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

Note on the Enterprise Forum of Wednesday, 16 October 2024

Meetings are held under Chatham House rule

Attendees

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation	Dara Calleary TD
Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail	Emer Higgins TD
Secretary General, DETE	Declan Hughes
DETE officials	Pauline Mulligan, Colm Forde, Ronnie Downes, John Newham, Ross Church, Dermot Coates, Brian Walsh, Manus O'Donnell, Orla O'Brien, Colm O'Neill, Barry Cullen, Deborah Dignam Advisors: Treasa Kelly, Brian Keegan Forum Secretariat: Susan McNamee, Sinéad O'Brien, Anthony Barrett
Enterprise Ireland	Donal Leahy
IDA	Breda O'Sullivan
Local Enterprise Office Network	Padraic McElwee
American Chamber of Commerce	Ellen McGrath
British Irish Chamber of Commerce	Paul Lynam
Construction Industry Federation	Hubert Fitzpatrick
Chambers Ireland	Ian Talbot
IBEC	Fergal O'Brien, Sharon Higgins
Irish Exporters Association	Vicki Caplin
ISME	Neill McDonnell
Retail Excellence	Jean McCabe
RGDATA	Tara Buckley
SFA	David Broderick
The Family Business Network	John McGrane
Department of Finance	Bernard Kelly
Department of Taoiseach	Nigel Clarke

Item 1: Welcome and opening remarks

- The Secretary General of DETE, Declan Hughes opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees both in the room and online.
- The minutes from the Enterprise Forum meeting of 12 June were approved.

Item 2: Update from Responsible Business Forum Subgroup

- The Assistant Secretary of Trade Division spoke to the overall responsible business agenda items and gave an update on the fifth meeting of the Responsible Business Subgroup, which was held on 18 September.
- Subgroup members received three presentations. The first on the CSRD giving an overview of the Department's work on implementation and the ongoing stakeholder outreach efforts.
- The second on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, presented by the Environmental Protection Agency which outlined the requirements for businesses under the new EU instrument for the prevention of carbon leakage.
- The third on the UN Global Compact Network on the establishment of a Country Network for Ireland.
- It was acknowledged that the stakeholders see merit in the Forum and the next meeting is expected to take place before the end of the year.

Item 3: Update on Action Plan for Insurance Reform

- The Government has prioritised the reform of the insurance sector via the Action Plan for Insurance Reform setting out 66 actions to help reduce costs for business and consumers, to introduce more competition into the market and to prevent fraud.
- An official from the Department of Finance gave a presentation on the Action plan for Insurance Reform.
- Key actions include amendments to the *Occupier's Liability Act 1995 to* rebalance the duty of care and the Reform of the **Injuries Resolution Board** (which can now provide mediation as a means of resolving a claim in employer liability claims), the establishment of an Insurance Fraud Coordination Office, and the creation of an Office to promote Competition in the Insurance Market in the Department of Finance.
- 2023 has seen an increase of 9.8% of voluntary applications to the Injuries Resolution Board with the average award being €18,537 which is an overall reduction of 23%.
- Forum members welcomed the actions, but it was highlighted that there are still significant issues. Forum members and their stakeholders are still paying more for insurance and stressed that insurance company savings need to be passed down to the consumers.

- Minister Calleary acknowledged the frustration at the continued increasing insurance costs and advised that a Cabinet Committee Subgroup was meeting today to update on the Action Plan and discuss the Implementation Plan.

Item 4: SME Burden Reduction

- The Government's decision to introduce a package of supports for SMEs included a commitment to ensuring that an enhanced SME Test is applied to all new major measures to consider the impact that measure may have on SMEs.
- Following the recent Competitiveness Summit additional measures were agreed to assist in minimising the regulatory burden on SMEs. These include the rigorous application of the SME Test across Government Departments, seeking to expand the Test to the wider public service and to consult with business to identify areas where the regulatory burden could be reduced.
- Members felt it was good to have this issue on the Governments agenda and that less is more with regards to adopting the least amount of regulation necessary to tackle any issues.
- Minister Higgins stressed the importance of these measures and highlighted that they are to stress test all policy and legislation from an SME focus.
- It was suggested that the SME Test could be applied retrospectively to legislation to analyse the impact of legislation already introduced.

Item 5: Presentations on Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CRSD) and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDD)

- An official from the Department's Company Law Audit & Accounting Policy Unit gave a presentation on the CSRD.
- The CSRD requires annual reporting by companies on sustainability matters - environmental, social and governance including human rights matters.
- Members were informed that Directors are responsible for ensuring the sustainability information is prepared in accordance with the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).
- Businesses need to assess whether they may be in scope, to evaluate their ability to capture the data, to determine their existing position on sustainability matters and to discuss the directive and standards with their auditor, accountant or business adviser.
- Minister Calleary advised that if your business is within a supply chain you may be in scope.
- An official from the Department's Company Registration and Regulation Policy Unit gave a presentation on the CSDD. The CSDD aims to address human rights and

environmental impacts in global value chains and promote responsible corporate behaviour.

- Companies who are also covered by the CSRD can meet their reporting obligations by complying with the CSRD's reporting requirements avoiding any duplication.
- Member States must designate one or more national supervisory authorities to ensure compliance. Financial sanctions comprised of 5% turnover can be levied on companies for non-compliance.
- A phased-in approach to compliance applies to both Directives.
- Forum Members enquired if there was information available to outline the differences between both directives and a matrix for showing who qualifies for which directive.
- The issue of costs to business, perceived increased pressure on the accounting profession and the impact of Ireland and the EUs global competitiveness were raised.

Item 6: AOB

- Declan Hughes invited the Forum members feedback on Budget 2025.
- The increased expenditure on infrastructure in Budget 2025 was broadly welcomed but that accommodation remains a big issue.
- Several members raised the issue of wage increase pressures, that the recent Government supports do not stretch far enough to assist and that medium sized companies won't qualify for the ICOB/Power Up grants.
- A member raised an issue with changes to the Capital Gains Tax Retirement Relief and wording in the Finance Bill 2024, Minister Higgins asked if they could submit further details on this and she would assess.
- Members were reminded to contact the Enterprise Forum Secretariat with any topics they would like discussed at future meetings of the Forum.
- Members were also reminded of the dates for the next Forum meeting on 11 December 2024.