

Response to Public Consultation on
Smart Specialisation Strategy

13/8/21

IT Sligo Response

In general terms, IT Sligo endorses the submission from the Northern & Western Regional Assembly in response to the consultation. The key points of emphasis are all ones that we would share.

In addition, we would offer the following points:

- In relation to regional strengths, we would – in addition to Tourism and Heritage, which the NWRA correctly identifies – add Construction and Construction materials as a potential focus of smart specialisation, particularly in the Border region. Companies such as Kingspan and Entekra are international leaders in their sector, with a strong role to play in developing more sustainable construction. We are collaborating with the FutureCast Centre in Manorhamilton which is working with companies in the sector to help them adopt more advanced digital technology.
- We have built a partnership between the CUA partners and NUIG, actively brokered and supported by the NWRA, that has been shortlisted to establish a European Digital Innovation Hub to support SMEs and public services in adopting more advanced digital technology. This will have a critical role to play in addressing this cross-cutting theme.
- A key area for development of sustainable technology will be floating wind energy platforms off the coast.
- In the diffusion of innovation, we particularly welcome Enterprise Ireland's current initiative to foster the development of industry clusters based in the Technological Higher Education sector. We know that a number of the clusters set up in recent years, including some referred to in the consultation document, have been losing momentum and would stress the importance of taking a sustained and adequately resourced approach to supporting clusters and helping to close the current gap between best practice in Europe and practice currently in Ireland.
- We have worked with many SMEs in delivery of innovation vouchers and fully appreciate the importance of this mechanism in helping SMEs to develop a taste for and confidence in undertaking innovation in their business. However, we see the need to have a more graduated approach than what is currently available. In addition to Innovation Partnerships worth €100,000 with a 20% company contribution, it would be good to establish intermediate steps such as a €50,000 budget with a 10% contribution, for example. Such a development will be critically important to encourage companies to move further along the innovation path.
- We would endorse in particular the response made by the NWRA to the final question, addressing the need to support great R&D activity in the region.



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