



Note of the Enterprise Forum, Thursday 3 April 2025

Meetings are held under Chatham House rule

Attendees

Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment	Peter Burke TD
Minister of State for Small Business and Retail	Alan Dillon TD
Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation	Niamh Smyth TD
Secretary General, DETE	Declan Hughes
DETE officials	Dermot Mulligan, Ronnie Downes, Yvonne White, Colm Forde, Gary Tobin, Brian Walsh, Ross Church, Breda O'Brien, John Shine, Manus O'Donnell, Rory Mulholland, Keith Fitzgerald, Orla O'Brien, Lucy Cusack, Stephen Bonnlander, Sandra Mullen. Ministerial Advisors: Brian Keegan, Jenny McCormack Forum Secretariat: Susan McNamee, Corinna O'Brien
Enterprise Ireland	Kevin Sherry
IDA	Shay Power
American Chamber of Commerce	Colm O'Callaghan
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	Simon McKeever, Seamus Banim
ISME	Neil McDonnell
Retail Excellence	Jean McCabe
RGDATA	Tara Buckley
SFA	David Broderick
The Family Business Network	John McGrane

Item 1: Welcome and opening remarks

- The Minister for ETE, Peter Burke TD, opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees both in the room and online.
- Minister Burke acknowledged that all Forum members are currently working hard to analyse the impacts of the trade tariffs announced the day before and that it is important that clear, calm messaging is sent to all networks.
- The Secretary General of DETE, Declan Hughes, informed the members that the Department is currently developing a new Statement of Strategy which will shortly be open for consultation and Forum members will be asked to send in any views or observations they have on this.
- The minutes from the Enterprise Forum meeting of 16 October 2024 were approved.

Item 2: Programme for Government

- This is the first Enterprise Forum meeting since the new Programme for Government was launched and Minister Burke spoke of the priorities that will be of benefit to the Enterprise sectors, such as the important role the SME Test plays in future legislation and decisions.

Item 3: IE/EU trade relationship with the USA.

- The Assistant Secretary of Trade Division spoke on the announcements of tariffs made by the US administration on 2 April.
- Minister Burke invited each Member to participate in a discussion, to include their initial economic analysis and findings, along with any communications from their own members.
- Many Members noted that the tariffs will pose challenges to some businesses in Ireland and the impact is still being assessed, with many businesses asking very practical questions.
- It was noted that the Trade Forum is being held on 4 April, and the messaging here will be important.
- Members were asked to share with DETE any issues/concerns that arise.

Item 4: Better Regulation and Burden Reduction

- Officials from the Department's Better Regulation Project Unit, Small Business Unit and Company Registration and Regulation Policy Unit spoke to Members about the Government's commitment to improve Ireland's competitiveness by making it easier

to do business in Ireland. To help with this, DETE is looking at ways to reduce any unnecessary red tape, bureaucracy and administrative burden on businesses.

- Members were involved to share with DETE any ideas they have to simplify administrative processes for business.
- Members were informed of the successful application of the SME Test since its introduction and plans to encourage its use further when Departments are developing new policies and legislation.
- The National Enterprise Hub (NEH) has been successful in bringing together information and resources on government supports from different Departments and state agencies.
- Members also received information on the European Commission's focus on simplification and burden reduction at EU level, following on from the Letta and Draghi reports published in 2024. The Commission's recently published work programme for 2025 has indicated the intention to bring forward a number of so-called "Omnibus" packages and simplification proposals in the context of strengthening EU competitiveness, such as the proposal to change to the scope and timing of both the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) requirements for certain categories of companies. This proposal would reduce the reporting and compliance burden on those businesses within scope.

Item 5: Update on Responsible Business Initiatives

- The Assistant Secretary of Trade Division reiterated the importance of keeping the overall Responsible Business initiatives streamlined and packaged together.
- It was acknowledged that the European Commission is working with Member States on these initiatives.
- The Responsible Business Forum, a sub-group of the Enterprise Forum, is planning to hold its first meeting of 2025 shortly. Members will be kept informed and invited to attend once the date has been set.

Item 6: Ireland's Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2022-2024

- An official from the Department's Data and Evaluation Unit gave a presentation on Ireland's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The UN Agenda 2030 is made up of 17 SDGs, with 169 SDG targets, in the areas of economic growth, social inclusion and protection of the environment. The 2030 Agenda is voluntary and not legally binding, but every country has agreed to implement the SDGs.

- The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications has overall responsibility for promoting the SDGs and overseeing their coherent implementation across Government. They have published two National Implementation Plans to date and all 169 SDG targets have been mapped against national policies.

Item 7: AOB

National Disability Strategy

- Brian Walsh from the Department's Retail Forum and Locally Traded Enterprises Unit informed the Members that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is currently overseeing finalisation of the next National Disability Strategy. The strategic objectives are being considered under five key thematic pillars and DETE leads on the Employment Pillar, along with the Department of Social Protection.
- DETE are proposing to form a sub-group of the Forum to provide a platform for a more structured consultation and engagement with employers on disability employment. It would serve as a means of discussing how best to support employers to employ people with a disability and to hear directly from employers on their experiences and discussing any concerns.
- Further details will be communicated in due course including membership and meeting arrangements

Next Meeting

- 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 date for the next Forum meeting on 18 June 2025.