

How we would like you to contribute

Representatives of the LEOs have been active in the REPs consultations and have been contributing valuable input to the development of the plans including the Smart Specialisation aspect. This request is to seek more national-level viewpoints. S3 has a focus on enterprise innovation, and the LEOs are key actors in the delivery of innovation supports to microenterprises. As such, we would be interested to hear about the work of the LEOs and in delivering innovation supports and would appreciate some text on this for inclusion in the strategy. Some other aspects you might consider for inclusion in S3 include –

- Are there strategic priorities you would like to see reflected in the S3? Is there a particular message you would like to communicate in the strategy?

The Centre of Excellence, through the LEO network, are working towards strategic priorities of Entrepreneurship development, Competitiveness and Digitalisation, Internationalisation, Networking and Green that are consistent with the SME Taskforce's priorities.

This agenda is being supported by Enterprise Ireland through their expertise and offers such as Agile, RD&I, IP Start, Innovation Vouchers, Innovation Partnerships. At the micro-enterprise level, Digitalisation is being progressed through the Trading Online Voucher scheme and development of a Digitalisation voucher, and the Green agenda is addressed by Green4Micro. Generally, the more progressive LEO clients transfer to Enterprise Ireland, and it is these clients that have the most potential to benefit from smart specialisation.

A focused local campaign promoting the Smart Specialisation agenda and highlighting the benefits of these offers to businesses will be required

- Are there any LEO actions relating to enterprise development in other national strategies which could be translated into this strategy? Are there actions that were under consideration but not included in other strategies, that may now be suitable for S3?

To realise the Smart Specialisation strategy further financial and capability development supports will be required by businesses. The LEOs look to continuously review and develop the financial supports available to meet client needs, with the Green4Micro launched in Q1 2021 and a Digitalisation offer being explored by the Centre of Excellence with Enterprise Ireland.

The LEOs will engage third party training and mentoring providers to deliver programmes of capability development that will support Digitalisation, Green etc. Alternatively, as a 'first stop shop' the LEOs can recommend other providers such as Skillnets, or the Education and Training Boards, which could deliver the capability development programmes required to implement a Smart Specialisation strategy.

- With regard to the five cross-cutting strategic aspects of S3 (1. Digitalisation and digital transformation 2. Green transformation for enterprise 3. Innovation diffusion 4. International collaboration on RD&I 5. Actions to improve the national or regional enterprise research and innovation system) are there any initiatives delivered by the LEOs that could fit under these headings?

1. Digitalisation and digital transformation - **The Trading Online Voucher Scheme** (TOVs), originally launched by the then Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in mid-2014, offers a voucher of up to €2,500 (50% co-funded by the applicant) to help businesses develop their online trading capability. It includes impartial training sessions that cover various topics, including developing a website, digital marketing, social media for business and search engine optimisation. The voucher can also be used towards subscriptions to low cost online retail platform solutions, to help companies quickly establish a retailing presence online. There is also scope within this scheme for the purchase of online advertising (this cannot make up more than 30% of an approved voucher cost).

2. Green transformation for enterprise – **Green for Micro** is a programme that aims to assist businesses in lowering their carbon footprint, reducing costs and improving the environmental profile of the business in the marketplace. The programme is designed to allow eligible companies to avail of technical and/or advisory supports from external experts across a broad range of activities from resource efficiency to understanding their carbon footprint to implementing an environmental management system. The Green for Micro programme is free of charge and open to all micro-enterprises with up to ten employees.

3. Innovation diffusion – The objective of the **2019 LEO Competitive Fund** was to encourage LEO projects aligned with the pillars of the Future Jobs Strategy and the Regional-Enterprise-Plans. LEOs. These projects were spread throughout the country and supported the lead partners (Dublin, Cork, Carlow, Clare, Leitrim and West-Meath) to collaborate within their network and enterprise eco-system to deliver projects such as;

The Incrementum South-East project, which is a targeted business development programme for the LEO Portfolio of clients over 10 employees which aims to increase their engagement in R&D and Export Activity.

The Engenuity Engineering Midlands project, which will power the next level of development for a cluster of engineering companies in the midland's region. This project aims to enhance the competitiveness and resilience of member companies in responding to changing market challenges and opportunities arising from Brexit. This Project encourages R&D collaboration between cluster members, education institutions and support agencies in the region, utilising the advantage of the Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR) and Athlone IT.

These projects were to be delivered in Q4 2019 and 2020. However, due to the Covid pandemic, the projects were extended into 2021 for completion this year.

4. International collaboration on RD&I - **The Enterprise Europe Network** is the world's largest support network for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and helps Irish companies to make the most of business and technology opportunities in the EU and other major global markets. Contact your local Enterprise Europe Network advisor as a first step to gain international success.

As the first-stop shop for enterprise, the network of Local Enterprise Offices' role is to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship in Ireland. In partnership with the Enterprise Europe Network, Local Enterprise Offices across the country can now support SMEs in becoming more knowledgeable and competitive in global markets, leading to greater international business opportunities.

5. Actions to improve the national or regional enterprise research and innovation system – The LEOs are involved in the Enterprise Ireland funded Regional Enterprise Development Fund projects in their respective areas.

- Are there regional specific enterprise initiatives delivered by the LEOs that we could reference in the S3 (perhaps local networks, Look for Local etc)

The 2019 Leo Competitive fund features 6 regional projects that aim to deliver collaborative innovation projects within their regions, The LEOs in the Border Region developed Green, Exporting and Innovation programmes for the Border Brexit Programme which were intended for delivery in 2020 but were delayed until 2021.

The Local Enterprise Offices' Look for Local campaign was launched by An Tániaste Leo Vardkar in early July. This is the second running of the campaign that initially took place in the run up to Christmas 2020 and saw 83% of consumers surveyed showing a willingness to look for local when purchasing in 2021.

The campaign, which is supported by Enterprise Ireland and the local authorities, is asking the public to look local when they are shopping for products, services and experiences. This can have a significant impact on the local economy with every €10 spent locally creating more than €40 of benefit to the local community in terms of employment. The campaign will run throughout the summer on national radio, social and digital media along with Look for Local segments on Ireland AM and Today FM and is being supported locally nationwide by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices. #LookForLocal.

- Do you have supporting case studies or profiles for any of the input you are providing? Are there examples of best practice?

The majority of the initiatives referenced above are either at the development stage, early stages or implementation or still being delivered. Therefore, no case studies or profiles are available.