



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# CSR Check 2018

Progress Report on Towards Responsible Business  
Ireland's National Plan on  
Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020



Prepared by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

## Foreword by Minister

Today's marketplace rewards businesses that generate positive impact – for their employees, their customers, the community and the environment. The vision of Government is that Ireland will be recognised as a Centre of Excellence for responsible and sustainable business practice, thereby enhancing not only our economy, but our country – its people and environment.

*Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's second National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020*, calls for businesses to understand their impact on the people they employ, the market they trade in, the environment they affect and the community they influence. Consumers are asking the same of business as they increasingly need to know that the choices they make in the marketplace will not produce negative impact – on people or the planet.

Businesses who have listened to their customers are now evolving to meet these demands and understand that a responsible business is a more competitive, sustainable, and successful business. Going beyond compliance and aligning business goals with good CSR practice is a win:win for business, as they generate benefits not only for their own companies and employees, but in the communities and environments in which they operate.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encapsulate the major societal and environmental challenges of our time and require a collective response from the international community. Businesses have a critical role to play, and increasingly I am seeing businesses in Ireland taking the lead and engaging with the SDGs through their own CSR agendas. I want to see more companies – large and small, embracing the challenges set under the SDGs and bringing them to the heart of their business.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the progress achieved by the CSR Stakeholder Forum under the Chairmanship of Catherine Heaney as it marks the first year of implementation on the National CSR Plan with this *CSR Check*.

Government and business must continue to work in partnership to achieve our collective vision of Ireland as a centre of excellence for responsible business and continue to inspire on the global stage.

*Heather Humphreys, T.D.,  
Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation*



'Our Vision for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)  
is that Ireland will be recognised as a Centre of  
Excellence for responsible and sustainable business  
practice through the adoption and implementation  
of best practice in CSR in enterprises and  
organisations.'

*Towards Responsible Business,  
Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017 - 2020*

## Message from the Chairperson

The journey in delivering on the ambitions of *Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's National Plan on CSR 2017-2020* is a year old. The CSR Stakeholder Forum – which was set up to support the Government in this delivery – has been using its influence and sharing best-practice to make CSR a natural part of our nation's business DNA.

In the past year, we have shared our experiences of CSR with other businesses through online and face-to-face interaction; we have examined and documented research and best practice on CSR; and we have worked to support policy alignment, including the National Implementation Plan for Ireland on the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conducting our work, we have come to recognise that a CSR culture is embedded in many businesses, and that the small changes that businesses are making to reduce their energy consumption; support employee wellbeing; and support communities around them, are making a real difference to business sustainability.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, we want to continue our journey in embedding and growing awareness of CSR. We will:

- Grow our online platform and outreach, particularly to the SMEs;
- Engage directly with businesses and forums to discuss CSR and share our best practice;
- Support the delivery of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, through partnership with Government and business;
- Build and grow a community of CSR-active businesses, that are recognised for their achievements in CSR; and
- Build and grow academic research and national understanding of our CSR progress through sharing research and commissioning data, and using this data to inform national policy on CSR.

While the Sustainable Development Goals underpin much of the policy and direction of both national policy and the CSR programmes of businesses, contemporary factors need to be considered as the CSR Forum maps its work for the next year.

As unemployment continues to fall to pre-recession levels, employers face issues of staff retention and recruitment. Thinking and planning outside the box on recruitment can allow employers to discover new pools of willing and able employees: people with disabilities; women who have taken time out to manage domestic care responsibilities; and people who represent the new Irish, are all among the untapped employee reserve that good CSR practice can help to embrace.

The issue of plastic pollution has become a significant challenge, especially as it impacts on marine and wildlife. While the movement is beginning against single-use plastics, the EU's first ever strategy on plastics, launched this year, creates a new imperative which business needs to consider. There are many other issues on the horizon that CSR can illuminate and support, and business in Ireland can show strong leadership.

Ireland continues to make strong progress in being a committed CSR nation. The very fact that we have a living and vibrant CSR policy and implementation infrastructure sets us apart from many of our EU counterparts. For this, the Minister and her Department need to be recognised and thanked. Likewise, the many businesses who take the time to build CSR into their practice deserve recognition.

It has been a pleasure to work with the members of the CSR Forum and the team at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in the first 12-months of implementing the CSR National Plan, and I look forward to their continued energetic commitment over the next part of our journey.

*Catherine Heaney,*  
(MD, DHR Communications)



## The Four Dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility



### *The Environment*

This is about how you reduce, reuse or recycle resources to minimize negative environmental impacts



### *The Community*

This is about how you interact with your local community partners and organisations



### *The Workplace*

This is about how you support and engage your employees



### *The Marketplace*

This is about how your company makes responsible commercial decisions in dealing with suppliers and customers

# Introduction

This is the first CSR Check, published by the CSR Stakeholder Forum in association with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, to reflect the progress of the Forum in achieving the goals set out in *Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's National Plan on CSR 2017-2020*. It will be produced on an annual basis (2018 /2019) with a concluding check in 2020. The *CSR Check 2018* reports on the achievements of the Forum from June 2017 to June 2018 and sets the direction of focus for the coming year, in line with the National Plan.

The CSR Checks will be available at [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie).

## Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility

*Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's National Plan on CSR 2017-2020* was launched in June 2017. It aims to build on the achievements of the first National Plan and to further support businesses in Ireland to create sustainable jobs; embed responsible practices in the marketplace; embrace diversity and promote responsible workplaces; and encourage enterprises to consider their impacts on the environment. It also aims to align its goals with the Government's objectives, outlined in the Programme for a Partnership Government, of achieving a fair society based on a strong economy.

*Towards Responsible Business, Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020* sets out four broad goals:

- Awareness: Help employers and employees better understand the benefits of embedding CSR and responsible business practices into the day-to-day activities of businesses operating in Ireland.
- Access: Support the development of effective CSR practices in business through accessible and appropriate information resources.
- Support: Support by promoting and highlighting best CSR practice, news and events.
- Policy Alignment: Advocate and support relevant policy priorities across Government Departments and their agencies, specifically those which complement CSR, including implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, National Plan on Business and Human Rights, Healthy Workplaces Framework, etc

The CSR Stakeholder Forum, chaired by Catherine Heaney (MD, DHR Communications), brings together the business community, public sector and Government Departments and Agencies to encourage businesses in Ireland to embed CSR in their core business strategies and operations, be they large multinationals or SMEs. Membership is on a voluntary basis with each member committed to realising the vision for the National Plan and contributing practical support to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, through their individual and organisational participation.

The work of the Forum is guided by the actions in the National Plan on CSR 2017-2020 and supported by a defined work programme and working groups. The Forum meets four times per year while the working groups meet on a more regular basis. The Forum is integral to driving the implementation of the National Plan.

Minutes from all Forum meetings are available on [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie).

A full list of current members is available in the appendix.

“CSR provides us with a particular lens through which we examine business opportunities and evaluate risk in Dawn Meats. Through this process we ensure a more robust supply chain, with team members, suppliers and customers supporting our ambition to be ‘Europe’s most sustainable meat company.’”

*David O’Flynn, Group Head of CSR, Dawn Meats*



# Goal 1: Awareness

## Driving awareness of CSR in Ireland

Generating awareness of CSR across the diverse spectrum of Irish based business is the first step in helping business to embark on their own CSR strategy. Understanding CSR – the value it generates for those who drive it and the benefit it brings on an overall economic, societal and environmental basis inspires business to engage strategically in CSR.

### CSR Stakeholder Forum Meetings

The Forum plays a key role in raising awareness of CSR in Ireland with a focus on encouraging SMEs to highlight existing CSR practices and to adopt a CSR strategy into their core business. By providing a platform to high performing organisations to share their CSR story to a wider audience, the Forum fosters peer learning and drives engagement in CSR.

In addition, the Forum brings together the public and private sectors in a facilitated dialogue which cultivates in new partnerships. Working in this way enables the successful realisation of CSR for business and wider society.

### CSR Ambassador Programme

From issues relating to sustainability, ethics and respect for business and human rights to diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace, it has never been more important for businesses to recognise the impacts that they have on both their environment and the society in which they operate. In 2018, the Forum initiated the CSR Ambassadors Programme to develop CSR Ambassadors to communicate the value and importance of CSR for business and society. The programme will be rolling out nationally in 2018 continuing into 2019 and 2020. CSR Ambassador Training was developed and delivered by DHR Communications.

A full list of speaking engagements can be viewed at [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie)

### CEO/Leaders Breakfast Forum

To reinforce the message that CSR is a boardroom issue and needs to be considered at the C-suite level, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the CSR stakeholder Forum will host an annual CEO/Leaders Breakfast Meeting to bring together Ireland's leaders from government and the private and public sectors.

The inaugural CEO/Leaders Breakfast Meeting takes place in June 2018.

### CSR Chambers Awards

The CSR Chambers Awards make a strong contribution to highlighting and providing recognition to excellence in CSR in Ireland. The Forum welcomes the addition of a new category in 2018 – Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion.

### CSR in the Public Sector

The public sector as organisations in their own right can work to embed the four dimensions of CSR and develop their own CSR Strategies. The CSR Forum provides a vehicle for building awareness of what can be achieved and also facilitates knowledge sharing about the CSR journey between private and public sector organisations. Building on this opportunity for knowledge transfer between the private and public sector, earlier this year the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation hosted a workshop, facilitated by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI), with the CSR Forum's public sector Working Group to explore practical ways in which the public sector can grow their CSR activity. The workshop also discussed the rationale and potential for further partnering between the public and private sector on CSR initiatives. This focus on CSR in the Public Sector will continue as an important theme for the CSR Forum over the period of the current Plan.

“Most Irish businesses (99%) are SMEs, and consider Corporate Social Responsibility to be an issue for large companies. Yet most of them are involved in some form of CSR activity, whether informal, unstructured, or even unplanned. But thinking about CSR in a structured way is good even for the smallest of businesses, and can make a real return to the bottom line. Initiatives such as investing in low-energy lighting, sticking to the prompt payment code, or employing a person with a disability can not only make a financial contribution to the enterprise, they can improve staff morale and retention, raise corporate profile, and increase custom. It’s just a matter of knowing how.”

*Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME*



## Goal 2: Access

### Providing access to information on CSR

Starting out on a CSR journey can be daunting for any organisation but with access to the right information and a supportive network of practitioners the journey can be made easier. Providing access to CSR resources – information and people, helps businesses and organisations translate the CSR principles into effective actions which they can adopt for themselves -regardless of their activity, size or location.

#### csrhub.ie

The CSRhub is hosted and managed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation with contribution from the CSR Stakeholder Forum, is Ireland's dedicated online resource for CSR. The Hub holds a wealth of resources that seek to inform and inspire businesses to embark on their own CSR journey. From practical tips on how to get started to detailed case studies of how other businesses have benefitted from adopting CSR into their own businesses of any size, the hub holds value for all stakeholders.

Significant work has been undertaken in the past year to collate a strong body of practice through the CSR case studies that can be found on [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie) (listed in The Appendix).

#### CSR Newsletter

The CSR newsletter, issued quarterly by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, gives businesses and organisations the chance to join Ireland's CSR network and engage in peer learning. It regularly features; best practice CSR case studies, information on CSR related policy issues, Global CSR trends and a calendar of CSR events in Ireland and abroad.

If you would like to be part of Ireland's CSR network you can sign up via the [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie).

#### CSR Research

There is relatively little research available on Corporate Social Responsibility trends in Ireland. To better understand the relationship that Irish based businesses have with CSR, The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation commissioned the study '*Indicative Baseline Study on Corporate Social Responsibility*' in 2017. A total of 27,000 businesses across Ireland were invited to participate in the study to quantify the scale

of activity across Ireland. The research provided a baseline for the second National Plan on CSR. *Towards Responsible Business 2017 – 2020*.

This study has led to further academic research into CSR in Ireland and has cultivated a growing community of expertise in this field. This will hopefully yield valuable insight for businesses and organisations, in support of building a more sustainable economy and society in the future.

'*Indicative Baseline Study on Corporate Social Responsibility*' study is now available to view and download on [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie).

On the 1st anniversary of the launch of the second National Plan on CSR the CSR Stakeholder Forum invited four academics – Dr Annmarie Ryan, Kemmy School, UL, Dr Sheila Killeen, Kemmy School, UL, Roisin Lyons, DCU and Dr Blath McGeough, IT Tallaght to comment on the Study and also on current CSR trends under each of the Four CSR Dimensions (Workplace, Marketplace, Environment & Community). This response is available to view at [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie).

#### SME Outreach Event

99.8% of businesses in Ireland are small to medium enterprises. Reaching out to this community is a key focus of the National Plan, which sets out the importance of CSR for all businesses in Ireland – regardless of size or location. To that end, the Forum held its November meeting in Doolin, Co.Clare and hosted an SME Outreach event for local SMEs to join an expert panel discussion with leaders in the CSR field representing the private and public sector.

The next SME outreach regional event is planned for September 2018 and will focus on the Sustainable Development Goals.

“CSR is not just for large corporates, it is also for small businesses, like my own. There is excellent work already being undertaken by SMEs in this sphere but I want to ensure that all SMEs see the benefit of embedding CSR into their business practices. CSR initiatives can help improve sustainability, competitiveness, ability to attract and retain talent, whilst also fostering social cohesion and protecting the environment.”

*Catherine Heaney, Chairperson of the CSR Stakeholder Forum and Managing Director of DHR*



## Goal 3: Support

### Supporting and highlighting CSR practice

Good CSR practice encourages businesses to go further and do more as they see the win:win that an effective CSR strategy can achieve on an economic, societal and environmental basis. The Forum, supports best practice through sharing at the Forum meetings, Outreach Events, CSR Ambassador Presentations, the CSRhub website, Twitter and LinkedIn. Sharing good practice is a way to highlight the value of CSR and motivate other companies – particularly SMEs into adopting a CSR strategy for their business.

This culture of sharing, uniquely facilitated by the Forum, seeks to transform how business operates in Ireland and in return – the workplace, the marketplace, the community and the environment.

Significant effort has been given to identifying and gathering best practice CSR case studies from CSR Stakeholder Forum members and the wider business and public sectors over the past 12 months. The full collection of over 50 CSR Case Studies can be viewed at [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie). Four examples are presented here, reflecting the four main dimensions of CSR.

See the appendix for a full list of case studies.



#### Workplace 'Voxgro' Garden project'



In 2015 Voxpro launched a CSR initiative that encouraged team members to submit ideas for improving company culture, internal systems and processes, and employee engagement. One of the most successful ideas was the 'Voxgro' garden project. The idea was to cultivate an allotment where all staff could grow fruit and vegetables, connect with nature, and bond through teamwork.

*"At the core of Voxpro, human connection and multiculturalism are both valued and celebrated...Voxgro is a place to nourish nature, body and soul. The garden and dome are already epicentres for conversation, fun, food, learning, sharing, education, meetings, meditation, cultural exchange, relaxation, innovation and more. It can only get better." Voxgro Horticulturalist*

Voxpro gave the idea its full support, and in the three years since that small allotment was created, Voxgro has grown into an extensive company garden featuring a bio-dome, a disco ball pizza oven, an outdoor bar, juice company and a family of chickens. It has boosted employee engagement and creativity, which has in turn created a culture of continuous improvement within the business. The company has even employed a horticulturalist to oversee the project on a full-time basis.



**Environment**  
'Green Business Online Resource Efficiency Tool



Green Business is a free and confidential resource efficiency service for all types of SMEs in Ireland. The service is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the National Waste Prevention Programme with the objective of delivering substantive resource efficiency improvements and cost savings, through waste prevention and reductions in water and energy consumption.

The Tool for Resource Efficiency (TREE), launched by Green Business, allows businesses to carry out a quick assessment of their current business practices and takes less than 15 minutes to complete. In return, businesses will receive a tailor-made report with suggestions for more efficient management of energy, water and materials within their business.

Businesses will also receive a Resource Efficiency Score which reflects the level of Resource Efficiency awareness and practices in the company.

This is an important example of how public-sector initiatives are working in partnership with business.

*"The Tool for Resource Efficiency (TREE) can be used by companies of all sizes, but was designed specifically for small businesses who may not have the resources in-house to carry out an assessment of the Resource Efficiency of the business. Over 90% of Irish businesses have 10 or fewer employees and need assistance with identifying opportunities for reducing waste, improving efficiency and thereby reducing utility and material costs"*  
James Hogan, Programme Manager with Green Business Programme.



**Community**  
IBM Volunteers'



IBM is a founding member of IMPACT 2030, a global, private sector-led collaboration dedicated to mobilising corporate volunteers in service to advance the achievement of the SDGs. IBM Volunteers, the IBM global volunteering programme, has long fostered the active engagement of employees in their communities, providing a platform for them to take charge and help address critical issues affecting the lives of others. The programme was redeveloped to align with the SDGs from both a Corporate and an Individual perspective. IBM is also working with Impact 2030 to design and develop a tracking system aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. All of IBM's volunteer resources and activity kits are freely available to the public at <https://www.ibm.com/volunteers>

*'Corporate: IBM selected 5 SDG goals (Goal 3: Good Health; Goal 4 - Quality Education; Goal 5 - Gender Equality; Goal 8 - Good Jobs & Economic Growth and Goal 13 - Climate Action) based on our corporate strategy and the interests and skills of our 280K volunteers. We are leveraging these 5 goals to execute global volunteer campaigns to drive numbers and impact in these issues and have mapped volunteer and pro bono resources to these goals. We have also mapped other citizenship programmes and IBM business initiatives to the SDG's and will continue to do so.*

*Individual: We believe we will make an impact in all 17 goals through individual volunteers working on key issues important to them and their communities. We are empowering our volunteers with resources to ensure the impact they want to make is made.'*



**Marketplace**  
Responding to customer preferences  
for sustainable products



In 2018 Achill Island Sea Salt took the initiative to address the issue of single-use plastics and decided to move away from plastic packaging. The company wanted to become part of the solution in the marketplace and not the problem. Achill Island Sea Salt is now packaged in recyclable glass jars which enhances the attractiveness of the product for the customer and is in line with their Origin Green Plan to operate in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Achill Island Sea Salt is produced using one ingredient - the ocean. Achill Island Sea Salt was founded with the ethos of harnessing local resources to create a sustainable product. The company aims for sustainability in all operations, efficient use of renewable and non-renewable resources and to act with a social and moral character. Our vision is to develop a long-term sustainable industry on Achill Island and to promote the area as a unique food experience destination which contributes to the local economy by creating long-term employment on the island.

*'Maintaining strong relationships with customers, suppliers and business partners has been a key aspect of the development of Achill Island Sea Salt and will continue to play a significant role for the future long-term sustainability of the business as it moves to opening its new visitor centre dedicated to sustainable sea salt production process.'*

“Microsoft’s Business Mentoring Program provides start up and early stage companies with access to a wide range of specialist skills. We support their business growth through addressing questions such as “how do I create the right business model?”; “how do I move to the cloud?”; “how do I access international markets?”;” should I use a direct sales or channel partner model?”;” how do I develop a performance management system and culture?”. Our Mentors are Volunteers who are all passionate about empowering people and organisations to achieve more.”

*Ken Hickey, CFO Microsoft*



## Goal 4: Policy Alignment

### CSR and complementing policy priorities

CSR is about going beyond compliance, investing in and committing to – responsibilities with regard to employees, customers, the environment and the community. When business CSR strategies align with public policy objectives, there is a real opportunity for positive change in the workplace, marketplace, community and environment. The CSR stakeholder Forum is actively seeking to encourage this in a number of ways and it will continue to be a strong theme.

#### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018-2020

The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018- 2020 is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a whole-of-government approach to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was launched on 26th April 2018, by Denis Naughten, TD, Minister for Communication, Climate Action and Environment. A CSR Stakeholder Forum Working Group was tasked with assessing the understanding and awareness of the role and impact of business on the Goals. This work will be progressed as part of the Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Plan, and its engagement mechanisms.

Please see page 19 to read about CSR and the SDGs.

#### National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020

The National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020 was launched by Simon Coveney, TD., Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on 15th November 2017.

The Plan's mission is to '*to promote responsible business practices at home and overseas by all Irish business enterprises in line with Ireland's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights globally and to being one of the best countries in the world in which to do business*'.

The CSR Forum supports the National Plan on Business and Human Rights 2017-2020 and seeks to raise awareness of the importance of human rights in business.

#### Public Policy and CSR in partnership

A range of Government led initiatives are engaging with businesses' desire to become more responsible, across a number of areas and sectors. These include:

- Prompt Payment Code of Conduct, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation with various industry representative bodies [Marketplace]
- EPIC (Employment for People from Emigrant Communities) Programme, Department of Justice and Equality with Business in the Community Ireland [Workplace]
- Steps into Work – Integrating Employment and Mental Health Supports, Mental Health Reform, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, HSE & participating enterprises [Workplace]
- Healthy Ireland, Department of Health [Community, Workplace]
- Origin Green Programme, Bord Bia [Environment]
- Green Business Programme, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Clean Technology Centre [Environment]

#### National CSR Mentorship Programme

The National CSR Voluntary Mentorship Programme provides a way for established business expertise to share skills and knowledge with start-ups, SMEs and micro enterprises through mentoring. In 2017/2018 twelve Senior Executives from Microsoft Ireland worked with twelve Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Office client companies to assist them with business growth and to realise the benefits of responsible business growth. The Microsoft mentors shared their significant expertise with the CEOs and senior teams from the client companies over an eight-month period. The programme was hugely successful, with positive feedback from clients who found the programme extremely beneficial.

The programme will run until 2020 and businesses are encouraged to participate to share their expertise in assisting young businesses to grow and develop. Further information is available from [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie).



## What's Driving CSR Trends in Ireland?

CSR is not a static agenda for businesses: it is evolving and it is being influenced by social and global challenges such as climate change, increased waste production, migration and inequality. It is not always clear where the business motivation for CSR engagements emerges from. Sometimes, businesses give voice to their principles through so-called 'brand activism'; others see a competitive edge; government led initiatives can influence business decisions to become a better corporate citizen; or businesses simply respond to customer demand. What is clear, is that increasingly, businesses are recognising their own critically important part in the solutions to these challenges.

Building on initial baseline research into CSR activities in Ireland commissioned by DBEI in 2017<sup>1</sup>, the CSR Stakeholder Forum has started to engage directly with Irish based academics with an interest in the area<sup>2</sup>. It is the aim of the Forum over the period of this second National Plan to encourage the development of a dynamic community of CSR academic expertise in Ireland to better understand and if possible measure, how CSR motives, practice and impacts are evolving in Ireland's businesses and organisations.

Existing research indicates that Irish companies engaged in CSR are motivated by a variety of factors, including: customer and employee needs; business sustainability; ethical decision-making; customer confidence; brand value; and environmental impact. Building company reputation, and competing successfully for prospective employees are also emerging as strong business drivers for adopting CSR.

The Forum's 2017 CSR baseline survey of businesses in Ireland (over 1,300 respondents) found that the majority (80%) viewed CSR as either "very important" or "moderately important". Yet Ireland appears to lag other countries internationally on actual engagement, with one study placing Ireland 18th of 37 developed countries. CSR definitions in studies internationally vary however, and the largely informal CSR activities of smaller companies are often excluded. Encouragingly, the Forum's survey results indicate a readiness among Irish businesses to engage in CSR.

The Forum's baseline survey indicates a high-level of engagement in philanthropy based CSR in the community (83% of businesses). Research shows that business benefits are enhanced if such community based activity is approached strategically, rather than ad hoc donations.

More than two-thirds of businesses in the baseline survey indicated active workplace CSR in the areas of work-life balance and staff learning. Significantly fewer were active in the areas of equality & diversity and employee health and well-being. The survey highlighted a challenge for smaller companies in engaging with workplace CSR.

Based on firm level experience, going beyond compliance in the area of environmental sustainability can generate significant business opportunities and secure differentiation in the marketplace. Yet the baseline survey showed that CSR practices in this area are significantly less prevalent than philanthropy /sponsorship.

European Commission research identifies CSR in the 'marketplace' as one of the least understood, which may explain relatively lower levels of activity recorded in the Irish baseline study in this area. However smaller firms may not always recognise their own best practices as CSR, and the business benefits, such as customer and supplier loyalty, may also be under appreciated.

Growing the amount of quantitative and qualitative analysis of CSR activity in businesses and other organisations in Ireland will continue to be a key focus of the CSR Stakeholder Forum so that we can track progress and trends in the Irish context.

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1 Indicative baseline assessment of CSR in Ireland, by Research Matters, available at [www.csrhub.ie](http://www.csrhub.ie)

2 The following text draws on commentary on the baseline study provided by Dr Annmarie Ryan & Dr Sheila Killeen, Kemmy School, University of Limerick; Roisin Lyons, DCU; and Dr Blath McGeough, IT Tallaght (see full article at [www.csrhub.ie](http://www.csrhub.ie))



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

<b>1</b> NO POVERTY 	<b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER 	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 	<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 
<b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	<b>9</b> INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 
<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER 	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 	<b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	 <b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS</b>

# The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by unanimous vote by every country represented at the United Nations. The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The goals are interconnected – often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another. The Goals provide clear guidelines and targets which can be adopted in accordance with the priorities of each country and the environmental challenges of the world at large.<sup>3</sup>

The SDGs offer a framework to drive CSR activity and to further deepen and enrich it. Attainment of the Goals is based on a progressive partnership model between government, civil society and business, and represent an historic opportunity for business to engage more broadly, as a positive force for society. The CSR National Plan and Forum has embraced the SDGs' call to action for the business community and is actively examining how to encourage more businesses to consider aligning their CSR agenda with the goals.

Through a Forum working group, a cursory analysis of what Forum member businesses are doing was conducted and this provided insights into current practices and priorities together with identifying case studies. The analysis points to a range of further actions to enhance the understanding and awareness on the role and impact of business on the Goals. The CSR Forum is keen that this can be progressed as part of the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan, and its engagement mechanisms.

The SDG National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 for Ireland, commits Government to establish a national SDG Stakeholder Forum. The Forum will be used to consult and engage in the preparation of future Plans and reporting, as stakeholders have a key role in the follow-up and review processes which monitor how Government implements the Goals. The active participation of the business sector is imperative in this process. To that end, the CSR Stakeholder Forum, through its members, will seek to strategically engage with and contribute to, the work of the National SDG Stakeholder Forum and actively encourage the participation of the business sector in Ireland's ambition to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals

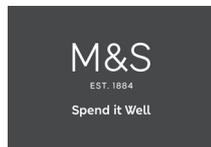
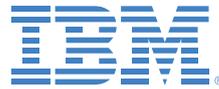
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

# Members of the CSR Stakeholder Forum



Business to Arts  
Developing Creative Partnerships



# Speakers/Presentations to the CSR Stakeholder Forum

## September 2015

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- Dr Sheila Killian, Kemmy Business School, UL - UN Global Compact Companies, Business for Peace, and Principles for Responsible Management Education.
- Ms Catherine Curran, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) - Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015.

## November 2015

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- Ms Tina Roche, CEO, BITCI - BITCI's experience at the Enterprise 2020 Summit.
- Mr Ronan O'Reilly, Office of Government Procurement (OGP) - Social clauses in public procurement.
- Mr Malachy Corcoran, Department of Health - update on his Department's Healthy Ireland Initiative.
- Mr Mark Fielding, ISME - outlined the many steps ISME have taken in 2015 to raise awareness of CSR.
- Ms Emma Kerins, Chambers Ireland - spoke about the Chambers Ireland CSR Awards.
- Mr Paul Carroll, Department of Social Protection (DSP) - Employment & Youth Activation Charter run by Intreo, DSP.

## March 2016

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- Mr Ken Hickey, CFO Microsoft - spoke to the Forum about Microsoft's Pilot Mentoring Scheme.
- Ms Maria McKeown, NSAI's Lead Auditor in management system auditing - addressed the Forum to provide an overview on the auditing process undertaken to enable organisations to be audited and certified to the Business Working Responsibly Mark.

- Mr Seán O'Connell, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade - presented to the CSR Forum on the Working Outline of Ireland's National Plan on Business and Human Rights.
- Ms Caitriona Bracken, Department of Social Protection (DEASP) - spoke about the various DEASP programmes.
- Ms Alexa Toomey, Enterprise Ireland - updated the members on Enterprise Ireland's CSR activities.
- Ms Siobhan Masterson, Ibec - provided a brief overview of CSR from Ibec's perspective.
- Mr Brendan McDonagh, IDA Ireland - outlined a number of CSR related activities IDA Ireland has been engaged in.

## June 2016

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- Mr Andrew Mullins, Sustainability Development Manager at Origin Green.
- Ms Bernadette Phelan, Business in The Community Ireland - briefed the Forum on what has been happening since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched.
- Mr Patrick Rochford and Ms Orla Kenny, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), and Mr Frank Moroney, Irish Institute of Credit Management (IICM) spoke about the Prompt Payment Code (PPC).

## September 2016

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- Ms Anne O'Leary, CEO, Vodafone Ireland - spoke on their New Ways of Working initiative.
- Mr Peter Cosgrove, Director at CPL Recruitment - presented to the Forum on "The Future of Work".
- Ms Michelle Browne, NSAI - explained that the Excellence

Through People (ETP) programme equals best practice.

- Dr Max Hills, Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Social Protection - 'Fit for Work' scheme.
- Ms Claire Downey, Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI) addressed the Forum on the work of (CRNI).

## September 2017

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- Dr Sinead Hanafin, Research Matters Ltd - Presentation on the "Indicative baseline assessment of Corporate Social Responsibility in Ireland" produced by Research Matters.
- Ms Catherine Curran, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation - spoke on the Electric Vehicles Grant for Business.

## November 2017

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- Dr Mairead Moriarty, Chair, University of Sanctuary Committee, University of Limerick - gave a presentation on 'Unlocking the talent of the Refugee & Asylum Seeker Community'.

## March 2018

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- Dr Annmarie Ryan, UL - gave a presentation on CSR and SMEs.
- Mr Adrian Langan, DHR Communications - led an interactive session on messaging for CSR Ambassadors.

## CSR Case Studies

ORGANISATION	TITLE OF CASE STUDY
A & L Goodbody	A & L Goodbody Writer in Residence
Accenture	Accenture's Corporate Citizenship Report
Achill Island Sea Salt	Achill Island Sea Salt
Arthur Cox	Helping to change Irish Legislation on Human Rights around Immigration
ARUP	ARUP Community Engagement Programme
B H Consulting	CSR in BH Consulting
Bank of Ireland	Workbench: Supporting Startups
Bord Na Móna	Eco Rangers Programme
Cisco	Cisco Galway Partner with Age Action
Deloitte	Deloitte Volunteering Programme
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation	Voluntary Prompt Payment Code for Business
Department of Health	Healthy Ireland Framework
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Learning and Development Strategy
DHR Communications	CSR at DHR Communications
Diageo Ireland	CSR in Diageo Ireland
Dropbox	Dropbox for Good: Cloud Computing Company Grounded in the Community
Employer Disability Information	Information on the Employer Disability Information Service
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	National Green Teams Programme
Freightspeed	Freightspeed and the HSE - Collaborating for Sustainable Transport
Green Business	Resource Efficiency Tool
GIY & SAP	GIY & SAP Landscapes Donate 500 Trees for 1916 Centenary
Hotel Doolin	CSR in Hotel Doolin
IBM	Addressing SDGs through Skills Based Volunteering
Integrity at Work	Changing attitudes to Whistleblowing
Intel	CSR in Intel
Irish Life	Irish Life Partner with GAA to promote the Healthy Club Project

ORGANISATION	TITLE OF CASE STUDY
John Craddock Limited	CSR in John Craddock Limited
Keystone Procurement	CSR in Keystone Procurement
Kilbarrack Fire Station	Green Plan
KPMG	Corporate Citizenship
Libraries Nationwide	Healthy Ireland at your Local Library
Lidl	A Better Tomorrow: Sustainability at Lidl
Marks & Spencers	Plan A: There's no Plan B
Mason Hayes and Curran	CSR in Mason Hayes & Curran
Mental Health Reform, HSE etc	Steps into Work
Microsoft	Microsoft Mentoring Programme
Midlands Science	Midlands Science Partnership with Bord Na Móna
Midlands Science	Midlands Science Partnership with Integra Lifesciences
Musgrave	Musgrave Group's Corporate Values
OECD	OECD Guidelines for SMEs
Presentation College Bray	Energy Bandits
SAP	SAP equips students to thrive with Skills @ Work programme
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	Electric Vehicles for Business
The Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI)	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
The Q Café Company	The Q Café Company
Tico Mail Works	Supporting Work/Life Balance
Transdev	Transdev's CSR Strategy
Trinity College Dublin	Trinity Access 21
Ulster Bank	Do Good, Feel Good in June
Ulster Bank	Sustainability in Ulster Bank
University of Limerick	Aim2Flourish
Vodafone Ireland Foundation	ISPC Childline and Vodafone Ireland Foundation
Voxpro	Voxgro

## Appendix

### Towards Responsible Business 2017-2020 Actions

ACTIONS	
1	Support and promote Government policy in areas which enrich responsible business practice
2	Collaborate with DFAT through the CSR Stakeholder Forum to communicate the National Plan on Business and Human Rights
3	Monitor best practice and evolving trends in CSR and benchmark activity through relevant tools and studies
4	Continue to increase awareness of CSR, its value to business and to society as a whole
5	Develop a CSR Award – Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum
6	Develop a Work Programme to implement the actions contained throughout the Plan
7	Arrange a CSR Leaders Breakfast Forum
8	Collaborate with Chambers Ireland and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to emphasise the increased need to expand the categories in the annual Chambers CSR Awards
9	Encourage more micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to raise their competitiveness through improved CSR engagement
10	Work to increase recognition among large businesses of the value of sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility in boosting employment, attracting and retaining talent and their impact on wider society
11	Identify and examine ways in which workplace related Government policies outlined in Action 2 can be supported and promoted through business
12	Support and promote Government policy in areas which enrich responsible business practices in the Marketplace
13	Implement National CSR Voluntary Mentorship Programme
14	Encourage businesses to report CSR activity in their Annual Reports and other publications to communicate these initiatives to their stakeholders thereby building reputation and gaining trust in the marketplace
15	Work to increase the recognition of the impact of business operations on the environment and to encourage businesses to mitigate their negative impacts
16	Encourage businesses to build their CSR capacity in the Community
17	Encourage businesses to align their CSR strategy and activity to the Sustainable Development Goals

Full List of Case Studies are available at [csrhub.ie](http://csrhub.ie)



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland