 2014) after 12 months of operation, as well as a cross-departmental review of implementation of the Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation in the Energy, Communications and Broadcasting sectors (Actions 237 and 265).

Under Research, Development and Innovation:

- Further scaled up SFI Research Centres through the SFI Spokes Programme, under which several projects have been funded, with the total industry cash contributions surpassing the €1 million target (Action 271).
- Completed a study on the market-focused element of the research landscape; the study's recommendations will be implemented through the successor to the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI) currently in development (Action 272).
- Launched the SFI Investigators Programme 2015, which supports the development of world-class research capability and human capital in STEM areas that demonstrably support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland (Action 284).
- Launched the National Framework for Doctoral Education, which has been endorsed by a range of research funders and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); promotion of the Framework is now underway (Action 290).

Under Stimulating the Domestic Economy:

- In a bid to attract graduate talent into the Agri-Food sector, 20 new participants have started the Marketing Fellowship programme (Action 300).
- The Retail Consultation Forum has considered and prioritised the recommendations in the Report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and an action plan to progress the priority recommendations has been developed (Action 324).
- Launched the Living City initiative, to support the rejuvenation of eligible areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway and Kilkenny (Action 332).

Under New Sources of Growth:

- Approved funding for 205 projects, involving a national and international reach, under the Design Innovation Fund (Action 346).
- Approved additional funding for the National Institute for Bioprocess Research and Training (NIBRT) to invest in Research and Development on manufacturing technology for biologic drugs including next generation therapeutics over the next five years (Action 364).

Under Evaluations and Reviews to inform future policy development:

- Established a Peer Review Group to analyse the key issues identified in the national employer survey through a qualitative research project (Action 370).
- Continued to systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of the Springboard initiative; three trend analyses have been published to date (Action 372).

However, 15 of the 109 Q2 measures outlined in the Plan have not been delivered on schedule:

- *Finalisation of Junior Cycle Irish and Business specifications/Publication of new Junior Cycle Irish and Business specifications with a view to implementation in schools in September 2016 – Action 22.* Consultation on the specification for Business was completed and is scheduled for consideration by the Junior Cycle Board in October 2015, and a further consultation event on the Irish specification is scheduled for October 2015. In view of the outcome of the recent ballot of Teacher Unions further engagement with education stakeholders will take place in order to progress junior cycle reform.
- *Agree with the UK the rollout schedule to extend the British-Irish Visa Scheme to other countries (Phase 2) and commence rollout of Phase 2 - Action 25.* While an evaluation of the Scheme was scheduled to take place following three months of operation in China and India, the rollout to India was delayed, and the evaluation will therefore take place over the coming months. In addition, work will continue with all concerned on resolving early life technical and other issues, and further deployment will then be agreed with the UK in tandem with the evaluation, thereby keeping the overall project on track.
- *Regional Assemblies to commence preparation of regional Spatial Economic Strategies - Action 42.* Work on the commencement of the Regional Spatial Economic Strategies (RSES) has been delayed until the fourth quarter of 2015 as the necessary organisational and co-ordination arrangements are put in place to facilitate their preparation.

- *Deliver Industry-Research Performing Organisation Collaboration Agreements including a Practical Guide, an industry Decision Tree and suite of Model Collaboration Agreements - Action 73.* In progressing this action, which is delayed due to a pressure on Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) resources and a need to undertake a wide consultation with stakeholders, KTI has established a panel of Knowledge Transfer experts to contribute to the consultation and to assist with the associated project management; the action, which will support the revision of the national IP Protocol, will be delivered in Q4.
- *Following the passing of the appropriate primary legislation, implement and promote the new Credit Guarantee Scheme; New Scheme Implemented - Action 106.* The Bill was on the A list of the Spring legislation programme; the work has proven to be very complicated and a range of technical and legal issues which have been raised by the Office of the Attorney General has meant that progress has been much slower than anticipated in having the amended legislation enacted. The Bill was published on 16 September 2015 and it is hoped to have the Bill enacted as early as possible in the new Oireachtas term, with a view to making a new Scheme thereafter. As an interim measure, a new Credit Guarantee Scheme was made in 2015 which allows guarantees for refinancing loans where an SME's bank has exited or is exiting the Irish market. This new Scheme will also increase the maximum length of guarantees from 3 to 7 years.
- *Support the voluntary youth work sector in accessing the proposed new Youth Programme and the Youth Entrepreneurship Fund by facilitating links between local youth services and the Local Enterprise Offices/Microfinance Ireland - Action 131.* This action has been incorporated into the new National Youth Strategy, the aim of which is to improve the five national outcomes for the 10-24 age cohort (that young people are active and healthy, achieving in learning in development, safe and protected from harm, have economic security and opportunity and are connected, respected and contributing to their world). Included in the Strategy will be the promotion of youth entrepreneurship initiatives in schools and youth work settings and the facilitation of engagement and interaction between local youth services and the Local Enterprise Offices/Microfinance Ireland and Intreo Centres. The National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020 has been completed and will be launched in early October.
- *Continue to promote the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) and Startup Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) to leverage the potential of migrant entrepreneurs and investors; Evaluate take-up of IIP and revise promotional strategy as required - Action 197.* Frequent meetings between officials and potential investors and promoters continue; a review document in respect of the IIP is being drafted at present by the Evaluation Committee and is expected to be submitted to the Minister for Justice and Equality in Q3.

- *A Working Group will implement reforms in mentoring; Create a simple mentors database to which new types of mentors (volunteer entrepreneurs or serving executives) would be attracted - Action 214.* A workshop was held in February involving discussion and feedback by existing mentors/entrepreneurs of a proposed model of national volunteer mentoring. Following the workshop, it was agreed that broader action was required to better achieve the objective, and a report was drafted with recommendations for next steps, one of which involved the development and promotion of a pilot regional volunteer mentoring initiative that may develop into a national approach, and which was included under the new €5 million Community Enterprise Initiatives (CEI) Fund to be rolled out by Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Action Plan for Jobs.
- *In order to ensure legal business models are better informed, better established, better operated, better regulated, better for consumers and enterprise and better for the economy, Government will: Resume Report Stage of the Legal Services Bill in the Dáil; and Complete legislation for the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority to become operational - Action 263.* The Legal Services Bill completed its Dáil Stages on 22 April 2015 and completed Seanad Second Stage on 13 May 2015. The intention is that the Bill be completed so that the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority can become operational without delay this year.
- *Develop a successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation to cover the period to 2020 - Action 267.* An Inter Departmental Committee (IDC) was established at the end of 2014 and has met 8 times up to the end of July 2015 to progress the development of the Strategy. A written consultation process was held and 80 submissions were received; in addition, 120 stakeholders participated in a consultative forum held on 8 July to elicit views on a number of thematic areas. Work developing the Strategy is continuing and it is expected to have the draft Strategy submitted to Government for consideration in Q4.
- *Publish and implement a new Marine Research and Innovation 2014-2020 strategy, to include a strong emphasis on research in support of the sector - Action 282.* A revised draft of the Marine Research and Innovation Strategy is progressing with a view to completion by end-Q3 with a public consultation process to follow; the likely publication date is Q4.
- *Use the standardisation system intelligently to expedite the commercialisation of new technology and to reduce the risk of project failure; Launch Conference 2015 – Standards and Innovation – Action 294.* Following consultation with Enterprise Ireland, it was considered that a single generic event would not achieve the desired objective due to the differences in interests and needs of the research areas, and that a number of smaller events focussed on key areas of Horizon 2020 such as Health, ICT and Energy would be more effective. This action will now be completed by Q4.

- *Implement Construction 2020 so as to deliver a dynamic, competitive and sustainable construction sector, capable of contributing to economic growth and job creation, and equipped to meet the future infrastructure needs of the country, including addressing the challenges in housing supply; Work with key stakeholders to encourage and promote home and building owners to carry out sensible thermal efficiency improvements when undertaking major renovation works to their homes or buildings; Develop proposals to bring to Government on thermal efficiency performance and consequential improvements as part of the Construction Strategy 2020: Establish working group and invite public comment on the feasibility and impact of setting minimum thermal – Action 336 (2 measures). Both measures will be progressed in the coming months as the relevant stakeholders work with the experts appointed to bring technical and economic assistance to the project.*
- *Develop a Workforce Development Strategy; Develop policy framework for the formulation of Workforce Development Strategy - Action 380. This action will be delayed into Q3, due to the fact that the development of a policy framework for the formulation of the FET Workforce Development Strategy must ensure synchronisation with the updating of the National Skills Strategy, which is likely to be completed in Q4.*

Quarter 2 Measures

2. Disruptive Reforms

2.1 National Talent Drive

Action 3: 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, implement the key actions from the ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018.

Q2 Measure: Introduction of Springboard portal to connect graduates and employers with job opportunities. (HEA)

Update: Complete

The final technical aspects on the website are being completed and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has issued notification to previous participants of this new feature. The work placement portal, which will connect graduates and employers with job opportunities, is now live and can be found at:

<http://www.springboardcourses.ie/EmployerInfo>

Q2 Measure: Launch new rounds of conversion and upskilling. (HEA, HEIs, employers)

Update: Complete

Springboard+ 2015, which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme was launched on 7 May providing for a total of 9,000 free part-time and full-time higher education re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities for jobseekers. 285 Springboard+ courses will be delivered in 42 colleges throughout Ireland.

Q2 Measure: Results of call for additional incentivised ICT conversion courses and accelerated courses starting in 2015. (HEA, HEIs)

Update: Complete

Following a Call for additional places to be provided in Autumn 2015, the HEA received proposals from 17 HEIs for 1124 places on core ICT courses at NFQ levels 8-9, however, this has now been revised down to an additional 1061.

Q2 Measure: Research project reviewing impact of retention interventions focused on students in ICT programmes levels 6 to 9. (National Forum of Teaching and Learning)

Update: Complete

The research project has been completed and a draft report has been submitted to the

National Forum. Following review, the final report is undergoing a number of revisions and will be published in mid-September. It will be launched as part of the Forum's dissemination of funded research project findings to the higher education sector, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Higher Education Authority.

Action 6: Enhance collaboration and engagement between enterprise and higher education providers to roll out Level 8 ICT Conversion programmes as part of the Springboard 2015 programme.

Q2 Measure: Outcome of competitive process determined by expert panel, in accordance with process and overseen by independent process auditor. (HEA)

Update: Complete

A competitive Call for Springboard+ 2015, to include the ICT skills conversion programme, issued in January. A guidance document, prepared by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), on current and future skills needs of enterprise accompanied the Call. The information contained in the guidance document gathered together the most recently available data concerning higher education level skills needs for enterprise. All courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are in areas of identified skills needs and were selected by an independent panel with industry and educational expertise.

Q2 Measure: Approval and launch of new conversion places as part of Springboard 2015. (HEA, HEIs, employers)

Update: Complete

As part of Springboard+ 2015, an independent panel with industry and educational expertise approved funding of 34 ICT skills conversion programmes.

Action 7: Enhance industry input to programme content, provision of work placements and promotion of ICT programmes as part of the implementation of Skillnets ICT Conversion Programmes.

Q2 Measure: Commence delivery of ICT Conversion Programmes. (Skillnets)

Update: Complete

Delivery of programmes has commenced during Q2 and is progressing in line with planned targets.

Action 8: Step up collaboration between government, industry and education through Smart Futures to raise awareness of STEM career opportunities for post-primary students, in line with the agreed 2014-16 strategy.

Q2 Measure: STEM careers roadshow to take place during SciFest and Science Week in 2015 (Q2 and Q4). (SFI)

Update: Complete

SciFest is an ongoing series of one-day science fairs for second-level students hosted locally in schools and at regional level in the Institutes of Technology. The Smart Futures Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) Careers Roadshow takes place between the judging and awards ceremony at the relevant SciFests. The Roadshow consists of two or three speakers from the industry talking about their careers in STEM – subjects they liked/studied in school, what they studied in college, the variety of jobs they have held to date, where they are working now, what their typical day consists of, etc. The presentations are followed by a Q&A session during which the students can ask career-related questions.

The Careers Roadshow took place in 11 Institutes of Technology - 22 speakers from industry and research in areas such as Pharma, Medical Devices, Food Science and Software Development took part. Talks are estimated to have reached 2,500 secondary school students and were aimed at giving students insights into STEM careers so they know more about what opportunities are out there and also have any stereotypes challenged they might hold about what kind of people work in STEM.

Action 10: Maintain the level of awards under the IRC Employment Based Programme to provide opportunities for MSc and PhD students to undertake a 'co-educational' experience in research and skills development while employed and embedded in a company or public organisation.

Q2 Measure: Review process complete and funding decisions made. (Irish Research Council)

Update: Complete

The assessment process is now complete and 36 awards were made by the Council to PhD and MSc students. This compares with 43 in 2014. Work is ongoing to reach out to new enterprises and organisations, particularly SMEs, who would benefit greatly from participation in the Employment Based Programme (EBP) and in doing so provide further employment opportunities for talented researchers. It is hoped that this outreach and relationship-building will support a return to 2014 EBP levels upon completion of the next call for the programme.

Action 11: Continue to implement the pilot phase of the Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice to provide graduates with opportunities to develop cross disciplinary skills in STEM based sectors with enhanced engagement by employers to progress graduates to employment.

Q2 Measure: Monitor inputs, outputs and outcomes from the pilot phase. (HEA, HEIs and DSP American Chamber of Commerce and Employers)

Update: Complete

The evaluation of the pilot phase of the Post Graduate Programme of Professional Practice is complete, and the findings will feed in to the development of the National Skills Strategy (NSS), which is ongoing. A public consultation paper on the development of the NSS is being drafted and it is planned to issue this in September.

Action 12: Increase the pool of researchers strongly positioned to take up employment in industry in Ireland.

Q2 Measure: Review process complete for the 2014 SFI Industry Fellowship programme and funding decisions made. (SFI)

Update: Complete

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funded 21 projects under the December deadline of the 2014 Industry Fellowship Programme at a cost of €1.5 million. The Industry Fellowship Programme aims to stimulate excellence through knowledge transfer and training, thereby building critical mass in areas of strategic importance for Ireland and enabling economic and societal challenges to be tackled.

Q2 Measure: The 2015 Industry Fellowship Programme launched. (SFI)

Update: Complete

Science Foundation Ireland launched the Industry Fellowship Programme in March of this year to develop and support academic partnerships with industry. The programme has two rounds of assessment this year. The purpose of the Industry Fellowship programme is to facilitate the bi-directional movement of academic and industry researchers. The Programme aims to stimulate excellence through knowledge transfer and training, thereby building critical mass in areas of strategic importance for Ireland and enabling economic and societal challenges to be tackled. The fellowships will enable access for researchers to new technology pathways and standards and will facilitate training in the use of specialist research infrastructure. There are two deadlines for the 2015 Industry Fellowship Programme; June 2015 and December 2015.

Action 13: Roll out the 2015 call for proposals for Springboard courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by EGFSN including ICT; the medtech and biotech sectors; skills for enterprise to trade internationally; international financial services (IFS); entrepreneurship and business startup.

Q2 Measure: Outcome of competitive process determined by expert panel, in accordance with process and overseen by independent process auditor. (HEA)

Update: Complete

A competitive Call for Springboard+ 2015, to include the ICT skills conversion programme, issued in January. All courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are in areas of identified skills needs and were selected by an independent panel with industry and educational expertise. Courses approved for funding in 2015 will focus on areas such as ICT, high-end manufacturing, international financial services, skills to trade internationally and entrepreneurial/business start-up skills.

Q2 Measure: Launch of Springboard 2015. (HEA, HEIs, Employers)

Update: Complete

Springboard+ 2015, which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme was launched on 7 May providing for a total of 9,000 free part-time and full-time higher education re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities for jobseekers. 285 courses will be delivered in 42 colleges throughout Ireland.

Action 14: Publish an integrated 2015 Further Education and Training (FET) Services Plan that includes provision to meet the FET skills needs identified in various published EGFSN reports and sectoral studies.

Q2 Measure: The 2015 FET Services Plan to be published. (SOLAS)

Update: Complete

The 2015 Further Education and Training (FET) Services Plan was published on 8 July 2015, and is available at: <http://solas.ie/FETServicesPlan.aspx>

Action 16: Develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy.

Q2 Measure: Evaluation of proposals by Apprenticeship Council and recommendation on a

number of pilot proposals to Minister. (SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council)

Update: Complete

The evaluation of apprenticeship proposals is now complete and the Apprenticeship Council has issued a report to the Minister for Education and Skills; the Report is available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Apprenticeship-Council-Report-on-New-Apprenticeship-Programme-Proposals.pdf>

Action 17: Implement the provision of places under the second iteration of Momentum.

Q2 Measure: Recruit the participants. (DES/Provider)

Update: Complete

A second round of Momentum was officially launched in November 2014. Programmes are currently providing up to 5,200 additional training and education places to the Long-Term Unemployed. It is expected that a further 800 places will be made available over the coming months.

Action 22: Progress curricular change in the context of the phasing in of the Junior Cycle reform with the new Specification for English being implemented from September 2014.

Q2 Measure: Finalisation of Junior Cycle Irish and Business specifications/Publication of new Junior Cycle Irish and Business specifications with a view to implementation in schools in September 2016. (DES)

Update: Delayed

Consultation on specification for Business was completed and is scheduled for consideration by the Junior Cycle Board in October 2015. A further consultation event on the Irish specification is scheduled for October 2015. In view of the outcome of the recent ballot of Teacher Unions further engagement with education stakeholders will take place in order to progress junior cycle reform.

Action 25: Continue implementation of the British-Irish Visa Scheme allowing for travel to and around the Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK, for tourism and business purposes, on a single visa.

Q2 Measure: Agree with the UK the rollout schedule to extend the scheme to other countries (Phase 2) and commence rollout of Phase 2. (D/Justice and Equality, (INIS))

Update: Delayed

An evaluation of the Scheme was scheduled to take place following three months of operation in China and India. The rollout to India was delayed until February 2015 due to the need to resolve some technical issues with the deployment to China. Work is continuing on resolving early life technical and other issues in both China and India. The evaluation will take place over the coming months. Regular liaison continues with the UK. Following satisfactory resolution of the technical issues further deployment will be agreed with the UK in tandem with the evaluation, thereby keeping the overall project on track.

Action 26: Continue to ensure employers are able to secure Employment Permits for the critical skills they need, including ICT skills.

Q2 Measure: Review progress on a quarterly basis. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The employment permits system is closely aligned with the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) and critical skills lists are reviewed twice each year and updated as required. This ensures that the critical skills list, on which the grant of Critical Skills Employment permits is based, remains relevant to the needs of enterprise as the economy continues to recover.

The Employment Permits Section has completed the first review of the critical skills list for 2015, which involved broad-based consultation with stakeholders. The review has been submitted to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for approval.

The total number of permits issued to end Q1 2015 (1,323) shows an increase over the same quarter in 2014 (1,104) which equates to a 20% increase in the numbers of permits issued. While the trend in employer demand for ICT permits continues to show a strong upward trajectory, for technical/process reasons the number of ICT permits issued during Q1 shows a slight decrease (444 compared to 472 for Q1 2014, or 6%). By end, May, 927 ICT permits had issued. This is 30% ahead of the same period in 2014 (712).

Action 32: Continue to roll out the Housing Assistance Payment.

Q2 Measure: Issue guidance to local authorities on the application of HAP. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

General updates on Housing Assistant Payment (HAP) are provided to Local Authorities (LAs) through a number of forums, including making regularly updated HAP guidance documents and FAQs available on the Housing Agency website: <http://www.housing.ie/>. Detailed

guidance and hands-on training is provided to each LA as HAP becomes operational in their area.

2.2 Delivering Regional Potential

Action 34: Develop and publish a suite of Regional Enterprise Strategies, based on consultation with key stakeholders at regional level and on the analysis of the strengths of each region, commencing with the publication of strategies for the Midlands and South East regions. The strategies will include a series of specific actions and targets for delivery by a range of public bodies to support enterprise growth and job creation in the regions and will complement the statutory Plans to be developed as part of Local Government reform

Q2 Measure: Agree key actions and targets for inclusion in the South-East strategy. (DJEI, EI, IDA, other relevant Departments and public bodies)

Update: Complete

The Public Bodies Group, which is responsible for formulating the South-East Strategy, was convened twice since the publication of the Q1 Report and agreed the Actions which would ultimately form the basis of the South-East Action Plan for Jobs.

Q2 Measure: Publish Enterprise Strategy for the South East region. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The South East Action Plan for Jobs, along with similar Plans for the Mid West and West regions are due for publication in September 2015. The Midlands and South West APJs were launched in June and July 2015 respectively.

Action 37: Develop a tourism brand proposition and identity for the South, East and Midlands of Ireland, that will help in scaling up the asset base and achieve international “stand-out” for the region based on its comparative advantage in built and cultural heritage.

Q2 Measure: Work with clusters of circa 200 tourism businesses, mostly in the accommodation sector, to improve their ability to generate international sales. (Fáilte Ireland)

Update: Complete

Ireland’s Ancient East is the new brand proposition and a brand identity has been created as well as a brand narrative and tool kit. The brand was launched to 270 international buyers at Meitheal, and feedback was very positive. Meitheal, now in its fortieth year, is the largest travel trade workshop that takes place for the Irish tourism industry. It provides Irish

tourism product providers with the opportunity to meet with overseas tour operators and group organisers, with a view to negotiating business for the future.

Fáilte Ireland have also run brand socialisation workshops across Ireland's Ancient East and have shared the brand with over 400 industry/stakeholders from across the 17 counties that make up Ireland's Ancient East. The engagement was very positive and there is an excitement and willingness to work together to leverage this great opportunity. These workshops started the process of developing world class tourism experiences and this work will continue across 2015 and into 2016.

Action 42: Regional Assemblies to commence preparation of Regional Spatial Economic Strategies

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DECLG)

Update: Delayed

Work on the commencement of the Regional Spatial Economic Strategies (RSES) has been delayed until the fourth quarter of 2015 as the necessary organisational and co-ordination arrangements are put in place to facilitate their preparation.

Action 48: Each Local Authority will make an integrated Plan, for the promotion of economic development and local and community development in its area

Q2 Measure: Local authorities and Local Community Development Committees to have commenced public consultation on integrated Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) (DECLG, LCDCs)

Update: Complete

Consultations by Local Authorities and Local Community Development Committees with the public and organisations in the public, business and community and voluntary sectors on drawing up a six year Local Economic and Community Plan for their area are well underway.

Action 50: Continue to review and progress recommendations of the CEDRA report to promote rural development, including through the piloting of Rural Economic Development Zones.

Q2 Measure: Develop an action plan for the implementation of a Rural Economic Development Zones pilot Initiative. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The review of the CEDRA report recommendations is continuing to take place through the Inter-Departmental Group and the CEDRA Expert Advisory Group meetings, where progress is being evaluated. The Rural Economic Development Zones Pilot Scheme was launched on 2 June, and an Information Seminar was held on 29 June. The closing date for applications has been extended to 5 September, and the establishment of the Evaluation Committee is currently underway.

2.6 Intellectual Property in Enterprise

Action 73: Deliver Industry-Research Performing Organisation Collaboration Agreements including a Practical Guide, an industry Decision Tree and suite of Model Collaboration Agreements.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI/KTI)

Update: Delayed

This action will be delivered in Q4. The delay is due to a pressure on Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) resources and a need to undertake a wide consultation with stakeholders including Higher Education Institutes (HEI) legal counsel. A panel of Knowledge Transfer experts has been established to contribute to the consultation and to assist with the associated project management. Delivery of this action will support the revision of the national Intellectual Property Protocol which is also currently underway. The revised Protocol will be brought to Government before the end of 2015 for approval to publish.

Action 78: Introduce a “Knowledge Development Box” income-based tax regime for intangible assets in 2015 following completion of a public consultation on this issue during 2015.

Q2 Measure: Complete public consultation process. (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

In order to gather views from as broad a spectrum as possible on what the Knowledge Development Box may entail, a public consultation was launched in January and closed in April. This consultation went well, with active engagement from industry; nearly 40 written submissions were received and nearly 100 companies met. This also included engagement with other Government agencies and Departments, including the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland. These have all fed into the legislation for the Knowledge Development Box which will be published with the Finance Bill in October

2015.

3. Progressing Disruptive Reforms from 2013 & 2014 Action Plans

3.1 Manufacturing Step Change

Action 81: As part of the National Talent Drive Disruptive reform (see above), develop new Apprenticeships in response to proposals from key sectors of the economy.

Q2 Measure: Evaluation of proposals by Apprenticeship Council and recommendation on a number of pilot proposals to Minister. (SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council)

Update: Complete

The evaluation of apprenticeship proposals is now complete and the Apprenticeship Council has issued a report to the Minister for Education and Skills; the Report is available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Apprenticeship-Council-Report-on-New-Apprenticeship-Programme-Proposals.pdf>

Action 83: EI will launch a Manufacturing Capital Equipment Grant providing up to €250,000 by way of grants to eligible SMEs for the purchase of capital equipment (subject to value for money criteria), that will boost productivity and lead to increased employment.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Context: Manufacturing Step Change Disruptive Reform

Manufacturing has contributed significantly to Ireland's economic development and is a crucial element of Ireland's economic future. The manufacturing sector supports a significant number of jobs both directly and indirectly in the economy. It is an important source of jobs for people at all skills level and it plays a key role in driving innovation and technological advance. Ireland has built up particular strengths in a range of sectors including biopharma, pharma, medical technologies, food, engineering and electronics.

As a small open economy, Ireland is impacted by global economic cycles and shifts in industries; factors over which we have no control. Government policy in areas such as cost competitiveness, the fiscal environment, education and skills, research, development and innovation and physical infrastructure can however play a crucial role in providing a

supportive business environment that will enable firms to increase their competitiveness, productivity performance and ability to innovate. It is evident that manufacturing globally is changing at an unprecedented pace in terms of business practices. Such changes have implications for all firms, regardless of scale. At the level of the firm, a National Step Change in manufacturing can help place Ireland's manufacturing sector to the forefront internationally and improve competitiveness, productivity and innovation; improve connections to the customer and expansions into new markets; and engage in new ways of working.

The ambition for manufacturing in Ireland is that by 2020, Ireland will be internationally renowned as a place that excels in manufacturing and where manufacturing accounts for a significant share of economic activity.

The **National Step Change Disruptive Reform** envisages delivering a suite of supports that are tailored to the specific needs of a firm, depending on its stage of development and strategic intent, and regardless of ownership and/or scale. In terms of assisting indigenous manufacturing companies to grow to scale, Enterprise Ireland (EI) will work intensively with a cohort of its client companies that are positioned for significant growth. Enterprise Ireland is also focused on ensuring the creation of manufacturing start-ups which will be the medium sized companies of the future. Building on the previous Action Plans for Jobs (2013 – 2014) the 2015 APJ sets out six Actions with eight associated deliverables. Action 83 is one of these key Actions.

Update: EI launched its pilot Capital Investment Initiative Fund of €10 million in Q1 2015. The objective of this pilot initiative is to address the gap in supporting capital investment and in so doing boost productivity and lead to increased employment. To date there has been 1 Capital Investment Initiative Funding Committee meeting, on 31 March, at which 5 proposals were approved under the new scheme. There is a strong pipeline of projects for future committees which will meet bi-monthly.

3.6 Local Enterprise Offices

Action 99: Continue to develop and promote the Local Enterprise Offices as the first-stop-shop providing advice and supports to entrepreneurs and new business in the micro and small sector.

Q2 Measure: Strengthen customer service by conducting a customer service survey. (EI, LEOs)

Update: Complete

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) Client Survey launched in May was designed to identify the needs and perspectives of LEO clients as they relate to the provision of support services.

This online survey will target some 7,000 LEO clients from the 31 different LEOs across Ireland spanning a number of sectors and regions. The findings of this survey will be used to strengthen customer service across the LEO network and to further develop and promote the LEOs as the first-stop-shop providing advice and supports to entrepreneurs and new business in the micro and small sector.

Following receipt of the survey's preliminary findings each LEO was provided with its individual score. Additional detailed briefing focusing on the Client Engagement Model will be provided to each LEO in Q4. These briefings will take on board the survey recommendations with a view to improving the client satisfaction experience and satisfaction score.

Update: The LEO Client Survey launched in May, was designed to identify the needs and perspectives of LEO clients as they relate to the provision of support services. This online survey will target some 7,000 LEO clients from the 31 LEOs across Ireland spanning a number of sectors and regions. The findings of this survey will be used to strengthen customer service across the network of LEOs and to further develop and promote the LEOs as the first-stop-shop providing advice and supports to entrepreneurs and new business in the micro and small sector. Preliminary findings from this survey were ascertained by the end of June and presented to the Board of Enterprise Ireland at its July Meeting.

Q2 Measure: Evaluate the quantity and quality of staffing resources in the LEOs with a view to ensuring customer service and delivery of the targets in the 2015 local enterprise development plans. (EI, LAs, DJEI)

Update: Complete

A survey evaluating the quantity of staffing resources in the LEOs has been completed. Pursuant to this, further evaluation will take place to look at other issues such as quality etc. This will be discussed between the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the County & City Management Agency (CCMA), Enterprise Ireland, and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Arising from these discussions, actions may be formulated to address any staffing resource issues identified.

Q2 Measure: Fill existing vacancies at Head of LEO in a number of locations. (DECLG, LAs, EI)

Update: Complete

In relation to the 4 vacancies covered by the recent competition, run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS), for Heads of Enterprise in the Local Enterprise Offices, 2 have taken up duty and the remaining 2 will take up duty in September, due to the notice requirements with their current employers.

Q2 Measure: Create a new element to the current LEO funding model to enable/encourage LEOs to collaborate to strengthen the entrepreneurship and enterprise environment at

local/regional level e.g. by facilitating hubs, developing networks or other initiatives. (EI, DJEI)

Update: Complete

On 15 May, the Taoiseach, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Minister of State for Business and Employment launched the Government's new €10 million initiative to support more start-up businesses in every county of the country.

Under this initiative, the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and other public, private and community organisations that support job creation are being invited to bid for funding to create new collaborative projects that will unleash the jobs potential in their locality. The initiative comprises two funds, which closed on 10 July 2015.

The first, a €5 million LEO competitive fund, covering the period 2015-2017, is open to groups of LEOs who come together to bid for funding for projects to support job creation initiatives in their areas. The funding will be awarded on a competitive basis to the projects with the greatest capacity to create jobs.

The second, a €5 million Community Enterprise Initiatives competitive fund, is open to groups and organisations in every county who come together with ideas for projects to create jobs. The fund will be awarded on a competitive basis to the projects with the greatest capacity to create jobs.

The funds are an opportunity for local groups to come up with their own innovative solutions that will boost job creation locally.

4. Finance for Growth

4.1 Effective Implementation to Maximise Benefits to SMEs

Action 103: The Department of Finance and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will roll-out an integrated export finance strategy in 2015 with financing products and platforms being developed by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland.

Q2 Measure: Agree Project Plan. (D/Finance, DJEI, SBCI, ISIF, EI)

Update: Complete

In developing a project plan, both SMEs and market participants have been surveyed. The Export Finance User Survey received 659 responses, and the survey results aided the

assessment of the extent of and nature of funding gaps/market failure in the provision of Export Credit in Ireland including SME awareness. A project plan has now been agreed and, recently, the High-Level Steering Group approved two priority product offerings that appear to suit the needs of Irish exporters, and which can be delivered in the near term. A proposed method to establish a platform to help deliver the strategy was also considered and is being refined.

Action 104: Collate and monitor data, including Central Bank data, on lending to SMEs from both bank and non-bank sources, including the full range of state sponsored initiatives and report on this issue to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs twice yearly.

Q2 Measure: Agree metrics for state sponsored schemes. (SME State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

The SME State Bodies Group finalised a metrics document containing recent data pertaining to State-sponsored schemes which was submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs on SME lending.

Q2 Measure: Report to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs (CCERJ) on SME lending. (SME State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

A report was submitted for consideration to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs of 7 July 2015, containing data pertaining to SME lending from both bank and non-bank sources.

Action 105: Detailed data from AIB and Bank of Ireland will be collated and examined, on a monthly basis ensuring a more informed understanding of the SME bank lending environment, with a particular focus on new lending.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Finance, Credit Review Office)

Update: Complete

Latest figures from AIB and Bank of Ireland have been received and examined.

Action 106: Following the passing of the appropriate primary legislation implement and promote the new Credit Guarantee Scheme.

Q2 Measure: New Scheme Implemented. (DJEI, Credit Review Office)

Update: Delayed

Government approved the revision of the Credit Guarantee Act 2012 in June 2014. In broad terms these amendments will increase the level of the State guarantee, and see additional providers of finance included as well as different Small and Medium Enterprise finance products.

The Bill was on the A list of the Government's 2014 Autumn legislation programme and the 2015 Spring legislation programme. The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) has been working with the Office of the Attorney General for over a year on drafting the Bill. This work has proven to be very complicated and a range of technical and legal issues have been raised by the Office of the Attorney General since the original Government decision, which have meant progress has been much slower than anticipated in having the amended legislation enacted. Following this complex work the Minister received permission to publish the Bill at the Government meeting of 22 July 2015. The Bill was published on the 16th September, 2015 and it is hoped to have the Bill enacted as early as possible in the new Oireachtas term, with a view to making a new Scheme thereafter. The Q2 measure has therefore been delayed until such time as the amendment Bill is enacted.

As an interim measure a new Credit Guarantee Scheme was made in 2015 which allows guarantees for refinancing loans where an SME's bank has exited or is exiting the Irish market. This new Scheme also increases the maximum length of guarantees from 3 to 7 years.

Action 107: Implement the recommendations of the review of the MicroEnterprise Loan Fund Scheme.

Q2 Measure: Implement recommendations as appropriate. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A number of changes were recommended as a result of the Review of Microfinance Ireland which was published by the Minister for Business and Employment on 1 April 2015.

The recommended changes contained in the review include:

- A new Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme, which will remove the requirement to be refused bank credit;
- An automatic bank referral system for all bank declines of microenterprise loans; and
- A renewed communications and marketing strategy.

The new Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme is being introduced through the introduction of a new Statutory Instrument which will remove the requirement to have a bank refusal before seeking funding from Microfinance Ireland. The Statutory Instrument is currently awaiting Ministerial signature and will then be laid before the Oireachtas.

Microfinance Ireland is currently in one-to-one engagement with the 3 main banks on referral systems and processes. There is also engagement with the Banking Payments Federation of Ireland (BPFI) on industry wide changes in application forms and processes.

Microfinance Ireland has recently supplied the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with the revised Communications and Marketing Strategy in line with the review deadline of end-Q2 2015. Microfinance Ireland has also recently requested a meeting with Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network to develop a local marketing plan pilot scheme and implement other measures which involve LEOs and Enterprise Ireland. Microfinance Ireland is also in discussion with the GAA on possible promotional campaigns.

Microfinance Ireland has also initiated credit policy review measures to ensure ongoing balance of risky versus sustainable lending in line with the MFI Review and have submitted an application under EU/EASI guarantee scheme which will cover an element of MFI's bad debts, and await the outcome of this application which has a potential value of some €3m to MFI. MFI has also been approved for a technical assistance funding package by the European Investment Fund which will bring training and systems development opportunities aimed at improving both MFI's lending and collections practices and credit policies.

Current position: In relation to Microfinance Ireland, a new Scheme has been signed off by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Finance and Business and Employment. The Statutory Instrument dealing with this new Scheme was laid before the Oireachtas on 24 September 2015.

Action 108: Survey the SME demand for credit.

Q2 Measure: Undertake two further SME Credit and Demand Surveys (Q2 and Q4). (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

An SME Credit Demand Survey was published on the Department of Finance's website in May; available at:

<http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Dept%20of%20Finance%20SME%20Credit%20Demand%20Survey%20Report%20-%20Oct%202014-Mar%202015%20final.pdf>

4.4 The LEOs Network – Enterprise Capacity Building

Action 115: Explore how best to support SMEs in building their financial capabilities.

Q2 Measure: Undertake Review of Finance4Growth Initiative. (D/Education and Skills, DJEI)

Update: Complete

A review of the initiative has been completed, and options for providing on-going access to programme material to SMEs are being finalised.

4.5 Diversify the Range of Financing Options for SMEs

Action 117: The ISIF to explore the feasibility of introducing a new SME Equity/Mezzanine Fund to provide capital to SMEs.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (ISIF)

Update: Complete

The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), as controller and manager of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), continues to work on commercial investment opportunities in the SME sector that will meet the strategic objectives and the investment strategy of the ISIF. The ISIF unit continues to engage with the market to examine how it can provide support to the SME sector. Evidence of a lack of supply of credit is most apparent in the market for loans below €10 million, and particularly below €2 million. The ISIF Unit is considering avenues to support this sector which do not compete with initiatives being supported by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), which supports senior debt funding for loans of less than €5 million.

ISIF is considering options to support lending in amounts of less than €10 million to SMEs through non-bank platforms. In addition, ISIF is considering how it can best support lending through peer-to-peer and alternative lending platforms. While the Q2 action is complete, ISIF will continue to engage with parties to see if an initiative could be supported that would support mezzanine lending to SMEs.

Action 118: Enterprise Ireland to work with the European Investment Fund to progress the establishment of a European Angel Fund in Ireland.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Context: Diversifying the Range of Financing Options for SMEs is one of the overarching objectives of the 2015 Action Plan for Jobs. As the economy moves into a new phase of growth there is now an opportunity to develop a policy agenda that addresses both cyclical and structural constraints in the financing of the SME sector and the continuing issue of the need for prompt payments. This will require a clear focus on how best to maximise the benefits to SMEs of the evolving financial landscape in Ireland and the adoption of actions that contribute to developing a more diversified and competitive financial system, capable of financing the growth potential of Irish SMEs. To build on the progress to date and to further support the financing of growth within the SME Sector 2015 will see the implementation of a series of actions aimed to deepen our engagement with international funding institutions. There are five actions set out in the 2015 APJ with six deliverables focused on diversifying the range of financing options for SMEs.

Actions 118 and 120 are two of these actions.

Update: Enterprise Ireland (EI) has been working closely with the European Investment Fund to progress the establishment of a European Angel Fund in Ireland. Significant progress has been made in relation to this, specifically in relation to the preparation of legal agreements governing the Fund. As part of the process, the European Angel Fund team came to Dublin in May and worked with EI on the Fund's implementation plan. However, due to a delay in terms of regulatory approval in Luxembourg the full operation launch of the European Angel Fund will take place in Q3.

Action 119: The Department of Finance to work with the relevant stakeholders in raising awareness of the EII Scheme and promoting it as vehicle for channelling investment to grow enterprises and support employment.

Q2 Measure: Implement agreed set of actions to both raise awareness of and promote the EII Scheme as vehicle for investing in growth and employment. (D/Finance, DJEI, State Bodies Group)

Update: Complete

The EII Scheme continues to be promoted through the Supporting SMEs Online Tool* supported by the work of the State Bodies Group Communications Team, and at all awareness-raising events attended by the Jobs Ambassadors.

*The Supporting SMEs online tool is available at:

<http://www.supportingsmes.ie/businessdetails.aspx>

Action 120: Issue a competitive second call for expressions of interest under the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Update: The Government, through Enterprise Ireland (EI), has made €175 million available as part of the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme (2013 – 2018) to stimulate job creation and support the funding requirements of young innovative Irish companies. This Scheme will allow the State to commit funding, through a number of competitive calls, to Venture Capital funds that best meet the Scheme objectives.

The overall vision of the scheme (2013-2018) is to increase the availability of risk capital for SMEs to support economic growth through the continued development of the Seed and Venture Capital Sector in Ireland to achieve a more robust, commercially viable and sustainable sector. Under the first call of the new Scheme, EI committed €99.5 million to commercially-focused Venture Capital funds in the wider Technology and Life Sciences sectors. A second call was announced by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on 18 June seeking expressions of interest from Seed-stage commercially-focused Venture Capital funds. Under the second call up to €65 million is being made available for co-investment in seed funds.

4.7 Trade Credit and Prompt Payments

Action 124: Establish a Prompt Payment Forum to support the delivery of the PPC and examine further initiatives to sustain a responsible payment culture in Ireland.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Given the importance the Government attaches to addressing the culture of late payments in Ireland and in an effort to further improve cash-flow between businesses, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) is continually looking at ways to develop and promote improved payment practices in Ireland.

One initiative recently introduced is the Prompt Payment Code of Conduct (PPC). The PPC is a joint initiative between DJEI, the business representative bodies in Ireland, the Banking and Payments Federation Ireland (BPF) and the Irish Institute of Credit Management (IICM).

The three main focuses of the PPC are:

- To encourage and promote best practice between businesses and their supplier;

- To improve cash flow between businesses; and
- To drive a change in payment culture.

Businesses who wish to sign up to the PPC can do so through an online portal www.promptpayment.ie, which was launched by the Minister for Business and Employment on 31 March, 2015.

Draft terms of reference for a Prompt Payments Forum, to support the delivery of the PPC, and to also examine further initiatives to sustain a responsible payment culture in Ireland, have been agreed by the Minister. Membership of the Forum, which will be chaired by the Minister, is currently being finalised.

5. Increasing Activation of the Unemployed

Action 127: Continue the development and reform of the State's public employment services to help ensure that the number of people on the Live Register is reduced as the economy recovers and that the labour market responds flexibly and efficiently to employment growth.

Q2 Measure: Promote employment supports such as FIS and incentivise the take-up of opportunities by unemployed jobseekers, for example through the introduction of a Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD), under Strand 4 of Pathways to Work. (DSP, ETBs)

Update: Complete

A poster campaign to increase jobseeker awareness of the Family Income Supplement (FIS) within Intreo offices has been developed and designed. FIS availability is being promoted as part of General Engagement and 1-to-1 sessions. An awareness campaign about FIS has been implemented in 2 Regions/Divisions and is in the process of being rolled out to other Regions/Divisions.

The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) went live on 7 May 2015. It can be paid concurrently with FIS and is not taken into account when assessing a family's FIS entitlement.

Q2 Measure: Increase the capacity of the Public Employment Service by contracting additional resources, under JobPath to provide services to people who are long term unemployed as part of Strand 2 of Pathways to Work. (DSP)

Update: Complete

JoPath contracts were signed with two companies, Seetec and Turas Nua on 5 June 2015, to provide services to people who are long term unemployed. The first JobPath referrals from the Department of Social Protection took place in mid-July, and the first cases were provided to the two JobPath companies on 13 July.

Action 128: Implement the actions agreed under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities

Q2 Measure: Comprehensive Employment Strategy finalised. (D/Justice)

Update: Complete

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities was approved by Government on 23 June and will be published shortly.

Action 129: Participate actively in the Department of Social Protection's Work Placement Programme and the National Internship Scheme

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DOD)

Update: Complete

The Defence Organisation continues to actively participate in this programme. At 18 August 2015 there were 11 internships filled, 2 places re-advertised and a further 11 in the process of being filled. Of these, 2 were awaiting security clearance and 9 were at interview stage.

Action 131: Support the voluntary youth work sector in accessing the proposed new Youth Programme and the Youth Entrepreneurship Fund by facilitating links between local youth services and the Local Enterprise Offices/Microfinance Ireland.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DOD)

Update: Delayed

This action has been incorporated into the new National Youth Strategy and will be progressed as part of its implementation. The aim of the Strategy is to improve the five national outcomes for the 10 to 24 age cohort. These are that young people are active and healthy, achieving in learning in development, safe and protected from harm, have economic security and opportunity and are connected, respected and contributing to their

world.

One of the objectives of the Strategy is that young people are better able to participate in the labour market through enhanced employability skills and entrepreneurship opportunities. Included in the proposed priorities for progression over 2015 to 2017 is the promotion of youth entrepreneurship initiatives in schools and youth work settings and the facilitation of engagement and interaction between local youth services and the Local Enterprise Offices/Microfinance Ireland and Intreo Centres. The National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020 has been completed and will be launched in early October.

Action 133: Subject to securing the required resources, develop and roll out a Youth Employability Programme in 2015 to support youth work initiatives that increase young peoples' employability, enhance their acquisition of transversal skills and aid their preparedness and progression to employment.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DCYA)

Update: Completed

This action has been incorporated into the new National Youth Strategy, to be published shortly, and will be progressed as part of its implementation. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), in consultation with the youth sector, has developed a 'Youth Employability Initiative'. This builds on existing youth work initiatives that increase the employability of marginalised young people in the 15 to 24 age group. The Department has compiled a mapping report which has gathered information about the innovative youth work activities and programmes underway in the sector that contribute to youth employability objectives.

This new initiative will target the hardest to reach young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (i.e. not in employment, education or training) for intensive support. The Department has secured €600,000 via Dormant Accounts funding for the new initiatives. The overall objective is to increase young people's employability, enhance their acquisition of key competencies and transferable skills and aid their progression to employment, education or training. Dedicated youth workers will be central to the coordination and management of the individual projects at local level. Development of the operational and administrative details of new Initiative is being finalised at present with a view to rolling out the Initiative in Q4 2015.

Action 135: Bring forward new measures in the field of childcare supports and market activation.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DCYA)

Update: Complete

An Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education was established by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in January 2015. Membership of the IDG included representation from across Government, including the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Justice and Equality, Social Protection, Public Expenditure and Reform, Finance and the Department of the Taoiseach.

The IDG was tasked with exploring ways of ensuring that current and future investment delivers more affordable, accessible and high quality early years and school-age care and education. The work of the Group was informed by research and evidence of best practice and by existing policy commitments, including those set out in 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People'. To inform its work, the Group solicited the views of key stakeholders, interested parties and the general public through a number of consultative processes, including:

- An Open Policy Debate on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education Services, which was hosted by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on 31 March 2015;
- A series of bilateral discussions with relevant Government Departments; and
- Two separate online consultation processes - one with the early years sector and one with parents and guardians.

The IDG submitted a series of options for future investment to Government in July, 2015; available at:

<http://dcya.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/earlyyears/20150722IDGReportonEarlyYrsInvestmentReport.pdf>

6. Growing Irish Enterprise and Foreign Direct Investment

Action 141: Progress implementation of the agreed Global Sourcing Strategy across EI and IDA Ireland to increase global sourcing sales by EI client companies by €100m over 3 years and €30m in 2015.

Q2 Measure: EI and IDA will develop a framework for all future joint sector strategies to be completed by Q2 2015 and will progress the programme of joint sectoral strategies in 2015. (EI, IDA)

Update: Complete

A framework has been developed and agreed between Enterprise Ireland (EI) and IDA Ireland to progress the implementation of a new Global Sourcing Strategy across both agencies to increase global sourcing sales by EI client companies by €100 million over 3 years and €30 million in 2015. To further strengthen the implementation of the Global Sourcing Strategy supplementary sectoral strategies have been developed and are being progressed.

Action 155: Include the needs of family-owned businesses more clearly in EI Client Management Development Offering. Establish a family business cohort within the new 'Platform 4 Growth' 2015 programme to share best practice and ensure content addresses the needs of family owned businesses.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Update: As part of the current 'Platform 4 Growth' 2015 programme a cohort of family businesses has been established amongst the participants. This cohort of participants is encouraged to share best practice specific to family business, for example preparing the next generation of managers/succession planning.

Due to the blended delivery methodology of 'Platform 4 Growth' which includes online learning, a larger number of clients can be accommodated on the programme, with the design giving participants the opportunity to develop their own learning journey by selecting to attend modules most relevant to their needs.

Action 165: Engage with public bodies and training agencies to assist in identifying procurement opportunities that are best suited to facilitating social clauses aimed at

reducing long term unemployment and improving access to training opportunities in disadvantaged areas.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DPER)

Update: On Schedule

A questionnaire seeking the views of the SME representative bodies in relation to the use of social clauses in public procurement issued in May. The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) will be issuing guidance to Contracting Authorities in relation to the use of social clauses, and a progress report will be made to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in relation the work of the Inter-Departmental Social Clauses Pilot Group, which was established in June 2014. The guidance is currently being developed and will require input from the Chief State Solicitor's Office before issue. The progress report will be developed in parallel with the guidance.

Action 167: Develop Ireland's national enterprise policy that will set the strategic direction over the next decade to 2025 and framework for action across Government.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

A competitive, sustainable export led enterprise base is core to Ireland's longer term economic and job growth prospects. Enterprises drive productivity and investment and deliver jobs, and through exchequer returns, contribute to the provision of essential public services including infrastructures, healthcare and education. Much has been achieved over the past number of years in restoring fiscal stability and Ireland's international competitiveness and significant progress has been made in terms of job creation.

Nevertheless, global economic uncertainty remains high and Ireland's economy is at an inflection point. Government will set out a longer term ambition for enterprise that will orient our policies toward fostering a better, sustainable future and building a new economy founded on enterprise, innovation and talent. Enterprise Policy 2025 will set out the vision, strategic objectives and a suite of actions that will require a continued coordinated cross government approach to delivery. The development of the policy has been informed by research, analysis and extensive consultation.

Action 170: Finalise a plan for the delivery of priority eHealth projects in the context of the overall eHealth strategy, including the roll-out of the health identifier infrastructure.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Health, HSE/eHealth Ireland)

Update: Complete

The HSE published a Knowledge and Information Strategy in June 2015. The Strategy outlines how integrated information and enabling technology will support innovative, safe and high quality patient care and sets out an indicative timeframe for key deliverables over the next 6 years. The Strategy is available at:

<http://www.ehealthireland.ie/Knowledge-Information-Plan/Knowledge-and-Information-Plan.pdf>

7. Entrepreneurship

7.1 Progressing Entrepreneurship Policy Statement

Action 191: Each LEO will identify how it can facilitate hubs where startups can be established in a supportive network before moving on to accommodate for the next cohort of emerging enterprises. A key approach will be to build on the 100+ Community Enterprise Centres across the country by implementing local protocols to ensure the LEOs are fully integrated into the enterprise development plans of each county.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Context: The Government through its Community Enterprise Centre (CECs) Schemes supported the development of the 100+ CECs across the country. CECs provide infrastructural facilities to support the establishment and expansion of micro enterprises and to develop an enterprise culture within their wider community. The new network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) is building on this by implementing local protocols to ensure the LEOs are fully integrated into the enterprise development plans of each county.

Update: Each of the 31 LEOs has developed its own Local Enterprise Development Plan with targets for key activities aimed at supporting entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job creation. As part of these plans each LEO has identified ways to facilitate start-up hubs which will support and accommodate the next cohort of emerging enterprises. To further support entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and job-creation, each county's enterprise development plan has been duly considered in the recent development of 8 Regional Strategies, ensuring consistency in objectives and approach across all regions.

A key approach in facilitating hubs for start-ups is building on the existing CECs to ensure the LEOs are fully integrated into the enterprise development plans of each county. A protocol

has been developed between the LEOs and the CECs, which placed the client at the heart of the relationship with a view to ensuring they receive the appropriate suite of services and on-the-ground interventions to foster and develop their enterprise. These protocols will be monitored and reviewed by Enterprise Ireland on a regular basis.

Action 194: Support a further cohort of new food entrepreneurs under Food Works 3 and promote market outlets for food start-up companies.

Q2 Measure: Feasibility of ideas has been identified. (Board Bia/ EI/ Teagasc)

Update: Complete

Food Works 3 began on 27 January in the Guinness Enterprise Centre in Dublin. 17 projects completed the feasibility stage of Food Works 3, with feasibility plans submitted on 26 May. After a selection process, 10 projects were chosen to proceed to the final investor and launch ready phase of Food Works (July-Dec 2015).

The feasibility phase involved 7 group workshops, 1 market study visit to London and 8 1-to-1 meetings with appointed business advisors. Additionally each of the 17 projects received consumer research feedback from syndicated focus groups to provide them with early stage consumer views and reactions to their products and positioning.

The investor and launch ready phase of Food Works 3 began on 14 July with a visit to EXPO Milan. This is being followed with retailer meetings over September and October and monthly 1-to-1 business advisor sessions up to the end of the year.

Action 196: Examine the Advisory Group on Small Business (AGSB) recommendations from December 2014 and report back to the Group.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Advisory Group on Small Business' (AGSB) recommendations, which were submitted for consideration under the Action Plan for Jobs 2015, were discussed at meetings on 11 February and 25 March.

At the meetings, the Group's recommendations were examined in terms of their status; a number of recommendations have already been completed or addressed through ancillary actions. A number of other recommendations are being delivered through mechanisms such as the Regional Enterprise Strategies, and the remaining recommendations are currently being considered by the members for inclusion in the 2015 work programme for the Group.

The secretariat has informed members of a revised process for engagement on proposals put forward by the Group for consideration under the Action Plan for Jobs 2016. It is intended that the revised process will entail the Group identifying a number of priority issues that can then be progressed with the relevant actors, and actions to be agreed by the Group in advance of submission to the Action Plan for Jobs process.

Action 197: Continue to promote the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) and Startup Entrepreneur Programme (STEP) to leverage the potential of migrant entrepreneurs and investors.

Q2 Measure: Evaluate take-up of IIP and revise promotional strategy as required. (D/Justice and Equality and others)

Update: Delayed

Frequent meetings between officials and potential investors and promoters continue. It is anticipated that the level of application for the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) in 2015 will show a significant increase over that for 2014. A review document in respect of the IIP is being drafted at present by the Evaluation Committee and is expected to be submitted to the Minister for Justice and Equality in Q3.

Action 198: Expand the international technology sourcing initiative to a new overseas location of high value intellectual property which can serve the basis of new spinout company opportunities in Ireland.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Context: The Government is committed to developing and implementing its strategy to increase the number of entrepreneurs in Ireland and thereby support thousands of extra jobs. The availability of innovative technologies can support and encourage SMEs to become more innovative and can also encourage the creation of new spinout company opportunities in Ireland.

Update: Co-ordinated by Enterprise Ireland (EI), in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and the Chambers in Dublin and Cork, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is an information source on new technologies available internationally. The EEN has opened up and expanded technology sourcing opportunities for SMEs and other interested parties through the EEN database which connects 600 partner organisations in 54 countries to engage with business, technology and research partnering. The Network has a total reach of

25 million SMEs.

EEN services are specifically designed for SMEs but are also available to all businesses, research centres and universities. The EEN in Ireland works with Irish-based companies to help them to take advantage of the opportunities that the European market-place presents. The EEN has a database of over 9,500 technology requests and offers, business cooperation profiles and research partner requests from companies across Europe, Asia, Russia and the US.

This international technology sourcing by the EEN has a strong focus on China and is further assisted by the EU through the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) China Helpdesk, which the EEN in Ireland is closely associated with. Ireland's involvement in this supports the objective of delivering more new Irish spinout company opportunities.

In addition to the ENN, the EI Technology Transfer Team has expert knowledge and significant experience in the field of technology partnering, technology licensing and technology transfer and is well positioned to advise companies on protecting their interests when licensing technologies and managing intellectual property. The Team also provides assistance in identifying licensable technologies for companies, licensing out proprietary technology and best practice for IP licensing. This non-financial support aims to assist SMEs to become more innovative and to encourage the creation of new spinout company opportunities in Ireland.

Action 208: Increase the usage of Equity financing by SMEs.

Q2 Measure: Awareness raising for SURE. (DJEI, EI, LEOs)

Update: Complete

Start Up Refunds for Entrepreneurs (SURE) seeks to encourage individuals to start their own company. Individuals may be entitled to an income tax refund of up to 41% of the capital that they invest in the company. To raise awareness of this support, a dedicated webpage has been created at www.sure.gov.ie which had received over 9,400 visits by mid-August 2015. An explanatory leaflet for SURE was created with an electronic copy circulated among stakeholders and 60,000 hard copies circulated to Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, Revenue, Intreo offices and other stakeholders. The website enables potential entrepreneurs to get an estimate of their SURE refund with the new online calculator. This provides greater clarity on the potential SURE refund which is dependent on the level of the investment and the amount of income tax paid over the six years before the year of investment through the PAYE system. The website also outlines the general criteria of the scheme and provides a link to the revised Revenue Guide.

Action 214: A Working Group will implement reforms in mentoring.

Q2 Measure: Create a simple mentors database to which new types of mentors (volunteer entrepreneurs or serving executives) would be attracted. (DJEI)

Update: Delayed

Context: The issue of providing mentoring on a volunteer basis to start-ups and existing businesses has been raised over the last number of years in various forms. It was looked at in some detail in two reports that were published in 2014 – Report of the Entrepreneurship Forum, ‘Entrepreneurship in Ireland 2014’ and Forfás’ ‘Review of Business Mentoring Services in Ireland 2014’.

Based on these reports a National Mentoring Review Group was established, chaired by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with representatives from Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Skillnets and entrepreneurs in the private sector. The main remit given to the group was to look at implementing, where possible, the recommendations from the Forfás report. The agreed first step in that journey was to focus on the possible creation of a Volunteer Mentors Database or Portal.

Update: A workshop was held in February of this year where a number of existing mentors/entrepreneurs were invited to discuss a proposed model of national volunteer mentoring and to give their feedback. It became clear from this workshop that the idea of just a standalone volunteer mentoring database would not be sufficient to meet the needs of both the mentor and the mentees. It was agreed that a broader action was required to better achieve the objective. Following on from this a report was drafted with recommendations for next steps one of which involved the development and promotion of a pilot regional volunteer mentoring initiative that may develop into a national approach. This approach is broader than just a database with a list of names available and will involve a more structured approach such as single point of contact for mentees, limited brokering and the design of a web presence or portal to facilitate promotion and awareness.

This idea was included under the new Community Enterprise Initiatives (CEI) Fund of €5 million being rolled out by Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. The documentation for the CEI Fund includes references to mentoring and specifically a volunteer mentoring initiative. The closing date for receipt of applications under this fund was in July and over 100 applications were received. An initial evaluation for suitability is being undertaken at present with a full Evaluation Committee Review occurring during September. It is hoped that there will be a successful collaborative volunteer mentoring application'.

8. Competitiveness

8.1 Easier to do Business

Action 219: Roll out the new National Post Code system which will improve logistical efficiency, the accuracy of databases across both the public and private sector and planning and analysis capabilities in both sectors.

Q2 Measure: Launch of National Post Codes. (DCENR)

Update: Complete

The National Post Code system was launched on 13 July. Eircode letters, providing the Eircode for that address along with information on Eircode, have been sent to each address. A lookup facility is in place on the Eircode website which allows users to find the Eircode for any address and/or the address for any Eircode.

Action 237: Review the operation of the Building Control Amendment Regulations 2014 (SI No. 9 of 2014) after 12 months of operation and report with recommendations on matters arising.

Q2 Measure: Review Regulations in consultation with industry. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

Some 171 submissions were received during the public consultation and have been reviewed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG). A report on the key concerns raised during the review has now been completed and was presented to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government for consideration on 30 June 2015. This will ensure that any changes deemed appropriate may be effected as a matter of priority.

8.2 Institutionalising the Drive for Competitiveness

Action 246: Following on from the action in 2014 to institutionalise the drive for competitiveness, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will continue to monitor progress on competitiveness issues identified by the National Competitiveness Council and others and consider further actions to improve Ireland's international competitiveness and consider initiatives to make it easier to do business in Ireland. The Cabinet Committee(s) will be supported by the relevant Senior Officials Group and the APJ Monitoring Committee in this work.

Q2 Measure: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, and other Cabinet Committees as appropriate, will monitor progress on competitiveness issues, and consider actions to improve Ireland's performance. (Department of Taoiseach, All Departments)

Update: Complete

The work programmes of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs (CCERJ) and of other relevant Cabinet Committees reflect the priority that the Government attaches to safeguarding, and building on, Ireland's hard-won competitiveness gains. In July, the CCERJ, through its Senior Officials Group, was updated on the National Competitiveness Council's (NCC) Competitiveness Scorecard, as well as the NCC's Competitiveness Bulletins, in particular the first Bulletin, on Electricity Prices.

The NCC's Competitiveness Scorecard was subsequently considered by Government, prior to its publication at the end of July.

Action 247: Benchmark key business costs and publish a report highlighting areas where Irish enterprise costs are out of line with key competitors.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (NCC)

Update: Complete

The National Competitiveness Council's (NCC) 'Costs of Doing Business In Ireland 2015' report, which was published in April 2015, benchmarks key business costs and focuses on costs that are largely domestically determined such as labour, property, energy, water, waste, communications and business services. The report finds that while costs have fallen significantly since 2009, Ireland remains an expensive location in which to do business, relative to some of our key competitors. While, in relative terms, Irish cost competitiveness is improving, this improvement is largely being driven by external factors beyond the control of domestic policy makers. A number of upward domestic cost pressures are now emerging, however, particularly in relation to labour, property and business services. The report concludes, therefore, that there is a need to refocus efforts on minimising domestically controllable costs to the extent possible.

The Report is available at: http://www.competitiveness.ie/Publications/2015/24022045-Costs_of_Doing_Business_in_Ireland-Publication.pdf

8.6 Decreasing the Cost of Doing Business

Action 262: Review the regulatory framework for airport charges.

Q2 Measure: Engage consultants to undertake review. (DTTAS)

Update: Complete

Following a procurement process which attracted bids from a number of Irish and international consultancy firms, Indecon International Economic Consultants were awarded the contract to conduct the review of the airport charging regulatory regime in Ireland on 28 April 2015. The review commenced immediately and is planned to be completed before the end of 2015. It is intended that, after the completion of the Review, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will finalise and publish its policy on airport charges regulation, and make preparations for any necessary changes to legislation, by mid-2016.

Action 263: In order to ensure legal business models are better informed, better established, better operated, better regulated, better for consumers and enterprise and better for the economy, Government will:

- Resume Report Stage of the Legal Services Bill in the Dáil; and
- Complete legislation for the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority to become operational.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (D/Justice and Equality)

Update: Delayed

The Legal Services Bill completed its Dáil Stages on 22 April 2015 and completed Seanad Second Stage on 13 May 2015. The intention is that the Bill be completed so that the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority can become operational without delay this year.

8.7 Regulating for a Better Future

Action 265: Continue the implementation of actions outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation in the Energy, Communications and Broadcasting sectors.

Q2 Measure: Review of Progress. (D/Taoiseach)

Update: Complete

Work has continued on implementing the Government Policy Statement on Economic

Regulation under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Infrastructure and Climate Change. A cross departmental review was conducted and completed by the Department of the Taoiseach in July 2015. Some key sectoral developments highlighted include:

- The forthcoming publication of the Energy White Paper;
- The development of the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2014;
- The Railway Safety Commission has been assigned responsibility for Economic Regulation of the rail sector; and
- The National Aviation Policy is under development and is close to completion.

The review will be formally brought to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Infrastructure and Climate Change in Q3.

9. Research, Development and Innovation

Action 266: Continue to drive implementation of Research Prioritisation through the Government's Prioritisation Action Group and complete the review of the Independent Panel established to review progress.

Q2 Measure: Devise an integrated approach to findings and recommendations of the international panel, in the context of the concurrent STI policy studies. (DJEI, RPAG)

Update: Complete

The independent panel of national and international experts, convened to assess progress on implementation of Research Prioritisation (RP), has completed its review and has signed off on its final report. The report has been circulated to the 'Prioritisation Action Group' for comment and has been presented to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Minister of State for Skills, Research and Innovation for their consideration.

The panel's findings and recommendations are being considered as part of the ongoing work on the successor to the national strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), to cover the period 2015-2020. 8 pillars have been identified for this work and the report is a key input to Pillar 2: 'Prioritised Approach to Public Research Funding'. In addition, as a number of the findings extend beyond the scope of RP to the broader STI system, they are being considered in the context of the broader development of the strategy.

Action 267: Develop a successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation to cover the period to 2020.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI)

Update: Delayed

An Inter Departmental Committee (IDC) was established at the end of 2014 and has met 8 times up to the end of July 2015 to progress the development of a whole of Government Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy. A written consultation process was held and 80 submissions were received by the closing date of 8 May. In addition 120 stakeholders participated in a consultative forum held on 8 July to elicit views on a number of thematic areas that emerged from written submissions received and IDC discussions. Work developing the Strategy is continuing and it is expected to have the draft Strategy submitted to Government for consideration in Q4.

Action 271: Further scale up of SFI Research Centres through the SFI Spokes Programme. Target one or more funded spokes with at least €1 million industry cash contributions.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (SFI)

Update: Complete

The Spokes programme is a vehicle to enable the addition of new industrial and academic partners and projects to a Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Centre, so allowing the Centre to expand and develop in line with new priorities and opportunities. This will ensure that the Research Centre retains its ability to do cutting edge research and its industrial relevance, and so enhance its sustainability. Several projects have been funded under the Spokes programme in 2015; the total industry cash contributions surpass the target in the headline action. Further information on these funded Spokes projects is currently confidential.

Action 272: Ensure research centres landscape offers the full continuum of support to companies from basic to applied research facilities.

Q2 Measure: Secure approval to implement the relevant recommendations of the study on market focussed element of the research centre landscape in the context of overall STI policy. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The purpose of the study on the market focused element of the research landscape was to determine the extent to which enterprise needs for applied research are being met by the

current mix of research centre's in Ireland and how best that mix of centre's should evolve in the medium term. Recommendations are based on an analysis of current and projections of future supply and enterprise demand and on a review of successful research ecosystems and research centre models internationally.

The study proposes that the market-focused research centre landscape should evolve and introduce a third model on a pilot basis. The market-focussed research centre landscape would therefore comprise three centre models: Research Centres (RCs), strengthened Technology Centres (TCs), and a small number of broad adapted and flexible Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs).

Research centres would continue on their existing trajectory, continuing to build strategic linkages with enterprise with the main focus on oriented basic and short and medium term problem driven research, academic led and industry informed.

The TC's should evolve towards a consolidation into fewer centre's with increased critical mass, focused on industry led research with increasing capacity to deliver a broader range of research functions.

Building on current capacity and expertise, existing centre's could feasibly transition towards a broad adapted flexible RTO model in a pilot initiative to begin to develop research capacity and expertise in the types of research offered to enterprises by RTOs internationally. These pilot RTO centre's would deliver a broad range of research with emphasis on close to market research functions, including technology validation and testing services, pilot lines in the case of manufacturing research, contract research services and consultancy.

The strengthened TC and broad RTO models would be flexible and demand led, with the research offering developed in response to needs of a sector or sectors in the case of a platform technology.

The study recommendations were agreed by Technology Ireland and the Inter Departmental Committee on Science Technology and Innovation at their respective meetings in April and implementation will be through the successor to the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI) currently in development.

Action 274: Conclude evaluation for the business case for the establishment of a Meat Technology Centre, or other research mechanism, to support the sector.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (EI)

Update: Complete

Context: Measures to promote innovation are an important component of Ireland's

research, development and innovation (RD&I) systems. Innovation support makes a critical contribution to enterprise policy, and to the development of a competitive national economy, through the stimulus given by innovation to high value economic activities, and jobs. By encouraging the development of new economic activities RD&I policy measures strengthen Ireland's competitive advantage and build potential new areas of economic activity.

In line with its commitment to generating economic value from publicly-funded research, the Government has provided funding to establish industry-led Technology Centres. These centres are collaborative entities established, and led by industry. They are resourced by highly qualified researchers associated with research institutions who are empowered to undertake market focussed strategic Research & Development for the benefit of industry. This is a joint initiative between Enterprise Ireland (EI) and IDA Ireland allowing Irish companies and multinationals to work together in these centres. There are at present 15 industry-led research centres in the Technology Centres Programme.

Update: EI undertook an evaluation of the business case for the establishment of a Meat Technology Centre to support the sector. As part of this process EI, in collaboration with the beef and sheep meat processing industry, assessed the industry's specific needs to build competitive advantage through investment in research and innovation capability. Following the evaluation process Enterprise Ireland invited the academic community to submit proposals responding to the strategic research agenda produced by industry.

Action 282: Publish and implement a new Marine Research and Innovation 2014-2020 strategy, to include a strong emphasis on research in support of the sector.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DAFM)

Update: Delayed

A revised draft of the Marine Research and Innovation Strategy is progressing with a view to completion by end-Q3 with a public consultation process to follow; the likely publication date is Q4.

Action 283: Strengthen the research links between marine functional foods and marine biotechnology research/industry stakeholders and establish links with the wider food research/industry community including Food for Health Ireland.

Q2 Measure: A major conference with extensive food industry/research involvement will take place. (DAFM)

Update: Complete

The NutraMara Conference & Expo 2015 was held on 29 and 30 June 2015 at the Royal Dublin Society, Dublin. The main theme of the event was 'Harnessing marine bio resources for innovations in the food industry'. It was attended by up to 300 delegates from industry, academia and support agencies across Ireland and beyond. It included a major exhibition of capabilities and technology platforms from an all-island perspective as detailed in the NutraMara Technology Portfolio specially published for the event. This was accompanied by 2 days of scientific plenary sessions presented by the key Principal Investigators of NutraMara and from abroad.

Action 284: Drive the national Horizon 2020 European engagement agenda.

Q2 Measure: Develop targets for the SFI Research Centres for the Horizon 2020 European funding programmes. Monitor and work with the Centres to achieve these targets, utilising the Horizon 2020 National Support Network. (SFI)

Update: Complete

In close consultation with Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) EU Affairs team, the 5 new SFI Research Centres, which started in January 2015, have submitted their Horizon 2020 (H2020) targets. The Research Centres team in SFI continue to monitor the performance of the 7 SFI Research Centres which started in 2013. Progress on the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of the Centres is monitored on a 6 monthly basis when the Research Centres submit a governance report. The 7 SFI Research Centres have submitted 2 governance reports to date where they have reported that they have secured €24 million in funding against a cumulative target of €17.5 million. Furthermore SFI EU Affairs team has drawn up a database to track the H2020 submissions and applications in draft for each of the 12 SFI Research Centres.

Q2 Measure: Launch 2015 Investigators' Programme with H2020 focus to catalyse more H2020 applications from researchers. (SFI)

Update: Complete

SFI launched the SFI Investigators Programme 2015 (IvP 2015) in collaboration with the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, Teagasc, the Geological Survey of Ireland, the Marine Institute, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Irish Research Council. The SFI Investigators Programme supports the development of world-class research capability and human capital in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that demonstrably support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland. A major objective of the IvP 2015 call is to stimulate and catalyse strong participation by Ireland's researchers in the European Commission's H2020 research

framework programme.

Action 285: Develop initiatives to support researcher careers and enhance applications to Horizon 2020.

Q2 Measure: Launch a ‘New Horizons’ funding initiative to enable researchers develop the track record required for success in the ERC and Societal Challenges dimensions of Horizon 2020 - Call for Proposals in Q2. (Irish Research Council)

Update: Complete

There are two strands to the ‘New Horizons’ funding programme:

- Strand 1 allows early stage Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) researchers to develop a track record in basic and exploratory research, and provides the seed funding for researchers interested in applying for a Horizon 2020 European Research Council grant; and
- Strand 2 Interdisciplinary Grant is to encourage AHSS researchers to collaborate with STEM researchers on interdisciplinary projects that address societal challenges under Horizon 2020. It will also help AHSS researchers to form new connections and build on existing national and international networks to develop studies, etc. and help establish consortia on upcoming topics across all Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges.

The deadline for applications was 23 June 2015 and it is anticipated that the awards under the programme will be made in Q3 2015, with projects commencing before the end of 2015.

Action 290: Promote quality PhD framework to relevant Institutions and track implementation of the framework at Institution level.

Q2 Measure: Ongoing promotion of the framework. (HEA, QQI)

Update: Complete

The development of the National Framework for Doctoral Education is complete. It has been endorsed by a range of research funders and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and was formally launched by the Minister of State for Skills, Research and Innovation. Promotion of the Framework in the HEIs is underway through the engagement of the Irish Universities Association (IUA), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) on the Working Group. In addition to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) promotion of the Framework, the IUA, DIT and IOTI will also promote the Framework to their own constituents.

Action 294: Use the standardisation system intelligently to expedite the commercialisation of new technology and to reduce the risk of project failure.

Q2 Measure: Launch Conference 2015 – Standards and Innovation. (NSAI)

Update: Delayed

Following consultation with colleagues involved with the Horizon 2020 programme in Enterprise Ireland, it was considered that a single generic event would not achieve the desired objective because of the differences in interests and needs of the research areas, and that a number of smaller events focussed on key areas of Horizon 2020 such as Health, ICT and Energy would be more effective. This action will now be completed by Q4.

10. Stimulating the Domestic Economy

10.1 Agri-food

Action 297: Work with the industry to implement a new beef genomic scheme.

Q2 Measure: Applications processed by DAFM. Herds analysed by ICBF database. (DAFM)

Update: Complete

All applications have been processed - the processing of the applications includes an analysis of the ICBF database to verify herd data - and approval letters are issuing to successful applicants over August.

Action 300: Attract graduate talent into the sector through the Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship and Strategic Growth Programme to improve export sales.

Q2 Measure: Marketing Fellowship. (Bord Bia)

Update: Complete

20 new Fellows started the Marketing Fellowship programme on 15 June 2015 (21 started in 2014). This programme will last until 10 June 2016.

The Strategic Growth Programme will start again in December 2015, and the current programme has finished with 27 participants.

10.3 Tourism

Action 317: Dublin, as the capital city, is the primary driver of Ireland's tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland will work with industry and agency partners to grow the city's international appeal.

Q2 Measure: Put in place a comprehensive Destination Dublin brand strategy, with international activation. (Fáilte Ireland)

Update: Complete

A new brand identity is being developed via the Grow Dublin Tourism Alliance (GDTA), and will be launched in due course.

10.4 Retail

Action 324: Review the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee report on Town Centre retailing; develop an action plan to advance recommendations which are considered feasible for delivery, and monitor progress in implementing those recommendations through the Retail Consultation Forum.

Q2 Measure: Convene meeting of the Retail Consultation Forum to consider the Joint Oireachtas Committee report on Town Centre Retailing and its recommendations. (Retail Consultation Forum)

Update: Complete

A special meeting of the Retail Consultation Forum was held in West Court Hotel, Drogheda, on 27 April 2015 to consider the report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 'Policy Options to Support Business Growth and Job Creation and Retention in Town and Village Centres', which was published in March.

The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Business and Employment. The Retail Consultation Forum comprises members from retail representative bodies, retail practitioners and relevant Government Departments and agencies. The Oireachtas Committee's report sets out 15 recommendations to support jobs in the retail sector in towns and villages throughout the country. The report is available on the Oireachtas website at:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/Final---Policy-Options-to-Support-Business-Growth-and-Job-Creation-and-Retention-in-Town-and-Village-Centres.pdf>

Q2 Measure: Identify and prioritise recommendations which are considered most feasible for delivery. (Retail Consultation Forum, relevant Govt Departments and agencies)

Update: Complete

At its meeting on 27 April 2015, the Retail Consultation Forum considered each of the 15 recommendations contained in the report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 'Policy Options to Support Business Growth and Job Creation and Retention in Town and Village Centres', which was published in March.

On the basis of the discussion, recommendations in the Oireachtas Committee's report identified by the Forum as holding particular potential for action were:

- developing training for retailers in on-line sales and social media;
- highlighting the increased cost of bank charges and other administrative burdens on retailers;
- exploring how retailers might get improved deals from energy providers; and
- taking a collaborative approach to identifying towns that might be suitable for a pilot approach to Town Teams that would be consistent with the Regional Action Plans for Jobs to be launched by the Government.

Q2 Measure: Develop an action plan to progress the priority recommendations. (DJEI, Retail Consultation Forum)

Update: Complete

Arising from the consideration by the Retail Consultation Forum of the report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the priority areas for action were identified (see above), recorded and presented to a subsequent meeting of the Forum on 15 June 2015. Initial steps to follow-up on these actions were also identified. It was agreed that the Secretariat to the Forum would follow up with other members of the Forum to move these issues forward and that progress would be considered by the Forum at its next meeting in the Autumn.

Action 325: Identify best practice initiatives which are being taken by Local Authorities to support retail at a local level which could serve as exemplars for consideration by other Local Authority areas.

Q2 Measure: Present results of this exercise to the Retail Consultation Forum for information/consideration. (CCMA, DJEI)

Update: Complete

Local Authorities (LAs) across the country are implementing initiatives to support enterprises and job creation in their own administrative areas. Many of these initiatives

have a positive impact on the retail sector and may have the potential to be replicated in other Local Authority areas.

In order to build on the work of individual LAs throughout the country, the County and City Management Association (CCMA) undertook to prepare a report identifying best practice initiatives that have a positive impact on the retail sector, with a view to these practices serving as exemplars for consideration by other LAs.

The CCMA presented a report 'Local Authority Retail Support – Improving Our Cities and Towns' to the Retail Consultation Forum at its meeting on 15 June. The report outlines examples of best practice in areas such as Rates and Financial Incentives, Traffic Management and Parking, Improving the Streetscape and general environment, and supports for Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Festivals and Events.

The full report is available at:

http://lgma.ie/sites/default/files/newsfiles/150615_local_authority_retail_support-web.pdf

Action 329: Roll out the National Post Code system which will facilitate on-line trading and help tackle fraud in this area.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DCENR)

Update: Complete

The National Post Code system was launched on 13 July. Eircode letters, providing the Eircode for that address along with information on Eircode, have been sent to each address. A lookup facility is in place on the Eircode website which allows users to find the Eircode for any address and/or the address for any Eircode.

Action 332: Commence the Living City initiative to support the rejuvenation of eligible areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway and Kilkenny.

Q2 Measure: Launch scheme. (D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The Living City initiative was launched on 5 May 2015. The initiative is a scheme of property tax incentives designed to regenerate both historic buildings and other buildings in specified cities, and it commenced on 5 May 2015 for a five year period.

The initiative focuses on the regeneration of retail and commercial districts, and encouraging people to live in the historic centres of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford. The aim of the Living City initiative is to bring life back into the heart of the

relevant cities by offering tax relief for qualifying expenditure incurred on the refurbishment or conversion of certain buildings where conditions are met. These property tax incentives apply in certain “special regeneration areas” (SRAs). These areas have been designated for the purposes of the scheme by Order of the Minister for Finance.

The maps and boundaries of these SRAs can be found on the websites of the respective local authorities, and at <http://finance.gov.ie/living-city-initiative>.

A document containing frequently asked questions is available from the Revenue Commissioners, at:

<http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/living-city-initiative.html>

Action 334: Carry out further analysis on the Retail Export Scheme, including through consultations with D/Finance, to determine the scope for a significant increase from the ceiling of €2,000 for individual high-value goods that must be presented to customs officials for inspection on departure from the State.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI, in consultation with D/Finance)

Update: Complete

The Retail Export Scheme allows persons who are resident outside the EU, and who make purchases of goods in the EU, to a refund of the Value-Added Tax (VAT) charged on these goods where the goods are exported from the EU by the traveller. A traveller who purchases a good whose value exceeds €2,000 (including VAT) must present that good - along with an export voucher - to Customs for inspection on departure from the State.

A proposal to increase the €2,000 limit was raised by members of the Retail Consultation Forum (RCF) in 2014 and was discussed again at the Forum’s meeting on 15 June 2015. The view of retail bodies is that increasing the ceiling for individual high-value goods that must be presented to Customs officials for inspection would make Ireland more attractive as a destination for consumers that travel to the EU to shop for such goods.

Ultimately, any change to the ceiling would require to be addressed in the Finance Act. It was therefore agreed that the proposal should form part of a pre-Budget submission to the Department of Finance on behalf of the retail members of the RCF.

10.5 Construction and Housing

Action 336: Implement Construction 2020 so as to deliver a dynamic, competitive and sustainable construction sector, capable of contributing to economic growth and job creation, and equipped to meet the future infrastructure needs of the country, including addressing the challenges in housing supply.

Q2 Measure: Work with key stakeholders to encourage and promote home and building owners to carry out sensible thermal efficiency improvements when undertaking major renovation works to their homes or buildings. (DCENR, DECLG, SEAI)

Update: Delayed

This action will be progressed in the coming months as the relevant stakeholders work with the experts appointed to bring technical and economic assistance to the project.

Q2 Measure: Develop proposals to bring to Government on thermal efficiency performance and consequential improvements as part of the Construction Strategy 2020: Establish working group and invite public comment on the feasibility and impact of setting minimum thermal. (DCENR, DECLG, SEAI)

Update: Delayed

This action will be progressed in the coming months as the relevant stakeholders work with the experts appointed to bring technical and economic assistance to the project.

11. New Sources of Growth

11.2 Growing Sales Through Leadership in Design

Action 346: Develop a series of National Design Enterprise and Education initiatives including design hubs, design networks, startup and investment platforms, cross-sectoral collaborations, design challenges and funded design development programmes.

Q2 Measure: Support a range of design-led initiatives across the regions through a match funded design innovation fund exploring, promoting and celebrating Irish design and designers through events and activities. (DCCoI, ID2015)

Update: Complete

Under the Design Innovation Fund 205 projects have been approved for funding; these involve a national and international reach.

Education and Enterprise initiatives include:

Enterprise Initiatives	Education Initiatives
<p>Design Networks – Q1-4</p> <p>Regional and sectoral design networks.</p>	<p>Design Masterclasses – Q1-4</p> <p>A programme of match-funded lectures and masterclasses, developed in partnership with Goethe Institute, Alliance Francaise, British Council and others.</p>
<p>Design Island – Tourism App – Q2</p> <p>An app promoting design-led tourism in partnership with IBM.</p>	<p>Design Research Sandpit – Q2</p> <p>A scheme to stimulate European Research Funding applications involving 30+ participants.</p>
<p>In-corporate – Q2</p> <p>A scheme to assist 50+ micro businesses and SMEs to implement design strategy in their businesses.</p>	<p>Design for Growth – Q3</p> <p>An ‘Education to Enterprise’ toolkit for students and graduates.</p>
<p>Design Start-ups – Q2</p> <p>Start-up platform for creative industry entrepreneurs. 40+ designers/SMEs, chosen in partnership with EI and LEOs to receive training.</p>	<p>designED – Q2-4</p> <p>Design innovation programme and toolkit for 2nd level that seeks to embed design thinking and entrepreneurship into the curriculum.</p>
<p>Design in Ireland – Q3</p> <p>A digital B2B platform offering toolkits, techniques and latest research for applying design.</p>	<p>D-Stem – Q3-4</p> <p>An initiative to introduce design and enterprise into STEM subjects in partnership with SFI.</p>
<p>Enterprise Research – Q2/3</p> <p>Research audit led by DJEI and involving DCCol/ID2015, EI, SFI and IDA, leading to policy document and whitepaper: Nov – Dec.</p>	<p>Exhibition Outreach – Q1-4</p> <p>A programme of first, second and third level education activities and CPD activities supporting the ID2015 Design Hub exhibition programme.</p>
<p>Radical Design – Q4</p> <p>A series of design challenges identified through workshops with communities and stakeholders to be tackled by designers to promote radically innovative design</p>	

solutions.

Designed in Ireland Collection – Q3

A commissioned collection of innovative products designed and made in Ireland to mark Irish Design 2015.

11.5 Innovative / Advanced Manufacturing

Action 355: A Guide/Directory will be prepared (including online) and regularly updated which will outline, in industry and user-friendly terms, Ireland's current offering in the area of manufacturing across areas such as skills programmes, production innovation supports, research facilities, researcher supports, etc. and an easily understood pathway to accessing supports for innovative manufacturers.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (Innovative Manufacturing Group, DJEI)

Update: Complete

Material for this Guide/Directory, involving information covering the multiplicity and complexity of the range of State supports available from various bodies for the Manufacturing sector has been collated. A designer was engaged, who developed a suitable and user-friendly format for the content. The Guide has now been printed and was recently publicly launched. The development of such a Directory will assist relevant manufacturing companies to readily identify and access assistance which may be appropriate to their business. This initiative will overcome a situation where some companies have found it difficult to easily obtain clear information on existing supports, some straightforward, some complex, that are being provided by a range of State Agencies and other bodies.

11.6 Green Economy

Action 359: Develop a strategy and appropriate tools to communicate the performance of Ireland's Green Economy to global audiences more effectively to encourage greater investment in the sector in Ireland.

Q2 Measure: Consult with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate tools to better communicate the progress of the Green Economy in Ireland. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

The Global Green Economy Index 2014 ranked Ireland 11th of 60 countries in terms of its performance in the Green Economy. However, Ireland is ranked only 33rd in terms of how

its performance is perceived internationally. A focus of the Action Plan for Jobs 2015 is to explore how Ireland's performance in the Green Economy can be communicated more effectively in order to encourage greater investment in the sector in Ireland.

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has held initial discussions with some stakeholders on how Ireland's performance in this area can be better communicated. The Department has also spoken with the publishers of the Global Green Economic Index to more fully understand the quantitative and qualitative indicators used to measure how countries perform in the Green Economy. Work will continue on this measure in the second half of 2015.

Action 361: Consult with the Office of Government Procurement and EI on the potential to increase innovation in public procurement which could support cleantech products and services.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DJEI, EI, OGP)

Update: Complete

Initial discussion has taken place between the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), the Office of Government Procurement and Enterprise Ireland (EI), through the High Level Group on Small and Medium Enterprise Access to Public Procurement, on the potential to increase innovation generally in public procurement.

There is a particular opportunity for innovative Cleantech goods and services to contribute to reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, and to improving energy and resource efficiency in both the public and private sectors. For example, the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action Plan (see Action 65) will provide an opportunity to support cleantech products and services.

EI supports a range of companies that have met with international success in the Cleantech sector. The DCU Cleantech Innovation campus is also supporting early-stage companies to develop new innovative products in the Cleantech sector.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and EI, in collaboration with ESB Innovation, have launched Ireland's first Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) competition, to develop a smart technology solution for charging Electric Vehicles in shared-access parking areas.

There is, therefore, clear scope for companies to provide Cleantech solutions to meet the needs of procuring bodies in Ireland and overseas. Discussion between the parties will continue, to explore how best to progress these opportunities in the medium to long term.

11.7 National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training

Action 364: Invest in infrastructural and research project supports (innovation partnerships, spokes etc) to encourage research, development and training in pilot scale (Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 5-9) manufacturing and quality testing of next Generation Therapeutics (e.g. ADC etc).

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (IDA, EI, SFI)

Update: Complete

The Action Plan for Jobs 2015 comes amidst generally improving economic conditions; it looks to the future to ensure that steps are taken now to prepare a path for further progress.

The Government, through IDA, has approved additional funding of the National Institute for Bioprocess Research and Training (NIBRT) to invest in Research and Development on manufacturing technology for biologic drugs including next generation therapeutics over the next five years. The NIBRT is now actively working with a number of universities in Ireland to recruit additional principle investigators in the area of bioprocess research for manufacture of next generation therapeutics. As part of this recruitment process, NIBRT and the universities will seek to ensure they identify candidates who would have a suitably strong track record in research in this area to be eligible for the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), professorship award. The NIBRT has also been successful in recent months in winning a number of innovation partnerships from Enterprise Ireland to collaborate with multinational companies in the area of bioprocess research and characterisation of next generation biologics.

Existing researchers in NIBRT have recently been awarded starting investigator and career development awards from SFI and further applications for competitive funding from SFI and EU sources are in preparation with related centres Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceuticals (SSPC) and Pharmaceutical Manufacturing and Technology Centre (PMTC).

The research activity in the area of bio processing strongly complements the large number of recent biotech drug manufacturing from companies such as Lilly, Regeneron, Amgen, Alexion and BMS. These research programs provide an output of highly educated engineers and scientists with the relevant skills to work in research roles in the growing biotech manufacturing subsector. IDA has also supported two major multinationals to invest in pilot scale process Research and Development on next generation biologic drugs in their Irish manufacturing facilities during Q1 and Q2 of 2015.

Annex 1: Evaluations and reviews to inform future policy development

Action 370: Undertake a qualitative research project to follow-up on key issues identified in the national employer survey.

Q2 Measure: Analysis of key issues arising from the national employer survey. (DES, HEA, SOLAS, QQI)

Update: Complete

Following on from the publication of the outcomes of the national employer survey, a Peer Review Group has been established to analyse the process and the outcomes. The group includes representatives from the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Higher Education Authority (HEA), SOLAS and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

Action 372: Continue to systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of the Springboard initiative to further strengthen the contribution of the programme to supporting job creation and retention, reducing unemployment and meeting the skills needs of emerging industries.

Q2 Measure: Continue to gather the full range of quantitative and qualitative data on Springboard inputs, outputs and outcomes. (HEA)

Update: Complete

The evaluation framework for Springboard provides for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of outputs. In June 2014 the first trend analysis evaluation of Springboard was published, presenting outcomes over a three-year period. A second trend analysis was published in December 2014, and a third was published on 7 July 2015.

The reports are available at: <http://www.springboardcourses.ie/reports>

Action 375: Consider further exemptions for development from the requirement to obtain planning permission.

Q2 Measure: As per headline action. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has considered the

possibility of further exemptions and Regulations to exempt further development from the requirement to apply for permission and it is expected that they will be brought to the Oireachtas in Q4 2015.

Action 376: Consider a streamlined process for modifications of existing planning permissions.

Q2 Measure: Examine whether there is scope to provide a more streamlined process for certain alterations of planning permission. (DECLG)

Update: Complete

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has considered a number of options designed to streamline the planning process for modifications to existing permissions. These modifications will be reflected in legislative amendments in the Planning (No. 2) Bill, which it is intended will be enacted before the end of the year.

Action 380: Develop a Workforce Development Strategy.

Q2 Measure: Develop policy framework for the formulation of Workforce Development Strategy. (SOLAS)

Update: Delayed

This action is delayed to Q3; the delay is due to the fact that the development of a policy framework for the formulation of the FET Workforce Development Strategy must ensure synchronisation with the updating of the National Skills Strategy (NSS). A public consultation paper on the development of the NSS is being drafted and it is planned to issue this in September. The NSS was due to be completed in Q3 but is likely to run into Q4.

Action 382: Develop a strategy to improve the performance of Irish business in relation to securing contracts with International Financial Institutions.

Q2 Measure: Draw up terms of reference for developing a strategy in collaboration with industry stakeholders. (DJEI)

Update: Complete

Context: The Action Plan for Jobs sets out a number of evaluations and reviews to be undertaken in 2015, the results of which will help inform future policy development. One area of interest in this context is the performance of Irish business in relation to securing

contracts with International Financial Institutions. Successful firms will benefit from the opportunity afforded by these contracts which can serve as reference points for competing in overseas markets. In addition they will serve to raise awareness of the capabilities within innovative Irish firms to deliver at international level.

Update: Enterprise Ireland in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Finance and private sector representatives held a “terms of reference” meeting for a research project into the International Financial Institutions. The objective of this project is to inform the relevant parties and support the development of a strategy to improve the performance of Irish business in relation to securing contracts with International Financial Institutions.