



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

# Enterprise Digital Advisory Forum

## 14 May 2025

Room 110, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 23 Kildare Street

### Attendees

#### EDAF Members (In-person)

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation, Niamh Smyth TD

Barry O'Brien (IBM)

Martina Fitzgerald (Scale Ireland)

Mike Conroy (ITAG)

Kieran McCorry (Microsoft Ireland)

Stephanie Anderson (Meta)

Niamh O'Donnellan (Stripe)

Ryan Meade (Google)

Erik O'Donovan (IBEC)

Victor Timon (Digital Business Ireland)

#### EDAF Members (Online)

Terri O'Donovan (J&J)

Orla O'Keeffe (Failte Ireland)

Eoin Costello (Digital HQ)

#### Officials (In-person)

Wendy Gray (DETE)

Orla Mulready (DETE)

Michelle Kiernan (DETE)

Paul McMorrow (DETE)

Valerie Rousselin (DETE)

Donal Flavin (IDA)

Ruairi O' Halínn (EI)

Gerry O'Grady (EI - LEOs Centre of Excellence)

Fiona Bourke (D/Taoiseach)

### 1. Introduction

Minister Smyth welcomed EDAF members.

She underlined the invaluable insights of the EDAF to support on the implementation of the enterprise aspects of the National Digital Strategy in a rapidly evolving context.

She highlighted the focus this year on progressing the AI strategy, driving the uptake of AI systems across all business and industry sectors, upskilling SME staff, implementing the AI act

and the establishment of an AI regulatory sandbox to foster AI innovation. All these priorities will be advanced thanks to strong stakeholder engagement and support from business representatives.

Finally, she introduced the launch of the Charter for Digital Inclusion which is a call to action for organisations to embed digital inclusivity in into daily operations.

## **2. Update on Digital matters shared by Wendy Gray**

### Ireland as a guest country during the South African 2025 Presidency of the G20:

The Government agreed that the G20 opportunity needs to be prioritised, and our engagement maximised, with a view to securing Ireland's position (if possible) as a guest country for future years. The South African Presidency will be the first time the G20 is hosted by Africa and the Chair emphasised that it offers a good opportunity to consider specific challenges on the African continent. The themes of the presidency are solidarity, equality and sustainability.

As part of Ireland's guest membership, DETE is leading on participation in the G20 Digital Economy Working Group. One of the deliverables will be a showcase of Micro and SME innovation from G20 members and guest countries. It will speak to economic development, local solutions, and higher-value employment in the digital economy.

In this regard, the G20 is holding a competition for innovative digital/AI startups, and all countries, including guest countries are invited to nominate innovate startups (<10yrs old) from their own countries to the global competition. The focus is on innovations for digital infrastructure, or for supporting climate change, for local development eg. agritech etc. and meeting societal needs (that can be adopted in Africa).

To further enhance our reputation as a good faith participant and as a country that engages actively, it would be good to showcase Irish innovations and consider potential Irish startup companies to nominate for the competition.

Ireland will be nominating innovative start-ups in the areas of digital infrastructure, supporting climate-change, in sectors such as agriculture or health technologies. DETE would welcome suggestions from EDAF members.

### Update of the National Digital Strategy:

In line with the Programme for Government's commitment to update the National Digital Strategy, work is starting, led by the Department of the Taoiseach, with the objective of adopting an updated strategy by year end.

DETE will be supporting the Department of the Taoiseach on shaping the enterprise pillar of the strategy.

Suggestions from EDAF members are very welcomed to help in fleshing out the consultation process as much as on the content of the strategy. Feedback on digitalisation programmes delivered through EI, LEOs and EDIHs including the Grow Digital voucher should be part of the discussions.

### **3. Update on the implementation of the AI Act shared by Eamonn Cahill**

#### Overview of AI Act milestones and European Commission support to implementation:

The AI Act entered into force in August 2024. First obligations on AI literacy and on the prohibition of some AI practices with unacceptable risks have started to apply in February 2025.

To support the implementation of the Act, and given the evolving technological and political context, the European Commission:

- Published 2 sets of guidelines on the definition of AI systems (i) and on prohibitive practices (ii).
- Set a service desk for regulators, companies and multinationals including an online platform and a call centre phone to provide support. We are expecting to see this should in place in the summer.
- Adopted the rules for the set-up and operation of a new scientific advisory group of independent experts on artificial intelligence and has now launched a call for expression of interest to select the experts.
- Will publish the final draft of the Code of Practice for the Use of AI in June.

Finally, the European Commission has opened a consultation on reducing reporting obligations for SMEs. DETE is planning on submitting a contribution to this consultation.

#### Overview of Ireland's implementation of the AI Act:

DETE is leading on the national implementation of the Act, and in March the Government endorsed the proposal that Ireland would leverage the existing national framework of well-

established sectoral authorities for enforcement of the EU AI Act, building on their sectoral knowledge and expertise.

Additional authorities, including a lead regulator to coordinate enforcement of the Act and to provide a number of centralised functions, will be designated by a future government decision to ensure comprehensive implementation of the Act. Officials are considering the mandate of the lead regulator for the Act, and how it could provide a focal point for AI in Ireland and play an active role spurring innovation for the benefit of our economy and our society.

Careful consideration is being given to the recent advice from the AI Advisory Council that a dedicated Irish AI Office would provide cohesive governance, and a coordinated approach across all departments.

In parallel, DETE has started driving the implementation of the Act by:

- Working with the four European Digital and Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) to support the development and delivery of AI literacy courses. Example of CeADAR, developing and delivering online, self-paced introductory training course on AI to help AI literacy - freely available to companies.
- Starting to operationalise the AI authority to ensure it is well established by August 2026.
- Developing an AI Sandbox, focussing on a phased approach with a sectoral basis before assessing feasibility of extending the sandbox more widely.

**The following points were discussed with the members:**

The issue of SME alignment with the AI Act and the potential impact the AI Act could have on SMEs was raised. DETE will engage with SME representative bodies to support in shaping the future AI Authority and AI Sandbox.

**4. Presentation of Ibec's AI awareness campaign by Erik O'Donovan**

EDAF plays a key role in working with the Government to drive industry adoption of digital technologies. To support that, Ibec is designing a campaign 'Work Just Got Smarter', which will be launched before the summer. The campaign will include guidance and case studies and is centred around 3 areas: 1. AI as an opportunity for businesses, 2. AI governance and how to comply, 3. How to get started with AI. The approach is very wide to appeal to all sectors.

Ibec would welcome EDAF members to support the campaign, including by providing content for podcasts to share different perspectives.

**The following points were discussed with the members:**

The importance of case studies was underlined to showcase the opportunity that Digitalisation and AI represents for companies in specific sectors and to share example of first steps in engaging with AI. This should also include sharing a comprehensive list of available trainings to support companies in getting started with AI, which the European Digital and Innovation Hubs have started doing.

Maintaining a structured engagement with SME representatives to discuss alignment with the AI Act, to highlight supports available for Digitalisation & AI and to collect feedback ahead of the update of the National Digitalisation Strategy. This will be a focus of DETE in the coming weeks.

**5. Update on the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) webpage and driving awareness, Orla Mulready**

The Key priority here is on Digital adaptation, with a target of 90% of SMEs at basic digital intensity by 2030. The network of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) will be key to achieve this, including by designing and delivering courses, signposting towards available supports and raising awareness.

A key tool to raise awareness on the opportunities of AI for SMEs are case studies. These are being gathered by the EDIHs and will be available on Enterprise Ireland's website as well as the National Enterprise Hubs.

**The following points were discussed with the members:**

The need to increase the uptake of existing Digitalisation and AI supports to SMEs, including through increased awareness of these programmes amongst SMEs.

DETE will share further information on the uptake of these supports with EDAF members and Failte Ireland offered sharing lessons learned from a 6-year programme on 'Digital that delivers', delivered in coordination with the EDIHs.

**6. Programme for government commitments, Wendy Gray**

Work is starting, led by the Department of the Taoiseach, on updating the National Digital Strategy, with the objective of adopting an updated strategy by year end.

The aim is for Ireland to remain a leader in this area, so the Strategy will be the overall framework to share Ireland's ambition, looking at achieving the Digital decade targets and areas where Ireland could go further.

While no formal consultation process is expected at this stage, input from stakeholders is very welcomed to help shape the content of the updated strategy.

**The following points were discussed with the members:**

Some of the EDAF members recalled the SME roundtable that had been hosted by Minister Dara Calleary last July. In relation to consultation, Minister Smyth has undertaken to host a similar SME roundtable over the coming weeks to obtain views for supporting SMEs for the Government's new National Digital Strategy.

## **7. Charter for Digital Inclusion**

Minister Smyth announced the launch of the Charter for Digital Inclusion.

The Charter will outline a set of core commitments focused on accessibility, equity, affordability, and the development of digital skills. It will serve as a framework for collaboration between the public sector, large enterprises, SMEs, community organisations and citizens.

This is a major step forward in Ireland's journey toward a more inclusive digital society with a call to action on the forthcoming Charter for Digital Inclusion. The ask is that larger businesses support SMEs to adopt digital technologies.

Strengthening an ecosystem where large companies assist SMEs will benefit the entire economy. Minister Smyth encouraged EDAF members to sign the Charter and join in building a more digitally inclusive Ireland.

**The following point were discussed with the members:**

Charter commitments can include initiatives that support primary and secondary schools to bring the worlds of education and work closer together.

The next meeting is scheduled for 25.06.2025.

**Paul McMorrow and Valerie Rousselin - 19 May 2025**