Northern & Western Regional Assembly

BORDER, MIDLAND & WESTERN REGIONAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

PROGRESS REPORT 2019

Europe's Regional Development Fund
This is the Fifth Annual Implementation Report for the Border Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme (ROP) for 2014-2020. It reports on the progress achieved under the OP for the year 2019. Expenditure under the ROP was eligible from 1st January 2014.
The European Regional Development Fund co-finances investments into the regions with Governments across the European Union and supports activities in the regions contributing to a balanced level of development.

The European Union have made €276.8 billion available for regional development across the European Union between 2014 and 2020.

The European Structural and Investment Funds are delivered through Programmes. In Ireland there are two Programmes co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund:

- **Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme**
- **Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme**

The map below shows the division of Ireland between these two programmes and illustrates the performance targets that the programmes are expected to achieve.

As well as funding the two regional investment programmes, the European Regional Development Fund is used to co-fund cooperation programmes that invest in more than one country.

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<th>Border, Midland &amp; Western</th>
<th>Southern &amp; Eastern</th>
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<td>New researchers</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Unserved households</td>
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<td>Households with improved Energy Efficiency</td>
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Our Operational Programme

The eligible region as covered by this OP is called the Border Midland and Western (BMW) Region which is a NUTS II region. It covers a total of thirteen counties and encompasses the former Border, Midland and West Regional Authority areas.

The BMW Region accounts for 47% of the land area of Ireland, 26.5% of the population and 19% of GDP.

The Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Regional Operational Programme is a funding package of €320m million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Irish exchequer and Local Authorities and invested in the region over the programme period.

Investment is concentrated on research and innovation, information and communication technologies (ICT), small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and promoting a low-carbon economy as required by the regulations. In addition the programme provides for an increased focus on sustainable urban development.
1. Macroeconomic Developments

1.1: National Macroeconomic Performance

In the years prior to the Coronavirus outbreak the Irish economy experienced significant growth, operating close to full capacity as recent as February 2020. According to the latest available data, the economy grew at a strong pace in 2019 with Ireland’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - a measure of total production in an economy - rising to €339 billion; an increase of 5.5 per cent relative to the previous year. Discussions of GDP unavoidably must also take into account the limitations of this statistic as a measure of economic development, considering the distortionary activities of a small set of multinational companies.

Notwithstanding these issues, it clear that there has been underlying growth in domestic activity in Ireland in recent years. Modified Total Domestic Demand - a measure of domestic activity which strips out the distortionary activities of multinational companies - rose to €181 billion in 2019, up 3.2 per cent compared to the previous year, with the past 5 years seeing domestic activity expand at an average rate of 4 per cent per annum.

Buoyant labour market conditions and rising personal incomes supported improvements in consumer’s spending power as personal consumption totalled €108 billion in 2019; an

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3. Includes Personal Consumption, Government Expenditure and Modified Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation and would exclude distortionary activities of Multinational companies and net exports
4. https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVar/Val/?maintable=NQQ42&PLanguage=0
increase of 2.8 per cent relative to 2018 and in line with its average annual growth rate of the past 5 years (+3.5%). Government expenditure - the fastest growing component of the domestic economy in 2019 - increased by 5.6 per cent, with its rate of growth quickening every year since 2015.

Notably, modified investment in the domestic economy - which would exclude distortionary activities of multinational companies - was quite subdued in 2019, with year-on-year growth of 1.3 per cent, well below its average annual growth rate of the past 5 years (+6.5%). It is likely that heightened Brexit related uncertainty and the possibility of an aggressive global trade war were contributing factors to this slowdown in 2019, with such uncertainty leading to the deferral of some investment decisions by firms.

Nonetheless, underlying domestic activity has been quite strong in recent years and this was reflected in Ireland’s improving labour market conditions in this time period, as the latest quarterly unemployment rate fell to 4.5 per cent in Q4 2019; a significant drop of 11.4 percentage points relative to the previous financial crisis peak of Q3 2012. Concurrently, this recovery has also seen average net income surpass pre-crisis levels, with disposable income per person - as of 2018 - 3.8 per cent higher than the previous peak of 2008.

Figure 2: Year-on-year growth in components of Modified Total Domestic Demand, 2010-2019

That said, the short term economic outlook has significantly deteriorated as Ireland’s highly integrated and open economy has be impacted by the spread of the coronavirus. As a result of the restrictive measures to control the spread of the coronavirus, the number of benefit claimants on the Live Register rose substantially by a record 330,550, with the total signing on at a historical high of 513,350 in March 2020. Of this total, 283,037

Source: CSO

5 Non-Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate: https://statbank.cso.ie/pv/pxirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=QLF02&PLanguage=0


7 Total includes those being paid the new pandemic unemployment benefit or those in receipt of the new Covid-19 wage subsidy
people were receiving the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment introduced by the Government last month, 25,104 people were benefiting from the Temporary Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme with the remaining claimants attributed to the non-seasonally adjusted total of 205,209. Important to note that although the Live Register does take into account some people that claim benefits while working part-time, such figures nevertheless reveal the significant impact of the coronavirus on the Ireland’s labour market. As per the latest estimates, Ireland’s unemployment rate is forecasted to rise to 18 per cent by Q2 2020, if the restrictive measures remain in place over a period of 12 weeks.

For the economy as a whole, the ESRI has warned that a lengthy outbreak of the coronavirus in the Republic could push the Irish economy into a deep recession in 2020, with the Institute noting that the economy could decline by 7.1 per cent in 2020, if the restrictive measures remain in place for a 12 week period. All sources of growth such as consumption, investment and exports are expected to be substantially impacted under the scenario.

Furthermore, the general government balance, which had been expected to be in surplus at the start of the year, is now expected to register a deficit of at least 4.3 per cent of GDP, albeit this may be higher in order to meet the healthcare demands of the crisis. Nevertheless, the extent of the coronavirus’s economic impact will very much depend on the length and severity of this pandemic and the effectiveness of any Irish or European wide stimuli in mitigating the economic shock.

1.2: Regional Macroeconomic Performance

In recent years, it has been well documented that the Border, Midland and Western region has not prospered economically compared to the EU 27 average. Such a decline can be attributed to many factors, ranging from - but not limited to - the region’s reliance on low-value added industries, a lack of urban centres with sufficient scale and relatively low levels of public and private investment in key growth enablers. Although Galway City, Sligo, Athlone and other urban centres within the region are home to prominent multinational companies operating in sectors such as ICT, Engineering, Life Sciences, and Financial Services, the performance of the region’s economy - as a whole - has been below the EU norm over the past decade.

This is evident from the latest available Eurostat data (Figure 3), which expresses GDP per head of population figures in purchasing power standards (PPS). It is important to note that the majority of data sources in this sub section have been aggregated using the

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8 https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lr/liveregistermarch2020/
latest definitions of the NUTS 3 regions of Ireland, considering the provision of data with respect to the historical Border, Midland and Western NUTS 2 region have been discontinued by these data sources in recent times. In the case of the new NUTS 3 definition of the Border region, Louth is now excluded having been categorised under the new NUTS 3 definition of the Mid East region, therefore certain up-to-date datasets presented in this sub section exclude Louth.

As evident from Figure 3, the aggregated Border, Midlands and West region’s GDP per capita was 77 per cent of the EU27 average as of 2017, compared to Ireland’s overall performance which was 183 per cent of the EU27 average. From the perspective of the Multiannual Financial Framework, the newly updated Eurostat figures with respect to the evaluation period (2015 – 2017) showed that the aggregated Border, Midlands and West region’s GDP per capita was 81 per cent of the EU27 average during this time period. Therefore, the region would be classified as a “Transition region”, considering its GDP per capita was between 75 and 100 per cent of the EU27 average during the evaluation period.

The individual NUTS 3 regions can also be compared to the EU27 average, as can be seen from Figure 4. The Border region’s GDP per capita was 70 per cent of the EU27 average as of 2017, whereas the corresponding figures for the West and Midlands regions were 79 and 84 per cent of the EU27 average respectively.

**Figure 3: GDP Per Capita, as a % of the EU27 average for Ireland and the Border, Midlands and West region, 2000-2017, (PPS)**

![Figure 3: GDP Per Capita, as a % of the EU27 average for Ireland and the Border, Midlands and West region, 2000-2017, (PPS)](https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/revnuts23/)

Data aggregated using latest definitions of NUTS 3 regions in Ireland therefore in the case of the Border region, Louth is excluded.

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13 Data aggregated using latest definitions of NUTS 3 regions in Ireland therefore in the case of the Border region, Louth is excluded.

Source: Eurostat\(^{15}\)

Figure 4: GDP Per Capita, as a % of the EU27 average, for the NUTS 3 regions, 2000-2017, (PPS)

The aggregated Border, Midlands and West\(^{16}\) region’s labour market began to recover from the financial crisis in 2012, to the point that the unemployment rate in the region – as of Q4 2019 – was 4.1 per cent; 0.4 percentage points below the corresponding national average of 4.5 per cent\(^{17}\). Therefore, rather than the absence of a labour market recovery since the previous financial crisis, it seems that the region’s poor economic performance is more reflective of the low valued nature of this recovery. This is illustrated in the fact that the average net income of an individual living in the Border, Midland and Western region continues to remain below pre-crisis levels\(^{18}\).

As of 2018, disposable income per capita in the Border, Midland and Western region was 3.5 per cent off its peak level in 2008, with the Border and the West region 7.0 and 5.9 per cent behind their respective pre-crisis peaks. In contrast, the average net income of an individual in the Midlands has recovered from the previous financial crisis, with disposable income per capita 6.6 per cent above its previous peak of 2008. For the State as a whole, disposable income per capita was 3.8 per cent ahead its previous peak of 2008.

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\(^{15}\) The region’s GDP figures seem undistorted from the previously mentioned disruptive activities of multinational companies, therefore it is fair to compare the region’s performance relative to the EU27 average, which would also be unaffected.

\(^{16}\) Data aggregated using latest definitions of NUTS 3 regions in Ireland therefore in the case of the Border region, Louth is excluded.

\(^{17}\) [https://statbank.cso.ie/ps/pixeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=QLF08&PLanguage=017](https://statbank.cso.ie/ps/pixeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=QLF08&PLanguage=0)

\(^{18}\) Data aggregated using county data from the CSO’s “County Income and Regional GDP” release, therefore Louth can be included in this calculation: [https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/nationalaccounts/countyincomesandregionalgdp/](https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/nationalaccounts/countyincomesandregionalgdp/)
In monetary terms, disposable income per capita in the Border, Midland and Western region stood at €18,562 in 2018, which was €2,933 lower per head of population than the State average of €21,495. Likewise, each of the NUTS 3 regions also lagged behind the State average, with the Border region recording the lowest level of disposable income at €16,993 per head of population, followed by the West and the Midlands region at €18,517 and €20,287 respectively.

That said, it is important to consider such performances relative to the State average over time, which can be achieved by creating a regional disposable income index which will allow us to display the relative performance of each of the above areas. Figure 6 shows that over the past seventeen years, growth in disposable income per capita within the Border, Midland and Western region has been much lower relative to the State average and that disposable income per head of population in this region has been declining considerably relative to the State average from 2010 onwards. Likewise, each of the NUTS 3 regions have performed poorly relative to the State average since 2010, albeit the Midland’s relative performance has improved since 2016 as can be seen from Figure 7.
The low valued nature of the region’s economic recovery is also evident from changes in its productivity levels in recent years. One of the most widely used measures of labour productivity is Gross Value Added (GVA) per employee\(^\text{19}\), which measures how much output is generated per worker in a region; a key determinant of economic growth. Regions with more high valued firms will tend to have higher GVA per employee, implying higher regional economic growth.

As evident from Figure 8, the aggregated Border, Midlands and West region\(^\text{20}\) has consistently registered labour productivity levels below the State average over the past seventeen years. GVA per employee was €53,850 in the aggregated Border, Midlands and West region in 2018 compared to €134,023 for the State as a whole. Although Ireland’s GVA have been considerably inflated by the globalised activities of a small set of


\(^{20}\) Data aggregated using latest definitions of NUTS 3 regions in Ireland therefore in the case of the Border region, Louth is excluded.
multinational companies - predominantly located in the historical Southern and Eastern NUTS 2 region - it seems that the aggregated Border, Midlands and West region has been largely unaffected by these distortions. This suggests that these figures seem to be a fair reflection of the region’s productive capacity, with labour productivity levels in the aggregated Border, Midlands and West region falling in every year since 2015, equating to a decline of 15 per cent over this time period. Similarly, each of the NUTS 3 regions also lagged behind the State average, with the West region recording the lowest level of GVA per employee at €47,580, followed by the Border and the Midlands region at €55,678 and €63,809 respectively.

Figure 8: GVA per employee for the Border, Midlands and West region versus the State average 2000-2018

Source: Northern and Western Regional Assembly calculations using CSO data

Figure 6: GVA per employee for the NUTS 3 regions versus the State average, 2000-2018

Source: CSO
2: National Policy Developments

2.1: Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government’s overarching policy initiative to achieve effective regional development in Ireland and to improve the State’s infrastructure over the next twenty years. It aligns a series of published strategic policy initiatives, namely:

- The National Planning Framework
- The National Development Plan
- The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

2.1.1: National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the government’s high-level strategic plan to guide regional development and investment up to the year 2040. Its ultimate aims are to facilitate future development of the State, taking into account the projected 1 million increase in Ireland’s population, the need to create 660,000 additional jobs to achieve full employment and a need for 550,000 more homes by 2040.

Of the extra 1 million people, 25 per cent of growth is planned for Dublin, 25 per cent across the other four cities of Ireland combined – namely Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford – with the remaining 50 per cent to occur in key regional centres, towns, villages and rural areas, with such targets being underpinned by the €116 billion allocated for the National Development Plan (2018-2027). To facilitate such growth, the NPF has outlined a series of objectives - in the form of National Strategic Outcomes - which are aligned with the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, and would involve delivering:

1. Compact Growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4. Sustainable Mobility
5. A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High Quality International Connectivity
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

9. Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

2.1.2: National Development Plan 2018 - 2027

The National Development Plan 2018 - 2027 (NDP)\textsuperscript{22} sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the implementation of the NPF, through a total investment of approximately €116 billion. The stated aim of the NDP is to act as a driver of Ireland’s long-term economic, environmental and social progress over the next decade. In order to support the NPF’s National Strategic Outcomes, the NDP contains ten corresponding strategic investment priorities, which are as follows:

1. Housing and sustainable urban development
2. National road network
3. Rural development
4. Environmentally sustainable public transport
5. Enterprise, skills and innovation capacity
6. Airports and ports
7. Culture, heritage and sport
8. Climate action
9. Water infrastructure
10. Education, health and childcare

Of the €116 billion, €91 billion will come from Exchequer funding, with the remaining €25 billion of investment supplemented from commercial State-owned enterprises. A major innovation in the reformed funding model for the NDP is the establishment of four competitive funds to drive the delivery of specific core priorities detailed in the NPF. These competitive funds are designed to stimulate investment in projects relating to the renewal of rural and urban areas, the environment and innovation, via the following funding schemes:

- Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (€2 billion allocation)
- Rural Development Fund (€1 billion)
- Climate Action Fund (€500 million)
- Disruptive Technologies Fund (€500 million)

\textsuperscript{22} [Link to NDP PDF page 122]
2.1.3: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

As part of implementation of Project Ireland 2040, the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland – namely the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, the Southern Regional Assembly and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly - were each mandated to prepare a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for its own respective region. The principle statutory purpose of these strategies is to outline the regional implementation of Project Ireland 2040 by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region in question. The RSES provides the context for each local authority to develop their county and city development plans, ensuring that national, regional and local policy align.

Each RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures throughout the region in question and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. Furthermore, it also seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve the objectives of the NPF by identifying Regional Strategic Outcomes, with a core principle of these objectives being the creation of suitable conditions and opportunities to sustain economic growth and employment in the regions.

To manage the projected population growth up to 2040, each RSES has developed a growth strategy for its respective region, which sets out the key places of regional scale for population and employment growth, setting a framework for the development plans of each local authority and the policy strategies of other public bodies. This shall inform the amount of residential and employment generating land and support infrastructure that will be required.

For example, the settlement hierarchy for the Northern and Western region is broken down as followed:

- **First tier**: Galway Metropolitan Area
- **Second tier**: Regional Growth Centres which are Sligo, Letterkenny and Athlone
- **Third tier**: Key Towns which are Ballina, Castlebar, Cavan, Ballinasloe, Carrick-on-Shannon, Monaghan, Roscommon and Tuam

Smaller towns and rural areas that are in the fourth and fifth tiers of the settlement hierarchy are to be defined by local authorities in their respective development plans.

2.2: Rebuilding Ireland

Rebuilding Ireland - which was launched in July 2016 - is the Irish government’s action plan for housing and homelessness which seeks to increase the overall supply of new homes to 25,000 per annum by 2020; deliver an additional 50,000 social housing units in the period to 2021; and meet the housing needs of an additional 87,000 households.
through the Housing Assistance Payment scheme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

Rebuilding Ireland consists of a comprehensive five pillar approach, with these pillars acting as the foundations of the strategy. The five pillars, along with the corresponding actions proposed under each pillar can be summarised as follows:

**Pillar 1: Address Homelessness**
- Provide early solutions to address the level of families in emergency accommodation; deliver inter-agency supports for people who are currently homeless with a particular emphasis on minimising the incidence of rough sleeping, and enhance State supports to keep people in their own homes.

**Pillar 2: Accelerate Social Housing**
- Increase the level and speed of delivery of social housing and other State supported housing.

**Pillar 3 - Build More Homes**
- Increase the output of private housing to meet demand at affordable prices.

**Pillar 4 – Improve the Rental Sector**
- Address the obstacles to greater private rented sector delivery, to improve the supply of units at affordable rents.

**Pillar 5 – Utilise Existing Housing**
- Ensure that existing housing stock is used to the maximum degree possible, focusing on measures to use vacant stock to renew urban and rural areas.

3: Relevant Policy Developments at Priority Levels

Although negotiations on the Cohesion Policy legislative package are ongoing, there is an acceptance that EU Cohesion funding should address the following Policy Objectives (POs):

1. **A smarter Europe** by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation
2. **A greener, low-carbon Europe** by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

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23: [https://rebuildingireland.ie/](https://rebuildingireland.ie/)
3. **A more connected Europe** by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity  

4. **A more social Europe** implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights  

5. **A Europe closer to citizens** by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives

The principle POs for the European Regional Development Funds will be PO1 and PO2. This allows for a focus on priority areas such as:

1. Research, innovation capacity and uptake of advanced technologies  
2. Benefits of digitization for citizens, government and companies  
3. Developing skills for smart specialization, industrial transition and entrepreneurship  
4. SME competitiveness & growth  
5. Energy efficiency, renewable energy  
6. Climate Change adaptation, risk prevention  
7. Enhancing green infrastructure, reducing pollution

On this basis, the following sub sections will outline recent policy developments that are relevant for each of these seven priorities.

### 3.1: Research, Innovation Capacity and uptake of Advanced Technologies

#### 3.1.1: Innovation 2020

Innovation 2020 is Ireland’s current strategy for research and development (R&D), science and technology and was launched in December 2015. The central vision of Innovation 2020 is for Ireland to become a Global Innovation Leader. One of the key metrics of the strategy is to increase total investment in R&D in Ireland - led by the private sector - to 2.5 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP). Its key goals are as followed:

- Excellent research will be performed in strategically important areas with relevance and impact for the Irish economy and society  
- Ireland will have a strong, innovative and internationally competitive enterprise base, growing sales, employment and exports

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The development of a renowned pool of talent in Ireland’s public research system and in industry, which maximises exchange of talent and knowledge between the two

A coherent, joined-up innovation ecosystem, responsive to emerging opportunities, delivering enhanced impact through the creation and application of knowledge

An internationally competitive research system that acts as a magnet and catalyst for talent and industry.

Furthermore, other targets to be delivered by Innovation 2020 include:

- The number of research personnel in enterprise will be increased by 60 per cent to 40,000
- Research masters and PhD enrolments will be increased by 500
- Private investment of R&D performed in the public research system will be doubled
- A 40 per cent increase in the share of PhD researchers transferring from SFI research teams to industry
- Ireland’s participation in International research organisations will be expanded by applying for full membership of ELIXIR, while also exploring membership options for ESO and CERN
- The network of Research Centres will be further developed, building critical mass and addressing enterprise needs
- A successor to the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions will be rolled out to include investment in the creation of new - and the maintenance and upgrading of existing - facilities and equipment and ensure full utilisation
- €1.25 billion funding under the EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020 will be drawn down
- A new Programme of Funding for Frontier Research will be introduced, which will meet new challenges or opportunities as they emerge
- Challenge-centric research will be initiated to stimulate solutions-driven collaborations bringing together enterprise, higher education institutions and the public sector to identify and address national challenges
- Ireland will benchmark its performance in these areas against other comparable economies and develop steps to improve its relative performance.
- A formal horizon-scanning exercise will be undertaken to identify areas of strategic commercial opportunity for Irish-based firms; with this process feeding into the
research prioritisation exercise completed in March 2018. This process saw several revisions and updates to both the themes and the priority areas to reflect changing circumstances between 2012 and 2017.  

3.1.2: Future Jobs Ireland  

To ensure Ireland’s economy is well positioned to adapt to future developments in technology, the Government launched a new economic pathway for the State based on embracing innovation and technological change, improving productivity, increasing labour force participation, enhancing skills and talent and transitioning to a low carbon economy. Future Jobs Ireland will drive Ireland’s development as a resilient, innovative, and globally connected economy, capable of coping with technological and other transformational changes ahead. Future Jobs Ireland focuses on five pillars namely:

1. Embracing innovation and technological change  
2. Improving SME productivity  
3. Enhancing skills and developing and attracting talent  
4. Increasing participation in the labour force  
5. Transitioning to a low carbon economy

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 sets out core ambitions for each of these pillars, each backed up by a set of specific deliverables and targets in the short and long term. The specific targets for each pillar are as followed:

**Embracing Innovation and Technological Change**

- Aim to significantly increase gross expenditure on research and development - as a % of GNP - from 1.4 to 2.5 per cent by 2025 (target to be reviewed in the context of the development of successor to Innovation 2020).
- Aim for substantial increases in the share of SMEs introducing product or process innovations and with marketing or organisational innovations.

**Improving SME Productivity**

- Target an annual average increase in multifactor productivity in the domestic sectors of the economy by 1 per cent per year to 2025.

**Enhancing Skills and Developing and Attracting Talent**

- Target a doubling of participation in lifelong learning by 2025.
• Aim to reach, and if possible exceed, the EU average in terms of the percentage of the population with at least basic digital skills and target a substantial increase in investment in training in Irish enterprises

**Increasing Participation in the Labour Force**

• Target a substantial 3 percentage point increase in overall participation rates for people aged 25 to 69 years to 78 per cent by 2025, with higher increases for females and older people

**Transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy**

• Target the completion of some 250,000 residential retrofits by 2025.

• Target an increase in the share of total energy use from renewable resources to 20 per cent by 2025.

• Set ambitious targets, including for CO2 reductions, in the government’s Climate Action Plan, which will seek to make Ireland a leader in responding to climate disruption.

### 3.1.3: Irish Research Council’s Strategy 2020 to 2024

The Irish Research Council’s five-year strategic plan was launched in January 2020. In order to realise its mandate, vision and mission, the strategic plan has five key goals, namely:

1. Enable excellence in people, skills and ideas across all disciplines for discovery and enterprise research.

2. Be a partner of choice nationally and internationally to support excellent research that addresses the present challenges

3. Demonstrate the value of the research that the Irish Research Council supports, ensuring that the knowledge and innovations generated are shared and exchanged to the maximum extent

4. Make a tangible contribution to innovation, evaluation and reform in the higher education and research ecosystem.

5. Achieve and maintain excellence and optimise the Irish Research Council’s capacity as an organisation.

The strategy also sets out a comprehensive series of actions which aim to address each of these objectives.
3.2: Benefits of Digitization for Citizens, Government and Companies

3.2.1: Technology Skills 2022

Technology skills 2022\textsuperscript{28} sets out priority actions which will be undertaken in the four-year period up to 2022 to meet the demands for high-level ICT skillsets in the Irish economy. It sets out to provide appropriate education and training pathways for people to train, learn and upskill in a variety of high-level ICT skills which are sought after by a diverse range of industries.

The overarching target of Technology Skills 2022 is to provide an additional 3,200 high-level ICT graduates per annum over and above the existing planned increase in provision to 2022. This implies that there will be 5,000 more graduates with high-level ICT skills graduating every year by 2022, allowing Ireland to meet up to 70 per cent of annual expected demand from the education and training system.

Meeting these skill needs will be delivered through three main actions, namely:

- Expanding the numbers of ICT graduates at level 8+, both through higher education academic pathways and through new apprenticeship models
- Strengthening existing pathways and the creation of new structured opportunities for the development of high-level ICT skills through progression from the further education and training system into higher education
- Facilitating inward migration of skilled ICT professionals both from within and outside the European Economic Area

Some of the measures\textsuperscript{29} to grow graduate numbers include:

- Expanding the number of graduates from mainstream computing and electrical and electronic engineering courses in higher education from 4,220 to 4,830 by 2022.
- Expanding the numbers of relevant Skillnet Ireland programmes which are aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications by more than 1,000 by 2022.
- Attracting more females to the ICT sector
- Providing new options to embed high-level ICT apprenticeships within the education and training sector to attract more than 1,000 new entrants per year by 2020.
- A high-level ICT reskilling pathway to provide opportunities for up to 2,750 people from diverse backgrounds between 2019 and 2022.


\textsuperscript{29} https://www.ics.ie/news/Technology_Skills_2022_Ireland_report
Programmes will target areas of high demand and high potential growth, including Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Animation, Gaming, Blockchain, Internet of Things, 3D Printing, Augmented and Virtual Reality along with Cybersecurity/Next Generation Security.

These measures will be enabled by current investment in Ireland’s higher education system, as well as the 0.1 percentage point increase in the Training Levy in 2019 and 2020 and the establishment of the €300 million Human Capital Initiative to be provided between 2020 and 2024.

3.2.2: eGovernment Strategy 2017 - 2020

The eGovernment strategy 2017-2020 has been developed to build upon the first eGovernment Strategy (eGovernment 2012-2015) with the aim of setting out the next phase of eGovernment in Ireland. The Strategy focuses on ten key actions which cover a range of themes including presentation of services, secure online identification, underlying infrastructure and appropriate skilling. Specifically, these ten key actions are as follows:

1. Develop a Digital Service Gateway
2. Maintain an overall Digital Programme plan overseen by the eGovernment Minister
3. Develop the government’s existing e-ID capability
4. Develop similar plans to facilitate business and location identification
5. Enhance government’s data-sharing capability
6. Introduce legislation to support government’s data-sharing ambitions
7. Continue to develop government’s Open Data portal
8. Transform government’s “back office”
9. Ensure appropriate governance is in place
10. Ensure staff have the skills and capabilities to help staff move forward in this regard

3.2.3: Public Service Data Strategy 2019 - 2023

The Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023 sets out a detailed vision with a set of goals and actions to deliver a more joined-up whole-of-Government approach to how data is used and managed within the public service. The strategy aims to put in place a series of measures to develop how data is governed, managed and re-used in a secure, efficient and transparent manner, for the benefit of citizens, businesses and policy makers.

31 https://assets.gov.ie/71077ac4ae109cd944d-c9b9e178962fa095.pdf
Its implementation will enable Government to respond to service demands efficiently, by:

- Providing more joined-up and integrated, end-to-end digital services
- Better processes for policy formulation and evaluation
- Improving protection and transparency of personal data processing
- Reducing administration by cutting the need for businesses and citizens to provide the same data over and over again

3.2.4: National Digital Strategy

The Government is currently developing a new National Digital Strategy to help Ireland maximise the socioeconomic benefits from digitalisation and its transformative effects. The strategy is a shared effort by the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform [32].

3.3: Developing skills for Smart Specialization, Industrial Transition and Entrepreneurship

3.3.1: National Skills Strategy 2025

The National Skills Strategy 2025 [33] was published in January 2016 and was developed in the context of significant reform in the education and training sector to ensure a more dynamic, responsive and high quality system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy.

The strategy aims to achieve the ambitious vision that Ireland will be renowned as a place where the talent of its people thrives through:

- The quality of its workforce; a workforce equipped with relevant knowledge, entrepreneurial agility and analytical skills
- The strength of relationships and transfer of knowledge between employers, education and training providers and all sections of society, and the resulting impact on how people are prepared for life and work
- The quality and relevance of Ireland's education and training base, which is responsive to the changing and diverse needs of Ireland's society and economy
- The effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity, and to enhance the well-being of the State


The effective use of technology to support talent and skills provision, to grow enterprise, and to enhance the lives of all within society

Given that the underlying basis of smart specialisation is the concentration of public resources in knowledge intensive activities along with the development of collaborative relationships between different stakeholders; it is clear that the realisation of the ambitions and objectives of the National Skills Strategy will be key to developing an environment that encourages and nurtures a culture of smart specialisation in Ireland.

From an industrial transition perspective, and considering the importance of skills development and life-long learning in this regard, relevant actions within strategy include:

- Action 1.1: Students at all stages will learn 21st century skills
- Action 1.2: Participation in STEM education will grow
- Action 1.3: Enhance integration, partnerships and synergy between further education and training and higher education sectors
- Action 1.4: Employees will participate in skills development through active collaboration with education and training providers
- Action 4.1: The benefits of lifelong learning will be promoted and communicated to the full population of Ireland
- Action 4.2: There will be more opportunities for those in employment to engage in education and training
- Action 4.3: Greater recognition of workplace learning and capacity for recognition of prior learning will be developed
- Action 5.1: Disadvantaged and under-represented groups will be supported to participate in education and training
- Action 5.2: Jobseekers will be supported to find the best possible job
- Action 5.4: Economically inactive and under-represented groups will be helped to increase their labour market participation

In terms of entrepreneurship, the strategy also outlined an action whereby the government would pilot innovative summer camps to promote entrepreneurial thinking and design skills among students. Other relevant actions within the strategy - from an entrepreneurship perspective - include:

- Action 2.2: The capability of SMEs will be enhanced through skills development
- Action 2.4: Promote research and innovation activities, particularly in SMEs

35 https://hea.ie/skills-engagement/entrepreneurship/
3.4: SMEs Competitiveness and Growth

3.4.1: Enterprise 2025

From the perspective of enterprise development, the ambition of the renewed Enterprise 2025 is to remain on the path to long term sustainable growth, by achieving the following by 2020:

- At least 2.3 million people in employment
- An unemployment rate of no more than 5.5 per cent while improving participation rates
- Realise the potential of Ireland’s regions so that unemployment is within 1 percentage point of the national average
- A 6 to 8 per cent growth rate in indigenous exports to reach €26 billion, with greater geographic and market diversification
- Ireland as a Global Innovation Leader with 2.5 per cent of GNP invested in R&D and Innovation;
- Expenditure in the Irish economy of €29 billion by agency supported enterprises
- Rank in the top 5 most competitive small countries in the world, with a business environment that supports entrepreneurship, scaling of Irish owned enterprises and is attractive for the next wave of foreign direct investment (FDI)

In terms of actions, Enterprise 2025 aims to:

- Increase the emphasis on developing Irish owned enterprises, embedding resilience in the State’s enterprise base
- Enhance productivity and deliver quality jobs, including supporting companies to navigate their way through Brexit
- Harness the distinctive characteristics of Ireland’s foreign and Irish owned enterprise mix through collaboration and clustering
- Place a spotlight on innovation and talent and leverage Ireland’s strengths in disruptive technologies so more enterprises develop new products, services and solutions to compete effectively against international competition
- Realise the full potential of Ireland’s regions through investments in place-making; developing places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work
- Develop Ireland’s international relationships and strengthen economic diplomacy to raise Ireland’s visibility

• Protect Ireland’s reputation and provide opportunities for Irish enterprises supported by the Global Footprint 2025 initiative

3.4.2: Regional Enterprise Plans

The Regional Enterprise Plans are two-year focused plans to the end 2020 and they are also ‘live’ documents, with the expectation that new initiatives can be taken on during their operation by the regional stakeholders.

The nine Regional Enterprise Plans – one for every NUTS 3 region in Ireland – stem from the original Regional Action Plans for Jobs (RAPJs) which ran from 2015 to 2018. The new Plans complement and add value to the ongoing work of the Enterprise Agencies, Local Enterprise Offices, Regional Skills Fora, and other bodies involved in supporting enterprise development in the regional setting. The 2020 targets initially set out under the RAPJ 2015 – 2018 remain in place, which were:

• to have a further 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020
• to have the unemployment rate of each region within one percentage point of the State average
• to generate enterprise growth and resilience and to enable the creation of employment that is of good quality and sustainable over the longer term.

3.4.3: Enterprise Ireland Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Enterprise Ireland’s latest Strategic Plan (2017-2020) aims are to:

• Assist clients to create 60,000 new jobs by 2020 and to sustain the existing record level of jobs.

• Aim to grow annual exports by €5 billion to €26 billion per annum and increase the level of spend in the Irish economy by €4 billion to €27 billion per annum by 2020.

This strategy also focuses on addressing the need for greater scale across Irish enterprises and Enterprise Ireland intends to achieve this by:

• Driving innovation in Irish enterprises to unprecedented levels through new supports to reach the target of €1.25 billion in R&D expenditure per annum by 2020.

• Improving the competitiveness of Irish companies through Enterprise Ireland’s Lean programmes and new client engagement model, which will provide targeted supports based on agreed milestones.

• Increasing the diversification of client company exports into new markets, with two-thirds of exports going beyond the UK. This includes a major focus on the Eurozone where Enterprise Ireland are targeting a 50 per cent increase in exports.

• Inspiring more companies to have global ambition
3.5: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

3.5.1: Climate Action Plan

In 2019, the government – via the Climate Action Plan\(^{37}\) – outlined a series of actions across every sector of society which will ensure that Ireland meets its 2030 climate commitments and which puts Ireland on course to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Climate Action Plan outlines specific targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

In terms of renewable energy, the Climate Action Plan aims to:

- Increase reliance on renewables from 30 to 70 per cent adding 12GW of renewable energy capacity with some of this delivered by private contracts
- Put in place a coherent support scheme for micro-generation with a price for selling power to the grid
- Open up opportunity for community participation in renewable generation as well as community gain arrangements
- Streamline the consent system, the connection arrangements, and the funding supports for the new technologies on and off shore

With respect to energy efficiency, relevant objectives in the Climate Action Plan include:

- Introducing stricter requirements for new buildings and substantial refurbishments
- Designing policies to get circa 500,000 existing homes to upgrade to B2 Building Energy Rating (BER)
- Installing 600,000 heat pumps, of which 400,000 will be in existing buildings
- Building a supply chain and a model for aggregation where home retrofits are grouped together to allow this level of activity to be funded and delivered
- Delivering two new district heating systems, and implementing a roadmap for delivering District Heating potential
- Increasing attention to Energy and Carbon ratings in all aspects of managing property assets
- Embedding energy efficiency, replacement of fossil fuels, careful management of materials and waste, and carbon abatement across all enterprises and public service bodies.
- Improving energy efficiency of public sector buildings by 50 per cent by 2030.

3.6: Climate Change Adaptation and Risk Prevention
3.6.1: National Adaptation Framework

Ireland’s first statutory National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was published in January 2018. The NAF sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of Ireland to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts.

Under the NAF, a total of twelve Government Departments were required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans in relation to priority areas that they are responsible for. These priority areas include:

1. Seafood
2. Agriculture
3. Forestry
4. Biodiversity
5. Built and Archaeological Heritage
6. Transport Infrastructure
7. Electricity and Gas Networks
8. Communication networks
9. Flood Risk Management
10. Water Quality
11. Water Service Infrastructure
12. Health

Each sectoral adaption plan identifies the key risks faced across the sector and the approach being taken to address these risks and build climate resilience for the future. The plans include actions that:

- Mainstream adaptation into key sectoral plans and policies
- Identify and understand the key vulnerabilities, risks, and opportunities facing specific sectors, as well as major risks cross cutting different sectors
- Ensure climate-proofing of strategic emergency planning
- Identify and collect information on the costs and benefits of adaptation within specific sectors


• Build capacity within sectors to cope with climate change
• Identify and address key research gaps within their sectors
• Improve co-ordination with the Local Government sector
• Develop appropriate monitoring and verification systems within sectors

Furthermore, the NAF requires Local authorities to prepare local adaptation strategies, while the NAF also aims to improve the enabling environment for adaptation through ongoing engagement with civil society, the private sector and the research community.

3.7: Reducing Pollution and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

3.7.1: Climate Action Plan

The overarching objectives of the Climate Action Plan - with respect to a reduction of pollution levels - are as follows:

• A reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 30 per cent by 2030 and the achievement of net zero target by 2050
• Deliver a cumulative reduction in emissions, over the period 2021 to 2030, of 58.4 MtCO2eq outside the Emissions Trading System (ETS), 17 MtCO2eq within the ETS, and 26.8 MtCO2eq. from land use
• Implement a carbon tax rate of at least €80 per tonne by 2030 and carry out a full assessment of a trajectory of increases over successive annual Budgets
• The realisation of the principle underpinning Project Ireland 2040 for compact, connected, and sustainable development
• Competitive funding rounds to promote research and innovation to meet the climate challenge

Considering that transport, agriculture and waste generation are some of the leading sources of pollution, the Climate Action Plan has outlined a series of relevant objectives to reduce the environmental impact of these areas.

To reduce the level of pollution generated from transport, the Climate Action Plan aims to:

• Accelerate the take up of EV cars and vans so that Ireland can reach 100 per cent of all new cars and vans being EVs by 2030. This will facilitate the achievement of the target of 950,000 EVs on the road by 2030, implying that approximately one third of all vehicles sold during the decade will be Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) or Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV)
• Make growth less transport intensive through better planning, remote and home-working and modal shift to public transport
• Increase the renewable biofuel content of motor fuels
• Set targets for the conversion of public transport fleets to zero carbon alternatives

To reduce the level of pollution generated from agriculture, the Climate Action Plan aims to:

• Deliver substantial verifiable greenhouse gas abatement through adoption of a specified range of improvements in farming practice, in line with recommendations from Teagasc
• Deliver expansion of forestry planting and soil management to ensure that carbon abatement from land-use is delivered over the period 2021 to 2030 and in the years beyond
• Support diversification within Agriculture and land use to develop sustainable and circular value chains and business models for lower carbon intensity farming, including, organic production, protection and enhancement of biodiversity and water quality, and the production of bio-based products and bioenergy through the Common Agricultural Policy and implementation of the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy

Furthermore, the Climate Action Plan also aim to improve waste efficiency by:

• Developing coherent reduction strategies for plastics, food waste, and resource use
• Increase the level and the quality of recycling, with less contamination and greater replacement of virgin materials by recycling. Specifically, aim will be to recycle 70 per cent of packing waste and 55 per cent of plastic packaging waste by 2030.
• Eliminate non-recyclable plastic
• Reducing the reliance on landfill with the aim of reducing the percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill to 10 per cent by 2035.
Summary of Progress Achieved under the Operational Programme

For all priorities under the BMW ROP, a total of €247,659m in public eligible expenditure selected has been reported with €210,128m in public expenditure paid by the body responsible for making payments to beneficiaries reported. The Managing Authority declared eligible expenditure for the period up to the 31/12/2018 in the first half of 2019 in advance of the June 2019 financial milestones deadline. As a result, the total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority across all priorities for the period 01/01/14 to 31/12/2018 as of 28th June 2019 was €81,930,283m. By the end of 2019, the total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority across all priorities for the period 01/01/14 to 31/12/2019 was €90,643,530m.

The BMW ROP does not include any financial instruments. All ex-ante conditionalities were fulfilled on the adoption of the ROP. Therefore, no actions were required to be taken during programme implementation.

Good progress has been made in the implementation of all the Investment Priorities included in the Regional Operational Programme. The Operational Programme is being delivered in an effective and planned manner and is achieving impressive results. It is achieving its targets, the selection rate is high, physical outputs are high and the expenditure reported by IBs is also high.
Summary of Progress Achieved under the Operational Programme

The financial milestones for Priority 1, Priority 3 and Priority 4 at 30th June 2019 have been achieved in line with Article 6.2 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 215/2014. The only milestone relating to Priority 2 is a Key Implementation Step, that the procurement process for the National Broadband Plan has been launched, and this milestone was achieved. The financial milestone at 30th June 2019 for Priority 5 was not achieved but substantial progress has been reported since then regarding completion of works in respect of projects included under Priority 5.

Following on an audit mission to Ireland in November 2019 (Audit No. REGC314IE0171) in respect of the re-performance of management verifications with a focus on the respect of State aid rules, Member State was requested to clarify or validate the facts presented in the draft audit report submitted on 12th February 2020 and express its agreement or disagreement with its findings, actions and recommendations set out in the report. A interruption notification dated 13th February 2020 was also received which communicated a 6 month interruption of the payment deadline from that date.

A detailed response to the draft report together with a comprehensive Action Plan to address the draft audit findings was submitted to the Commission on 12th June. This Action Plan demonstrates the Member State’s commitment to satisfactorily address the Commission’s findings in the draft report. After analysing the information contained in the response the Commission by letter dated 27th July 2020 confirmed the lifting of the interruption of the payment deadline.

The Commission auditors will shortly communicate the final version of this report following examination of the draft audit report reply from the Member State. The Member State will then be invited to inform the Commission auditors on the implementation of recommendations and actions within the deadlines indicated for each recommendation in the final audit report.

It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic will have a significant adverse impact on Ireland’s economy, the degree to which this impact will be felt across our region, is uncertain. Under a proposed Operational Programme Modification issued by written procedure on 31st July 2020 the Managing Authority has proposed a new Priority No. 7 - Health Support Scheme under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII+) to address the immediate crisis presented by COVID-19 in the region. It is proposed to transfer all undeclared funds in Priorities 1.2 and 3 to this new Priority.

The content of this report focuses on progress up to the end of 2019 and predates those changes.
2019 Performance v Final Targets

123%

Number of new researchers in supported entities

52%

Number of enterprises receiving R & D supports

57%

Employment increase in supported enterprises

138%

Enterprises receiving EI financial support

8683

Number of households with improved energy consumption classification

85%

100%

Number of integrated growth centre strategies submitted
Priority 1: Strengthening RTDI

The overall objectives of this Priority are to: (a) increase the level of research taking place in the BMW region, with company engagement, by supplying applied research and (b) to increase the number of companies undertaking Industry R&D in the BMW region. It comprises of 7 individual schemes around research centres, marine research, and commercialisation of research.

Progress on Priority 1 is strong in terms of expenditure and impact and the priority has exceeded the final measure target for the number of new researchers in supported entities.

As at December 2019 eleven awards were made under the Investigator Programme which are based in the BMW Region. To date two awards INSIGHT and CURAM with an SFI award value of €73m, (direct cost budget) have been made which are based in the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and as at December 2019 all Research Centres awards were fully operational.

To date there have been no Spokes awarded to NUI Galway. It would be up to either of the two Research Centres INSIGHT and CURAM to apply for a Spokes award which is linked to the main research centre award. No awards have been made to date and its unlikely that the final target of 5 spokes awards will be met.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the IB for the Research Centres and Spokes Programme, undertook a review of their Management Information System (MIS) and were preparing a revised final target for performance indicator CO24, No. of new researchers in supported entities (FTE), and performance indicator 1.3, No. of awards under the Spokes Programme in the BMW Region. The Managing Authority had been closely monitoring the progress and implementation of these schemes.
Priority 1: Strengthening RTDI

The number of enterprises receiving R&D supports in the BMW region has met its milestone. This programme continues to be rolled out successfully and there have been no significant problems.

The ERDF Programme to strengthen Research, Technology Development and Innovation remains effectively and efficiently provided for within Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise Ireland has a final target of 95 companies to receive Innovation Partnership support by 2020 and the programme is on track to meet the final target. The pipeline for 2020 has been strong however, it is expected that the Covid-19 interruption may have an impact on the capacity of some enterprises to focus on innovation activities in the short term.

In 2019 the Commercialisation Fund performed very strongly in the BMW Region and future prospects are also strong.

The Managing Authority were confident that strong continuous management of the scheme would have ensured that the targets were met.

The Managing Authority and Enterprise Ireland were confident that activity levels were in place to deliver on agreed targets for the Innovation Partnership and Commercialisation Fund Schemes in the BMW Region.

The Marine Institute published a competitive call for applications for eight Post-Doctoral Fellowships on 1st August 2019. These fellowships have been selected for ERDF co-funding. A total of 17 proposals were received by the closing date of 18th September 2019 requesting total funding of €6.4m. Following the evaluation process grant offers were made to fund eight fellowships with a total investment of €3m to three higher education institutes – NUI Galway five awards, University College Cork two awards and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology one award. Two proposals have also been held in reserve should funding become available in 2020.

The total grant-aid awarded to the BMW partners is €2.4m. The total investment for ERDF co-funding is now €7.4m with €3.1m awarded in the BMW region.

For this priority €96.457m in public eligible expenditure has been reported, representing 92.75% of the total allocation to the priority. Public eligible expenditure paid to beneficiaries is reported as €78.288m which represents 75.28% of the total allocation to this priority.

In response to the effects of the Covid pandemic it is proposed under OP modification letter dated 31st July 2020 to transfer all undeclared expenditure in Priority 1 to the proposed new Priority No. 7 Health Support Scheme.
The National Broadband Plan for Ireland was published in 2012 as part of the Government’s commitment to the deliver high speed broadband throughout Ireland. The NBP aims to ensure that every home, school and business in Ireland regardless of how remote or rural, has access to high speed broadband. The objectives to increase broadband connectivity outlined in the NBP is of great importance for jobs, economic growth, innovation and social cohesion.

On the 19th November 2019 the Government signed the contract with National Broadband Ireland (NBI) to roll out high speed broadband to 1.1 million people living and working in the nearly 540,000 premises including 100,000 businesses and farms and over 600 schools where commercial operators will not commit to deliver the service. NBI, by the end of 2021, plans to pass approximately 115,000 premises. Approximately 70,000 to 100,000 premises will be passed each year thereafter with the final premises to be completed in 2026. The NBI network will include over 1.5 million poles, over 15,000 km of underground ducts and up to 146,000 km of new fibre cable. The network will make available 150 Mbps broadband product for consumers upgraded to 300Mbps by year 6 and 500Mbps by year 10. The network is designed with a roadmap to upgrade the services over 25 years. This ensures that the network is future proofed to meet requirements in years to come. Business and residential customers will be able to avail of 1Gbps from day 1.

In response to the effects of the Covid pandemic it is proposed under OP Modification letter dated 31st July 2020 to transfer all funding in Priority 2 to the proposed new Priority No. 7 Health Support Scheme.
Priority 3: SME Support, Promotion and Capability Development

This priority seeks to promote entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators. The priority also seeks to support the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes.

Implementation on Priority 3 is strong in terms of expenditure and impacts. Output indicators under this priority in relation to employment increase in supported enterprises and the number of enterprises receiving Enterprise Ireland financial support, have both exceeded their milestones. The financial milestone for Priority 3 has been achieved.

Entrepreneurship in the Micro enterprise scheme is delivered through the 13 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) located in the Border, Midlands and Western region. 3,149 new jobs were created in businesses supported by the Local Enterprise Offices in 2019. Since the Local Enterprise Offices were established in 2014, they have supported the creation of over 18,600 jobs nationwide with 144,830 entrepreneurs and business people trained in a range of skills over the five years.

Enterprise Ireland undertook to complete a review of their Management Information System (MIS) with respect to the potential for double indicator data reporting and to eliminate any duplicates identified. The indicative timeline to complete the review was H1 2020. The Managing Authority will continue to monitor this situation with an objective of agreeing revised final targets informed by this exercise, in Q3 2020.
Priority 3: SME Support, Promotion and Capability Development

The New Frontiers programme forms an important element of Enterprise Ireland’s strategy in the promotion of entrepreneurship and creation of new business start-ups across the regions. There are currently 12 programmes run across 16 Institutes of Technology/Universities and are open to applications from a diversity of sectors. Each year, New Frontiers supports over 400 Phase 1 and 160 Phase 2 participants. In 2019, a total of 168 participants passed through Phase 2 of the programme of which 52 hailed from the BMW area. A pilot funded Phase 3 commenced in 2019 for a total of 36 participants, selected from across the 12 programmes. This will be reviewed at the end of 2020 to determine if this additional support will result in a higher number of quality projects that could move to EI HPSU or LEO.

The SME Competitiveness Programme continues to be rolled out successfully and to-date no issues have hindered the performance of the programme.

However, Enterprise Ireland has reported that the Coronavirus outbreak and Brexit represents a potentially significant risk to enterprise development. At this juncture it is unclear of the precise nature of this risk. As a result, the LEOs now have a Covid-19 Business Continuity Response and Brexit tool kit developed which may be implemented if an economic crisis unfolds.

Overall, implementation of the SME Development Priority is well advanced with achievements reported against all agreed output indicators in accordance with target values.

Assuming the economic development conditions prevail and that there will not be an adverse effect from Brexit and the Coronavirus, Enterprise Ireland is confident about delivering the performance targets agreed under the BMW ROP.

For this priority €61.791m in public eligible expenditure has been reported, representing 104.33% of the total allocation to the priority. Public eligible expenditure paid to beneficiaries is reported as €50.797m which represents 85.77% of the total allocation to this priority.

In response to the effects of the Covid pandemic it is proposed under OP Modification letter dated 31st July 2020 to transfer all undeclared expenditure in Priority 3 to the proposed new Priority No. 7 Health Support Scheme.
Priority 4: Low Carbon Economy

This priority focuses on supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector. The priority comprises of two initiatives.

The principle objective of the programme is to meet Ireland’s commitments in relation to carbon emissions reduction and energy reduction target for 2020. The specific objective of the priority is to improve energy efficiency in the housing stock in the BMW Region. It is intended that the retrofitting proposal will fully meet the stringent requirements and ambitious targets of the Energy Efficiency Directive.

Progress on the implementation of Priority 4 is very strong. The milestone target relating to the number of households with improved energy consumption classification has been significantly exceeded and expenditure on the ground has been strong.

In H1 2019, the two Intermediary Bodies for the Low Carbon Economy Priority undertook a quality review of the indicator data reported for C031 Energy efficiency: Number of households with improved energy consumption classification. The Managing Authority engaged the IBs in a series of meetings whereby the agreed action plan required each IB to complete the exercise they commenced in 2019 for the indicator C031 Energy efficiency: Number of households with improved energy consumption classification.

A new baseline and target have been proposed for Results Indicator 4c.1, average thermal performance of housing units in the BMW Region.
Priority 5: Sustainable Urban Development

Priority 5 relates to capital flagship projects within urban centres that were classified as Gateways under the National Spatial Strategy. These projects must go through robust planning and procurement processes before works can commence.

In 2019 the Managing Authority effected the OP modifications arising from the requirement to reallocate the Performance Reserve from Priority 5 as the financial milestone target for Priority 5 was not achieved in the BMW Region due to insufficient expenditure declared.

The OP modification for the BMW ROP was approved by the Monitoring Committee in November 2019 and adopted by the European Commission in April 2020. Some of the projects under this scheme were still at the early stages of implementation during 2019 however substantial progress has now been reported with four of the projects completed to date and construction started on two others.

The Managing Authority continues to monitor the physical and financial performance of this Priority very closely, with a key focus on declaration of eligible expenditure and ensuring robust project management and regular communication with the local authorities concerned to minimise any further delay.
Progress Reports Received from the Implementing Bodies

PrioritY 1:  Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region

SFI Research Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>SFI Research Centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

Overview on objectives, description of the intervention, progress and achievements, also with regard to financial and indicator data.

The objective of the Research Centres Programme is to develop a set of world leading, large scale Research Centres that will provide major economic impact for Ireland.

SFI Research Centres link scientists and engineers in partnerships across academia and industry to address research questions and foster the development of new and existing Irish based technology companies. They also attract industry that could make an important contribution to Ireland and its economy, attract international research talent and capital and increase the number of SFI trained researchers employed in industry.

The Research Centres are structured on a hub and spoke model consisting of several targeted projects undertaken in partnership with industry that connect into a central hub containing the platform research and core operations. A key feature of the SFI Research Centres is the creation of a critical mass of internationally leading researchers in strategic areas which become a key attractant to industry and lay the foundation for effective and productive academic and industrial partnerships.
A key objective of the Research Centre funding is to meet the challenging needs of industry and society. This is done by providing the foundation for sustainable research activity which can take place in conjunction with industry partners and other funding agencies such as the EU by leveraging against the core SFI funding.

SFI Research Centres envisage maximising capabilities, outputs and industry offerings including the transfer of knowledge and expertise to enterprises and the spin out of new high technology start-up companies. The programme will contribute to the specific objective of the investment priority by increasing the level of strategic research taking place in the region, aligned with strong industrial linkages and will promote eco-innovation where relevant

**Description of key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems during the reporting period.**

To date two awards INSIGHT and CURAM with an SFI award value of €73m (direct cost budget) have been made which are based in the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Ref</th>
<th>Research Centre</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Total Direct Cost Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/RC/2289</td>
<td>INSIGHT</td>
<td>01.07.13</td>
<td>30.06.19</td>
<td>44,439,432</td>
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<tr>
<td>13/RC/2073</td>
<td>CURAM</td>
<td>01.01.15</td>
<td>31.12.20</td>
<td>28,823,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>73,262,670</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment of the information provided in points 1.1 and 1.2 as regards progress towards achieving the objectives of the scheme.**

As mentioned above the objective of the Research Centres Programme is to develop a set of world leading, large scale Research Centres that will provide major economic impact for Ireland. At December 2019 two of the seventeen Research Centre currently funded by SFI are hosted by NUIG.

Finally, as per the commentary above and the Output Indicators below SFI is well on target to achieving the objectives of the scheme.

2. **Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

Priority-level **Output Indicators** - Investment Priority 1(a)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C024</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of new researchers in supported entities (common output indicator)</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalents</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C024</td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>Number of new researchers in supported entities (common output indicator)</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalents</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.*

*Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.*

**Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 1(a)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Increased number of Industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the BMW region</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013**

**Financial data at priority axis and programme level**

*Operations selected for support*¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost</th>
<th>Public eligible cost</th>
<th>Total eligible</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

¹ Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
of operations selected for support (EUR) | of operations selected for support (EUR) | expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR) | of operations selected
---|---|---|---
2014 | 8,229,184 | 8,229,184 | 0 | 2
2015 | 6,207,927 | 6,207,927 | 0 | 2
2017 | 8,066,671 | 8,066,671 | €30,597,501 Notes 2-3 | 2
2018 | €8,066,641 Note 4 | 2
Total | €38,664,142 | €38,664,142 | €38,664,112 | 2

1. Combined declaration made for 2014/2015 made in 2018 – only includes Payroll costs and excludes PhD stipends (see note under section 1.2.above)
2. Declaration for 2016 made in late 2018. (only payroll costs excluding PhD stipends)
3. Declaration for 2017 includes the standard 2017 declaration of payroll costs of c. €8,1 mill plus PhD costs for 2014-2016 of c. €4,835 mill
4. Declaration for 2018 made in late 2019

### Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€8,299,184</td>
<td>€8,229,184</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>€6,207,927</td>
<td>€6,207,927</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€8,066,671</td>
<td>€8,066,671</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€8,000,000</td>
<td>€8,000,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€46,664,142</td>
<td>€46,664,142</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

The duration of the Research Centres are for a period of 6 years. All awards of this timescale follow a similar lifecycle from an initial ramp up phase through to being substantially complete in the final months of the award. As at December 2019 the two research Centres awards included in this report are fully operational.

5. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

The Information and Communication Guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014 was circulated to all Higher Educational Institutions (HEI’s) funded under the 2014-20 Operational Programme. The SFI Strategy and Communications Directorate are in ongoing contact with the Research Centre Communication Officers stressing the importance of adherence to the information and publicity requirements. They also provide ongoing support and assistance to ensure that the contribution of ERDF is acknowledged in all promotional material and on the Research Centre’s website.

Please see **Appendix 1** for examples of how the INSIGHT and CURAM Research Centre have publicised the ERDF contribution.

6. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

*Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan*

**Gender Equality**

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is committed to removing and mitigating any existing or perceived factors that may limit the participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers, and to redressing the gender imbalance amongst SFI award holders, of which 26% are female (Source: SFI Research Outputs (Census) 2018).

The underlying causes of the gender imbalance at decision-making levels across all sectors in STEM are numerous and complex, and include the following:

- Childbearing and caregiving are major determining factors for women leaving competitive STEM careers, but not the only factors; the lack of role models is also frequently cited and as such gender imbalance appears to be self-reinforcing.
- The working environment in Research Bodies (RBs) is often perceived as unsupportive of female candidates at all levels of seniority.
One of the sharpest declines in the percentages of women represented on the traditional academic research career track occurs between the graduate and tenure-track/permanent position career points (the so-called ‘leaky pipeline’).

To address the above causes of gender imbalance, SFI will focus on streamlining gender initiatives across all its programmes as outlined in the SFI Gender Strategy 2016-2020. This strategy paper provides guidance on the implementation of policies that aim to achieve the following objectives,

- To achieve the revised target of 30% female award holders by 2020.
- To increase the uptake of STEM subjects by female students at second and third level.
- To increase the proportion of women leading major STEM research initiatives in Ireland.
- To increase the proportion of women in the Science Foundation Ireland peer-review process.
- To ensure that the SFI peer-review process remains unbiased.
- To increase excellence in research and impact by requiring Science Foundation Ireland applicants to demonstrate that they have considered any potential gender dimension in their proposed research.
- To increase excellence in research and impact, by continuing to fund meritorious researchers regardless of their gender, while widening the pool of potential applicants.

The policies developed and associated outcomes will complement and support the Athena SWAN initiative, where within three years, the Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland and the Health Research Board will require universities to have attained and all other Research Bodies (RB) to have applied for a bronze institutional Athena SWAN award by the end of 2019. In 2019, all RBs eligible for SFI have met these targets. The Athena Swan Charter is the internationally recognised ‘quality mark’ for gender equality. Administered by the U.K.’s Equality Challenge Unit, accreditation indicates that an institution has demonstrated commitment to advancing gender equality across all academic disciplines. Accreditation is made at bronze, silver and gold levels.

The HEA negotiated the second extension of the Athena SWAN Charter to Ireland in 2020 in response to strong interest from the Irish higher education community, and all universities, institutes of technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland are eligible to apply. In taking this step, the agencies are adopting a key recommendation of the National Review of Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions, conducted by an Independent Expert Group and published in June 2016, which showed that significant gender inequality remains in higher education. The move will promote gender equality in researcher careers and the gender dimension in research content, which are also key requirements for winning European Horizon 2020 research funding.

Regarding the SFI Gender Strategy, the actions proposed will address the whole funding pipeline of programmes that fall under SFI’s remit and can be divided into three strands:
**Strand 1 – Gender in Education and Public Engagement**

Science Foundation Ireland is implementing several measures aimed at increasing the number of students studying STEM subjects at second and third level. In 2014 Science Foundation Ireland commissioned a study into the career choices of young people in Ireland. Looking at a representative sample of students in the first year of their undergraduate third level course the study examined the key influencing factors in course selection.

The study found that “fitting in” is most important to young people making qualification choices. Being able to identify themselves in a future role is the key influencing factor. Career opportunities and earning potential were also identified by the study as important, but secondary. Information about a course or career will not even be sought by young people if they have no affinity with the associated stereotypes. Parents were found to have an important role in influencing a child’s opinion on whether they ‘fit in’. This reinforces the importance of breaking perceived stereotypes amongst this group. Informed by this finding, Strand 1 will look to increase the participation and interest of girls in STEM-related activities, and thereby their confidence in the relevance of studying STEM subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions on Gender in Education and Public Engagement</th>
<th>The SFI Discover team will support projects that aim to increase the numbers of women pursuing STEM subjects. Such projects that are evaluated as being excellent and impactful will be supported where funding is available.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFI will publish evaluations of public engagement projects that address gender parity, to inform the broader public engagement community on best practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFI will ensure that our public engagement materials, activities and online content represent gender parity and challenge unconscious bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFI is contributing to the National STEM Education Policy and is Chairing the DES Gender Balance in STEM Education (Early Years to Post Primary) Group. This group is tasked with providing recommendations to the DES National STEM Education Policy on effective interventions to address gender balance in STEM Education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strand 2 – Gender Balance in Research Teams**
This Strand aims to tackle the under-representation of women in the STEM research sector, by implementing policies aimed at increasing the proportion of women in the Science Foundation Ireland funded portfolio, thereby contributing to attain the Science Foundation Ireland revised target: 30% of female award holders by 2020. Strand 2 will also aim to increase the number of women in the organisation’s peer-review process, by setting targets for female representation within the agency’s review panels, and concrete measures to attain those targets. The policies and programmes under this Strand may be grouped into two areas,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions to Increase the Number of Women in SFI's Funded Portfolio</th>
<th>Provide incentives for research Bodies to submit applications from female researchers to various programmes. An example of such an incentive is the SFI SIRG programme, where the institutional cap was recently increased from 6 to 12 applications where at least 50% of the applicants were women. Develop targeted gender initiatives, informed by annual gender-disaggregated statistics and the monitoring and analysis of the gender balance of applicants and awardees. Improve SFI call documents and programmes in areas such as eligible costs, time flexibility and eligibility criteria which would caregivers to undertake or remain in a STEM research career. Design and implement specific grant management policies to deal with the needs of female researchers during periods of maternity and adoptive leave. Set and monitor targets for gender balance in research teams within SFI’s programmes with the aim of ensuring that research teams are comprised of at least 40% women and at least 40% men. Within three years require the HEI’s to have attained an Athena Swan Bronze Institutional Award to be eligible for funding. Within seven years SFI will require HEI’s to have attained an Athena Swan Silver Institutional Award to be eligible for funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
One of the objectives of the SFI Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) programme is to contribute to improving gender balance in the higher education sector. Towards achieving this objective, the 2018 SIRG call permitted Research Bodies to put forward a maximum of 12 candidates for the submission of a proposal to the SIRG programme of which a maximum of six could be male. Upon submission to SFI, all applications will be treated equally regardless of the gender of the applicant. Only those deemed excellent and impactful will be recommended for funding. This approach is in line with SFI’s strategic objectives, as outlined in Agenda 2020, and will support success in attaining our KPI target of 30% female award holders. It also supports the retention of excellent female researchers within academia, thereby increasing excellence in research and impact by continuing to fund meritorious researchers regardless of their gender, while widening the pool of potential applicants.

Although limited data is available, we have concluded recently that

- Female researchers are as competitive as their male counterparts in terms of their SFI funding success rate i.e., ~30% across all programmes.
- However, female researchers account for only ~26% of SFI funding applications received.
- Data suggests that applying a SIRG-type gender balance incentive on institutional nominations where a cap exists can capture more female applicants than increasing the institutional cap alone.

More broadly and as indicated by the HEA data, capacity in the career pipeline is an issue and more aggressive measures are required to meet the SFI’s Gender target of 30% female award holders by 2020. There is a risk that limiting funding opportunities for early career researchers will impact female researchers more significantly than male researchers, and further delay gender rebalancing along the career pipeline. Consequently, this could potentially reduce women’s ability to lead major STEM research initiatives in Ireland, which is another of SFI’s gender targets.
Gender targeted initiatives were run in the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme (FFP) 2019 call, measures included having the call language reviewed by a gender expert for inclusivity, the widening of eligibility criteria to allow a more diverse applicant pool, the addition of an “emerging investigator category” to allow for researchers with non-linear track careers and the introduction of final score rounding and gender as a tie-breaker for funding decisions. While the FFP call has not been completed, we can report that there was an increase in the number of female applicants, as compare to historical SFI programmes targeting the same career stage.

**Strand 3 – Integrating Gender in Research and Innovation**

Research generates knowledge that serves as the basis for social development, policy formulation and the development of services and products. It is crucial that this knowledge benefits all individuals in society, regardless of gender. Both in ERA and Horizon 2020 it has been pointed out that gender perspectives are not a sufficiently integral part of research and innovation (R&I). This applies in Ireland as well. By increasing the relevance of basic and applied research endeavours to both men and women, the integration of gender perspectives in the research programmes would improve both the scientific quality and the impact of the Science Foundation Ireland outputs and outcomes.

Neglecting the gender dimension in research can lead to false conclusions, inapplicable results and withdrawal of commercial products. While it is perfectly acceptable that research programmes in specific fields might not need to consider gender aspects within the project design, it is critical that researchers assess if that is the case, and if so, that they justify the rationale for exclusion of gender aspects in their experimental design. The Strategy will work to ensure that gender is integrated as a perspective in all the research Science Foundation Ireland funds, when this is relevant. The integration of gender/sex in the research programme may be manifested in the research questions raised and the theoretical approaches and methods used. While it might be argued that the review process should already consider this aspect within the research ‘excellence’ criterion, this is not always the case. It is therefore crucial that funding agencies drive behaviour and raise awareness in the research community, by asking reviewers to consider if and how gender perspectives are included in the R&I design. Examples of gender integration in research can be found on the EU Gendered Innovations website.

During 2017, wording was developed for inclusion in all call documents that required applicants to provide a statement articulating the sex/gender variables in their research, as well as guidance for applicants and a request for comment from the reviewers. This approach was ‘soft’ launched for a number of SFI programmes including Res Prof, FRL, TIDA. In 2019, this was ‘hard’ launched, with applicants in all SFI calls required to address this in their research proposals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions on Integarting Gender in Research</th>
<th>SFI will request applicants to demonstrate that they have considered any potential gender aspects in their proposed research programmes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

51
Some ongoing initiatives in SFI to address the gender imbalance include the following,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Allowance</td>
<td>In 2014, SFI introduced a maternity allowance that provided our award holders with funding when either they themselves or a team member takes a period of maternity or adoptive leave. These funds can be used by the Research Body to hire additional staff to support the administration of the project, to hire a replacement team member or to extend the project so that the team member can complete their work after returning from leave. In 2019, SFI extended maternity and adoptive allowance to include postgraduate students funded on SFI awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare as an eligible travel expense</td>
<td>To support researchers with children, in 2019, SFI introduced childcare cost while traveling as an eligible expense on SFI awards. This includes the costs associated with enabling a partner to travel with a researcher with a young child and/or childcare costs during conferences and workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open &amp; transparent data - SFI Gender Dashboard</td>
<td>To allow open transparent data, in 2019 SFI launched the SFI Gender Dashboard. This online interactive dashboard on SFI’s website allows the public to view and interrogate SFI’s data in relation to the number of applications and awards granted, success rates and average award amount by gender, as well as the average total amount requested in applications and the average award amount, by gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFI Centres for Research Training Programme (CRT)</td>
<td>In 2018, this PhD training programme call launched with targets for the gender balance of research teams at three levels specified (Co-Principal Investigator, PhD Supervisor and PhD students). All funded CRTs met these targets in their research proposals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the success of the unconscious bias training delivered to all SFI staff including Board Members in 2016 and to feed into the ongoing work on reproducibility in research, the leading expert in the field of sex and gender in research from Stanford University, Professor Londa Schiebinger, delivered training on integrating gender in research to all SFI staff. To ensure SFI’s review process is fair and unbiased, reviewers are required to watch an unconscious bias training video, developed by SFI, before accepting proposals for review.
Whilst many of these actions are underway, SFI is also participating in Horizon 2020-led initiatives whose objectives are to promote gender equality / redressing in STEM. During 2017, SFI was successful funded in an EU gender project called ACT. ACT will enable better access, sharing, and improvement of gender equality knowledge by advancing Communities of Practice (CoP) as agents for implementing gender equality actions amongst RPOs and RFOs in the European Research Area, including integration of the gender dimension into research content and process. The Consortium includes 19 organisations and includes 50 experts, to ensure that results are sustainable and produce the desired impact. The expected impacts include: 1) ensuring that researchers, their organisations, and the projects they are involved in are better equipped to stop gender bias affecting quality of science knowledge making; 2) improving understanding of gender issues in science, and how to address them, including in science curriculum, and researcher training; 3) enhancing standards for assessment of institutional excellence through incorporation of gender equality as a criterion of success; and 4) more systematic and systemic adoption of best tools and practices for GEP implementation. As a Research Funding Organisation in ACT, SFI has setup and is coordinating a CoP amongst 15 RFOs across Europe.

In addition to this, SFI actively participates in the Irish Funders’ Forum for Gender Equality, which aims to share knowledge, learnings and develop complementary policies for gender equality between five RFOs in Ireland (SFI, HRB, IRC, EI and HEA).

SFI also offer a broad range of programme aimed at promoting education and public engagement with STEM.

**Science Week** ([www.scienceweek.ie](http://www.scienceweek.ie)) is an annual week-long event in Ireland each November, celebrating science in our everyday lives. It is the largest science festival in the country, engaging tens of thousands of members of the general public in workshops, science shows, talks, laboratory demonstrations, science walks and other science-related events. Science Week is a collaboration of events involving industry, colleges, schools, libraries, teachers, researchers and students throughout Ireland. Science Week encourages people of all ages and from all walks of life to be informed, inspired and involved in STEAM through fun, engaging and interactive events and initiatives.

In 2019, Science Week had 13 regional festivals offering a range of opportunities for the public to engage with STEM in Cavan/Monaghan, Cork, Carlow, Festival of Farming and Food (Teagasc), Galway, Limerick, Mayo, the Midlands, Sligo, Southeast, Tipperary, Wexford and Kerry. Science Week 2019 featured family open days, schools outreach events and public talks across more than 20 counties around Ireland. The theme for Science Week 2019 was Climate Action. It focused on what climate change means and how science can help us understand the facts behind climate action and potential solutions. As part of the effort to help people understand the part trees can play in climate action, forestry agency Coillte provided Science Foundation Ireland with 30,000 trees which were distributed planted around the country during Science Week.
**Smart Futures** is co-ordinated and managed by Science Foundation Ireland to provide information about careers in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The initiative, primarily through online channels, provides STEM career resources and role models to students, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents in Ireland in an aim to stimulate an interest in STEM subjects in secondary school and at third level.

The Discover Primary Science and Maths (DPSM) programme ([www.primaryscience.ie](http://www.primaryscience.ie)) is a flagship initiative of Science Foundation Ireland’s Education and Public Engagement programme, and aims to introduce primary school students to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in a practical, hands-on, enjoyable and interactive way. The programme offers a wide range of supports including:

- Continuous Professional Development Workshops and Summer Courses for teachers
- The SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards
- A network of 59 SFI Discover Centres offering accredited workshops to schools

Through the CPD programme, teachers are provided with a Framework and planning tool for teaching inquiry-based learning and are provided with resources and classroom activity packs which can also be used by parents and students. The SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards offer primary schools the opportunity to gain recognition for the STEM work they are doing. By completing STEM related activities or investigations for each of the 5 steps to Award (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, STEM Show & Tell) and compiling a Log of Evidence, schools can obtain either a Certificate of STEM or Plaque of STEM for their school. To date more than 50% of all primary schools in Ireland have received at least one SFI Discover Science and Maths Award previously, with 620 schools receiving an award in 2019. Last year the SFI Discover Centre Network grew to 59 members, all of which offer DPSM accredited STEM workshops for primary schools and help to support informal STEM learning outside of the classroom. Many of these SFI Discover Centres also offer STEM activities on an outreach basis and engagement with a centre can contribute towards the school’s log of evidence for their Award.

The **SFI Discover Programme Call** is an annual funding call for education and public engagement (EPE) projects. Funding is awarded to a range of organisations, both academic institutions and other bodies, (companies, charities, NGOs etc) to engage the public with Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. Funding of up to €50,000 is available for a one-year project or up to €300,000 for a two-year project which must have regional or national impact. SFI typically funds 40 to 50 such projects each year and has provided funding of almost €25 million to over 400 projects since the programme’s launch in 2014. In addition to the annual funding call, a separate call for Science Week Festivals and Events is launched each year to support regional festivals and events around the country to take place in November each year.
Research Integrity

SFI is committed to fostering a culture of integrity. This spans the spectrum of SFI’s funded research, from the conduct of rigorous studies to the accurate reporting and publication of research results, whether performed in Ireland or with international partners. Overarchingly, Science Foundation Ireland endorses the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland; that is, all research performing organisations and Science Foundation Ireland award holders are expected to abide by this policy statement, as reflected in SFI’s General Grant Terms & Conditions. We also endorse the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, which is largely reflected in the national statement. SFI has supported a three-year national programme, starting in 2018, which provides online training in Research Integrity throughout research performing organisations in Ireland. At the beginning of 2019, this initiative had provided training to almost 5,000 researchers in Ireland.

Data Provenance reviews have been mainstreamed into all SFI mid-term award progress reviews. This initiative allows the external subject-specific expert panel to study the provenance of a dataset and engage with the research team on matters concerning training, mentoring and supervision along with procedures used for data capture, analysis, storage and curation. This “bottom-up” initiative forms part of SFI’s assurance processes to promote the highest standards of research integrity & reproducibility throughout SFI-funded research.

Open Access

Science Foundation Ireland is committed to Ireland’s goal of ensuring that all publicly funded research articles published from 2021 are openly available. To this end, Science Foundation Ireland is a partner of cOAlition S, an initiative to make full and immediate Open Access to research publications a reality. SFI is taking a leading role in cOAlition S by chairing the taskforce to develop a framework for monitoring the effects of Plan S. In line with the principles espoused by Plan S and those of the National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment, we have updated our ‘Open Access’ policy which we anticipate will support Ireland in achieving its goal of ensuring that the outputs of all publicly-funded research are openly available. Additionally, SFI is part of the Science Europe Working Group on Open Access (OA) that has been developing a report on monitoring compliance with OA policy to be published in 2020.

As of 2019, Science Foundation Ireland is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA), making a formal commitment to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors. DORA comprises a set of recommendations that respond to the pressing need to improve the ways in which the output of scientific research is evaluated by funding agencies, academic institutions, and other parties. SFI supports DORA principles by asking applicants to describe the wider
impact of their research. In addition, SFI values diverse types of research outputs in both the application and review process and, in particular, places importance on the content and “openness” of publications rather than the publication venue. By supporting the statement as a signatory, Science Foundation Ireland is supporting the efforts to shift the culture of research assessment away from journal-based metrics and recognising the need to improve the ways in which the outputs of scientific research are evaluated, including the “openness” of publications.

7. Annexes – Appendix 1
CÚRAM, an SFI Research Centre designing the next generation of ‘smart’ medical devices

Our vision is to develop affordable, innovative and transformative device-based solutions to treat global chronic diseases.

Our research in innovative 'smart' medical devices and implants will benefit patients with chronic ailments such as cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, neural, soft tissue, renal and urology, and respiratory diseases.
Guest Seminar
Engineering Tissue Architecture Through Microfabrication and Polymer Engineering

Dr Milica Radisic
University of Toronto
Toronto General Research Institute

Dr Milica Radisic is a Professor at the University of Toronto, Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Functional Cardiovascular Tissue Engineering and a Senior Scientist at the Toronto General Research Institute. She is also the Associate Chair-Research for the Department of Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry at the University of Toronto and Director of the NSERC CREATE Training Program in Organ-on-a-Chip Engineering and Entrepreneurship. She obtained B.Eng. from McMaster University, and Ph.D. form the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The long term objective of Dr. Radisic’s research is to enable cardiovascular regeneration through tissue engineering and development of new biomaterials. Her research interests also include microfluidic cell separation and development of in vitro models for drug testing. Currently, she holds research funding from CIHR, NSERC, CFI, ORF, NIH, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. She is an Associate Editor for ACS Biomaterials Science & Engineering, a member of the Editorial Board of Tissue Engineering, Advanced Drug Delivery Reviews and Regenerative Biomaterials. She serves on review panels for Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the National Institutes of Health. She is actively involved with BMES (Cardiovascular Track Chair in 2013 and 2104) and TERMIS-AM (Council member, Chair of the Membership Committee). She was a co-organizer of a 2017 Keystone Symposium, “Engineered Cells and Tissues as Platforms for Discovery and Therapy”. Her research findings were presented in over 160 research papers, reviews and book chapters with h-index of 54 and over 10,000 citations.

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E: curam@nuigalway.ie
W: www.curamdevices.ie

2.00pm, Friday, 29th March, 2019
Seminar Room, Biomedical Sciences Building
Hosted by: Professor Abhay Pandit
SFI Spokes Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>SFI Spokes Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

*To date there have been no Spokes awarded to NUI Galway. It would be up to either of the two Research Centres INSIGHT and CURAM to apply for a Spokes award – which is linked to the main research centre award. No awards have been made to date.*

2. **Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

**Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 1(a)**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Fully implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of Awards under the Spokes Programme in the BMW Region</td>
<td>No. of awards</td>
<td>5 0 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>Number of Awards under the Spokes Programme in the BMW Region</td>
<td>No. of awards</td>
<td>5 0 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C024</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of new researchers in supported entities (common output indicator)</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalents</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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*Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.*
Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.

Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 1(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Increased number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the BMW region</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013**

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use made of cross-financing

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2 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**
   - Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
   - Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
   - If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

5. **Summary of evaluations**
   Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**
   - General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
   - Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
   - Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

7. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

   Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan
   - Promotion of equality between men and women
   - Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
   - Promotion of sustainable development

**Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives**
Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

8. **North/South Co-operation**

Please provide a brief summary of North/South Co-operation as outlined in the Implementation Plan

- Describe what has been done
- Commentary on any initiatives / developments
- Level of resources committed

9. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):

- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

10. **Annexes**

Please annex any relevant additional information

---

**SFI Investigators Programme**

| Priority | 1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region |

---
### Thematic Objective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Objective</th>
<th>1 Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Investment Priority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Priority</th>
<th>(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>SFI Investigators Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

*Overview on objectives, description of the intervention, progress and achievements, also with regard to financial and indicator data*

The objective of SFI’s Investigator Programme is to encourage researchers to build capacity, through expertise, collaborations and relationships in areas of strategic and economic importance through theme calls.

The Investigator Programme supports the development of world class research capability and human capital in the area of science, engineering and mathematics that support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland. To this end, SFI funds outstanding people with innovative ideas and recognises that excellence remains a paramount criterion in the research it funds. The Investigator Programme will address crucial research questions, expand educational and career opportunities in Ireland in science and engineering and prepare the research community to lead and win in Horizon 2020 and other non-exchequer funding programmes.

The Investigators Programme will contribute to the specific objective of the investment priority by building world class research capability among the research community and encouraging strategic partnerships with industry in the Northern and Western region and beyond. The supported themes are aligned with Ireland’s national research priorities and the themes chosen are intended to have significant economic and societal impacts.

### Description of key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems during the reporting period

As at December 2019 eleven awards were made under the Investigator Programme which are based in the Northern and Western region a summary of which can be seen below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Reference</th>
<th>Research Scientist</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Total Award Value – Note 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13/IA/1787</td>
<td>Sanbing Shen</td>
<td>01.09.14</td>
<td>31.08.18</td>
<td>1,333,288.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/IA/1954</td>
<td>Noel Lowndes</td>
<td>01.07.14</td>
<td>30.06.19</td>
<td>1,385,058.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/IA/1820</td>
<td>Charles Spillane</td>
<td>01.01.15</td>
<td>31.12.18</td>
<td>958,485.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/IA/2282</td>
<td>Alan Ryder</td>
<td>01.08.15</td>
<td>31.08.20</td>
<td>1,157,169.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/IA/2284</td>
<td>Laoise McNamara</td>
<td>01.09.15</td>
<td>31.08.19</td>
<td>883,219.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/IA/2371</td>
<td>Vincent O'Flaherty</td>
<td>01.09.15</td>
<td>31.08.19</td>
<td>512,618.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/IA/3177</td>
<td>Henry Curran</td>
<td>01.09.16</td>
<td>31.08.21</td>
<td>1,321,276.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/IA/3100</td>
<td>Louise Alcock</td>
<td>01.09.16</td>
<td>31.08.21</td>
<td>1,494,087.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/IA/3136</td>
<td>Timothy O'Brien</td>
<td>01.08.16</td>
<td>31.07.20</td>
<td>568,519.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/IA/4419</td>
<td>Paul Murphy</td>
<td>Mar-18</td>
<td>Feb-23</td>
<td>1,043,540.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/IA/4476</td>
<td>Corrado Santocanale</td>
<td>Mar-18</td>
<td>Feb-22</td>
<td>1,323,591.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>11,980,849.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of the information provided in points 1.1 and 1.2 as regards progress towards achieving the objectives of the scheme

As mentioned above the objective of the Investigator Programme is to encourage researchers to build capacity, through expertise, collaborations and relationships in areas of strategic and economic importance through theme calls.

The Investigator Programme research awards are progressing well and as per their Annual Scientific Reports are well on track to achieve the objectives contained in their proposals. Finally, as per Output indicator 2.1 below, **SFI is well on track in meeting the target value of 88 staff who have been trained in research via Investigator Programme awards.**

### 2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

**Priority-level Output Indicators – Investment Priority 1(a)**

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of staff who have been trained in research in Investigator Programme Awards</td>
<td>No. of trainees</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2 Selected Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff who have been trained in research in Investigator Programme Awards</th>
<th>No. of trainees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
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**Fully implemented projects** are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.

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**Programme-Specific Result Indicators – Specific Objective 1(a)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Increased number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the BMW region</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013)

**Financial data at priority axis and programme level**

**Operations selected for support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€466,017</td>
<td>€466,017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€466,017</td>
<td>€466,017</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€768,823</td>
<td>€768,823</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€1,463,462</td>
<td>€1,463,462</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€1,544,922</td>
<td>€1,544,922</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€1,500,000</td>
<td>€1,500,000</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€5,743,224</td>
<td>€5,743,224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1** – a combined declaration for 2014/2015 was made in 2018. Only payroll costs (excluding PhD stipends) were included in the declarations – following consultation with the North West Regional Assembly.

**Note 2** – The Investigators Programme won’t be run in 2018 or 2019

Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
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</thead>
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<td>2014</td>
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<td>€5,743,224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The use made of cross-financing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

There are currently no issues affecting the performance of the Research awards made under the SFI Investigator Programme to date which forms part of the Operational Programme 2014-2020. However, it should be noted that there will not be any Investigator awards made in 2018 or 2019.

5. **Summary of evaluations**

There has been no evaluation carried out as part of the implementation of the scheme.

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

The Information and Communication Guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014 was circulated to all Higher Educational Institutions (HEI’s) funded under the 2014-20 Operational Programme. The SFI Strategy and Communications Directorate are in ongoing contact with the research community stressing the importance of adherence to the information and publicity requirements. They also provide ongoing support and assistance to ensure that the contribution of ERDF is acknowledged in all promotional material and publications.

7. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

*Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan*

**Gender Equality**

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is committed to removing and mitigating any existing or perceived factors that may limit the participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers, and to redressing the gender imbalance amongst SFI award holders, of which 26% are female (Source: SFI Research Outputs (Census) 2018).

The underlying causes of the gender imbalance at decision-making levels across all sectors in STEM are numerous and complex, and include the following:
Childbearing and caregiving are major determining factors for women leaving competitive STEM careers, but not the only factors; the lack of role models is also frequently cited and as such gender imbalance appears to be self-reinforcing.

The working environment in Research Bodies (RBs) is often perceived as unsupportive of female candidates at all levels of seniority.

One of the sharpest declines in the percentages of women represented on the traditional academic research career track occurs between the graduate and tenure-track/permanent position career points (the so-called ‘leaky pipeline’).

To address the above causes of gender imbalance, SFI will focus on streamlining gender initiatives across all its programmes as outlined in the SFI Gender Strategy 2016-2020. This strategy paper provides guidance on the implementation of policies that aim to achieve the following objectives,

- To achieve the revised target of 30% female award holders by 2020.
- To increase the uptake of STEM subjects by female students at second and third level.
- To increase the proportion of women leading major STEM research initiatives in Ireland.
- To increase the proportion of women in the Science Foundation Ireland peer-review process.
- To ensure that the SFI peer-review process remains unbiased.
- To increase excellence in research and impact by requiring Science Foundation Ireland applicants to demonstrate that they have considered any potential gender dimension in their proposed research.
- To increase excellence in research and impact, by continuing to fund meritorious researchers regardless of their gender, while widening the pool of potential applicants.

The policies developed and associated outcomes will complement and support the Athena SWAN initiative, where within three years, the Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland and the Health Research Board will require universities to have attained and all other Research Bodies (RB) to a have applied for a bronze institutional Athena SWAN award by the end of 2019. In 2019, all RBs eligible for SFI have met these targets. The Athena Swan Charter is the internationally recognised ‘quality mark’ for gender equality. Administered by the U.K.’s Equality Challenge Unit, accreditation indicates that an institution has demonstrated commitment to advancing gender equality across all academic disciplines. Accreditation is made at bronze, silver and gold levels.

The HEA negotiated the second extension of the Athena SWAN Charter to Ireland in 2020 in response to strong interest from the Irish higher education community, and all universities, institutes of technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland are eligible to apply. In taking this step, the agencies are adopting a key recommendation of the National Review of Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions, conducted by an
Independent Expert Group and published in June 2016, which showed that significant gender inequality remains in higher education. The move will promote gender equality in researcher careers and the gender dimension in research content, which are also key requirements for winning European Horizon 2020 research funding.

Regarding the SFI Gender Strategy, the actions proposed will address the whole funding pipeline of programmes that fall under SFI’s remit and can be divided into three strands:

**Strand 1 – Gender in Education and Public Engagement**

Science Foundation Ireland is implementing several measures aimed at increasing the number of students studying STEM subjects at second and third level. In 2014 Science Foundation Ireland commissioned a study into the career choices of young people in Ireland. Looking at a representative sample of students in the first year of their undergraduate third level course the study examined the key influencing factors in course selection.

The study found that “fitting in” is most important to young people making qualification choices. Being able to identify themselves in a future role is the key influencing factor. Career opportunities and earning potential were also identified by the study as important, but secondary. Information about a course or career will not even be sought by young people if they have no affinity with the associated stereotypes. Parents were found to have an important role in influencing a child’s opinion on whether they ‘fit in’. This reinforces the importance of breaking perceived stereotypes amongst this group. Informed by this finding, Strand 1 will look to increase the participation and interest of girls in STEM-related activities, and thereby their confidence in the relevance of studying STEM subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions on Gender in Education and Public Engagement</th>
<th>The SFI Discover team will support projects that aim to increase the numbers of women pursuing STEM subjects. Such projects that are evaluated as being excellent and impactful will be supported where funding is available.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFI will publish evaluations of public engagement projects that address gender parity, to inform the broader public engagement community on best practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFI will ensure that our public engagement materials, activities and online content represent gender parity and challenge unconscious bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SFI is contributing to the National STEM Education Policy and is Chairing the DES Gender Balance in STEM Education (Early Years to Post Primary) Group. This group is tasked with providing recommendations to the DES National STEM Education Policy on effective interventions to address gender balance in STEM Education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strand 2 – Gender Balance in Research Teams

This Strand aims to tackle the under-representation of women in the STEM research sector, by implementing policies aimed at increasing the proportion of women in the Science Foundation Ireland funded portfolio, thereby contributing to attain the Science Foundation Ireland revised target: 30% of female award holders by 2020. Strand 2 will also aim to increase the number of women in the organisation’s peer-review process, by setting targets for female representation within the agency’s review panels, and concrete measures to attain those targets. The policies and programmes under this Strand may be grouped into two areas,

| Actions to Increase the Number of Women in SFI’s Funded Portfolio | Provide incentives for research Bodies to submit applications from female researchers to various programmes. An example of such an incentive is the SFI SIRG programme, where the institutional cap was recently increased from 6 to 12 applications where at least 50% of the applicants were women. Develop targeted gender initiatives, informed by annual gender-disaggregated statistics and the monitoring and analysis of the gender balance of applicants and awardees. Improve SFI call documents and programmes in areas such as eligible costs, time flexibility and eligibility criteria which would caregivers to undertake or remain in a STEM research career. Design and implement specific grant management policies to deal with the needs of female researchers during periods of maternity and adoptive leave. Set and monitor targets for gender balance in research teams within SFI’s programmes with the aim of ensuring that research teams are comprised of at least 40% women and at least 40% men. Within three years require the HEI’s to have attained an Athena Swan Bronze Institutional Award to be eligible for funding. Within seven years SFI will require HEI’s to have attained an Athena Swan Silver Institutional Award to be eligible for funding. |


### Actions to Increase the Number of Female Reviewers within the SFI process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Actions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve 40% representation of panellists of each gender (in sitting panels, remote panels and among postal reviewers) by 2020.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade SFI’s online grant management database SESAME to facilitate increased diversity within review panels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade SFI’s IT tools to facilitate the remote participation of panel reviewers who cannot travel for either family commitments or other impediments such as disability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the objectives of the SFI Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) programme is to contribute to improving gender balance in the higher education sector. Towards achieving this objective, the 2018 SIRG call permitted Research Bodies to put forward a maximum of 12 candidates for the submission of a proposal to the SIRG programme of which a maximum of six could be male. Upon submission to SFI, all applications will be treated equally regardless of the gender of the applicant. Only those deemed excellent and impactful will be recommended for funding. This approach is in line with SFI’s strategic objectives, as outlined in Agenda 2020, and will support success in attaining our KPI target of 30% female award holders. It also supports the retention of excellent female researchers within academia, thereby increasing excellence in research and impact by continuing to fund meritorious researchers regardless of their gender, while widening the pool of potential applicants.

Although limited data is available, we have concluded recently that

- Female researchers are as competitive as their male counterparts in terms of their SFI funding success rate i.e., ~30% across all programmes.
- However, female researchers account for only ~26% of SFI funding applications received.
- Data suggests that applying a SIRG-type gender balance incentive on institutional nominations where a cap exists can capture more female applicants than increasing the institutional cap alone.

More broadly and as indicated by the HEA data, capacity in the career pipeline is an issue and more aggressive measures are required to meet the SFI’s Gender target of 30% female award holders by 2020. There is a risk that limiting funding opportunities for early career researchers will impact female researchers more significantly than male researchers, and further delay gender rebalancing along the career pipeline. Consequently, this could potentially reduce women’s ability to lead major STEM research initiatives in Ireland, which is another of SFI’s gender targets.
Gender targeted initiatives were run in the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme (FFP) 2019 call, measures included having the call language reviewed by a gender expert for inclusivity, the widening of eligibility criteria to allow a more diverse applicant pool, the addition of an “emerging investigator category” to allow for researchers with non-linear track careers and the introduction of final score rounding and gender as a tie-breaker for funding decisions. While the FFP call has not been completed, we can report that there was an increase in the number of female applicants, as compare to historical SFI programmes targeting the same career stage.

**Strand 3 – Integrating Gender in Research and Innovation**

Research generates knowledge that serves as the basis for social development, policy formulation and the development of services and products. It is crucial that this knowledge benefits all individuals in society, regardless of gender. Both in ERA and Horizon 2020 it has been pointed out that gender perspectives are not a sufficiently integral part of research and innovation (R&I). This applies in Ireland as well. By increasing the relevance of basic and applied research endeavours to both men and women, the integration of gender perspectives in the research programmes would improve both the scientific quality and the impact of the Science Foundation Ireland outputs and outcomes.

Neglecting the gender dimension in research can lead to false conclusions, inapplicable results and withdrawal of commercial products. While it is perfectly acceptable that research programmes in specific fields might not need to consider gender aspects within the project design, it is critical that researchers assess if that is the case, and if so, that they justify the rationale for exclusion of gender aspects in their experimental design. The Strategy will work to ensure that gender is integrated as a perspective in all the research Science Foundation Ireland funds, when this is relevant. The integration of gender/sex in the research programme may be manifested in the research questions raised and the theoretical approaches and methods used. While it might be argued that the review process should already consider this aspect within the research ‘excellence’ criterion, this is not always the case. It is therefore crucial that funding agencies drive behaviour and raise awareness in the research community, by asking reviewers to consider if and how gender perspectives are included in the R&I design. Examples of gender integration in research can be found on the EU Gendered Innovations website.

During 2017, wording was developed for inclusion in all call documents that required applicants to provide a statement articulating the sex/gender variables in their research, as well as guidance for applicants and a request for comment from the reviewers. This approach was ‘soft’ launched for a number of SFI programmes including Res Prof, FRL, TIDA. In 2019, this was ‘hard’ launched, with applicants in all SFI calls required to address this in their research proposals.
SFI will request applicants to demonstrate that they have considered any potential gender aspects in their proposed research programmes.

SFI will consider making “gender in research” training for SFI funded researchers an eligible programme cost.

Some ongoing initiatives in SFI to address the gender imbalance include the following,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternity Allowance</th>
<th>In 2014, SFI introduced a maternity allowance that provided our award holders with funding when either they themselves or a team member takes a period of maternity or adoptive leave. These funds can be used by the Research Body to hire additional staff to support the administration of the project, to hire a replacement team member or to extend the project so that the team member can complete their work after returning from leave. In 2019, SFI extended maternity and adoptive allowance to include postgraduate students funded on SFI awards.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childcare as an eligible travel expense</td>
<td>To support researchers with children, in 2019, SFI introduced childcare cost while traveling as an eligible expense on SFI awards. This includes the costs associated with enabling a partner to travel with a researcher with a young child and/or childcare costs during conferences and workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open &amp; transparent data - SFI Gender Dashboard</td>
<td>To allow open transparent data, in 2019 SFI launched the SFI Gender Dashboard. This online interactive dashboard on SFI’s website allows the public to view and interrogate SFI’s data in relation to the number of applications and awards granted, success rates and average award amount by gender, as well as the average total amount requested in applications and the average award amount, by gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFI Centres for Research Training Programme (CRT)</td>
<td>In 2018, this PhD training programme call launched with targets for the gender balance of research teams at three levels specified (Co-Principal Investigator, PhD Supervisor and PhD students). All funded CRTs met these targets in their research proposals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the success of the unconscious bias training delivered to all SFI staff including Board Members in 2016 and to feed into the ongoing work on reproducibility in research, the leading expert in the field of sex and gender in research from Stanford University, Professor Londa Schiebinger, delivered training on integrating gender in research to all SFI
staff. To ensure SFI’s review process is fair and unbiased, reviewers are required to watch an unconscious bias training video, developed by SFI, before accepting proposals for review.

Whilst many of these actions are underway, SFI is also participating in Horizon 2020-led initiatives whose objectives are to promote gender equality / redressing in STEM. During 2017, SFI was successful funded in an EU gender project called ACT. ACT will enable better access, sharing, and improvement of gender equality knowledge by advancing Communities of Practice (CoP) as agents for implementing gender equality actions amongst RPOs and RFOs in the European Research Area, including integration of the gender dimension into research content and process. The Consortium includes 19 organisations and includes 50 experts, to ensure that results are sustainable and produce the desired impact. The expected impacts include: 1) ensuring that researchers, their organisations, and the projects they are involved in are better equipped to stop gender bias affecting quality of science knowledge making; 2) improving understanding of gender issues in science, and how to address them, including in science curriculum, and researcher training; 3) enhancing standards for assessment of institutional excellence through incorporation of gender equality as a criterion of success; and 4) more systematic and systemic adoption of best tools and practices for GEP implementation. As a Research Funding Organisation in ACT, SFI has setup and is coordinating a CoP amongst 15 RFOs across Europe.

In addition to this, SFI actively participates in the Irish Funders’ Forum for Gender Equality, which aims to share knowledge, learnings and develop complementary policies for gender equality between five RFOs in Ireland (SFI, HRB, IRC, EI and HEA).

SFI also offer a broad range of programme aimed at promoting education and public engagement with STEM.

**Science Week** ([www.scienceweek.ie](http://www.scienceweek.ie)) is an annual week-long event in Ireland each November, celebrating science in our everyday lives. It is the largest science festival in the country, engaging tens of thousands of members of the general public in workshops, science shows, talks, laboratory demonstrations, science walks and other science-related events. Science Week is a collaboration of events involving industry, colleges, schools, libraries, teachers, researchers and students throughout Ireland. Science Week encourages people of all ages and from all walks of life to be informed, inspired and involved in STEAM through fun, engaging and interactive events and initiatives.

In 2019, Science Week had 13 regional festivals offering a range of opportunities for the public to engage with STEM in Cavan/Monaghan, Cork, Carlow, Festival of Farming and Food (Teagasc), Galway, Limerick, Mayo, the Midlands, Sligo, Southeast, Tipperary, Wexford and Kerry. Science Week 2019 featured family open days, schools outreach events and public talks across more than 20 counties around Ireland. The theme for Science Week 2019 was Climate Action. It focused on what climate change means and how science can help us understand the facts behind climate action and potential solutions. As part of
the effort to help people understand the part trees can play in climate action, forestry agency Coillte provided Science Foundation Ireland with 30,000 trees which were distributed planted around the country during Science Week.

**Smart Futures** is co-ordinated and managed by Science Foundation Ireland to provide information about careers in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The initiative, primarily through online channels, provides STEM career resources and role models to students, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents in Ireland in an aim to stimulate an interest in STEM subjects in secondary school and at third level.

**The Discover Primary Science and Maths (DPSM) programme** (www.primaryscience.ie) is a flagship initiative of Science Foundation Ireland’s Education and Public Engagement programme, and aims to introduce primary school students to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in a practical, hands-on, enjoyable and interactive way. The programme offers a wide range of supports including:

- Continuous Professional Development Workshops and Summer Courses for teachers
- The SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards
- A network of 59 SFI Discover Centres offering accredited workshops to schools

Through the CPD programme, teachers are provided with a Framework and planning tool for teaching inquiry-based learning and are provided with resources and classroom activity packs which can also be used by parents and students. The SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards offer primary schools the opportunity to gain recognition for the STEM work they are doing. By completing STEM related activities or investigations for each of the 5 steps to Award (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, STEM Show & Tell) and compiling a Log of Evidence, schools can obtain either a Certificate of STEM or Plaque of STEM for their school. To date more than 50% of all primary schools in Ireland have received at least one SFI Discover Science and Maths Award previously, with 620 schools receiving an award in 2019. Last year the SFI Discover Centre Network grew to 59 members, all of which offer DPSM accredited STEM workshops for primary schools and help to support informal STEM learning outside of the classroom. Many of these SFI Discover Centres also offer STEM activities on an outreach basis and engagement with a centre can contribute towards the school’s log of evidence for their Award.

The **SFI Discover Programme Call** is an annual funding call for education and public engagement (EPE) projects. Funding is awarded to a range of organisations, both academic institutions and other bodies, (companies, charities, NGOs etc) to engage the public with Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. Funding of up to €50,000 is available for a one-year project or up to €300,000 for a two-year project which must have regional or national impact. SFI typically funds 40 to 50 such projects each year and has provided funding of almost €25 million to over 400 projects since the programme’s launch in 2014. In addition to the annual funding call, a separate call for Science Week Festivals and Events...
is launched each year to support regional festivals and events around the country to take place in November each year.

**Research Integrity**

SFI is committed to fostering a culture of integrity. This spans the spectrum of SFI’s funded research, from the conduct of rigorous studies to the accurate reporting and publication of research results, whether performed in Ireland or with international partners. Overarchingly, Science Foundation Ireland endorses the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland; that is, all research performing organisations and Science Foundation Ireland award holders are expected to abide by this policy statement, as reflected in SFI’s General Grant Terms & Conditions. We also endorse the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, which is largely reflected in the national statement. SFI has supported a three-year national programme, starting in 2018, which provides online training in Research Integrity throughout research performing organisations in Ireland. At the beginning of 2019, this initiative had provided training to almost 5,000 researchers in Ireland.

Data Provenance reviews have been mainstreamed into all SFI mid-term award progress reviews. This initiative allows the external subject-specific expert panel to study the provenance of a dataset and engage with the research team on matters concerning training, mentoring and supervision along with procedures used for data capture, analysis, storage and curation. This “bottom-up” initiative forms part of SFI’s assurance processes to promote the highest standards of research integrity & reproducibility throughout SFI-funded research.

**Open Access**

Science Foundation Ireland is committed to Ireland’s goal of ensuring that all publicly funded research articles published from 2021 are openly available. To this end, Science Foundation Ireland is a partner of cOAlition S, an initiative to make full and immediate Open Access to research publications a reality. SFI is taking a leading role in cOAlition S by chairing the taskforce to develop a framework for monitoring the effects of Plan S. In line with the principles espoused by Plan S and those of the National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment, we have updated our ‘Open Access’ policy which we anticipate will support Ireland in achieving its goal of ensuring that the outputs of all publicly-funded research are openly available. Additionally, SFI is part of the Science Europe Working Group on Open Access (OA) that has been developing a report on monitoring compliance with OA policy to be published in 2020.

As of 2019, Science Foundation Ireland is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA), making a formal commitment to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors. DORA comprises a set of recommendations that respond to the pressing need to improve the ways in which the output of scientific research is evaluated by funding agencies, academic institutions, and other parties. SFI supports DORA principles by asking applicants to describe the wider impact of their research. In addition, SFI values diverse types of research outputs in both the application and review process and, in particular, places importance on the content and
“openness” of publications rather than the publication venue. By supporting the statement as a signatory, Science Foundation Ireland is supporting the efforts to shift the culture of research assessment away from journal-based metrics and recognising the need to improve the ways in which the outputs of scientific research are evaluated, including the “openness” of publications.

8. North/South Co-operation

SFI continues to meet with international research funding agencies and/or government departments with the aim of ensuring that Irish researchers have the best possible range of strategically relevant co funding partnerships. SFI’s policy is to explore international partnerships that are based on a “lead agency” model as per previous partnerships whereby either SFI conducts the review of proposals as part of an existing programme or where the partner agency conducts the review as part of their programme or suite of programmes.

A prime example of this collaboration is the US-Ireland R&D Partnership Programme in which the Governments of the United States of America, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive have come together for a unique initiative to advance scientific progress in fields that will have a significant impact on the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of all their citizens.

The US Ireland R&D Programme links scientists and engineers in partnership across academia and industry to address crucial research questions, foster new and existing industrial research activity that could make an important contribution to the respective economies and expands educational and research career opportunities in science and engineering.

### Marine Research Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW and S&amp;E Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Marine Research Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

**Industry-Led Awards** – Work commenced on the 12 projects funded under the 2018 call supporting research and innovation costs for the development of innovative technologies, products and services from existing or new marine-based business. The successful projects involve 20 partners, with six of these based in the BMW region. The total grant-aid awarded to the BMW partners is €0.7m.

**Post-Doctoral Fellowships** - The Marine Institute published a competitive call for applications for eight Post-Doctoral Fellowships on 1st August 2019. These fellowships have been selected for ERDF co-funding. The link to this call is follows:

[Post-Doctoral Fellowship Call 2019](#)

A total of 17 proposals received by the closing date of 18th September 2019 requesting total funding of €6.4m. Following the evaluation process grant offers were made to fund eight fellowships with a total investment of €3m to three higher education institutes – NUI Galway five awards, University College Cork two awards and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology one award. Two proposals have also been held in reserve should funding become available in 2020. The total grant-aid awarded to the BMW partners is €2.4m.

The total investment for ERDF co-funding is now €7.4m with €3.1m awarded in the BMW region.

**TY Visit**: On 30th April 2019 the Marine Institute hosted 30 students from Roscommon Convent of Mercy. This was organised by the Northern & Western Regional Assembly to encourage the pursuit of careers in science at second level, especially female students. The students posted their experience under the hashtag EU in my region. Press release link for further information: [Transition Year Visit to the Marine Institute](#)

2. **Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

2.1 **Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 1(a)**

*Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.*

*Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Target Value BMW</th>
<th>Target Value S&amp;E</th>
<th>Total Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative BMW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Number of marine research MSc/PhD and Post-Doctoral Researchers funded</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of researchers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of researchers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of projects/awards that advance the sustainable development and management of marine resources through investment in SMEs</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of projects/awards</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of projects/awards</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of projects/awards that enhances our understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems and/or create knowledge of relevance to the management and protection of Ireland’s environment and resources</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of projects/awards</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of projects/awards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of North/South Collaborations</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of collaborations</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of collaborations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Research Visits for Networking, Training and Technology Transfer</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of inward/ outward research visits</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of inward/ outward research visits</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>*185,943</td>
<td>185,943</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>*563,577</td>
<td>563,577</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total BMW</td>
<td>749,520</td>
<td>749,520</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Includes 20-25% pre-financing paid to grantees on signature of Grant Agreements.

The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**
   - Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
   - Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
   - If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

The total investment figure of €5m has now been exceeded, as the investment committed in 2018 and 2019 totals €7.4m. However, the actual expenditure for the programme is not yet known, but it is expected that the €5m target will be reached. The final investment of circa €0.8m will be committed in 2020.

5. **Summary of evaluations**
Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

Evaluations of the call proposals have been completed in 2018 and 2019. Please refer to Appendix 1 of the Guidelines for Applicants for details of the evaluation process.

Progress reports for the Industry-Led Awards have been submitted and reviewed as received. Five of the six industry awards have submitted their technical progress reports, with good progress made on four projects. One project had a delay on recruitment, so had as slower start but they are expected to catch up in 2020.

6. Information and Publicity Requirements

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

The publicity requirements form part of the Grant-Aid Agreement as an Annex. Grantees are also provided with a slide to include in presentations to acknowledge the funding. Examples provided

Launch event for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship originally planned for Jan-20 but delayed due to Government calling election. Date of event yet to be confirmed.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
- Promotion of sustainable development
- Promotion of Social Inclusion

Gender Equality/Equal Opportunities

Female applicants are encouraged to apply as project leads under all Marine Institute research funding calls; please refer to section 6 of the Guidelines for Applicants.
The Marine Institute actively seeks to achieve gender balance in the make-up of project evaluation and review panels. The panel for evaluation of the 2019 calls including the Post-Doctoral Fellowship call almost achieved parity, with the panel consisting of 11 female evaluators and 13 male evaluators. Previously the female/male ratio has been one third/two thirds.

Generally, we have to issue more invites to female evaluators than male evaluators, as many female scientists have to decline the offer due to other work commitments whereas their male counterparts tend to have the available capacity. This may be because fewer women are promoted to the top scientific positions. There has been some interesting research in this area, including the following report:

Royal Society of Chemistry "Breaking the Barriers" Report 2018

Sustainable Development
The projects awarded under the Industry-Led Call in 2018 are primarily focused on finding renewable energy solutions in the marine environment that will greatly reduce Ireland’s reliance on fossil fuel imports by providing clean and sustainably produced energy.

Social Inclusion and Accessibility
Education and outreach activities are an important part of promotion of the horizontal principles. The Marine Institute holds a number of events that provide the general public with an opportunity to learn about our oceans.

The Institute promotes the sustainable development of Ireland’s marine resource through co-ordinated and focused research, leading to sound and accurate management advice for the Government, industry and the EU. An example of how we do this is at the annual SeaFest event using interactive exhibition 'The Wild Atlantic – What lies beneath' that includes a series of interactive displays and exhibits that explore the marine world from the rocky seashore to the deep sea. Tours of the national research vessels are also provided where the public can talk with the researchers who carry out the surveys at sea.

SeaFest 2019 Cork
SeaFest 2018 Galway
Free taster sessions for sailing and canoeing are also provided, which are specifically tailored for children with disabilities.

Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

8. North/South Co-operation

Please provide a brief summary of North/South Co-operation as outlined in the Implementation Plan:
• Describe what has been done
• Commentary on any initiatives / developments
• Level of resources committed

There have been no North/South collaborations in the ERDF co-funded grants awarded to date.

9. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):

• urban and other public authorities;
• economic and social partners; and
• bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

Funded partners are SMEs and Higher Education Institutes. However, as the research progresses, we expect that other stakeholders (as listed above) will become involved through participation in the steering committee to oversee the progress of the research and/or at events/workshops to disseminate the research results.

Some of the renewable energy projects have had interactions with local authorities with respect to planning of installations or testing of devices.

10. Annexes

Please annex any relevant additional information

TY Visit 30-Apr-19
Note – to the right of the group you will notice one of the Xocean unmanned surface vessels, which is one of ERDF co-funded industry projects with the aim to using these unmanned vessels for fish stocks surveys.
Commercialisation Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(b) promoting business investment in R&amp;I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Scheme                   | Commercialisation Fund |

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

2019 has been a very successful year for the Commercialisation Fund in the BMW region for:

- Output Indicators - Investment Priority 1(b)
- Programme-Specific Result Indicators – Specific objective (b), Licences
- Continued growth of companies who licenced University technologies developed under the Commercialisation Fund. (see Annex 1 Success stories).
- Increase in the number of CF awarded to Female Principal Investigators (to 40%)

The Objective of the Commercialisation Fund is to support researchers in third level institutions and research performing organisations in the republic of Ireland in applied research projects which can generate useful outputs for the benefit of the Irish economy. The CF project outputs are commercialised by licensing agreements with existing companies in Ireland or with new start-up companies spinning out from the Institution. In so doing, the programme fosters a dynamic and commercially aware research community and an environment that promotes entrepreneurship.

Description: The programme funds proposals from all disciplines in the field of science and engineering. All stages of development are funded, from early stage research to pilot testing stage. The programme provides two levels of funding supports to researchers 1) Commercial Case Feasibility (CFF) support - a preparatory award, €15,000 maximum, to help researchers to scope the commercial case for the innovation or project idea 2) Commercialisation Fund (CF) support - to develop the innovation for commercialisation. CF proposals costs are guided as typically ranging from €80,000 to €350,000 but proposals with costs outside of this range are also considered where the costs are deemed...
appropriate. Medical device projects generally have higher costs. Call announcements, Guideline documents, Contact details, Online application portal etc. are available on the Enterprise Ireland corporate website at https://enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Researcher/Funding-to-Commercialise-Research/Commercialisation-Fund.html

Progress: Applications for CF support were received through bi-annual published call deadlines and through invited rolling call process which permits proposals to be submitted outside of the set call deadlines, (with provisos). Call 1 closed in February 2018 and Call 2 closed in July 2018. CFF feasibility <€15k proposals were accepted on a continuous basis, without a submission deadline.

- In 2019, there were 15 Commercialisation Fund (CF) proposals from BMW institutions of which 10 were approved. 8 of the projects approved were under the Bi-annual Calls and 2 were approved under the Invited rolling application process. Total CF funding awarded to BMW institutions in 2019 was €3,868,396 plus overheads. Most of these projects were awarded to NUI-Galway. Most projects were in the life sciences medical device application area, with just 1 in Manufacturing and 1 in ICT Informatics. See Annex 2 for list of CF projects funded

- 8 Commercial Case Feasibility (CFF) projects were approved. Total CFF funding awarded to BMW institutions in 2018 was €102,700. See Annex 2.

2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

2.1 Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 1(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of commercialisation fund awards</td>
<td>No. of awards</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>Number of commercialisation fund awards</td>
<td>No. of awards</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.*

*Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.*

This performance indicator is not relevant to the projects which are being funded by CF and IP. It has been agreed to dispense of the current indicator and instead insert the following table, which measures the number of licences.
### 2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators – Specific objective (b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Increased number of SME clients of Enterprise Ireland</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spending &gt;€100k per annum on R&amp;D in the BMW Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A critical performance indicator for Enterprise Ireland is the number of firms investing > €100,000 per annum in R&D projects. This threshold is considered a significant level of R&D spend by Companies.

**Agreed amendments:** It has been agreed to dispense with the current indicator and instead insert the following table, which measure the number of licences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Annual number of licences as a result of CF research in the BMW Region</td>
<td>No. of licences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013)**

**Financial data at priority axis and programme level**

**Operations selected for support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,622,359</td>
<td>1,622,359</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3,661,467</td>
<td>3,661,467</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2,484,213</td>
<td>2,484,213</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4,036,334</td>
<td>4,036,334</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>3,209,115</td>
<td>3,209,115</td>
<td>889,156</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>3,868,396</td>
<td>3,868,396</td>
<td>1,442,070</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>18,881,885</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,881,885</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,331,225</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public cost paid to beneficiaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total to end 2019</td>
<td><strong>13,548,455</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,548,455</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) The Intermediate Body has reported expenditure for selected operations for which a grant payment has been made to the beneficiary in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. ** It is not possible break down the ‘paid’ expenditure annually as staged payments on projects are made on an annual basis meaning the same project would appear in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 under number of operations paid, thus distorting the final figure for the number of operations paid. *** Six 2014 projects are now included.

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

The programme had previously encountered reduced interest among Researchers in Third Level Institutions due to the challenging and ambitious nature of the commercialisation objectives. However, in 2019 the Fund has performed very strongly in the BMW region. Additional communication & marketing activities for the Fund were introduced during 2019. Smaller proof of concept CF projects were encouraged to lower the intimidation factor that some Institutions had reported with respect to early stage Researchers.

The new commercialisation training course introduced during 2018 was provided to all 2019 awardees. During mid-2019 a focus on Research Integrity was introduced across Enterprise Ireland-managed Programmes, in keeping with initiatives by the Irish Universities body to encourage all Researchers to take an online Research Integrity training course in the first 6 months of their projects. Enterprise Ireland is supporting this initiative in line with other Public funding agencies.

Future prospects are strong and there is no need for further adjustments to the Fund.

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5 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
5. **Summary of evaluations**

Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

N/A

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions/plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

See photos of Certificate of Awards to Principal investigators at the ceremony event. The presentation of Certificates at the event helps to raise awareness of the ERDF contribution to each project. The CF programme is advertised and promoted through a dedicated page on the Enterprise Ireland website. All Calls are announced on the Enterprise Ireland website and the logos are prominently in place. The EI Standard Grant Agreement contract contains official guidance on using the logos and a link to the correct format and publicity requirements for publicising the ERDF contribution. During the monitoring of ongoing projects the Commercialisation Specialist is required to check that Researchers are complying with publicity requirements. The contribution of the EU Structural Funds 2014-2020 is acknowledged in brochures, promotional material, publicity activity, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. A pull-up backdrop with correct format logos in place is used for large venue presentations at Third Level events and the Big Ideas promotion of success stories from the Fund.

7. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

*Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan*

- **Promotion of equality between men and women**

  The number of awards to Female researchers has increased, 4 of the 10 CF awards were to Female Principal Investigators. Universities and Institutes of Technology in Ireland participate in the Athena Swan standards for female promotion. The Higher Education Authority of Ireland has completed an in-depth review of female employee numbers in all Universities and Institutes of Technology, which concluded that there are increasing efforts being made at Third Level to promote gender equality between men and women. A consultant was engaged by Enterprise Ireland during 2019 to review the language and expressions in Commercialisation Fund documentation to ensure that it is appropriate and encouraging to all prospective Applicants.

  Maternity cover policy: Should the issue of maternity leave arise during the course of a project, Enterprise Ireland will cover the additional costs for a replacement staff member unless these costs can be met from within the existing budget. We also consider applications to extend the project timeline if a key researcher will be taking maternity leave and is requiring additional time to complete deliverables on returning to the workplace.

- **Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities**
The Third Level Institutions who apply to the CF Programme have robust HR Human Resource policies in place to prevent discrimination and access for people with disabilities.

The Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Director now participates in the TAFTIE diversity group led by UK Innovate to ensure that best practice diversity and inclusion considerations are embedded in the Commercialisation Fund practices.

Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Specialist team members have received training in best practices for Diversity and Inclusion conducted by Dublin City University DCU Diversity Centre.

Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives. As above.

8. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):

- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

Projects for environmental applications have been piloted at urban municipal facilities. Business Mentors and Venture Investors are engaged to ensure highest economic return for Ireland arising from CF projects.

Sister agencies, i.e. SFI, IDA, Marine Institute, SEAI, IBEC are consulted on sector-specific issues. Public authorities have been consulted on smart city/smart car and food projects.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly works closely with Enterprise Ireland in delivering the ERDF co-funded awards to Third Level partners and promoting success stories form the Fund.

9. Annexes

Please annex any relevant additional information
Annex 1: Success Stories

**Loci Orthopaedics** is a new spin-out company which has licensed the outputs of Commercialisation Fund project CF-2015-0108 (Principal Investigator, Gerry Clarke) from the National University of Ireland Galway. The CF project developed a new clinically proven solution to address the increasing unmet need for thumb base joint arthritis. This need was identified by the Principal Investigator Gerry Clarke and clinician Dr Brendan Boland, when they were Research Fellows on the BioInnovate Ireland Programme, which is co-funded by Enterprise Ireland. The spin-out company will further develop the orthopaedic implant to access a market estimated at more than €550m per annum. Loci Orthopaedics has raised €2.75m in venture capital seed funding to bring the solution to market. [www.lociorthopaedics.com](http://www.lociorthopaedics.com)

From left: Loci Orthopaedics founders Gerry Clarke (CTO) and Dr Brendan Boland (CEO) at their office in NUI Galway. Image: Aengus McMahon, Source: “Silicon Republic”
Atrian Medical is a new spin-out company which has licensed the outputs of Commercialisation Fund project CF-2017-0620 (Principal Investigator, Dr Barry O’Brien) and CF-2014-4606 from the National University of Ireland Galway. Existing treatments for atrial fibrillation include anti-arrhythmic drugs and cardiac ablation. These treatments have limited efficacy and require repeat treatments. The NUIG team identified the unmet market need for new atrial fibrillation treatments as Fellows under the BioInnovate Ireland Programme, which is co-funded by Enterprise Ireland. Under the Commercialisation Fund, the NUIG team developed, a new device which can deliver short and precise electrical signals that ‘knock-out’ hyperactive neuronal cells at five locations on the outside surface of the heart. The technology was licensed by NUIG to Atrian Medical and further clinical trials are taking place before full market release. The spin out company has raised €2.3m venture capital seed funding investment to bring the product to market. www.atrianmedical.com
Title: A Medical Device to modulate Pulse Wave Velocity. (Principal Investigator, Dr Liam Morris, GMIT)

Under the Commercialisation Fund project CF-2017-0676, researchers in Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology are developing a novel device for treating heart failure. The team includes engineers and medical developers who identified the need for improved technologies for the treatment of heart failure. The ongoing project has so far resulted in a patent application for the novel innovation. Research will continue and is expected to lead to the formation of a new spin-out company from GMIT who will licence the technology to a new spin out.

Photo: Dr Liam Morris. Source: Enterprise Ireland website, full story at www.enterprise-ireland.com/commercialisation
Annex 2

In 2019, there were 10 Commercialisation Fund projects (CF) approved for funding in BMW Institutions all of which were fully implemented.

### CF projects funded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference No</th>
<th>Lead Applicant</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Technology Area</th>
<th>Funding, €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CF20191192</td>
<td>Dr Lyn Markey</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>542056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191149</td>
<td>Ms Elle Sander</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>227219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191126</td>
<td>Nadav Ben Haim</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>529084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191189</td>
<td>Jimmy Eaton-Evans</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>207141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191190I</td>
<td>Paula Newell</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>319863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191032</td>
<td>Aaron Hannon</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>495959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20181041</td>
<td>Ananya Gupta</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>469418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191082</td>
<td>Oisin McGrath</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>LifeSciences</td>
<td>505405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20181016</td>
<td>Dr Firas Awaja</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>303199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191045I</td>
<td>Dr Nick Timmons</td>
<td>LyIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>269052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 CF projects funded to a total of €3,868,396 plus overhead payment.

### Commercial Case Feasibility, CFF (8 projects awarded funding in 2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference no.</th>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CF20180739Y</td>
<td>Neil Malone</td>
<td>IT-Dundalk</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20184706Y</td>
<td>Sean Brennan</td>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191124Y</td>
<td>Dimitrios Zeugolis</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>14000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191158Y</td>
<td>Leo Creedon</td>
<td>IT-Sligo</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191143Y</td>
<td>Patrick Delassus</td>
<td>GMIT</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191210Y</td>
<td>Michael Arcan</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>11500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191238Y</td>
<td>Jim Morrison</td>
<td>LyIT</td>
<td>14500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF20191199Y</td>
<td>David Clarke</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>14700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total CFF funding for 8 projects €102,700 plus overheads
Annex 3

### BMW Number of Licences, 5 in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Licensee</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Project Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aurigen</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2016-0488-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspire Pharma Ltd</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2014-4016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyethi Software Ltd</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2015-0043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loci Orthopaedics (Q2)</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2015-0108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atrian Medical Ltd (q3)</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2014-4604 &amp;CF-2017-0620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BMW Number of Licences, 7 in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Licensee</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Project Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nektr Technologies</td>
<td>IT-Sligo</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2015-0301Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurent Medical</td>
<td>NUIG-Galway</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2015-0741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trucorp</td>
<td>GMIT</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>CF-2015-0050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADF Farm Solutions</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2014-4616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyethi Software (Q4)</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2015-0043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kite Medical</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2016-0417, CF-2013-3322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atrian Medical</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2014-4604 &amp;CF-2017-0620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BMW Number of Licences, 5 in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Licensee</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Project Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loci Orthopaedics</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2015-0108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioprobe Diagnostics</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2015-0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobidiag Oy (Q3 &amp;Q4)</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>PC-2006-0193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVP Energy</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>CF-2010-0062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Value Services</td>
<td>DkIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2014-4603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BMW Number of Licences, 5 in 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Licensee</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Project Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Electric</td>
<td>DkIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2014-4603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Leah</td>
<td>DkIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2014-4603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derilinx</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2012-2610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signum Surgical</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2014-4612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vetex Medical</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2014-4632</td>
</tr>
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</table>

BMW Number of Licences, 4 in 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Licensee</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Project Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fanstream</td>
<td>AIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2013-3627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celtic Medtech</td>
<td>DkIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-201-2631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapa Health</td>
<td>DkIT</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2012-2306, CF-2015-5600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onkoimmune</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CFTD-06-122</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**BMW Number of Licences, 5 in 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Licensee</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Project Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embo Medical</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>CF-2010-2690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vornia</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PC-2007-027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elanco</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>TD-2009-0132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smarter Linked</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2013-3623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedicii Innovations</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>CF-2012-2630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Innovation Partnerships
Priority | 1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region
---|---
Thematic Objective | 1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
Investment Priority | (b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, ecoinnovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;

Scheme | Innovation Partnership

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

2.1 Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 1(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C004</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support (Innovation Partnerships)</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support (Innovation Partnerships)</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number of companies in BMW region supported by completed projects approved in or after 2014, and on which Final Payment was made in that year.

Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.

Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.

This performance indicator is not relevant to the projects which are being funded by CF and IP. It has been agreed to dispense of the current indicator and instead insert the following table, which measures the number of licences.

2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 1(b)
A critical performance indicator for Enterprise Ireland is the number of firms investing > €100,000 per annum in R&D projects. This threshold is considered a significant level of R&D spend by Companies.

**Agreed amendments:** It has been agreed to dispense with the current indicator and instead insert the following table, which measure the number of licences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Annual number of licences as a result of research in the BMW Region</td>
<td>No. of licences*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- * License includes licenses, options, and assignments
- Corrections were made to only count licenses resulting from projects approved in or after 2014
- Corrections were made to count licenses from RPOs in the BMW region, not the recipient enterprises based in the region

### Name of Indicator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Indicator</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises Support to the same enterprises - cumulative to date (Fully Implemented)</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises Support to the same enterprises - cumulative to date (Selected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C001 Number of Enterprises receiving support</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C002 Number of enterprises receiving grants</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C003 Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C004 Number of Enterprises receiving non-financial support</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C005 Number of new enterprises supported</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Enterprises do not receive direct financial support from the Innovation Partnership programme. The programme pays to Research Institutes.

### 3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

**Financial data at priority axis and programme level**

**Operations selected for support**

---

6 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>321,184</td>
<td>224,829</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>761,013</td>
<td>532,709</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>807,006</td>
<td>564,904</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>926,247</td>
<td>648,373</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,171,191</td>
<td>819,834</td>
<td>838,562</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>971,414</td>
<td>679,990</td>
<td>167,350</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,958,055</td>
<td>3,470,639</td>
<td>1,005,912</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Projects that did not proceed have been removed from the figures
** Total public eligible is estimated at 70% of total eligible cost as IP projects are individually grant rated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public cost paid to beneficiaries</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total to end 2019</td>
<td>3,426,216</td>
<td>2,398,351</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Intermediate Body has reported expenditure for selected operations for which a grant payment has been made to the beneficiary in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.
** It is not possible break down the ‘paid’ expenditure annually as staged payments on projects are made on an annual basis meaning the same project would appear in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 under number of operations paid, thus distorting the final figure for the number of operations paid.

**The use made of cross-financing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**
   - Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
   - Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
   - If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.
The ERDF Programme to strengthen Research, Technology Development and Innovation remains effectively and efficiently provided for within Enterprise Ireland.

**We have reached the target of supporting 95 enterprises in the BMW region in 2019.**

The pipeline for 2020 has been strong however we expect the Covid-19 interruption may have an impact on the capacity of some enterprises to focus in innovation activities in the short term.

5. **Summary of evaluations**

*Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.*

The Innovation Partnership Programme was evaluated by an independent consultant completed in March 2018. The review examined the impact generated by Innovation Partnerships undertaken over 2011-2014 with the purpose of ensuring the objectives of the Innovation Partnership Programme are being met.

### Extent to which company objectives were met

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement of objectives</th>
<th>Wholly achieved</th>
<th>Largely achieved</th>
<th>Partly achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The review reported that most companies were satisfied or very satisfied with their partner institutes.*

In 49% of projects, companies felt their objectives had been wholly achieved, and in a further 29% of cases, objectives were largely achieved. In 23% of projects objectives were only partly achieved and in 6% they were not achieved at all. Where objectives had not been met, company-related reasons such as prioritising other activities, were the most common.

The net NPV impacts estimated to have accrued directly from the innovation partnerships between 2011 and 2014 are:

- turnover – €280.2m over the period 2011-16 and €1,272.0m projected for the period 2011-21
- employment – 2,001 jobs in 2016 and 2,149 jobs projected for the period 2011-21
- EVA – €99.8m over the period 2011-16 and €452.8m projected for the period 2011-21

Almost all respondents (98%) would be willing to recommend the Programme to other businesses. This is a very positive reflection on company experiences of the Programme.

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
• Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
• Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

Each year the Programme Manager and Team provide presentations and workshops to researchers and companies to promote the programme and its funding supports.

7. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

7.1 **Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan**

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities

7.2 **Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives**

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

Enterprise Ireland strongly supports the role of women in business. It has published an action plan for women in business to increase the number of women in middle and senior management and in entrepreneurship. It runs a female entrepreneur programme which in 2019 supported 38 female led start-ups.

The Innovation Partnership initiative is a competitive programme whereby awards are made on the merits of individual applications including the technical quality of the proposals and the business benefits to the companies involved in the projects. The gender balance of researchers working on approved projects is reflective of the existing gender split within the colleges. Applicant colleges are required to consider equality issues in line with the Equality Authority’s guidelines. This requirement is highlighted in the programme’s application forms. We also track the gender balance of Principal Investigators funded under the programme.

8. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):

- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

The Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) works closely with Enterprise Ireland in delivering grant support to a wide range of businesses in the Border Midlands and West Counties.
Enterprise Ireland has a team of Development Advisors (DAs) working closely with each client company to help maximise their growth potential. Enterprise Ireland’s network of contacts can be accessed by client companies participating in the ERDF programme. This network includes third level colleges, overseas marketing advisors, and other business leaders.

The Innovation Partnership Programme works with clients of Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta and Local Enterprise Offices.

9. Annexes

Please annex any relevant additional information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year - Selected</th>
<th>IPPCode</th>
<th>Beneficiary - RPO</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Enterprise County</th>
<th>Enterprise Town</th>
<th>Enterprise Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0774</td>
<td>University College Dublin</td>
<td>Computational Modelling and Simulation Studies (CM&amp;S) for N-Pro Sports Headguard</td>
<td>Galway Oranmore BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0770</td>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td>AutoSPAS (Automated Sales Processing and Analysis System)</td>
<td>Westmeath Athlone BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2018 0753</td>
<td>NIBRT</td>
<td>Manufacturing and characterisation solutions for AAV based gene therapies.</td>
<td>Mayo Westport BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0832</td>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Learning-based Adaptive Video Streaming System for Trailers over Wireless Channel (LAVaTeC)</td>
<td>Galway Tuam BMW</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0844 E</td>
<td>Dundalk Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Voice Activated Smart Heating Control System</td>
<td>Louth Dundalk BMW</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0869 E</td>
<td>National University of Ireland Galway</td>
<td>OsteoAnchor Short Stem Shoulder Implant Development</td>
<td>Galway Galway BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0865</td>
<td>National University of Ireland Galway</td>
<td>The Science of Clot Ingestion; Optimizing Aspiration Thrombectomy procedures using accurate Blood clot analogues</td>
<td>Galway Galway BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0868</td>
<td>University of Limerick</td>
<td>OpComp</td>
<td>Galway Galway BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0866 E</td>
<td>Dundalk Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Integrated self-sterilisation packaging</td>
<td>Galway Galway BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0880</td>
<td>Trinity College Dublin</td>
<td>Mushroom digestion as a model to re-define gut-immune system cross-talk via Innate Immune Training</td>
<td>Monaghan Tyholland BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0889</td>
<td>Irish Manufacturing Research</td>
<td>XR-Adopt (XR-Interact)</td>
<td>Inverin Galway BMW</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 IP 2019 0879</td>
<td>Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Investigation of Abbott Diagnostics Polypropylene Reaction Vessel and Polypropylene Material Behaviour in terms of Factors Affecting Performance due to Processing, Stability and Environmental Storage and Transport Conditions.</td>
<td>Longford Longford BMW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Industry R&D Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Thematic Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region</td>
<td>1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Investment Priority** (b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, ecoinnovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Industry R&amp;D Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

The programme has been implemented in line with the Scheme approval to strengthen Research, Technology Development and Innovation in Ireland. The intervention is in line with the programme objectives and has provided essential support to encourage business investment in R&I while also developing links with research centres and the higher education authorities.

The approvals are in line with Enterprise Ireland Value For Money (VFM) criteria and in line with the monitoring requirements of the ERDF.

**The programme continues to be rolled out successfully and there have been no significant problems.** Enterprise Ireland is in regular contact with its client base and these clients have been advised of the requirements in respect of monitoring and reporting requirements of the ERDF.

Enterprise Ireland’s clients continue to view investment in R&D as a key part of developing competitive products and services for the future.

2. **Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

2.1 **Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 1(b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving R&amp;D supports</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.

Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.

2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 1(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ib R.2</td>
<td>Increased number of clients of Enterprise Ireland spending &gt;€100k per annum on R&amp;D in the BMW Region</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>Data not yet available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A critical performance indicator for Enterprise Ireland is the number of firms investing > €100,000 per annum in R&D projects. This threshold is considered a significant level of R&D spend by Companies.

R&D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Indicator</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Fully Implemented)</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Selected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C001 Number of Enterprises receiving support</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C002 Number of enterprises receiving grants</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C003 Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C004 Number of Enterprises receiving non-financial support</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C005 Number of new enterprises supported</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>selected for support (EUR)</td>
<td>selected for support (EUR)</td>
<td>declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>16,837,413</td>
<td>5,219,598</td>
<td>499,689</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5,779,384</td>
<td>1,791,609</td>
<td>1,645,603</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>12,377,206</td>
<td>3,836,934</td>
<td>1,954,974</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>16,975,394</td>
<td>5,262,372</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>7,980,381</td>
<td>2,473,918</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59,949,777</td>
<td>18,584,431</td>
<td>4,100,266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,470,362</td>
<td>499,689</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>8,800,902</td>
<td>1,645,603</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>9,726,555</td>
<td>2,364,146</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>9,747,659</td>
<td>2,388,921</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>10,371,716</td>
<td>2,285,868</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41,117,194</td>
<td>9,184,227</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

The ERDF programme to strengthen Research, Technological Development and Innovation has been effectively and efficiently provided for within Enterprise Ireland. To-date no issues have hindered the performance of the programme.
Enterprise Ireland has launched the ‘Agile’ Innovation Fund which is designed to enable clients to quickly develop innovations and respond to opportunities and threats in new and existing markets. The application process has been simplified to encourage smaller companies to participate in innovation.

5. **Summary of evaluations**

*Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.*

Enterprise Ireland in conjunction with the N&W Regional Assembly regularly evaluates progress of this programme against the targets set for the period 2014-2020. The Priority 1 funding target for this period is €22 million. Projects amounting to €18.5 million have been approved for funding, up to 31 December 2019.

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

The companies who participate in the programme are aware that they are required to display a poster showing the ERDF and the ESIF logos at a prominent location in their premises. In addition, these logos have also to be displayed on the company website. Enterprise Ireland’s grant inspection staff check to ensure that these requirements are fulfilled when processing all grant claims.

7. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

7.1 Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- In 2019 Enterprise Ireland supported 38 female led start up’s (out of a total of 127) 91 HPSUs and 36 Competitive Start Fund (CSF)
- Of the 91 High Potential Start Up’s (HPSU’s) supported by Enterprise Ireland in 2019, 19 (i.e. 21%) were female led.
- Of the 36 companies supported under the Competitive Start Fund (CSF) in 2019, 19 (i.e. 53%) were female led.

7.2 Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

Enterprise Ireland has a Female Entrepreneurship Unit, established in response to an underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs in Ireland. The purpose is to support ambitious women entrepreneurs to launch and grow High Potential Start-Ups, and to address the key challenges facing
women in start-ups. It also runs tailored development programmes to support ambitious women optimise their business success.

8. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

*Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):*

- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

The Northern & Western Regional assembly works closely with Enterprise Ireland in delivering grant support to a wide range of businesses in the Border Midlands and West counties. Enterprise Ireland has a team of Development Advisors (DA’s) who work closely with each client company to help them optimise their growth potential. Enterprise Ireland’s network of contacts can be accessed by client companies participating in the ERDF programme. This network includes third level colleges, overseas marketing advisors, other business leaders, etc.

9. **Annexes**

Please annex any relevant additional information

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**PRIORITY 2: ICT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**National Broadband Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>2: Information and Communication Technologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic Objective</strong></td>
<td>2 - Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, Information and Communication Technologies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

The National Broadband Plan for Ireland was published in 2012 as part of the Government’s commitment to the deliver high speed broadband throughout Ireland. The NBP aims to ensure that every home, school and business in Ireland regardless of how remote or rural, has access to high speed broadband. This is being achieved through a combination of:

- Commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and
- A State Intervention in those areas where commercial providers acting alone will not provide this essential service

While the NBP defines high speed broadband as a minimum speed of 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 6Mbps upload, the solution proposed for the State intervention is a mostly fibre solution which can provide speeds of over 100 Mbps.

The objectives to increase broadband connectivity outlined in the NBP is of great importance for jobs, economic growth, innovation and social cohesion. Implementation of the NBP aims to underpin and support wider public policy objectives and initiatives nationally and within the European context.

The Europe 2020 Strategy underlines the importance of broadband deployment as part of the EU’s growth strategy and sets ambitious targets for broadband development. One of its flagship initiatives, the Digital Agenda for Europe acknowledges the socio-economic benefits of broadband, highlighting its importance for competitiveness, social inclusion and employment. The DAE restates the objective of the EU 2020 Strategy with the following targets for broadband development in Europe: (i) to bring basic broadband to all Europeans by 2013; (ii) for all Europeans to have access to internet speeds of above 30 Mbps by 2020; (iii) for 50% or more of European households to subscribe to internet connections above 100 Mbps by 2020.

The NBP is fully aligned with Ireland’s national institutional policy. Project Ireland 2040 is a long-term Government strategy for Ireland’s future development. In response to Brexit and wider challenges such as climate change, a core tenet of the Government strategy is to bring greater economic resilience to Ireland’s rural regions by addressing the infrastructure deficits that currently exist. Under the strategy €2.3 billion investment has been allocated to the NBP under Priority 3. *Strengthening Rural Economies and Communities.*

Key objectives of the NBP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Sub-objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop intervention strategy for areas commercial operators will not deliver high speed broadband.</td>
<td>Deliver intervention as soon as possible to ensure a national high speed broadband network for Ireland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Provide high quality and reliable broadband services. | Every home / business to have access to high speed broadband with a choice of service providers. Ensure network can meet current and future data demand for at least the next 25 years.

Value for money. | Design an economically advantageous procurement strategy. Maximise re-use of existing infrastructure. Incentivise additional commercial investment.

Underpin Government policy on economic recovery and jobs. | Stimulate retention/growth in jobs, enable farming, e-health, trading online, tourism, regional development, savings for consumers etc.

Within the context of these objectives there are a number of key elements which informed the intervention strategy to be adopted for the Project. These principles include:

- **One-off intervention with target of achieving 100% coverage** - to deliver high speed broadband to all premises that will not be able to access such services through commercial investment alone.

- **Step change in services** - to conclusively address connectivity deficits across Ireland, including in rural areas, by setting down minimum speeds and delivering an infrastructure that is capable of meeting current and future demands for bandwidth.

- **Open, competitive market** - to ensure that services are affordable, competitive and on a par with those available in commercial and urban areas, by delivering a wholesale service that is open to all retailers, with benchmarked and transparent pricing and conditions for access.

- **Technology neutral procurement** - to ensure value for money and future proofed solution that is in compliance with EU State Aid Guidelines through a technology neutral procurement process.

- **Cost effective deployment** - to ensure that the network is built within a structured and measurable timeframe, by building on and integrating with commercial operators’ existing networks.

- **Reliable, affordable and future proofed services** - to ensure that quality and affordable services are continuously provided through a long term contract with stringent governance measures.

**Financial Data**
Due to the unique nature of the National Broadband Plan, which involves the deployment of a modern future proofed high speed broadband network to an area involving approximately 96% of Ireland's landmass, the nature and cost of the solution required to deliver the State intervention network could only become known through extensive engagement with bidders during the procurement process. The maximum possible investment by the State for the NBP contract will be €2.977 billion over 25 years. This includes €480m for contingency costs and includes €354m in VAT, which will be paid to the Revenue Commissioners as subsidy is spent.
The State led intervention has secured a commitment of €75m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of which €45m has been committed to the Border, Midland and Western region.

**Report Indicators**
This investment aims to support the delivery of high speed broadband access to 144,976 additional households in the BMW region. The Households Output indicator incorporates mixed use commercial and residential premises which will include farms as this is seen as a key sector. Commercial only premises will not be included in the target indicator metric.
The investment will also support the delivery of access to high speed broadband to 1,145 unserved settlements in the BMW region. It should be noted that the settlements result indicator is currently under review by the NBP specialist team to come up with a more meaningful measurement. The Department has had extensive engagement with the Regional Authorities and during these engagements the Department advised that a change to the Results Indicator would be required as the “Settlements” indicator that was originally proposed in 2014, is no longer appropriate. Following the outcome of the 2019 Mapping Consultation the mapping exercise was updated to reflect the updated scope of the Intervention Area. The Department is suggesting that the Outcome Indicators should be updated and refreshed following the latest mapping exercise. This work is ongoing in consultation with the Regional Assemblies.

Procurement Process – update for 2019

- Procurement took the form of “competitive dialogue”. The purpose of the intensive dialogue process was to tease through very detailed specifications and to trouble shoot issues arising, to deliver a robust and fit-for-purpose contract and network.

- On May 7th 2019 the Government approved a recommendation to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt. This was the final stage of procurement before contract award.

- The Department conducted a public consultation in 2019 to close the ongoing NBP mapping exercise in advance of the award of the NBP contract. The mapping exercise was to ensure that the NBP High Speed Broadband Map is up to date, is compliant with State Aid guidelines for broadband, and reflects telecommunications operators’ proposed commercial investments in high speed broadband across Ireland over the next seven years as well as confirming the final State Intervention Area. That consultation sought submissions from operators who wished to have their existing high speed broadband networks, or who had concrete plans to invest in high speed broadband networks over the next 7 years, to be included on my Department’s High Speed Broadband Map. Over 180 submissions were received by the due date of 30 September 2019, including 30 from large and small commercial telecommunications operators.

- Following that public consultation the updated Intervention Area proposed now represents c537,500 premises in the State led Intervention Area.

- Following the submission of the State Aid notification to the European Commission on the 17th of October 2019 a positive decision approving the NBP State led intervention was received on the 15th of November 2019. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules and concluded that the scheme’s positive effects on competition in the Irish broadband market outweigh potential negative effects brought about by the public intervention.

Government Decision 19th November to sign the contract for National Broadband Plan

Government signed the contract with National Broadband Ireland (NBI) to roll out high speed broadband to 1.1 million people living and working in the nearly 540,000 premises including 100,000 businesses and farms and over 600 schools where commercial operators will not commit to deliver the service. NBI, by the end of 2021, plans to pass approximately 115,000 premises. Approximately 70,000 to 100,000 premises will be passed each year thereafter and the final premises to be completed in 2026.
The NBI network will include over 1.5 million poles, over 15,000 km of underground ducts and up to 146,000 km of new fibre cable. The network will make available 150 Mbps broadband product for consumers upgraded to 300Mbps by year 6 and 500Mbps by year 10. The network is designed with a roadmap to upgrade the services over 25 years. This ensures that the network is future-proofed to meet requirements in years to come. Business and residential customers will be able to avail of 1Gbps from day 1.

In the first year of roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties including in the BMW region. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county. BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations.

The NBP procurement process has determined that the maximum possible cost to the State will be €3 billion including VAT and contingency over 25 years. The subsidy will not be paid to the NBI until the milestones have been achieved and verified and there are a comprehensive set of protections and legally binding obligations set out in the contract which include a suite of key performance indicators to ensure the service is maintained appropriately.

NBI has commenced mobilisation work, including site surveys in a number of counties and this work is continuing at a pace. All counties will see premises passed in the first 2 years and over 90% of premises in the State will have access to high speed broadband within the next four years. The first fibre to the home connection is expected to be made in quarter 4, 2020. ERDF funding of €75m (€30m for S&E region) is likely to be drawn down by 2021.

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### Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

#### 2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

##### 2.1 Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 2(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 C010</td>
<td>Additional households with broadband access of at least 30Mbps (Common Output Indicator)</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of households</td>
<td>144,976</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional households with broadband access of at least 30Mbps (Common Output Indicator)</td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of households</td>
<td>144,976</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fully implemented projects** are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.

**Selected projects** are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.

### 2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 2(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(a)</td>
<td>R.3.1</td>
<td>Extension of next generation broadband to 583 un-served settlements in the BMW Region</td>
<td>No. of towns/villages</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013**

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

**Operations selected for support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

8 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
### Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

The NBP contract is a detailed document that provides for the design, build and operation of a national high-speed broadband network by NBI and includes detailed provisions that are designed to protect the interests of the State and citizens. The Department will manage governance of the NBP contract and the Department’s NBP team will be supported in this task by a range of external experts.

The Department recently published a request for tenders for the technical expertise required to support the Department’s core team, for at least the next two years. The technical expertise that is being sought...
through an open tendering process, will assist the Department in monitoring the implementation and progress of the network rollout and evaluating the large volume of technical information that NBI must provide to the Department, during the deployment phase of the rollout in particular.

5. **Summary of evaluations**

*Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.*

As the NBP is entering implementation stage no evaluations have as yet been carried out. Regular evaluations are planned in line with State Aid requirements.

6. **Major projects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>CCI</th>
<th>Status of MP</th>
<th>Total investments</th>
<th>Total eligible cost</th>
<th>Planned notification/submission to EC</th>
<th>Date of approval by EC</th>
<th>Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)</th>
<th>Planned completion date (year, quarter)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBP State Intervention 2014</td>
<td>IE16RFO P002</td>
<td>4.planned for notification/submission to EC</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>€75 m (ERDF) €45m BMW Region</td>
<td>Q2 2020</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Q4 2020</td>
<td>Contract is for 25 years to include build, rollout, operations and maintenance. Deployment will take 7 years and will be completed by 2027.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>CCI</th>
<th>Current state of realisation – physical progress</th>
<th>Main outputs</th>
<th>Date of signature of first works contract</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBP State Intervention</td>
<td>2014IE16RFOP002</td>
<td>5. Design</td>
<td>Providing access to high speed broadband to nearly 540k premises in the Intervention Area</td>
<td>At design stage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Significant problems encountered in implementing major projects and measures taken to overcome them.

See Section 4 above.

7. Information and Publicity Requirements

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions/plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

As project beneficiaries, NBI are responsible for ensuring that all communication measures acknowledge the support from the funds in line with the Information and Communication guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020.

Both Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds’ logo and the Union Emblem will be featured on the following items (not exhaustive), if they are produced in relation to the NBP, as per the stated technical specification requirement detailed in Information and Communication guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020. For small promotional objects the obligation to make reference to the Fund shall not apply.

- Billboards / Publicity Signage;
- Plaques;
- Brochures / Literature;
- Application Forms;
- Annual Reports;
- Display / Exhibition stands;
- Videos;
- Advertisements & Supplements;
- Conference Material;
- CD-ROMs / DVDs;
- Websites;
- Offer letters, correspondence with projects/beneficiaries;
- Press releases;
- Launches / Awards;
- Posters;

**Temporary or permanent billboards**

Prior to the start of and during the implementation of the National Broadband Plan in each deployment area, roadside and site signage will be constructed to communicate to the passing public that the major project is taking place and will display Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds’ logo and the EU emblem on all signs and on all advertisements, information and communication material.

**Documentation**

NBI will ensure any document, relating to the implementation of the National Broadband Plan which is used for the public or for participants, including any attendance or other certificate, will include a statement to the effect that the Operational Programme was supported by the Fund or Funds or display the Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds’ logo and EU Emblem.

8. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles
8.1 Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
- Promotion of sustainable development

**Integration**
The NBP aims to ensure that all premises in Ireland regardless of how remote or rural, has access to high speed broadband. It is expected that all economic and societal groups will benefit from the State led intervention. Social integration and development in regional and rural Ireland will be supported by the implementation of the programme as communities, businesses and families will have the ability to ‘stay-in-touch’, older people will be facilitated in continuous learning and digital literacy and reliable online to public services will enhance access to key Government supports regardless of a person’s location. eHealth will enable remote monitoring of older and vulnerable people in their homes, improving home based care as an alternative to hospitalisation.

**Equality/Diversity**
The procurement process includes strict adherence protocols to relevant EU Directives and legislation on equality and employment laws in all RFT documents.

It is anticipated that the provision of access to high speed broadband to all citizens in Ireland will provide enhanced access to education services (through facilitating innovative educational tools, granting access to specialist teaching resources and enabling equal engagement by distance learning), labour market access (providing Gigabit connectivity to create new applications and business models to produce distribute and sell goods) and the future delivery of services such as eHealth and eGovernment for all citizens and all genders. The NBP aims to be fully inclusive in ensuring that people with disabilities will have access on an equal basis with others, to information, facilities and services provided to the public, in both urban and rural areas.

**Sustainable Development**
The NBP will benefit the environment by reducing commuting time, promoting more balanced regional development and allowing for energy efficient smart technologies. The NBP will facilitate remote working, cloud services and Smart Homes and therefore contribute to the mitigation of fossil fuel emissions and support other environmental polices across Ireland. Precision agriculture through smart farming, which allows increased production quality, remote monitoring of livestock, lower operational costs, reduced impact on the environment, better security technology and easier interaction with State bodies online. NBP will benefit transport through remote working, innovations in traffic management, smart travel technology and promotion of ride sharing. Ireland’s transition to a digital economy occurs against the backdrop of climate change. Transitioning Ireland’s economy to a low carbon future will require investment in digital technology and infrastructure. Access to reliable high speed broadband can help Ireland’s rural and regional economies contribution to this low carbon future.

Rollout of the NBP will take places against a backdrop of significant and rapid transformation in the structure of global and national economies. Technology and digitisation are developing rapidly and are expected to change jobs, enterprise and sectors. Businesses are increasingly moving to cloud based solutions, which in turn drive an increased dependency on broadband for the transfer and management of rich data and to support complex business solutions. This move to a cloud based solution enables employees to be productive from home and is a key enabler of the workforce of the future. Access to
talent for employers, particularly smaller and more innovative businesses, will be critical to the digital economy. This will increase the likelihood of virtual teams working across an organisation and minimise the need for travel to a designated place of work.

**SEA/AA**

The Department, in accordance with European and national law, undertook a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the National Broadband Plan – Intervention Strategy. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes prior to their completion.

As part of the SEA the Department commissioned an environmental report to assess the likely environmental impacts the Intervention Strategy is likely to have, and to propose measures to mitigate any such impacts.

As part of the AA the Department also commissioned a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) as part of the AA process to ascertain if the Intervention Strategy could significantly impact on any site designated for conservation. The NIS also proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts.

The Department published these documents, along with the National Broadband Plan Intervention Strategy as part of the SEA and AA processes. The consultation ran from 2 January 2018 to 9 February 2018.

**8.2 Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives**

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

A comprehensive mapping consultation has been undertaken by the Department to identify where the market is expected to deliver high speed broadband services and thus to identify areas that will need to be targeted by a State led intervention. On the 26th of July 2019 a final public consultation on the scope of the Intervention Area in advance of contract award was launched to ensure the NBP high speed broadband map is up to date, is compliant with State Aid guidelines for broadband and reflects telecommunications operators’ proposed commercial investments in high speed broadband across Ireland over the next seven years as well as confirming the final State Intervention Area. Following this consultation the Intervention Area is now confirmed as circa 537,500 premises in rural Ireland that will benefit from the NBP access to high speed broadband enhancing sustainable development, equality and diversity and integration in the targeted Intervention area.

The Department considers the strengthening of digital adoption among citizens a priority. The Department’s Trading on Line Voucher Scheme, which is administered by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices continues to support small businesses and sole traders to participate in the digital economy. Preliminary figures show that some 6,599 small businesses received funding under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme to date to develop their online trading capabilities.

The Department’s Digital Skills for Citizens Scheme is focussed on encouraging and empowering citizens to participate fully in a digital economy and society. Since training commenced in 2017 the Digital Skills for Citizens Scheme provided free, basic digital skills training to over 55,000 citizens who never used the internet, removing a key barrier to digital adoption.

The School Digital Champion Programme commenced in 2016 and is another innovative way in which the Department in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills is driving digital
adoption. The programme gives students the opportunity to complete a project using technology and data sources to make a real difference to their school, local business and the wider community. To date over 1,700 champions throughout the country have participated in the programme.

9. **North/South Co-operation**

Please provide a brief summary of North/South Co-operation as outlined in the Implementation Plan:
- Describe what has been done
- Commentary on any initiatives / developments
- Level of resources committed

The National Broadband Plan State intervention, through its delivery of affordable high speed broadband to 144,976 additional premises in the BMW region, will contribute greatly to improved social and economic development to citizens living in the southern and eastern region. This is particularly important given the impact of Brexit – the ESRI predict Irish economic growth will be some 2.7%-3.8% less than it would have been without Brexit. The Copenhagen Economics predict that a decade after Brexit Irish GDP could be 4.3%-7% lower than the non-Brexit baseline level in 2030. Analysis by Copenhagen Economics and the Department of Finance identify the regional and rural economies as having the greatest exposure/risk to any negative economic downside of Brexit.

10. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):
- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-goverment organisations.

Approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs), including schools, library hubs and local sports halls in every country in Ireland are currently going through a detailed planning process and it is anticipated that the majority of them will be connected to high speed broadband this year, to enable communities to quickly get free public access to high speed broadband. This will allow local residents to work remotely, IT educational classes for pupils and local community groups local businesses to access hot desking and upload and down load large files without the need to travel into towns and cities.

BCPs have been specifically selected by the local authorities so that they can provide public Wi-Fi and other facilities a number of locations to support mini digital/enterprise hubs to the local community in advance of the main NBP deployment. There is significant engagement across each county with many stakeholders and the Department of Rural and Community Affairs have a large team managing the BCP project in conjunctions with the Department and NBI.

11. **Annexes**

Please annex any relevant additional information
**PRIORITY 3: SME SUPPORT, PROMOTION, CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT**

Entrepreneurship in Micro-Enterprise - LEOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>3: SME support, promotion and capability development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(a) Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship in Micro-Enterprise - LEOs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

**Overview on objectives:**
The Entrepreneurship in Micro enterprise scheme is delivered though the 13 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) located in the Border, Midlands and Western region. The specific objective of this priority is to increase employment levels in micro-enterprises in this region by supporting business start-ups, business expansion and higher innovation levels in micro-enterprises. This investment priority will support innovative and growth-oriented SME start-ups and expansions through the provision of business information, advisory services, capacity building, mentoring and financial supports.

The financial supports will be targeted at more value-added clients in the manufacturing and traded services activities which do not lead to deadweight and or displacement. The non-financial supports are broader and more generally focused but will meet the specific needs of a large cohort of manufacturing and traded service micro-enterprises.

**Description of the Intervention:**

In pursuing the above objective, the Local Enterprise Offices:

- promote local enterprise culture and entrepreneurship throughout society through initiatives such as their Start-Your-Own-Business training courses, provision of business information and advisory services, school’s enterprise programmes, awards schemes, networks.
- support business start-ups and expansions with appropriate financial supports, including feasibility supports, priming supports and repayable assistance in addition to networking with appropriate private sector finance providers.
- encourage and facilitate higher levels of value-added businesses, including green enterprises and eco-innovation, by applying innovation, ICT strategies and export awareness.
- build the capability of owner/managers of micro-businesses through training and development actions.

**Progress and Achievements**

**LEO Highlights from 2019**

- 3,149 new jobs created in businesses supported by the Local Enterprise Offices in 2019
- 7,408 new jobs (gross) and 3,149 jobs (net) created by LEO backed client companies
- 37,306 people participated in business training programmes.
- 10,756 mentoring assignments were provided to small business owners to give guidance and advice around key business issues.
- 1,341 business projects received direct financial assistance.

The 31 LEOs nationwide, run in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities, provide a ‘first stop shop’ for the supports available to entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses.

**Key developments 2019**

Some major developments/initiatives of the LEO project in 2019 include:

- **5 Years of Local Enterprise Offices**
Since the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) were established in 2014 they have supported the creation of over 18,600 jobs nationwide with 144,830 entrepreneurs and businesspeople trained in a range of skills over the five years.

The figures were announced by Heather Humphreys T.D., Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Pat Breen T.D., Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection at an event in Russborough House in Wicklow to celebrate 5 Years of the Local Enterprise Offices.
v **www.startupnow.ie**

Start is a national campaign developed by the Local Enterprise Offices aimed at ensuring innovative start-ups and entrepreneurs get the funding and supports they need to develop their business or grow a business idea. In 2019, 1,200 enquiries were generated from the Start campaign. Start is aimed at innovative microenterprise start-ups. These are start-ups with the potential to:

- manufacture innovative products or processes
- trade innovative services
- employ up to 10 people
- export

v **Trading Online Voucher Scheme**

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is administered by the LEOs on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE). It assists small businesses in developing their ecommerce capability. Eligible businesses can apply for a voucher of up to €2,500 matched by own funding to develop a trading online component to their business. In 2019, there were 1,218 LEO clients approved for Trading Online Voucher Scheme grants. It is agreed with DCCAE that the 2020 target will be 1,000.

v **Lean4Micro**

The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Competitiveness department and the LEOs. Since 2017, all LEOs receive an allocation to fund a Lean4Micro programme in their area. 278 clients undertook a Lean programme in 2019. There is a 2020 target of 300 LEO client participants in the programme.

v **Brexit Scorecard**

The Brexit Scorecard for LEO clients was launched by the Minister of State for Employment and Small Business in May 2017. The Centre of Excellence collaborates with the EI Brexit Unit to ensure that LEOs clients in their area who complete the Brexit Scorecard are contacted by their LEO to offer assistance with their Brexit planning and to make them aware of LEO supports. 975 EI Brexit Scorecards were completed in 2019 by individuals/businesses that identified themselves as LEO clients.

v **Productivity Challenge**

The Productivity Challenge is a competitive programme introduced in 2019 that supports businesses who have a turnover or balance sheet total of less than €10 million and employ less than 50 employees. The Productivity voucher is €2,500 to engage and leverage experts, who can assess the business’ value chain and operations. This process can cover supply chain management, internal business and production operations, right through to logistics and the distribution network. It can also be used to invest in Lean training and capability development.

There were 718 applications for the Productivity Challenge in 2019 with 200 vouchers approved, these vouchers will be paid in 2020. It is proposed to run further Productivity Challenges in 2020 with funding allocated for 700 vouchers.

v **LEO Competitive Fund**

The €2.5m. LEO Competitive Fund was launched in Q3 2019 with the winning projects announced by Minister Humphreys on the 4th of October 2019. The objective of the LEO Competitive Fund is to encourage LEO projects aligned with the pillars of the Future Jobs Strategy and the Regional-Enterprise-Plans. Collaboration with one or more LEOs from within the national network was encouraged as was the creation of initiatives with other partners such as LAs, Chambers and Community Enterprise Centres.

v **National Women’s Enterprise Day**

National Women’s Enterprise Day took place on Thursday 17th October 2019 with 17 major female entrepreneurial events ran across the country. The Local Enterprise Offices organised a programme
of events under the theme “Making It Happen” aimed at inspiring and educating the next generation of female business leaders to take their local ideas and make them a global success.

- **Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur**
The IBYE Programme is an Action Plan for Jobs action. The programme targets the development of young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18-35 across three categories: Best Business Idea, Best Start-Up Business and Best-Established Business.

The 2019 competition attracted over 1,600 applications from Ireland’s young entrepreneurs. As part of the supports on offer through the competition, more than 400 young entrepreneurs benefited from boot-camp training sessions. They competed at County and Regional Finals for a place as one of the 24 finalists participating in a National Event in Google’s European Headquarters on the 15th September 2019 with 3 category winners and an overall winner announced.

- **Micro Finance Ireland**
Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) supports microenterprises by providing unsecured business loans of €2,000 to €25,000 for commercially viable proposals. LEO clients can get a 1% reduction in the interest rate if the business submits their application through them. In 2019, LEOs assisted client companies with 327 applications for loans. Of these, 159 applications were successful in securing loan approval, supporting the creation of 327 jobs.

- **Local Enterprise Week**
The focus of ‘Local Enterprise Week’ is to increase awareness of the range of LEO supports and services available to micro and small enterprises. Local Enterprise Week ran from March 4th to March 8th, 2019 with all 31 LEOs celebrating with a range of events for start-ups, aspiring entrepreneurs and small businesses in their area. Several key events during Local Enterprise Week are organised in collaboration with State Agencies and Government Departments, including Enterprise Ireland, InterTrade Ireland, Microfinance Ireland, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment. LEOs across the country hosted a programme of over 300 events to showcase the supports that can be accessed locally; covering a broad range of topics such as ethical entrepreneurship, spotting mega trends, getting ready for Brexit, how to tender for more work and close more sales. Other bodies, such as IBEC and Chambers of Commerce also supported events during the Local Enterprise Week.

**Financial Data:**
The initial 2019 Measure 1 and 2 allocations for the 31 LEOs was €9,842,500 and €8,279,710 respectively. During 2019 there was a reallocation of capital monies of €2,963,217 which resulted in a final Measure 1 and 2 allocations to LEOs of €11,250,891 and €9,834,536 respectively.

The 2019 IBYE Investment and bootcamp allocation was €2,131,000 with an IBYE Marketing allocation of €155,000.

**Indicator Data:**
Assuming the economic development conditions prevail and that there will not be an adverse effect from Brexit and the Coronavirus we are confident about delivering the performance targets agreed for the OP.
### 2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

**Priority-level Output Indicators**

**Investment Priority 3(a)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Employment increase in supported enterprises</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalents</td>
<td>3,661</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>356.5</td>
<td>445.5</td>
<td>565.5</td>
<td>623.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Number of business start-ups supported</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>636</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving non-financial aid</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>11,397</td>
<td>3305</td>
<td>3702</td>
<td>3439</td>
<td>4,195</td>
<td>5290</td>
<td>5,887</td>
<td>22,288*</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Number of participants of enterprise training programmes</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of participants</td>
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<td>5681</td>
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<td>6940</td>
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<td>CO01</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving support</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
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<td>Number of enterprises receiving grants</td>
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<td>No. of enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO06</td>
<td>Private investment matching public support to enterprises</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>€</td>
<td>€9,513,081</td>
<td>2,095,357</td>
<td>1,532,892</td>
<td>1,770,252</td>
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<td></td>
<td>€</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.*

*Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.*

\(^9\) Provisional figure provided by EI (GMIS report run date 26/02/2020), updated figure to be provided to MA in May 2020

\(^10\) Provisional figure provided by EI (GMIS report run date 26/02/2020), updated figure to be provided to MA in May 2020

\(^11\) Provisional figure provided by EI (GMIS report run date 26/02/2020), updated figure to be provided to MA in May 2020
Programme-Specific Result Indicators

Investment Priority 3(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3(a)</td>
<td>Employment in the micro-enterprise sector in the BMW Region</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalents</td>
<td>56,969</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>+ 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EL LEOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Indicator</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Fully Implemented)</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Selected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C001</td>
<td>Number of Enterprises receiving support</td>
<td>23,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C002</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving grants</td>
<td>1205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C003</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants</td>
<td>684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C004</td>
<td>Number of Enterprises receiving non-financial support</td>
<td>22,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C005</td>
<td>Number of new enterprises supported</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$6,157,530</td>
<td>$5,066,801</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$6,462,877</td>
<td>$5,228,613</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$7,780,652</td>
<td>$6,459,974</td>
<td>$2,390,587</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$8,574,504</td>
<td>$6,768,505</td>
<td>$3,523,892</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$8,504,214</td>
<td>$6,624,772</td>
<td>$4,195,921</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$37,479,777</td>
<td>$30,148,665</td>
<td>$10,110,400</td>
<td>1904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
### Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€6,157,530</td>
<td>€5,066,801</td>
<td>321</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€37,479,777</td>
<td>€30,148,665</td>
<td>1904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.
- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.

Economic conditions and factors have a potential impact i.e. Brexit, EU/UK trade deal negotiations and Coronavirus fall out.

The Coronavirus outbreak and Brexit represents a potentially significant risk to enterprise development. At this juncture it is unclear at the precise nature of this risk. As a result, the LEOs now have a COVID-19 Business Continuity Response and Brexit tool kit developed which may be implemented if an economic crisis unfolds.

LEOs now have a suite of tailored supports in place to support micro enterprises:

1. Scorecards to help with planning
2. One-to-one mentoring
3. Specialist training and consultancy
4. Financial supports
5. Access to worldwide support networks
6. Dedicated Brexit events
7. LEO Lean for Micro
8. LEO Training and Management Development Programmes
9. Microfinance Ireland
10. Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters
11. Trading Online Voucher Scheme
12. COVID-19 Business Continuity Supports

- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.

Assuming the economic development conditions prevail and that there will not be an adverse effect from Brexit, EU/UK trade deal negotiations and Coronavirus we are confident about delivering the performance targets agreed for the OP.

5. **Summary of Evaluations**

- Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

Performance of LEOs in respect of all enterprise development plans, metrics and outcomes are closely monitored on a regular basis by the Centre of Excellence.

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

**Publicity**

LEOs continue to publicise their programmes and activities through various media and channels. Mail shot advertising, national and local Newspaper advertorials and advertisements, as well as signage for LEO-sponsored exhibitions and enterprise events constitute the bulk of LEO expenditure/outgoings on publicity. Websites maintained by each LEO equally notify and publicise their activities. In each case the EU logo and accreditation is printed and displayed prominently. Beneficiaries are also required to acknowledge EU Contribution.

LEO marketing and communication material e.g. brochures, DVD’s, stationery carry the appropriate logos. Photo opportunities where possible demonstrate appropriate use of EU logos either in backdrops or use of EU flags.

In our role as Intermediate Body, the ERDF section of the Centre of Excellence, Micro Enterprise & Small Business Unit, Enterprise Ireland undertake checks on publicity to ensure that all LEOs acknowledge the contribution of the EU.

**Sample of Publicity Activities:**

**Local Enterprise Office Website**
www.localenterprise.ie is client-focused website providing information about all national and local supports and events for local business. The EU logo is displayed prominently on this website and each of the 31 individual LEO websites.

National Events where EU publicity is acknowledged:
National Women’s Enterprise day

Now in its 13th year, the National Women’s Enterprise Day 2019 took place on October 17th with the 31 Local Enterprise Offices marking the day with seventeen regional and local events, all aimed at aspiring female entrepreneurs and existing owner-managers.

The theme for 2019 was “Making It Happen”. The key takeaway from NWED 2019 was to encourage more female entrepreneurs to overcome business challenges and explore ways of “Making it Happen for their own business”
Speaking ahead of the events, Orla Martin, Chair of the National Women’s Enterprise Day Committee and Head of Enterprise with LEO Offaly, spoke proudly about how the event has progressed over the last number of years. “It had been one single day in a single location,” she explains. “However, in the past few years, we have changed the format to have more regional and local events. This has been fantastic as it has allowed so many more women to attend and avail of the services and network regionally and locally. “The events, which are free and open to anyone, will give female entrepreneurs a platform to network with their peers and gain valuable information. “It’s a great opportunity for women to network with role models and meet people who have been there and done it,” states Orla. “It can lead the way in business development”. Despite the broad spectrum of different sectors taking part, Orla believes that there are common threads that run through every business. “Even though the businesses can be really diverse, for example, you could have somebody in a medical device business and another person who is an artisan food producer, however there are lots of commons difficulties and opportunities that they are facing in business,” she enthuses.

IBYE 2019
Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) is a €2 million investment competition aimed at 18 to 35-year olds. The programme is run by the network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in local authorities nationwide and is funded by the Government of Ireland and supported by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland. There were over 1,600 applications for IBYE in 2019 across three categories:

- Best Business Idea
- Best Start-Up Business
- Best Established Business

Already through the programme, 186 entrants have secured investments of between €3,000 and €15,000 each. 24 finalists reached the IBYE National Final in 2019, where winners shared a €100,000 investment fund.

Pictured above is Martin O’Reilly’s Output Sports, (supported by Local Enterprise Office Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) who won the Best Business Idea category and Sharon Cunningham of Shorla Pharma named Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) for 2019 and Sean McGarry of Showergem (Local Enterprise Office Mayo) who won the Best Established Business category, at the IBYE National Final on Sunday 13th April at Google’s European HQ in Dublin
Sharon Cunningham, a Waterford native, started Shorla Pharma with her former EirGen colleague Orlaith Ryan based out of Tipperary and named Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) for 2019 at the National Final in Dublin.

Martin O’Reilly of Output Sports (Local Enterprise Office Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) who won the Best Business Idea category and Sean McGarry of Showergem (Local Enterprise Office Mayo) who won the Best-Established Business category.

The runners-up in each of the categories were Elizabeth McGloughlin of Tympany Medical (Local Enterprise Office Galway) in the Best Business Idea category, Brendan Maloney of Skillko (Local Enterprise Office Mayo) in the Best Start-Up Business category and Devan Hughes of Buymie (Local Enterprise Office Dublin City) in the Best Established Business category. The winner of the Google Best Online Promotion of Business Award was Devan Hughes and Buymie.

Minster for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys, T.D., said; “Irish entrepreneurs are among the very best in the world. That’s because we have huge talent in every region and community in Ireland. Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur is about celebrating that talent. The €2 million investment by Government in the competition has ensured that 185 entrepreneurs have not only received investment, but also mentoring, advice and peer-to-peer learning”.

“This year’s winners and wider group of finalists are the cream of the crop. They are our future business leaders, and I am delighted that we are celebrating and supporting them through the competition. They are also central to the success of Future Jobs Ireland, our whole-of-Government plan to prepare our businesses and workers for the future.”

Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen T.D., said;

“These entrepreneurs represent the very best of talent that exists within Ireland’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. Many of today’s finalists have developed businesses that are already well known. The others, no doubt, will be the stars of the future. Getting to today’s final is validation for all of finalists that they are following the right path. For our winners, we congratulate them. Today is a day to celebrate with their family and friends, but from tomorrow onwards, they can apply the valuable experience that participation in IBYE has given them to bring their businesses to even greater heights. They can be assured that my Department will be there to support them every step of the way on their entrepreneurial journey.”

• Over 1,600 entrants applied to be Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur for 2019
• Over 400 places were provided at Business Bootcamps for entrants
• 186 local winners and runners-up sharing investments between €3,000 and €15,000
• 8 regional finals were hosted across the country
• An investment fund of €100,000 was provided for the National Winners and Runners-Up

Local Enterprise Offices host Enterprise Village at National Ploughing Championships

The 88th Annual National Ploughing Championships took place on 17th – 19th September at Ballintrane, Fenagh, County Carlow. The Local Enterprise Village, which is designed and hosted by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), was home to 30 small businesses showcasing their products and services from a range of sectors, that have been supported on their enterprise journey by LEOs nationwide.
Minister Humphreys put emphasis on the key role these businesses play in Ireland’s economy; “The Local Enterprise Village is a snapshot of the wide variety of businesses supported by the Government through the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). These firms are the bedrock of local economies right across the country, which is why we are putting an increased focus on the LEOs under the Future Jobs Ireland strategy. This event is a fantastic opportunity for the businesses involved to showcase their products and services, and I look forward to seeing them all in Carlow.”

Kieran Comerford, Local Enterprise Office Carlow, outlined what a significant opportunity it is for these businesses; “You are looking at a potential footfall for these businesses of over 250,000 people across the 3 days of the Ploughing Championships. That is simply incredible for them, to be given that
size of a captive audience to sell to, does not happen to small businesses like this. We have put in extensive work with each business to ensure they are as best prepared as they can be for the ploughing and to maximise this opportunity through sales and marketing training and stand development. The Local Enterprise Village is always a hub of wonderful products and innovative services and will no doubt be a big hit again with the visitors to Ballintrane”.

The NPA Kildare Director John Dunne said; “It is marvellous to see that so many diverse and interesting businesses, from every county in Ireland, will be represented at this year’s National Ploughing Championships’ ‘Local Enterprise Village’. This is an ideal and unique opportunity for these companies to showcase their products & services to the huge number of visitors that Ploughing attracts.”

The National Enterprise Awards 2019
The National Enterprise Awards, co-ordinated by the Local Enterprise Offices, took place on May 29th, 2019 at the Mansion House, Dublin. This competition was established in 1997 to highlight the success stories behind Ireland’s best small businesses and micro-enterprises.

A global skincare company that was founded in Kildare, Pestle & Mortar, won the top prize at the 2019 National Enterprise Awards, organised by the Local Enterprise Offices to celebrate Ireland’s best small businesses. The Newbridge-headquartered company, launched by Sonia Deasy in 2014, is now a global skincare brand and stocks its products in thirteen countries including the US, the UK, Australia, Bermuda and Thailand. Inspired by Deasy’s sixth-generation Indian heritage in natural healing, Pestle & Mortar is the first skincare company to win the overall title in the competition’s 21-year history and is backed by Local Enterprise Office Kildare and Enterprise Ireland.

Presenting the awards on stage, Minister Pat Breen said: “I want to pay tribute to all the winners and finalists in this year’s National Enterprise Awards. Their drive, determination and passion for building successful businesses and creating local jobs is what this competition is all about. This year’s winners, like all those in previous years, represent the backbone of Ireland’s enterprise success and contribute hugely to the economic vibrancy of their respective regions. All this year’s finalists and winners have been supported by my Department through the Local Enterprise Office network. The Government, through the Local Enterprise Offices, will continue to play its part in helping to prepare small business for the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead.”

This is the second year in-a-row that the top title has been clinched by a Kildare company, with Terra NutriTech of Athy winning the top prize last year. Previous winners of the National Enterprise Awards have included Irish Yogurts (in 1998), Obelisk (in 2000), Digiweb (in 2004) and DesignPro (in 2013).
Category Winners 2019

PESTLE & MORTAR

CLEAN CUT MEALS

ICE CREAM TREATS

MECHANICAL MODULAR SOLUTIONS
National Enterprise Award 2019 Winners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Enterprise Awards 2019 (Cash Prize for business: €10,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Winner:</strong> Pestle &amp; Mortar, backed by LEO Kildare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kildare – Pestle &amp; Mortar</strong> is a family-owned company founded by Sonia Deasy in 2014. It is now a global skincare brand combining natural healing philosophies with science to produce products which are beautifully simple, effective and easy-to-use. Sold across 3 continents, all 8 of the existing ranges are recipients of numerous awards worldwide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Export: Best Export Award Category Winner (Cash Prize for business: €5,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kilkenny – Mechanical Modular Solutions (MMS)</strong> design, manufacture, integrate and deliver pre-engineered and prefabricated modular solutions for large-scale construction projects including data centres, schools, colleges, hotels, leisure centres, retail outlets and office developments. Operating from a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility and with accredited in-house expertise, MMS can deliver modules for large-scale projects worldwide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start-Up: Best-Start Up Category Winner (Cash Prize for business: €5,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Galway – Clean Cut Meals</strong> offer healthy, ready-made meal plans delivered direct. All meals are handmade by the team based in Clarinbridge, Co. Galway. The company focus on sales directly to the customer but are also looking at branching into multiple retail stores across Ireland in late 2019. Established in 2015 by two Galway friends, the company has grown from strength to strength and are looking to enter the US market in 2020.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation: Innovation Award Category Winner (Cash Prize for business: €5,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cavan – Ice Cream Treats</strong> is a producer of award-winning premium quality ice cream and frozen yogurts. All their products are hand filled using Irish dairy milk and cream. Ice Cream Treats produce product for retail and have begun exporting to Dubai and Singapore.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight regional awards winners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Regional Awards (Cash Prize for business: €2,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Gym + Coffee in the Dublin Region (backed by LEO Dublin City)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ ABS Engineering Control Systems Ltd in the South West Region (backed by LEO Limerick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Dotser Ltd in the Mid-East Region (backed by LEO Offaly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ VirtualVet in the South Region (backed by LEO Waterford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Harte Outdoor Lighting in the South East Region (backed by LEO Wexford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ MMG Welding in the North West Region (backed by LEO Donegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Rivval Ltd in the North East Region (backed by LEO Monaghan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Skillko Ltd in the West Region (backed by LEO Mayo).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Enterprise Week took place from March 4th to 8th 2019. Local Enterprise Offices hosts a series of events during the week aimed at stimulating business growth and new business start-ups to drive local economic prosperity. Local Enterprise Week provides an opportunity, at any stage of business development, to seek out advice and guidance to develop a business idea, start a business or grow an existing enterprise.

Over 300 events were held to increase awareness of the range of supports and services available to microenterprises from the 31 Local Enterprise Offices in every county.

Showcase Ireland 2019
Showcase Ireland described as Ireland’s Creative Expo and is the first major trade event of the year. Showcase – Ireland’s International Creative Expo was held in Dublin’s RDS from 20th – 23rd January 2019.

Showcase is a partnership between the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland and Showcase Ireland Events Ltd., with support from Enterprise Ireland in promoting the trade show internationally through their network of offices overseas. Karen Hennessy, Chief Executive of the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, said: “Showcase is central to the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland’s strategy of supporting client companies in the domestic market and building the international reputation and commercial potential of the Irish design and craft sector. Each year the show provides a unique platform for hundreds of designers and makers from across Ireland to meet and do business with domestic and international buyers, enabling them to potentially grow and scale up to extend their market reach. We are delighted to work in partnership with the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices in supporting and guiding client companies in their commercial development. Working together, our aim is to ensure our clients continue to grow, innovate and successfully compete at home and abroad and to support them in addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from Brexit while uncertainty continues in the marketplace.”
The Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Ms. Heather Humphreys T.D., visited the Local Enterprise Showcase to meet the start-ups and first-time exhibitors that have been supported by their LEO. Speaking in the RDS, Minister Humphreys said: “The quality of the work on display at Showcase is a testament to the vibrancy and diversity of the design and craft sector which makes an immense contribution to Ireland’s economy and culture and provides vital sustainable jobs in every region of the country. Export diversification is essential for the design and crafts sectors to build resilience. This annual fair offers ambitious Irish designers and makers eager to break into the export market or expand their existing international presence an unparalleled opportunity to connect with buyers from around the world and secure orders for the coming year, maximising the potential for future growth and job creation. I wish both exhibitors and buyers a very productive show and every success throughout 2019.”
Creative entrepreneurs from all over Ireland promote local craft and design to an estimated 5,000 national and international buyers at Showcase in Dublin, Ireland’s International Creative Expo. Working in partnership with the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) around the country set up a dedicated area within Showcase – the Local Enterprise Showcase - enabling over 100 designers, manufacturers and craftspeople to sell directly to international buyers.

All Local Enterprise Offices comply with the Information and Publicity requirements and use appropriate EU Logos & branding.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

Brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities

Equality between men and women
All LEOs generally seek to proactively gender-mainstream their operational activities and structures, particularly regarding gender balance requirements, with a view to achieving optimum levels of gender equality.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination
All LEOs help promote equal diverse and socially inclusive societies and help combat poverty and inequality through co-operation with local and rural development structures and facilitation of job creation.
The following actions will be taken to integrate below horizontal principles:

1. In dealing with clients the LEOs will ensure the rights (enshrined in the Customer Service Charter) to equal treatment established by equality legislation are upheld. The LEOs do not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, family status, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, and membership of the traveller community.

2. The LEOs will ensure that all offices, facilities, and resources are fully accessible in line with the Disability Act 2005.

3. LEOs will generally seek to proactively gender-mainstream their operational activities and structures, particularly regarding gender balance requirements, with a view to achieving optimum levels of gender equality. The selection of projects for support or financial assistance will be monitored for gender balance.

4. Positive interventions such as The Women in Business Networks, Women’s National Enterprise Day, Mentoring and tailored training programmes will be undertaken throughout the life of the programme.

5. Specific initiatives targeting non-Irish nationals such as Ethnic Entrepreneurship programmes will be promoted to maximize the potential of this latent entrepreneurship. Other initiatives including youth entrepreneurship, senior’s enterprise and activity by minority groups will be encouraged.

Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

- Promotion of equality between men and women

Women in Business
Each of the 31 LEOs support women in business through dedicated business and networking events. Such initiatives generally focus on how to address the particular issues and obstacles facing women entrepreneurs. Networks, business owners/managers come together to meet and exchange views and information on business models for start-up and growth.

An important aspect of the programme is the way in which LEOs promote successful female entrepreneurs as role models; for example the use of mentoring and networking opportunities which aim to build confidence of newly emerging female entrepreneurs. These networks bring together women who are already successfully running their own businesses and women who aspire to emulate them for information and experience exchange. The networks also provide a practical ongoing programme of activities on business-related topics such as insurance, taxation, HR, marketing.
etc. High profile successful women entrepreneurs frequently appear as guest speakers at these network events.

National Women’s Enterprise Day is the primary national event for women entrepreneurs.

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys, T.D., launched the programme of events for National Women’s Enterprise Day (NWED) 2019 which took place on Thursday 17th October 2019 with 17 major female entrepreneurial events ran across the country.

This initiative is led by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices nationwide, and funded by the Government of Ireland, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities. All 31 Local Enterprise Offices supported the initiative, with established female entrepreneurs acting as Regional Ambassadors, sharing their inspiring success stories. The Local Enterprise Offices organised a programme of events under the theme “Making It Happen” aimed at inspiring and educating the next generation of female business leaders to take their local ideas and make them a global success.
Other Gender Equality initiatives include:

**Local Enterprise Office Cavan ongoing actions include:**

- All enterprise related training programmes and supports are aimed at both male and female entrepreneurs.
- Female entrepreneurs and women in business are encouraged to participate in Going for Growth and Acorns programmes.
- LEO Cavan had 48 female participants take part in the Mentoring Programme in 2019.
- LEO Cavan held 6 Cavan Businesswomen Club meetings with attendance of 342 women in business and female entrepreneurs.
- 535 females attended other LEO Cavan enterprise training and events in 2019.
- LEO Cavan was represented by a young female entrepreneur in the National Finals of Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur 2019.

**Local Enterprise Office Laois ongoing actions include:**
• All LEO initiatives are open to both male/female with 679 females participating in LEO events in 2019. 416 males participated in LEO Laois events in 2019.
• LEO Laois fully support Network Ireland Laois and sponsor events, course etc through the year and will continue to do so in 2020.
• LEO Laois are looking at delivering a specific female leadership programme in 2020. LEO Laois are also doing a series of events with Laois Chamber of Commerce around work life balance specifically aimed at female entrepreneurs.

Local Enterprise Office Leitrim ongoing actions include:

• LEO Leitrim worked in conjunction with LEO Longford and Westmeath to deliver 3 Women in Business networking events during 2019, in months of March, July and December.
• Through the WISE (Women in Stem Enterprise) Project, 10 graduates were placed in 9 Irish businesses for a 4-week paid placement.

Local Enterprise Office Galway ongoing actions include:

• Local Enterprise Office Galway continue to encourage gender equality on all programmes, initiatives and activities that LEO Galway organise or promote.
• LEO Galway Measure 2 supports for 2019 including Management Development Programmes, Training Workshops, Networking Sessions, Mentoring, etc. – 48 % of participants were male and 52 % were female.
• 2019 New Actions - LEO Galway were proud sponsors of Business & Professional Women (BPW) Galway’s Financial Health Check and New Members Event in November 2019
Local Enterprise Office Louth ongoing actions include:

- 917 women (out of 1,195 total participants) attended training, mentoring, etc., programmes through LEO Louth
- LEO Louth supported, promoted and funded Network Louth (Women in Business Network in Co. Louth) and National Women’s Enterprise Day (October 2019) with over 100 female entrepreneurs attending.
- As part of Local Enterprise Week and to mark International Women’s Day (March 2019), LEO Louth promoted and funded a Female Entrepreneurship evening in conjunction with Network Louth with c.100 female entrepreneurs attending.
- LEO Louth continues to support and provide funding towards Network Ireland – Louth branch with a membership of c.48 Women in Business Network
- The Illuminate (Female Management Development) Programme was launched in Co Louth with The Mill Enterprise Hub in December 2018, and was delivered during the course of 2019, beginning February 2019.
- The programme is operated with assistance from DKIT and DCU Ryan Academy and aims to empower early stage female entrepreneurs to develop and expand their business. The programme is supported by Coca-Cola International Services, AIB, and the Local Enterprise Offices in County Louth and Meath.
Local Enterprise Office *Westmeath ongoing actions include*:

- In 2019, 557 females representing 57% of participants attended training and seminars. A total of 411 males attended training and seminars.
- Of the 228 clients who received mentoring, 113 of them were women with the remaining 155 men.
- LEO Westmeath jointly hosted 3 Women in Business Networking events with 127 women in attendance in 2019 in conjunction with Longford & Leitrim LEO Offices.

Local Enterprise Office *Roscommon ongoing actions include*:

- Roscommon Ireland Network are supported for talks, events, presentations and awards by LEO Roscommon

Local Enterprise Office *Sligo ongoing actions include*:

- LEO Sligo supports positive interventions to promote gender equality such as the facilitation of Sligo Women in Business Network.
- LEO Sligo held over 10 network meetings and Women in Enterprise Day. The groups consisted of both existing LEO clients and new LEO clients. An average of 25 participants attended each event.
- Sligo Women in Business Network facilitation

Local Enterprise Office *Mayo ongoing actions include*:

- LEO Mayo is a Sponsor of Network Ireland Mayo, Digital Marketing in Mayo. Our support of networks regardless is of gender.

** Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
Ongoing Actions

Student Enterprise Programme
Over 26,000 students took part in this year’s Student Enterprise programme from across the country. 222 students from 78 different student enterprises reached the 2019 National Finals, having qualified through school and county finals earlier in the year. The 222 students who reached the National Final competed across 3 categories; Junior, Intermediate and Senior. The winners were announced and presented with their trophies by Pat Breen, T.D., Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection.

Starting every September, students across three age categories (Junior, Intermediate and Senior) research, set up, and run their own businesses with the help of their teachers and supports from their Local Enterprise Office. The programme is delivered by the 31 Local Enterprise Office and is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in partnership with Enterprise Ireland across every local authority area.

Congratulating the winners Minister Breen said; “These student entrepreneurs are the future of Irish business and job creation across the country. The skills attained by these young students during the Student Enterprise Programme will be invaluable to these young entrepreneurs and provide them with a fantastic foundation for a future in business. Many congratulations to all the students here today. By making it to Croke Park you have shown you can create and run a business. And congratulations also to their teachers who play such a significant role in sparking and encouraging their entrepreneurial imagination. If these students decide that being an entrepreneur is the path they want to take in their future, I can assure them their Local Enterprise Office will be there to support them every step of the way.”

Michael Nevin, Chair of the Education Enterprise Committee, Local Enterprise Offices, said; “This year we’ve had over 26,000 students involved in creating, setting up and running a business, learning a whole new range of skills. We have finalists looking to address environmental issues, mental health issues and climate change issues so the class of 2019 is very much committed to creating businesses who can make the world a better place and that is a great thing. Many businesses of today could learn a lot from these students particularly in their clever use of social media to promote their enterprises. No doubt the finalists today have a bright future in business in whatever form that takes and we hope to see them walking through the door of their Local Enterprise Office in the near future.”

The National Final in Croke Park is the biggest celebration of secondary school entrepreneurs in the country every year. The Student Enterprise Programme links in with the school curriculum around enterprise in the classroom and really helps students gain skills and practical knowledge of running a real-life business. The programme also encourages more students to consider entrepreneurship as a future career choice, with the Local Enterprise Office on hand to help.

2019 Student Enterprise Programme winners:

Senior Category Winners 2019
Senior Category

- Student Enterprise: Smooth Remove
- School: Boherbue Comprehensive School, Cork
- Students: Laura Moynihan, Michelle Bradley, Sean Doody, Joe Clogan & Anthony O’Connor
- Teacher: Áine Ni Bhroin
- Local Enterprise Office: Cork North and West

An enterprise inspired by a grandparent’s inability to remove their shoes took top prize in the senior category. Smooth Remove from Boherbue Comprehensive School in Mallow, North Cork designed an ergonomic wooden device that enables the easy removal of footwear for those who may have back problems or have difficulty bending down to take off their shoes. Designed from wood with a heel shaped groove that will fit any size of footwear, the user slides their foot into the groove using their other foot to keep the device secure; this allows the footwear to ease off. The Smooth Remove also includes a Perspex wedge underneath for removing dirt from boots and shoes. The device was so popular they have now integrated it into a shoe box design that allows both the removal and easy storage of footwear. The Smooth Remove can be personalised with names and images and retails at €10.

Intermediate Category winners 2019
Intermediate Category

- Student Enterprise: Críos Mhadra
- School: Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland, Kerry
- Students: Kelly-Anne Nix and Katelyn Curtin
- Teacher: Pierce Dargan
- Local Enterprise Office: Kerry

Pet safety was to the fore in the Intermediate category as Críos Mhadra from Presentation Secondary School in Castleisland, Kerry won the judges vote. Designed by 14-year-old students Katelyn Curtin and Kelly Anne Nix, the dog-loving duo have developed a complete three-point safety harness for pets, for car journeys. Although traditional neck harnesses are already on the market, Kelly-Anne and Katelyn have designed a complete body harness that keeps the entire body of the pet safe and secure in the car. When Kelly-Anne’s pet dog (Max, a Bijon Freise) hurt his neck while wearing a traditional harness, the experience inspired her to design a full body harness. Now both of their dogs, wear the harness whenever they’re in the car. The harness comes in two sizes: small (€32.99) and medium (€34.99) and is finished by a local tailor in Castleisland. The duo has sold harnesses to pet owners in Kerry, Cork and Limerick.

Junior Category winners 2019
Junior Category

- Student Enterprise: Specrest
- School: Malahide-Portmarnock Educate Together, Dublin
- Students: Ava Gilmartin
- Teacher: Mrs C Bergin
- Local Enterprise Office: Fingal
- Ava Gilmartin (aged 13) is a national finalist in the Junior Category, representing Fingal.

In the Junior category, a practical solution by a daughter for a parent’s tendency to misplace glasses at work was a big hit with the judging panel. Ava Gilmartin from Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together School in Fingal vowed to solve her mother’s issue of her glasses constantly falling off, while working as a nurse. Ava created Specrest, a small biodegradable clip which is made using a 3-D printer that keeps glasses secure. Specrest is an affordable, biodegradable holder for glasses, that can slide into bags, pockets, clothing or even sun visors in cars. Ava designed Specrest to be a secure, handy way to keep glasses safe. The product is manufactured locally and Ava is currently exploring a patent application for Specrest. Specrest costs €5 and is on sale in opticians, pharmacies and supermarkets. Specrest also isn’t Ava’s first business, as she began making and selling bracelets as a six-year-old.

The runners-up this year in the senior category were Hurl Standz from St. Mary’s CBS in Laois who create wall-mounted, handcrafted metal stands to hold hurls and helmets. In the Intermediate category, second place went to JCJ Get a Grip from St. Joseph’s Secondary School in Westmeath whose enterprise was a pre-cut and pre-measured and scored tape which is applied to the underside of Irish dancing shoes to prevent slipping without affecting the sound. The runners-up in the Junior category went to B Good Brownie from St. Patrick’s Classical School in Navan, Co. Meath, who make gluten and lactose free brownies with unique blend coffee.

Awards were presented for intellectual property awareness by the Irish Patents Office and for social media by Essential French. Twenty students in the Senior Category also won a place at the residential
‘Winners’ Business Bootcamp’ over the summer to help them further develop their business skills. Further details about the next Student Enterprise Programme, which begins in September through the Local Enterprise Offices, are available through www.studententerprise.ie

Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (#IBYE)

Aimed at 18 to 35-year-olds, Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) is a €2 million investment competition from the Local Enterprise Offices which is an initiative of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and is supported by Enterprise Ireland. There were over 1,600 applications for IBYE in 2019 across three categories:

- Best Business Idea
- Best Start-Up Business
- Best Established Business.

24 finalists reached the IBYE National Final in April 2019, where winners shared a €100,000 investment fund.

www.ibye.ie

IBYE Winners 2019:

A 34-year-old former accountant Sharon Cunningham, co-founder of Shorla Pharma won Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur for 2019. Sharon Cunningham, a Waterford native, started Shorla Pharma with her former EirGen colleague Orlaith Ryan based out of Tipperary. A qualified chartered account, Cunningham founded Shorla in 2018 after identifying a significant issue in the pharmaceutical industry. The company focuses on improving existing treatments for children’s and women’s cancers making them more user friendly. Their first product is the redevelopment of a children’s cancer drug from a difficult to swallow capsule, into an oral solution.
Pictured above are Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur, Sharon Cunningham, of Shorla Pharma together with Martin O’Reilly of Output Sports (Local Enterprise Office Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) who won the Best Business Idea category and Sean McGarry of Showergem (Local Enterprise Office Mayo) who won the Best Established Business category.

Martin O’Reilly’s of Output Sports (Local Enterprise Office Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) who won the Best Business Idea category and who are supported by Enterprise Ireland, are working with professional athletes around the world, including Leinster’s Adam Byrne and Kilkenny hurler Cillian Buckley. They are developing a sensor system that streamlines off-field performance optimisation, testing speed and strength offering unrivalled accuracy in exercise analysis.

Sean McGarry’s of Showergem (Local Enterprise Office Mayo) who won the Best Established Business category, was an invention borne out of gap in the bathroom fixture market. Showergem is a shower caddy that attaches to shower walls to hold bottles and razors, using a durable glue that ensures no suction or drilling issues. A recent participant on BBC’s Dragons’ Den, Sean received investment from three of the Dragons to help their continued growth. Showergem is also a current Enterprise Ireland client.

The runners-up in each of the categories were Elizabeth McGloughlin of Tympany Medical (Local Enterprise Office Galway) in the Best Business Idea category, Brendan Maloney of Skillko (Local Enterprise Office Mayo) in the Best Start-Up Business category and Devan Hughes of Buymie (Local Enterprise Office Dublin City) in the Best Established Business category. The winner of the Google Best Online Promotion of Business Award was Devan Hughes and Buymie.
Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys, T.D., said; “Irish entrepreneurs are among the very best in the world. That’s because we have huge talent in every region and community in Ireland. Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur is about celebrating that talent. The €2 million investment by Government in the competition has ensured that 185 entrepreneurs have not only received investment, but also mentoring, advice and peer-to-peer learning. “This year’s winners and wider group of finalists are the cream of the crop. They are our future business leaders, and I am delighted that we are celebrating and supporting them through the competition. They are also central to the success of Future Jobs Ireland, our whole-of-Government plan to prepare our businesses and workers for the future.”

Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen T.D., said “These entrepreneurs represent the very best of talent that exists within Ireland’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. Many of today’s finalists have developed businesses that are already well known. The others, no doubt, will be the stars of the future. Getting to today’s final is validation for all of finalists that they are following the right path. For our winners, we congratulate them. Today is a day to celebrate with their family and friends, but from tomorrow onwards, they can apply the valuable experience that participation in IBYE has given them to bring their businesses to even greater heights. They can be assured that my Department will be there to support them every step of the way on their entrepreneurial journey.”
Oisin Geoghegan, Chair of the Network of Local Enterprise Offices, said: “Congratulations to this year’s winners and finalists. The quality of Finalists is a reflection of the quality of businesses and ideas that are coming through the Local Enterprise Offices across the country. They have been working closely with their LEOs, getting advice, mentoring, speaking with previous IBYE participants and tapping into that network and this will stand by them. They know that the Local Enterprise Office is an open door for whatever business issues they encounter and is their first port of call when they need to overcome a hurdle. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the winners, finalists and all of those who have participated in this year’s IBYE and helping them to grow.

Mark Christal, Manager, Regions and Entrepreneurship, Enterprise Ireland, said “Every year the quality of Finalists in IBYE is outstanding and this year is no different with entrepreneurs from every region across the country represented. Their ideas and businesses continue to improve, and their ideas are not limited by being Irish. Their ideas are international, our entrepreneurs have global ambition engrained in their psyche and they are not limited by borders. The IBYE programme is an excellent way for these entrepreneurs to hone their skills, tighten their ideas and improve their businesses and they are now in a better place to push forward, to look to new international markets and the Local Enterprise Offices together with Enterprise Ireland will help them get there.”

Other Equal opportunities and non-discrimination initiatives include:

All Local Enterprise Offices - As per Customer Service Charter in each LEO:
Equality:

In their dealings with customers LEOs will ensure that rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation are upheld. The LEO does not discriminate on the grounds of age, gender, family status, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, and membership of the traveller community.

Accessibility:

Each LEO will provide a meeting room where appropriate to conduct business in a confidential manner. Each LEO will ensure that all their offices, facilities and resources are fully accessible in line with the Disability Act 2005.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination ongoing actions include:

*Local Enterprise Office Cavan ongoing actions include:*

- LEO Cavan events are held in premises which have disabled access.
- All training courses, mentoring programmes, and other soft supports are available to all applicants irrespective of gender, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and membership of specific communities.
- The LEO has a comprehensive website outlining all the services and supports offered. Clients can interact with the LEO through telephone, email, one-to-one meetings (either at our offices or at their premises), and via our website.
- LEO Cavan training and mentoring programmes, events and other enterprise support programmes welcome all groups including non-Irish nationals and minority groups. The concept of entrepreneurship is promoted for all age groups.
- Specific initiatives targeting unemployed include Kick Start Your Own Business programmes which are tailored Start Your Own Business programmes for this group, following consultation with the local development company and local representatives from Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection. Unemployed also avail of LEO mentoring and other supports for new business start-ups such as assistance with Microfinance loan applications.
- In 2019 LEO Cavan delivered 7 Kick Start programmes with 87 participants.

*Local Enterprise Office Laois ongoing actions include:*

- All events are held in premises with disability access.
- All initiatives are open to all nationals and non-nationals.
- All SYOB courses are offered to unemployed at a discounted rate of €30; 20% of participants on SYOB are unemployed.
- Work collaboratively with Laois Partnership in terms of the unemployed looking at starting their own businesses.
- Provides mentoring through Laois Partnership to unemployed.
• LEO Laois will continue to deliver programmes that are accessible to all and will continue to work with Laois Partnership to deliver training to non-Irish nationals and minority groups in 2020.

Local Enterprise Office Galway ongoing actions include
• LEO Galway organised and provided 3 Start Your Own Business training courses in conjunction with Galway City Partnership in 2019 to those who are long term unemployed.
• Galway City Partnerships aim is to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion; and focus particularly on helping those who are long term unemployed.

Local Enterprise Office Mayo ongoing actions include

Local Enterprise Office Sligo ongoing actions include
• 55 participants attended a Cross Border Seminar – “Preparing your Business for Trading with UK” (35 males and 25 females).
• All LEO events will be held in premises which have disabled access.

Local Enterprise Office Leitrim ongoing actions include
• All LEO events will be held in premises which have disabled access
• LEO Leitrim offer free participation on training courses for the unemployed. In 2019, 22 free places were offered on courses including Start Your Own Food Business, Food Starter, Book-Keeping, Food Hygiene and How to Create an Online Video.

Local Enterprise Office Roscommon
• Work with County Roscommon Supported Employment Services to provide mentoring.
• Work with Partnership board for unemployed and new start-ups also.
• Local Enterprise Office Roscommon’s Start Your Own Business included a 50% fee reduction for the unemployed

Local Enterprise Office Westmeath
• All LEO events are held in premises which have disabled access.
• LEO Westmeath promote on their website, the Employers Disability Information Service (EDI). The purpose of the service is to provide employers with an expert peer source of advice and information on employing and retaining staff with disabilities and to enhance the confidence and competence of individual employers in this area.
• LEO Westmeath actively encourage our clients to liaise with other Government agencies to look at all supports available to them and would hold events in conjunction with those agencies e.g. Dept. of Employment Affairs and Social Protection etc.

Local Enterprise Office Louth ongoing actions include:
Ethnic Entrepreneurship:
- edundalk.com is a social networking platform initiated by edundalk to celebrate economic contributions and positive visibility of migrants in Ireland. During 2019 sponsorship was provided for E Dundalk’s annual networking event where members of the ethnic community come together to learn about opportunities including supports from the LEO. Information on LEO supports are available on the evening of the event.

Youth Entrepreneurship:
- LEO Louth continues the roll out of Student Enterprise programme in all second level schools across the county with 1,129 students engaging with the programme for 2018/2019. Promoting awareness of enterprise and the opportunity of self-employment as a viable career option.
- LEO Louth continues to promote ongoing engagement with schools to highlight and promote LEO services.
- 39 mini Companies made it through to the county final with 15 prize winners at county level.

Senior Entrepreneurship
- LEO Louth supported the delivery of all programmes being made equally accessible for senior entrepreneurs
- Partner on the EU Erasmus funded European project researching tools that SMEs can adopt to become more Age Friendly.
- Age Friendly Economy Programme was delivered to 18 businesses
8. North/South Co-operation

Brief summary of North/South Co-operation as outlined in the Implementation Plan

- Describe what has been done
- Commentary on any initiatives / developments
- Level of resources committed

Cross-border trade and business co-operation is facilitated and encouraged by LEOs, especially by those in Border counties. LEOs in the BMW region participate in cross-Border projects such as: Interreg VA and in informal networks of cooperation at district and local area level. Joint LEO-LEA (Northern network of Local Enterprise Agencies) activities are undertaken to introduce micro-businesses in either jurisdiction to Island-wide market possibilities for products and services. Other activities promoted on a cross-border basis include business visit exchanges, joint marketing initiatives, exhibitions, alliances and joint ventures etc.

Co-operation in female entrepreneurship is also encouraged through links established by the LEO Women-in-Business Networks with various women groups/organisations in Northern Ireland. While many of the LEOs are very active in North South cooperation programmes and activities, many such programmes are funded from other streams outside the normal micro enterprise Exchequer funding. In 2019 LEOs continued to cooperate with their counterparts in Northern Ireland.

The following is a summary of actions from a number of LEOs:

**Local Enterprise Office Cavan ongoing actions include**
- Co-Innovate is a cross border research and innovation (R&I) initiative funded under the European INTERREG VA Programme aiming to increase the proportion of SMEs engaged in cross-border research and innovation in the INTERREG eligible region of Northern Ireland, Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.
- The objective of the programme is to increase the number and capacity of SME’s engaged in cross border research and innovation activities in the region resulting in the development of new products, processes and services.
- The Co-Innovate programme was launched in 2017.
- LEO Cavan also continues to support Cavan businesses in applying for other North South Trade supports from InterTrade Ireland e.g. the Acumen and Fusion programmes.

**2019 New Actions**
- A Co-Innovate Innovation workshop held by LEO Cavan in April 2019 was attended by 19 businesses.
- Over 50 LEO Cavan businesses have been supported and/or are continuing in the programme (End of 2019), with the majority progressing from Business Status Review to Innovation Audit stage. Several have progressed to further support in the form of mentoring and innovation project management.

**Local Enterprise Office Galway ongoing actions include:**
• LEO Galway refer clients to the Acumen and Elevate programme where relevant and signpost the services of Intertrade Ireland on an ongoing basis.

Local Enterprise Office Laois ongoing actions include:
• LEO Laois will continue to work with/promote Intertrade Ireland in 2020 in terms of North-South Co-operation

Local Enterprise Office Leitrim ongoing actions include:
• LEO Leitrim were the Irish partner on the WISE Erasmus programme with Omagh Enterprise Company, the Northern Irish partner, alongside partners from Germany and Norway.
• LEO Leitrim are delivering the Co-Innovate programme in Leitrim.

Local Enterprise Office Louth ongoing actions include:
Co-Innovate
• The aim of the Programme is to develop the innovation capability of the local businesses and increase the number actively participating in cross-border research. This Innovation focused EU Interreg funded cross-border programme targeted at border county companies and those in Northern Ireland is progressing. Delivery of the programme is led by Intertrade Ireland with LEO Louth being one of the delivery agents, arranging workshops, recruiting SMEs, carrying out business reviews and innovation audits. In 2019, 63 Louth companies have engaged with the programme.

Age Friendly Economy
• Louth County Council via LEO Louth engaged with European Partners from the Rep. of Ireland, Northern Ireland (UK), Denmark, Poland and Spain in delivering a project to develop entrepreneurial, innovation and digital skills to innovate age friendly products and services. In 2019, 18 businesses took part in this programme

Enterprise Europe Network
• In 2019, LEO Louth continued to promote and participate in the Enterprise Europe Network Programme.

PLATO
• LEO Louth continues to work with other LEOs in the North East region (Counties Louth, Cavan, Monaghan, Meath) and 4 local authorities in Northern Ireland (Newry, Mourne Down Council, Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Council, Mid Ulster Council, and Fermanagh Council) in the development and roll out of the East Border Region PLATO Network.

Specific Initiatives
Co-Innovate – The Innovation Pathway Programme
The Co-Innovate programme sees LEO Louth along with Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan working in partnership with Intertrade Ireland and Local Enterprise Agencies in Northern Ireland. This is a competitive process with companies exiting the programme at various stages.

2019 saw 63 Louth Businesses participate in the programme and they continue to work with LEO Louth on their innovation agenda.

Innovate Accelerate

For those companies who exit the programme but still need support to innovate and explore export options; a new cross-border programme, ‘Innovate Accelerate’, was launched by Local Enterprise Office Louth and Meath and their counterpart Local Enterprise Agency in Northern Ireland (Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency, on behalf of Newry, Mourne Down Council).

This innovation and export programme was set up to assist LEO clients who cannot progress through Co-Innovate but who plan to innovate and increase their capacity to export. 7 companies all LEO Louth clients in the technology sector participated in the follow on Innovate Accelerate cross-border programme.

Level of resources

- Equivalent to 4 days/week x 52 weeks per annum

Local Enterprise Office Mayo ongoing actions include:

- LEO Mayo continues to support any new initiatives promoting and supporting enterprise and economic development on a North South basis.

2019 New Actions

- LEO Mayo contracted consultant Tony McNally to deliver a workshop on 5th March and a one to one Brexit clinic on 22nd August 2019 on the issues surrounding Brexit and spoke about Intertrade Ireland and outlined the supports they offer.
- There were 13 participants between the workshop and clinic.
- Level of Resources: Significant time was invested by LEO staff organising the events and consultant time delivering.

Local Enterprise Office Sligo ongoing actions include:

- Brexit Supports – The LEO is providing a suit of Brexit supports which includes advisory supports, clinics and mentoring with NI based mentors on trading cross-border
- Brexit Event – LEO delivered a Brexit event in March 2018 on cross-border trade
- Intertrade Ireland – LEO Sligo provides information on Intertrade Ireland supports and reports on fusion programme applications to Intertrade Ireland
- Co-Innovate Programme (INTERREG VA) – A cross-border programme led by Intertrade Ireland which includes workshops, business advisory supports and support for developing cross-border innovation partnerships.
- Level of Resources: 80 hours staff time

Local Enterprise Office Westmeath ongoing actions include:
• LEO Westmeath has promoted the programmes and supports organised by Intertrade Ireland in the Midlands region both on Social Media, on their website and in their Business Information Centre in Mullingar and Athlone.

• LEO Westmeath have a dedicated landing page “Cross Border Business Advice” on their website containing current information about Intertrade Ireland and it also has links to Intertrade website.

• The LEO has actively partnered and promoted North South trading activity in 2019 in County Westmeath by promoting the Go To Tenders Event. LEO Westmeath are also working in conjunction with Intertrade on the upcoming Tendering event in Feb 2020 in Athlone.

• In 2019, Intertrade Ireland committed the financial resources to the training programme. LEO Westmeath committed HR resources by recruiting participants and marketing the Go To Tender event.

• For the event in February 2020 LEO Westmeath will be using LEO financial resources for the room hire and refreshments. In addition, LEO Westmeath will also be using HR resources.

2019 New Actions

• LEO Westmeath organised 2 Cross Border Clinics in 2019.

• LEO Westmeath organised 6 Brexit Clinics in 2019, which coordinated all Ireland and Agency offerings to highlight the strategies and supports available to address Brexit opportunities and challenges. These were held in Athlone and in Mullingar.

• Brexit Advisors: LEO Westmeath have appointed 32 dedicated Business Advisors to work exclusively with portfolio clients who are growing, failing to reach their potential or losing market share as well as with other small and micro enterprises identified at risk from Brexit.

• Customs & Export Procedures: LEO Westmeath held 4 Customs Import and Export Procedures Workshops during this year. The workshops were open to businesses from all sectors and covered areas such as what export and import procedures apply, how tariffs work and how to correctly classify goods.
9. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

Brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013)

- urban and other public authorities,
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

LEOs proactively work with a range of public and private bodies in relation to the achievement of their objectives i.e.

(a) **urban and other public authorities;**

- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
- Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.
- Department of Social Protection
- Credit Review Office

(b) **economic and social partners; and**

- Enterprise Ireland
- Bord Bia
- Microfinance Ireland
- Leader
- Fáilte Ireland
- Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
- Credit Review Office
- Údarás na Gaeltachta

(c) **bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations**

- Chamber of Commerce
- Skillnet
- National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC)

**Protocols**

Protocols have been agreed with the following support providers:

- Department of Social Protection
- Credit Review Board
- Fáilte Ireland
- Microfinance Ireland
- Skillnets
- Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
- Revenue Commissioners
- National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC)
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
These protocols govern dissemination of information, information sign-posting and inter-agency referrals.

**LEOs and LEADER Protocol**
A protocol to agree and formalise the working relationship between the LEOs and LEADER groups was finalised in 2017. A LEO/Local Action Group (LAG) working group was established by the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) and Arts Heritage Regional Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) to discuss and agree the opportunities for collaboration, to identify and remove any existing overlap or duplication between the two services and to draft a protocol for managing the interaction between the two services. Following the final meeting of the working group on the 10th of February 2017, agreement was reached in respect of a national operating protocol predicated on each LEO/LAG agreeing a practical local operating agreement build on the principles of mutual respect and collaboration.

**Other LEO examples include:**

Collaboration with key partners is central to Local Enterprise Office success. In 2019 LEOs worked closely with its stakeholders to roll out a range of enterprise supports.

**Microfinance Ireland**
Microfinance Ireland (MFI) is a not-for profit lender established to deliver the Government’s Microenterprise Loan Fund. It provides loans of between €2,000 and €25,000 to commercially viable businesses that employ fewer than 10 people, with an annual turnover of less than €2 million. Local Enterprise Offices assist client companies with their MFI loan applications, which attract a discount on standard loan rates. In 2019, LEOs assisted client companies with 327 applications for loans. Of these, 159 applications were successful in securing loan approval, supporting the creation of 327 jobs.

**Trading Online Voucher Scheme**
Designed under the National Digital Strategy to assist small businesses to increase their online trade, the Trading Online Voucher Scheme offers training, advice and financial assistance of up to €2,500. The scheme is funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and delivered by Local Enterprise Offices. It is based on matched-funding, where the maximum amount payable is either €2,500 or 50% of the eligible cost (whichever is the lesser). In 2019, 1,218 approvals were secured by Local Enterprise Offices under the Trading Online Voucher scheme. [https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Digital-Strategy/trading-online-voucher-scheme/Pages/Trading-Online-Voucher-Scheme.aspx](https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Digital-Strategy/trading-online-voucher-scheme/Pages/Trading-Online-Voucher-Scheme.aspx)

**Co-Innovate and Interreg**
The Co-Innovate Programme (supported by the European Union’s INTERREG VA funding) is designed to support SMEs and micro-businesses in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland, and Western Scotland to deliver success through innovation. The aim of the programme is to develop the innovation capability of the local businesses and increase the number actively participating in cross-border research. It brings together key development agencies to deliver a programme aligned with each government’s strategic priorities. In the border region of Ireland this support is delivered by Local Enterprise Offices in Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. In Northern Ireland, key elements will be delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland and its member agencies.

**Age Friendly Business**
The LEO Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme is an approach to doing business that recognises and addresses the market opportunity afforded by a society in which people are leading healthier lives, for longer. Older people own 75% of the wealth in the EU and account for 50% of consumer spending. The number of older consumers is estimated to double in the next 30 years, and those aged over 80 will quadruple. Not only are older people typically loyal customers, they outspend younger shoppers and tend to spend locally.

10. Annexes

Please annex any relevant additional information

Annex 1

List of LEO’s in BMW Region

Local Enterprise Office Cavan
Local Enterprise Office Donegal
Local Enterprise Office Galway
Local Enterprise Office Laois
Local Enterprise Office Leitrim
Local Enterprise Office Longford
Local Enterprise Office Mayo
Local Enterprise Office Monaghan
Local Enterprise Office Offaly
Local Enterprise Office Roscommon
Local Enterprise Office Sligo
Local Enterprise Office Westmeath
Annex 2
Function and Role of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) Function and Role of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)

The LEOs support the promotion of entrepreneurship and self-help and are now the first-stop-shop for those beginning a new business as well as those wishing to expand their existing one. In accordance with the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Enterprise Ireland and each Local Authority, the LEOs provide services under four headings:

- Business Information and Advisory Services;
- Enterprise Support Services;
- Entrepreneurship Support Services, and
- Local Enterprise Development Services.

The LEO Offices are now the local hub for enterprise support, delivering a comprehensive service to local entrepreneurs and businesses, including:

- Combining direct grants, mentoring, and training, as well as business supports and assistance available through the Local Authorities;
- Utilising local business expertise to evaluate projects;
- Providing training and mentoring on starting your own business, including drawing up a business plan or accessing commercial space;
- Providing an enhanced advice and guidance service embracing all other local and national supports;
- Direct referral of clients to Enterprise Ireland;
- Referral to the supports of other service providers. Several protocols have been developed and signed off between DBEI/EI and other State Agencies/Bodies to provide for a level of cooperation and information exchange with the LEO staff to assist them in providing an expansive range of information and assistance to LEO clients (e.g. Revenue, Social Protection, Microfinance Ireland) and to ensure the best possible service to people who have a business idea.
- Direct advice and guidance on Local Authority rates, procurement and regulations affecting business.

Additional Information
Since their establishment in April 2014, the LEOs have undoubtedly increased the visibility and awareness of support for entrepreneurs and business people in their local regions. The LEO branding is very strong and LEOs feature heavily in the delivery of the enterprise agenda in major policy activities such as the Action Plan for Jobs, especially the regional plans, the Entrepreneurship Policy Statement, the delivery of Microfinance Loans and the distribution of Trading Online Vouchers.

As well as delivering grants to qualifying businesses, LEOs provide soft supports to all businesses and entrepreneurs covering aspects such as finance, marketing, mentoring, management as well as advice, guidance, and signposting to other support providers on issues such as company formation, taxation and sources of Government supports.
Financial Supports available from Local Enterprise Offices are:

**Priming Grant**
Eligible clients may be awarded a Priming Grant within the first eighteen months of setting up the business. The maximum priming grant payable shall be 50% of the investment of €150,000 whichever is the lesser.

**Business Expansion Grant**
The Maximum Business Expansion Grant payable shall be 50% of the investment or 150,000 whichever is the lesser.

**Feasibility / Innovation Grant**
The maximum Feasibility Grant payable for the S&E Region shall be 50% of the total expenditure or €15,000 whichever is the lesser.

**Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter's Grant**
Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter's Grant enables clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. This grants part-funds the costs that can be incurred in investigating and researching export markets, e.g. exhibiting at Trade Fairs, preparing marketing material and developing websites specifically targeting overseas markets. Grant covers 50% of eligible costs (net of vat) to a max of €2 500.

New Frontiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>3: SME support, promotion and capability development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic Objective</strong></td>
<td>Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investment Priority</strong></td>
<td>(a) Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
creation of new firms, including through business incubators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>New Frontiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

New Frontiers [www.newfrontiers.ie](http://www.newfrontiers.ie) is Ireland’s national programme for developing entrepreneurs, delivered at a local level by the Institutes of Technology and Technological University (amalgamation of DIT, IT Blanchardstown and IT Tallaght) and funded and managed by Enterprise Ireland. Its primary purpose is to accelerate the development of regionally significant and sustainable new businesses, which have strong employment and growth potential and contribute to job creation and economic activity in regional locations. The New Frontiers programme forms an important element of Enterprise Irland’s strategy in the promotion of entrepreneurship and creation of new business start-ups across the regions. There are currently 12 programmes run across 16 Institutes of Technology/Universities and are open to applications from a diversity of sectors. Each year, New Frontiers supports over 400 Phase 1 and 160 Phase 2 participants.

New Frontiers differs from privately-funded ‘accelerator’ programmes in that its focus is on the entrepreneur rather than the enterprise and thus it is concerned with progressing more early-stage ideas from business concept to investable business, consequently the programme does not take equity.

The core phase of the programme (Phase 2), is a 6-month full-time commitment. Participants selected onto this phase receive:

- Financial support of up to €15,000 from Enterprise Ireland
- 6-month intensive and challenging development programme where they are equipped with the practical skills they need to start up and run a business
- Free co-working space in the Institute of Technology’s incubation centre
- 5 x one-to-one sessions with experienced mentors
- Access to networking opportunities with potential investors and EI staff

A competitive recruitment process and a pre-screening phase, together with rigorous progress reviews, ensure that only high calibre participants are selected and retained on the programme.

Four programmes run within the BMW region – (1) GMIT, (2) Dundalk IT (in partnership with Dublin City University (DCU), (3) Letterkenny IT/Sligo IT and (4) Athlone IT in partnership with Maynooth University.
• In the period 2014-2019 303 participants participated on the New Frontiers programme within the BMW region.

• In 2019 a total of 168 participants passed through Phase 2 of the programme of which 52 hailed from the BMW area.

A pilot funded Phase 3 commenced in 2019 for a total of 36 participants, selected from across the 12 programmes. This will be reviewed at the end of 2020 to determine if this additional support will result in a higher number of quality projects that could move to EI HPSU or LEO.

The contract for the current programmes will end on the completion of the 2020 programmes (some will run into 2021). Approval for funding for a further programme beyond 2020 is currently underway within Enterprise Ireland. In tandem with this an independent evaluation of the current programme will commence in March 2020 with findings to be published by the end of Q2 2020.

2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

2.1 Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 3(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Number of participants of EI New Frontiers enterprise training programmes</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of participants</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.

Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.

2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 3(a)
### Code 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment in the micro-enterprise sector in the BMW Region</th>
<th>Full-Time Equivalents</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>+ 6%</th>
<th>56,663</th>
<th>59,285</th>
<th>61,344</th>
<th>63,239</th>
<th>Not available</th>
<th>Not available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### New Frontiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Indicator</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Fully Implemented)</th>
<th>Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Selected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C001 Number of Enterprises receiving support</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C002 Number of enterprises receiving grants</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C003 Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C004 Number of Enterprises receiving non-financial support</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C005 Number of new enterprises supported</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013)

**Financial data at priority axis and programme level**

**Operations selected for support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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13 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,895,750</td>
<td>1,895,750</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,150,702</td>
<td>1,150,702</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,426,504</td>
<td>1,426,504</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,463,117</td>
<td>1,463,117</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,426,504</td>
<td>1,426,504</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1,463,117</td>
<td>1,463,117</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,936,073</td>
<td>5,936,073</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

5. Summary of evaluations

An independent evaluation is due to commence this month (March 2020) with findings to be published at the end of Q2 2020.

6. Information and Publicity Requirements
Programme documentation and publicity material comply with ERDF requirements and acknowledge ERD Funding.

The contribution of the EU Structural Funds 2014-2020 is acknowledged in brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. Guidance on the ‘publicity requirements’ is also provided to beneficiaries in the ‘letter of offer’ or contracts for awarded projects.

The requirements to maintain documentation for audit purposes is clearly stated in the Programme Reference document and contracts for the sub-theme.

A dedicated website is updated continuously with promotional content & acts as an excellent PR tool in terms of recruitment.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

7.1 Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

Gender targets have not been set for this programme as the selection of projects/individuals for approval under programmes is based on excellence. In this regard, the setting of specific targets based on gender analysis is not appropriate. As part of its role in promoting the New Frontiers programme nationally, the dedicated website www.newfrontiers.ie hosts blogs and videos, which include articles on female entrepreneurship and interviews with female founders.

In the period 2014 - 2019 the number of female participants for the BMW region between was 87 (29.8%).

7.2 Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

More general long-term targets would aim to improve gender balance over the time-scale of the Programme. All institutions of higher education are statutorily obliged to ensure equality in all their activities, and wording to the effect that: “Applications are welcomed from both male and female candidates”, is incorporated into application documentation.

The EU principle of gender mainstreaming applies, and the individual IoT Programme Managers are encouraged to promote participation by female applicants. However, evaluation of applicants is based purely on the merit of proposals. Enterprise Ireland centrally monitors the male/female ratio of participants completing Phase 2 of the programme.

8. North/South Co-operation

The programme operates in the colleges within the state’s jurisdiction
9. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

- Institutes of Technology and Universities and Technology Universities
- Northern & Western Regional Assembly
- Enterprise Ireland (EI)
- Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)

10. **Annexes**

Please annex any relevant additional information

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**Supporting the capacity of SMEs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>3: SME support, promotion and capability development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic Objective</strong></td>
<td>Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investment Priority</strong></td>
<td>(d) Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheme</strong></td>
<td>Supporting the capacity of SMEs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial and indicator data in Section 2 and 3 below.

*Overview on objectives, description of the intervention, progress and achievements, also with regard to financial and indicator data*
The programme has been implemented in line with the Scheme approval to enhance the competitiveness of SME’s in Ireland and to support regional, national and international growth opportunities.

The intervention, in line with the programme have provided for key supports in employment and Capital.

The approvals are in line with Enterprise Ireland’s Value For Money (VFM) criteria and in line with the monitoring requirements of the ERDF.

*Description of key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems during the reporting period*

The programme continues to be rolled out successfully and there have been no significant problems.

*Assessment of the information provided in points 1.1 and 1.2 as regards progress towards achieving the objectives of the scheme*

Enterprise Ireland has a final target of 110 companies to receive capacity support by 2020. At the end of 2019 a total of 216 companies had received Approval for funding, and 152 of these had received Payment as the projects were implemented.

2. *Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)*

*Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 3(d)*

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving EI financial support</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving EI financial support</td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of enterprises</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.*

*Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programmes.*

*Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 3(d)*
3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

### Name of Indicator
- Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises Support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Fully Implemented)
- Number of enterprises supported by the OP net of multiple support to the same enterprises Support to the same enterprises – cumulative to date (Selected)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C001</th>
<th>Number of Enterprises receiving support</th>
<th>152</th>
<th>216</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C002</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving grants</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C003</td>
<td>Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C004</td>
<td>Number of Enterprises receiving non-financial support*</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C005</td>
<td>Number of new enterprises supported **</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Enterprise Ireland’s Development Advisor staff work closely with clients providing advice on issues such as Finance, Marketing, Strategy, Innovation, etc.

**Start-up companies generally receive support from Enterprise Ireland by way of Feasibility Study or through an Equity Investment in the business (i.e. this programme generally supports established companies which have moved beyond the start-up phase).

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>19,628,636</td>
<td>5,496,018</td>
<td>377,563</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>19,857,707</td>
<td>5,560,158</td>
<td>3,318,753</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>12,435,007</td>
<td>3,481,802</td>
<td>2,340,512</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>16,453,271</td>
<td>4,606,916</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>17,549,896</td>
<td>4,913,971</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85,924,518</td>
<td>24,058,865</td>
<td>6,036,828</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,816,500</td>
<td>377,564</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>12,815,667</td>
<td>3,318,753</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>10,676,199</td>
<td>2,340,512</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount of EU support envisaged</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>31,737,209</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>18,938,119</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75,983,694</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**The use made of cross-financing**

**Use of cross financing**

- The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)
- Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)

| Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF | N/A | N/A |

**Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

The ERDF programme to enhance the competitiveness of SME’s has been effectively and efficiently provided for by Enterprise Ireland. To-date no issues have hindered the performance of the programme.

5. **Summary of evaluations**

- Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

Enterprise Ireland in conjunction with the N&W Regional Assembly regularly evaluates progress of this programme against the targets set for the period 2014-2020. The Priority 3 funding target for this period is €13 million. Projects amounting to €24 million have been approved for funding, up to 31st December 2019.

6. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

The companies who participate in the programme are aware that they are required to display a poster showing the ERDF and the ESIF logos at a prominent location in their premises. In addition, these logos have also to be displayed on the company website. Enterprise Ireland’s grant inspection staff check to ensure that these requirements are fulfilled when processing all grant claims.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- In 2019 Enterprise Ireland supported 38 female led start up’s (out of a total of 127) 91 HPSUs and 36 Competitive Start Fund (CSF)
- Of the 91 High Potential Start Up’s (HPSU’s) supported by Enterprise Ireland in 2019, 19 (i.e. 21%) were female led.
- Of the 36 companies supported under the Competitive Start Fund (CSF) in 2019, 19 (i.e. 53%) were female led.

Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

Enterprise Ireland has a Female Entrepreneurship Unit, established in response to an underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs in Ireland. The purpose is to support ambitious women entrepreneurs to launch and grow High Potential Start-Ups, and to address the key challenges facing women in start-ups. It also runs tailored development programmes to support ambitious women optimise their business success.

8. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):
The Northern & Western Regional assembly works closely with Enterprise Ireland in delivering grant support to a wide range of businesses in the Border Midlands and West counties. Enterprise Ireland has a team of Development Advisors (DA’s) who work closely with each client company to help them optimise their growth potential. Enterprise Ireland’s network of contacts can be accessed by client companies participating in the ERDF programme. This network includes third level colleges, overseas marketing advisors, other business leaders, etc.

### PRIORITY 4: LOW CARBON ECONOMY

#### Social Housing Retrofit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>4: Low Carbon Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors in the BMW Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(c) Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Social Housing Retrofit of Vacant Housing Stock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

   **Overview on objectives, description of the intervention, progress and achievements, also with regard to financial and indicator data**

   The principle objective of this programme is to meet Ireland’s commitments in relation to carbon emissions reduction and energy reduction target for 2020. It is intended that this retrofitting proposal will meet the stringent requirements and ambitious targets of the Energy Efficiency Directive.

   The framework within which these measures are being implemented are provided by the recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and Energy Efficiency Directive.
Energy savings in buildings will contribute to Ireland’s total energy savings targets for 2020. The energy retrofitting of buildings in the private and public sector hold the greatest potential for energy saving.

A key objective of the programme is to provide funding to those local authorities that have the greatest social housing targets and whom can return the maximum number of units to a lettable, energy efficient condition at reasonable cost.

Secondary objectives of the retrofitting proposal include stimulating employment generation within the construction/energy retrofitting sector and demonstrating the importance of public sector bodies leading by example as also required by the Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Energy Efficiency Directive.

**Description of Intervention**

**Social Housing Retrofit of Vacant Housing Stock**

In addition to achieving best use of existing resources, minimising voids attracts a much enhanced perception of local authorities where housing applicants can be accommodated as quickly as possible and vacant dwellings are not the source of anti-social behaviour.

This targeted measure focuses exclusively on vacant and boarded-up properties with the objective of returning properties in the BMW region to productive use as quickly as possible over the period of the programme. The programme focuses on retrofitting of the fabric of the dwelling (insulation of walls/roofs, window/door replacement, heating system improvement, etc). The measure applies across all local authorities in the BMW region.

Retrofitting is undertaken on properties selected by local authorities on the basis of unit cost, the extent of local housing need and the age/condition of the property.

**Financial**

Funding is allocated on the degree of local housing need, the numbers of void properties, the length of time the property has been vacant and the cost effectiveness of the proposal.

There were 637 vacant units retrofitted in 2014 of which 451 had energy efficient works undertaken at a cost of €1,511,842, the DHPLG recouped €1,360,202 with the balance of €151,640 being met by the LAs.

In 2015 the number of vacant units retrofitted decreased to 625, however of these 494 units had energy efficiency works undertaken at a cost of €1,442,204. The DHPLG recouped €1,183,743 with the balance of €258,461 being met by the LAs.

In 2016 the number of vacant units retrofitted decreased to 597, of which 489 units had energy efficiency works undertaken at a cost of €2,063,572. The DHPLG recouped €1,771,303 with the balance of €292,270 being met by the LAs.
In 2017 the number of vacant units retrofitted was 408, of which 270 units had energy efficiency works undertaken at a cost of €1,374,210. The DHPLG recouped €1,193,661 with the balance of €180,549 being met by the LA.

In 2018 the number of vacant units retrofitted was 409, of which 322 units had energy efficiency works undertaken at a cost of €1,545,497. The DHPLG recouped €1,299,796 with the balance of €245,701 being met by the LA own resources.

The average energy efficient work cost per unit in 2014 was €3,352, €2,919 in 2015, €4,220 in 2016, €5,089 in 2017 and €4,799 in 2018.

**Indicator data**

The base used is the number of units completed and returned to productive use. In the BMW region energy efficiency works were carried out on 451 units in 2014 on 494 units in 2015, 489 units in 2016, 270 in 2017 and 322 units in 2018.

It is a requirement that BER be provided after the works for each unit returned. Also photographic evidence must be kept on file by the local authority.

Funding under the Voids programme for the period 2014 to 2018 was conditional on a commitment that the accommodation will be occupied immediately following the works. The 2014 programme has seen 637 units returned to productive use, with 625 being returned in 2015, 597 units in 2016, 408 in 2017 and 409 in 2018.

**1.2 Description of Key Developments**

The voids programme has significantly improved the performance of the local authority residential housing stock. A condition of the scheme are that these units are occupied immediately following the works.

**Significant Problems**

No significant problems were incurred.

**Steps taken to address the Problems identified:** N/A

**1.3 Assessment of the information provided in points 1.1 and 1.2 as regards progress towards achieving the objectives of the scheme**

The DHPLG has placed high priority on the provision of support to local authorities in returning vacant units to productive use and funding is allocated. Since the commencement of the programme in 2014 there has been the remediation of approximately 2,676 units in the BMW Region between 2014 and 2018 of which 2,026 had energy efficiency works undertaken.

The programme focuses on retrofitting of the fabric of the dwelling (insulation of walls/roofs, window/door replacement, heating system improvement, etc.). In addition to
achieving best use of existing resources and apart from the obvious advantages of providing much needed demand for social housing units, the return of these vacant units provide a positive impact on the community, attracting a much enhanced perception of local authorities where housing applicants can be accommodated as quickly as possible and vacant dwellings are not the source of anti-social behaviour.

2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

2.1 Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority 4 (c)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>C031</td>
<td>Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification (Common Output Indicator)</td>
<td><strong>Fully Implemented Projects</strong></td>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>C034</td>
<td>GHG Reduction (Common Output Indicator)</td>
<td><strong>Fully Implemented Projects</strong></td>
<td>Tonnes of CO2</td>
<td>4,560</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td>1028</td>
<td>1226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 4 (c)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>*Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4(c)</td>
<td>R.6</td>
<td>Increase the average thermal performance of households in the BMW Region</td>
<td>kWh per m²</td>
<td>210 kWh per m²</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>185 kWh per m²</td>
<td>11.20 MW</td>
<td>12.35 MW</td>
<td>12.23 MW</td>
<td>8.75 MW</td>
<td>8.05 MW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MW- Mega Watt - provisional figures
2.3 Milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of households</td>
<td>4,078</td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total cost of Energy Efficiency works of operations</th>
<th>Recouped to LA *for Energy Efficiency works</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,511,842</td>
<td>1,360,202</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,442,205</td>
<td>1,183,743</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2,063,572</td>
<td>1,771,303</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,374,210</td>
<td>1,193,661</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,545,497</td>
<td>1,229,796</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,937,328</td>
<td>6,738,705</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note these figures have not been declared to the MA, are based on monies paid by DHPLG on certified claims from local authorities but no admin/desktop/Article 125 checks have been undertaken to date.

The use made of cross-financing - N/A for DHPLG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area- N/A for DHPLG

| Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR) | Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR) |
4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

- The difficult nature of implementing such a scheme given that only certain elements qualify for ERDF funding (measures taken: ongoing engagement with beneficiaries)
- Late introduction of an IT system to enable declarations. The IT system only came into place during 2018 (measures taken: training and information sessions available to staff at beneficiary level)
- The substantial time ART 125 checks will take and the implications on resources (measures taken: additional staffing sought at IB level).
- Development of Systems and Procedures outlining the requirements to be met as part of ERDF Programme (measures taken: development of key documents including system description, sampling methodology in consultation with the MA’s)

5. Summary of evaluations

Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

6. Information and Publicity Requirements

The DHP&LG issued a Circular 24/2018 (March, 2018) to all local authorities providing a guidance document Information and Communication Guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 outlining the role of local authorities in declaring expenditure. A further Circular 19/2019 issued (May 2019) again reminding local authorities of publicity requirements.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan.
The issue of gender imbalance between men and women is not relevant in relation to the implementation of this programme, as the priority is given to units returned to productive use for the provision of accommodation for individuals/families.

Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Funding made available is allocated based on the priorities submitted by local authorities, the current numbers of vacant units and the cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Funding available in 2018 was allocated having regard to the housing needs in Local Authority areas, the works on the units in question and specific local requirements.

Funding under the scheme is based on evidence of the work done and confirmation that no previous public funding has been received in recent years for similar works for the property, it is a requirement under the programme to have photographic evidence (before/after) and details of energy savings (post-works BER) available for inspection on claims submitted.

8. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):

- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

9. Annexes

Please annex any relevant additional information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Programme</th>
<th>BMW Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>4: Low Carbon Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors in the BMW Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(c) Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Social Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme – Phase 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

Overview on objectives, description of the intervention, progress and achievements, also with regard to financial and indicator data

The principle objective of this programme is to meet Ireland’s commitments in relation to carbon emissions reduction and energy reduction target for 2020. It is intended that this retrofitting proposal will fully meet the stringent requirements and ambitious targets of the Energy Efficiency Directive.

The frameworks within which these measures are being implemented are provided by the recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and Energy Efficiency Directive.

Energy savings in buildings will contribute 45% of Ireland’s total energy savings targets for 2020. The energy retrofitting of buildings in the private and public sector hold the greatest potential for energy savings.

A key objective of the Social Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofitting programme, (Phase 1 commenced in June 2013) is the improvement of insulation standards and overall energy performance across social rented properties.

Secondary objectives of the retrofitting proposal include stimulating employment generation within the construction/energy retrofitting sector, and demonstrating the importance of public sector bodies leading by example as also required by the Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Energy Efficiency Directive.

Description of Intervention

Social Housing Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme

Energy Efficiency Retrofitting is undertaken on properties selected by local authorities.

Phase 1 of the scheme, which began in June 2013, does not form part of the ERDF application process under the EU Operational Programme 2014-2020.

Phase 2, which is covered under the ERDF, focuses on the fabric upgrade works to dwellings with solid/hollow block wall construction. Also, in situations where dwellings have poor performing single glazed windows or defective doors, funding may be recouped for these works.

Phase 2 commenced in 2015 on a pilot basis in Westmeath County Council area and this Council continued to undertake work under this Phase during 2018.

Financial and outputs
Work was undertaken in the BMW region on 6 properties at an overall eligible cost of €54,801.00. The maximum grant limits relevant to Phase 2 are €14,650 for mid-terrace and €17,650 for end-terrace units.

Phase 2 works will be rolled out to all local authorities shortly. Funding allocations to each local authority will be determined on the basis of proposals submitted to the Department, in relation to the number of units in their areas requiring Phase 1 and Phase 2 works.

The average eligible cost of Phase 2 works undertaken in 2018 was €9,133.5 per unit.

**Indicator data**
The basis used is number of units completed in 2018 under Phase 2. In the BMW region works were carried out on 6 units.

It is a requirement that pre works surveys are carried out by participating Energy Suppliers’ BER Assessors who will be required to audit these works under the SEAI scheme for awarding energy credits. Phase 2 will continue to be assisted by the participating energy suppliers as was the case with Phase 1 of the scheme.

**Description of key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems during the reporting period**

**Key Developments**
The works on these houses arose from the ambitious programme, Phase 1 of insulation retrofitting on the least energy efficient social houses, under which the Department has provided funding of some €128.7 million over the period 2013-2018 to improve energy efficiency and comfort levels in over 68,000 local authority homes, benefitting those at risk of fuel poverty and making a significant contribution to Ireland’s carbon emissions reduction targets and energy reduction targets for 2020. Phase 2 will continue with this progress, focussing on the remaining local authority dwellings with solid/hollow block wall construction.

**Significant Problems**
No problems were in identified.

**Steps taken to address the Problems identified**
N/A

2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

182
4.1 C031  Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification (Common Output Indicator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fully Implemented Projects</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>404</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>404</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.2 C034 GHG Reduction (Common Output Indicator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>4560</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,539</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>4560</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,539</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 4 (c)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator Description</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.6</td>
<td>Increase the average thermal performance of households in the BMW Region</td>
<td>kWh per m²</td>
<td>210 kWh per m²</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>185 kWh per m²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme

2.3 Milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>No. of households</td>
<td>4078</td>
<td>10194</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

1.1 Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure</th>
<th>Number of operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2018 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>479,234</td>
<td>479,234</td>
<td>LA (Fingal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>863,517</td>
<td>863,517</td>
<td>LA (Fingal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>589,800</td>
<td>589,800</td>
<td>2 LAs (Fingal &amp; Westmeath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>54,801.00</td>
<td>54,801.00</td>
<td>LA (Westmeath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,987,352</td>
<td>1,987,352</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 The use made of cross-financing - N/A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for support under the ESF, but supported from the ERDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area – N/A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
- If there are any proposals for adjustments considered necessary to the Implementation Plan, please include here.

There are no issues affecting the performance of the programme.
5. Summary of evaluations

Have any evaluations been carried out so far as part of the implementation of the scheme? If yes, please provide an overview on evaluation dates, scope, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations.

No evaluations have been carried out to date.

6. Information and Publicity Requirements

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

The Department ensures that the final beneficiaries comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014:

- The ERDF structural fund 2014-2020 is acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, letters’ of offer, signage etc.
- Appropriate logo and text for the ERDF Structural Fund is used on relevant Department Circulars
- Similarly, the appropriate logo is used on the claim form

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
- Promotion of sustainable development
- Promotion of Social Inclusion

- 80 units were completed in 2017 to an improved standard of energy performance
- The programme addresses energy poverty concerns by targeting local authority tenants that include vulnerable groups such as older people, people with a disability etc.
- Energy savings will contribute to reducing Ireland’s carbon emissions reduction targets and energy reduction targets by 2020.
- The issue of gender imbalance is not relevant in relation to the implementation of the Programme.

Summary of arrangements implemented to ensure mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives

Please provide an overview of the actions implemented to ensure the mainstreaming of horizontal policy objectives.

Funding made available under the Programme is allocated on an equitable system, based on the information submitted by local authorities as to the number of units requiring Phase
2 works. The provision of funding is based on evidence of work done and confirmation that no previous public funding has been received in recent years for similar works on the property, it is a requirement of the programme to have details of energy saving (post works BER at a minimum) available for inspection on claims submitted.

8. **Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme**

Please provide a brief summary on if/how any of the authorities listed below have been included in the implementation of your scheme (in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013):

- urban and other public authorities;
- economic and social partners; and
- bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, and non-governmental organisations.

9. **Annexes**

Please annex any relevant additional information

Circular 08/2019 – Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme 2019

**Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>4: Low Carbon Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors in the BMW Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>(c) Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

There were no major changes to the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme in 2019 in terms of eligibility or technical requirements. Following the 2018 expansion of the scheme to include internal and external wall insulation as standard (as opposed to just cavity wall insulation), our contractor panel, established in July 2017, continued to deliver at pace, delivering energy efficiency measures to the homes of eligible applicants based on technical recommendations by our surveyors.

The ambition of the scheme continued to increase throughout 2019 and in turn is delivering greater savings for more homes. Within a comparable budget, these deeper upgrades will see less homes receiving works per year, however the energy efficiency savings impact will be greater on average per home.
With the increased focus on deeper measures, the cost of works per home has continued to increase and with that waiting and delivery times have also continued to increase. With the high demand for the scheme and the level of investment for the average home, long waiting times are to be expected and this is something we regularly update homeowners on.

Ensuring the required quality standards are maintained across contractors is an ongoing challenge in delivering the scheme, particularly with an increase in the volume of deeper, more complicated measures being delivered.

**During 2019 we began to prepare for the new 2020 contractor tender, which will see a new panel of contractors established from mid-2020 to facilitate the delivery of works until 2024.**

SEAI report on applications received, delivered homes and the waiting list for service delivery to DCCAE on a monthly basis. Only costs related to the installation of the energy efficiency measures are included as part of the eligible expenditure. It does not include any surveys or inspections also carried out.

**2. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>1231</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>868*</td>
<td>7,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Common Output Indicator)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>10,194</td>
<td>1231</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>1527</td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>868*</td>
<td>7,898</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>GHG Reduction</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Projects</td>
<td>Tonnes of CO2</td>
<td>4,560</td>
<td>1433</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>575**</td>
<td>6826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Common Output Indicator)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected Projects</td>
<td>Tonnes of CO2</td>
<td>4,560</td>
<td>1433</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>575**</td>
<td>6826</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This figure relates to homes with improved energy consumption classification (excluding invalid data, 79% of homes analysed showed improved classification change, which is equivalent to 868 homes of total homes receiving energy efficiency works on WHS (1104)).

** This figure is based on the current calculation saving methodology, which is underestimating savings from deeper measures delivered. SEAI expects to revise this methodology in 2021 based on a review of previous years' data.

Fully implemented projects are actual achievements and when a project is fully completed. It includes all elements or parts that need to be carried out for the operation to be considered fully implemented.

Selected projects are the projects that have been selected following a selection process. This may involve a grant decision or the document setting out the conditions for support which is provided to the beneficiary such as a grant letter, or other forms of confirmation of inclusion of a project in the programme or allocation of EU funding from the programme.

**2.2 Programme-Specific Result Indicators - Investment Priority 4 (c)**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement Unit</th>
<th>Baseline Value</th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Target Value</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4(c) R.6</td>
<td>Increase the average thermal performance of households in the BMW Region</td>
<td>kWh per m²</td>
<td>210 kWh per m²</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>185 kWh per m²</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>n/a***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** SEAI statistical data on the average thermal performance of housing units in Ireland not yet available for 2019

3. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013

Financial data at priority axis and programme level

Operations selected for support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)</th>
<th>Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€7,069,626</td>
<td>€7,069,626</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>€6,214,093</td>
<td>€6,214,093</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€7,305,920</td>
<td>€7,305,920</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€7,718,814</td>
<td>€7,718,814</td>
<td>€13,283,719</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€10,983,303</td>
<td>€10,983,303</td>
<td>€7,305,920</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€11,101,269</td>
<td>€11,101,269</td>
<td>€18,702,117</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€50,393,025</td>
<td>€50,393,025</td>
<td>€39,291,756</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public cost paid to beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Public eligible cost paid to beneficiaries (EUR)</th>
<th>Number of operations paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>€7,069,626</td>
<td>€7,069,626</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>€6,214,093</td>
<td>€6,214,093</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€7,305,920</td>
<td>€7,305,920</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€11,101,269</td>
<td>€11,101,269</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€50,393,025</td>
<td>€50,393,025</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use made of cross-financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of cross financing</th>
<th>The amount of EU support envisaged to be used for cross financing based on selected operations (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure used under cross financing declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of cross-financing: Costs outside the scope of ERDF that are eligible for</td>
<td>€0</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 Figures are in accordance with the end December 2019 Art. 112 transmission of financial data
Cost of operations implemented outside the programme area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of operations outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Amount of support envisaged to be used for operations implemented outside the programme area (EUR)</th>
<th>Eligible expenditure incurred in operations implemented outside the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€0</td>
<td>€0</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

No key issues affecting the programme; the programme is demand led and interest from eligible parties is high. There is a healthy pipeline of applications and our contractors are delivering to capacity.

5. Summary of evaluations

We carry out ongoing evaluations of the Warmer Homes Scheme internally in SEAI, regularly reviewing various indicators, including number of homes treated, number of homes unsuitable for works, measures per home, average costs per home/measure groupings, etc. Working closely with the DCCAE, such analysis feeds into setting the policy direction of the scheme, and driving changes to eligibility criteria and measures offered. In 2019, we continued to look at ways to improve the targeting and waiting times on the programme, with recommendations submitted to DCCAE in Q4 for decision in 2020.

The expansion of the scheme in 2018 saw the average cost per home increasing, which continued in 2019, alongside waiting and delivery times for works. Given the changing profile of the scheme, a review of the savings methodology has been carried out (on 2017, 2018 and 2019 data) and an outcome from this review is expected in 2020, with a slight revision to our calculation methodology expected.

6. Information and Publicity Requirements

The European Union strapline, logo and artwork are used at all opportunities in communications regarding projects either directly by SEAI or by project beneficiaries. All logo/credit usage fully complies with applicable guidelines. The use of such materials is a requirement on all branded publications.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

The Warmer Homes Scheme delivers energy efficiency measures in residential homes, reducing energy usage and carbon emissions.
The scheme is specifically targeted at vulnerable people who are living in fuel poverty. SEAI ensures that all services are equally accessible to those with disabilities and tailor our communications accordingly to facilitate specific needs.

The Warmer Homes scheme fully funds energy efficiency improvements in the homes of the elderly and vulnerable, making their homes more comfortable, healthier and more cost effective to run. Since the commencement of the WHS in 2002, SEAI has utilised organisations embedded in local communities (community-based organisations) to address eligible homes, supplemented by a large number of private contractors to ensure full national coverage. As such the scheme is addressing a range of social, environmental and economic issues.

SEAI have a strong partnership approach in the delivery of this programme, working at local level with community-based organisations and local authorities. We also engage with charity organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul and Age Action. At a departmental level we frequently liaise with the Department of Health, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

8. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme

We work with housing charities, local authorities and healthcare providers, to target, where possible, the most vulnerable homes. We utilise multipliers such as libraries, public offices, local community groups and charities to promote the Warmer Homes Scheme and help vulnerable homeowners to apply for the free energy efficiency works available to them. We are continuously looking for ways to strengthen and expand these communication channels to improve the programme’s reach. We also have several community-based organisations on our panel helping to deliver the works on the ground within their specific communities.

9. Annexes

N/A
SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>5: Sustainable Urban Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Objective</td>
<td>6. Preserving and Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Supporting the shift to a low carbon economy in all sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Priority</td>
<td>6(e): Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4(e): Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multi-modal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

This Priority relates to capital flagship projects within urban centres that were classified as Gateways under the National Spatial Strategy. Projects were selected through an open call to designated towns in 2015.

The priority takes action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures. It also seeks to promote low carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multi-modal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures.

Specific objectives are: (a) to increase the number of integrated growth centre strategies implemented and (b) to support low carbon sustainable, multimodal urban mobility in designated urban centres.

2. Financial data (Art. 50(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013
## Total Expenditure 2014-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DUCGS</th>
<th>Expenditure 2014-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Athlone</td>
<td>€4,495,507.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dundalk</td>
<td>€5,637,806.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Letterkenny</td>
<td>€1,052,843.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mullingar</td>
<td>€3,103,702.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>€1,462,512.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tullamore</td>
<td>€3,878,455.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>€19,630,826.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

#### Priority-level Output Indicators - Investment Priority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1</td>
<td>Number of integrated growth centre strategies (6(e))</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of strategies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C037</td>
<td>Population (no.) living in areas with integrated urban development strategies (common indicator) (6(e))</td>
<td>Fully Implemented Selected Projects</td>
<td>No. of people</td>
<td>206,208</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Number of multimodal urban</td>
<td>Fully Implemented</td>
<td>No. of projects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

In 2019 the Managing Authority effected the OP modifications arising from the requirement to reallocate the Performance Reserve from Priority 5 as the financial milestone target for Priority 5 was not achieved in the BMW Region due to insufficient expenditure declared. The OP modification for the BMW ROP was approved by the Monitoring Committee in November 2019 and adopted by the European Commission in April 2020.

Some of the projects under this scheme were still at the early stages of implementation during 2019 however substantial progress has now been reported with four of the projects completed to date and construction started on two others.

The Managing Authority continues to monitor the physical and financial performance of this Priority very closely, with a key focus on declaration of eligible expenditure and ensuring robust project management and regular communication with the local authorities concerned to minimise any further delay.

During the course of the Mid-Term Evaluation, the Managing Authority highlighted that the measurement unit for Result Indicator 6e was no longer fit for purpose. The Managing Authority is now proposing the introduction of the following Result Indicator 6e: percentage (%) increase in active enterprises in the designated urban centres.

5. Summary of evaluations
6. Information and Publicity Requirements

See Section 9 for further information on the individual schemes included in this Priority.

7. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

The following actions will be taken to integrate the relevant horizontal principles:

The scheme will promote accessibility for all in supported projects and ensure a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities (Article 9 UNCRPD); Local Authorities will be required to provide evidence of community consultation including all relevant groups and interests; Local Authorities will report on the number of projects in deprived communities; Data will be captured on changes in non-private car use arising from sustainable urban transport projects; Local Authorities will be required to prepare Environmental Impact Statements on proposals which meet the criteria; The scheme will, where appropriate promote locally sourced, sustainably produced materials and environmentally friendly building methods; Local Authorities will be required to ensure that restored and / or rehabilitated buildings have improved energy-efficiency; Data on affluence / deprivation in designated gateways and hubs will be included in the Gateway and Hubs Development Index.

See Section 9 for further information on the individual schemes included in this Priority.

8. Involvement of partners in the implementation of the scheme

In the early implementation stages of the selected projects, all participating Local Authorities have carried out consultation processes with the civil society actors within their areas of remit and have engaged with the public and their elected representatives, businesses, and sectoral interests. Local Authorities through the planning and implementation phases of these projects will engage with the public and their elected representatives, businesses, and sectoral interests on how best to integrate their respective projects, when complete.

See Section 9 below for further information on the individual schemes
9. Information on individual schemes included in the Priority Axis

ATHLONE

**Athlone: €1.5million for Church Street Enhancement:** The project involves enhanced pedestrian facilities and public spaces through a rearrangement of the layout of the street using high quality pavement materials and street furniture including lighting.

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

1.1 Overview on objectives, description of the intervention, progress and achievements, also with regard to financial and indicator data

This scheme seeks to improve the urban environment, reduce air pollution, promote noise reduction and enhance urban mobility in the designated urban centre. A Part 8 for works on Church St had been approved in 2008 but a decision was taken to recommence this process to allow for urban design changes, updated policies in development plans etc in the interim. The scheme was redesigned, and Part 8 Planning was approved.

The works commenced in March 2018 with the final project completed at the end of February 2019.

1.2 Description of key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems during the reporting period

- Part 8 Approval – April 2017
- Contractor Appointed - February 2018
- Project commenced March 2018
- Project completed end February 2019

No significant problems during the reporting period.

2. Expenditure 2014-2019
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GATEWAY</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE 2014-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>€574,571.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>€3,273,548.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
<td>€647,386.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>€4,495,507.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

No issues arose that affected the delivery of this project. There were no proposals for adjustments in the implementation plan.

4. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions/plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

The following notices all contain the EU logo:

1. Church Street, Information Leaflet
2. Notice of Public Information Session March 1\textsuperscript{st} 2017
3. Letter to Traders dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 2018
4. Photo of Signage Boards at three locations on Church Street
5. Newspaper Notice Part 8 Feb 2017
6. Article in the Local Authority News November 2018

The required permanent plaque was placed on Church St. within 3 months of completion of the job.

5. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

**Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan**

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
- Promotion of sustainable development
- Promotion of Social Inclusion

This scheme has significantly enhanced the existing open space on Church St and improved pedestrian access for all through the centre of town. Access for mobility impaired and for
people with buggies has been greatly improved. A copy of the Design Statement included in the Part 8 is available if required. The aesthetic of the streetscape for the centre of Athlone has been greatly enhanced and there is a sense of ownership of the new street which has strengthened the sense of community and increase civic pride in the town.

**DUNDALK**

**Dundalk: €2 million for Clanbrassil Street & St Nicholas Quarter Rejuvenation:** The cash is granted as a rejuvenation scheme to re-invigorate this area and create a new identity for this key gateway into the town, including street improvements, enhanced gateway to the north, better public spaces, a new café culture, incorporated public art, a new street signage strategy & a facade improvement scheme for buildings with historic spine.

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial data in Section 2 below.

The contractor, John Cradock Ltd, commenced on site on the 7th January 2019.

The works progressed well, and it is anticipated that the scheme will be completed by the end of March 2020, which complies with the revised official completion date.

2. **Expenditure 2014-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUCGS Scheme</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE 2014-2019</th>
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</table>

3. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.

Unforeseen Archaeology was discovered during the works which needed to be assessed. This resulted in a delay to the works. Additional work areas were allowed to be opened up and this partially mitigated the overall delays. Utility providers required amendments to the original agreed plans for utilities which caused delays.

- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.
The Scheme will be completed by the approved completion date.

4. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

- Louth County Council is fully aware of its responsibilities as a Beneficiary as set out in the “Information and Communication Guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020”.
- There is a visible link on the homepage of the Council’s website to a page which acknowledges receipt of financial assistance from the ERDF.
- Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds’ logo and the Union Emblem have been used extensively on letters, Reports, Drawings etc.
- Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds’ logo and the Union Emblem have been used in all necessary Newspaper Notices.
- A temporary Billboard was erected on site which complies with the information and publicity requirements.
- A permanent Plaque will be unveiled on site, which complies with the information and publicity requirements, at the official opening of the Scheme.

5. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

5.1 Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- **Promotion of equality between men and women**
  
  Not applicable in relation to this project

- **Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities**
  
  This scheme has been designed and constructed so as to be accessible for people with disabilities and will incorporate age-friendly cities criteria.

- **Promotion of sustainable development**
  
  Provision of Energy efficient public lighting.
  
  There is a growing appreciation that streets should not just be corridors for traffic, but rather should be places in which people want to live and spend time.
  
  Streets also need to facilitate more sustainable forms of transportation such as walking, cycling and public transport so the need for car-borne trips is minimised in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote healthier lifestyles.
  
  The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Street (DMURS) seeks to put well-designed streets at the heart of sustainable communities and supports border government policies on the environment, planning and transportation. DMURS provides the practical measures to achieve:
Highly connected street which allow people to walk and cycle to key destinations in a direct and easy-to-find manner. A safe and comfortable street environment for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages. Streets that contribute to the creation of attractive and lively communities. Streets that calm traffic via a range of design measures that make drivers more aware of their environment.

This Scheme has been designed following the principles of DMURS

- **Promotion of Social Inclusion**
  The new plaza areas will provide locations for social gatherings, events, markets, public performances etc and will create a sense of place for the local community.

### GALWAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Galway: €3.5million for the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The development of a world-class shared-use pedestrian and cycle bridge at the Salmon Weir Bridge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

The Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge is progressing steadily. Following confirmation of ERDF funding, a summary of actions to date *(February 2020)* is as follows:

- Match funding secured through the National Transport Authority.
- Tender for appointment of Bridge Engineering, Environmental and Bridge Architects, and appointment of Lead Consultants. ARUP were appointed in Q1 2019. Seán Harrington Architects were appointed as Lead Architect.
- Internal consultation and engagement with Planning and Recreation & Amenity colleagues, regarding the Public Realm Strategy for Galway City, which was adopted by Council in 2019. The Public Realm Strategy provides a vision of place, design guidance and outline project proposals to improve Galway's streets and public spaces. The design response is specific to the location, history and character of Galway City, see [https://www.galwaycity.ie/public-realm-strategy](https://www.galwaycity.ie/public-realm-strategy).
- Appointment of a Landscape Architect through the National Transport Authority to incorporate requirements of the Public Realm Strategy into the project appropriately.
- 6 months of Constraints Study and Options Appraisal, in order to select the emerging preferred option for the new bridge.
- Presentation to the November 2019 Ordinary Meeting of Galway City Council on the emerging preferred option.
- Non-Statutory workshop for Elected Members (29th November 2019).
- Non-Statutory workshop for cycling stakeholder groups in Galway City (29th November 2019).
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were underway in Q4 2019, continuing into Q1 2020, with a planning application to An Bord Pleanála to follow in Q2 2020.
Detailed design and constructability development of the preferred option, to include selection of material finishes, bridge furniture including seating, handrails etc. to be completed for Q1 2020.

Consultation and meetings with landowners to secure agreement to progress the bridge (January/ February 2020)

Preparation for site investigation works, to be complete in Q1 2020.

Detailed design and tender documentation will be prepared in Q4 2020, anticipating a positive response from An Bord Pleanála. It is anticipated that commencement on site will be in Q1 2021.

The original project proposal estimated that the project would go to planning in Q4 2019. The requirement for additional environmental reporting will push this date out to Q2 2020, in order to adequately incorporate new environmental assessment requirements into the project.

2. **Expenditure 2014-2019**

Costs incurred to date have been largely by way of consultants’ fees. These have been recouped through the National Transport Authority as co-funders of the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge. It is envisaged that costs will be equalised between the two primary funders (the NWRA and the NTA) as they are incurred.

Project costs are estimated at approximately €7.2M total for the bridge and tie ins to the existing quays. This figure is an estimate as the project is currently at planning/design stage. More detailed project cost estimates will be determined when the planning/design is complete, including foundation design, land acquisition areas and acquisition process and architecture details. Claims for ERDF funding will be made for the construction phases of the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge.
### Table: DUCGS Scheme

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<th>DUCGS Scheme</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

3. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

Following an application made by Galway City Council in October 2015, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding, under the Designated Urban Centres (DUC) Grant Scheme, of €3.5m was approved by the BMW Regional Operational Programme Committee to support the proposed Galway Library and Cultural Centre Development on the Headford Road. In December 2018, Galway City Council notified the NWRA that the Council was not in a position to advance the Galway Library and Cultural Centre Development Project within the period of the designated Scheme. Following consultation and a reapplication to the Northern & Western Regional Assembly, the full funding allocation of €3.5m was approved to progress the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge.

In 2014, the amending EIA Directive was adopted – Directive 2014/52/EU. The Directive was transposed into Irish Law by the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018. These regulations were published in August 2018 with most of the regulations coming into force on 1 September 2018. The Amending EIA Directive has introduced a number of substantive amendments to the EIA process. The most significant amendments are considered to be additional factors in respect of which the effects of the project must be assessed.

The ‘new’ factors introduced by the Amending EIA Directive are as follows:

(a) Population and human health,

(b) Biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EU and Directive 2009/147/EU,

(c) The interaction between the factors and

(d) The effects on the factors shall include the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the projects to risks of major accidents and / or disasters to the projects concerned.

The introduction of this revised legislation requires that a more comprehensive environmental study be carried out and that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) be completed. The original project proposal for the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge estimated that the project would go to planning in Q4 2019. The requirement for additional environmental reporting will push this date out to Q2 2020, in order to adequately incorporate new environmental assessment requirements into the project.
4. Information and Publicity Requirements

Galway City Council is preparing web content on the Salmon Weir Bridge, for publication on www.galwaycity.ie. The content and logos have been reviewed by the NWRA, and approved for publication. The page will be live in Q1 2020.

When the project moves to site, all requirements regarding branding, signage and plaques will be adhered to. A launch will be held on completion of the bridge, with press releases prepared for all announcements/ launches etc.

5. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

The development of a world-class shared-use pedestrian and cycle bridge at the Salmon Weir Bridge will bring a number of significant benefits to Galway City, in relation to Horizontal Principles, including:

- **Removal of current conflicts** between vehicles including buses, trucks and cars, and pedestrians/ cyclists on the existing 200 year old bridge – encouraging more active, sustainable travel.

  The paths on the existing bridge are not wide enough to cater for the number of people crossing the river, with pedestrians often stepping out in front of vehicles, and weaving through traffic on the bridge to get from one side to the other. Those with buggies or mobility issues face additional challenges weaving through people to cross the bridge.

- **Facilitating the development of a cross-city public transport corridor** over the existing bridge, as part of the Galway Transport Strategy (Bus Connects). Bus Connects Galway will enhance public transport in Galway City with strategic high-frequency cross-city bus routes reducing dependency on the single occupant car in the city.

- **Enhancing links** between both sides of the river, supporting sustainable and active modes of transport, between significant populations in the University Hospital Galway, the National University of Ireland Galway, the Cathedral, the Courthouse, local communities and schools, and the city centre core.

- Creation of a **focal point** for locals and tourists alike, by offering new views of the river, the Cathedral, angling activities, the canal and the mill race – removed from traffic, and offering a relaxing place close to water and nature, right in the city.

- Supporting the **Masterplan for the adjacent Nuns Island**, which will extend the city centre into this area and facilitate the regeneration of Nuns Island.

- ‘**Making a Statement**’ that captures and celebrates the historical significance of the area on either side of the new bridge.
Letterkenny: €2 million is being awarded to split over 3 projects: Upgrading the Joe Bonner Link Road will increase connectivity between areas of high activity in the town, thereby boosting opportunities for employment in the town. Constructing a new Social Enterprise building will create a communal space to house key community and voluntary groupings. Under the sustainable transport grants, the upgrading of town linkages will give opportunity for safe walking and pedestrian infrastructure and lessen car usage.

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

   **Joe Bonner Road Project and Town Centre Linkages**

   Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial data in Section 2 below.

   **Project 1: Joe Bonner Road**
   Construction commenced in Q1 2019 and is being done via a combination of the Councils direct labour staff and contractors. Work progressed rapidly initially however delays to the installation of an Irish Water Foul Sewer have affected progress. Further delays are now being experienced as part of the recently installed foul sewer has subsided and will need remedial work. Donegal County Council staff continue to liaise with IW staff to expedite this work.

   **Project 2: Town Centre Linkages**
   This project consists of five separate elements;
   - Justice Walsh Road Traffic Lights: All civil works are in place and the traffic lights are to be procured at the same time as the traffic lights for the Joe Bonner Roads project and are scheduled for installation in Qtr 2, 2020.
   - Port Road Footpaths: This work was completed in Qtr 4 2019.
   - Town Centre Signage: Designed and procured and due for installation in Qtr 1 2020.
   - Lower Main Street: Design complete, Part 8 planning consent was approved in July 2019 and construction is to commence Qtr 1 2020.
   - Church Lane: Design complete, Part 8 planning consent was approved in July 2019. Awaiting replacement of an asbestos cement water main by Irish Water in Qtr 1 2020 prior to commencing construction.

2. **Expenditure 2014-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUCGS Scheme</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE 2014-2019</th>
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<td>€612,364</td>
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</table>

3. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)
   • Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
   • Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.

Project 1:

Joe Bonner Road:
Progress on the construction of this project has been delayed due to delays related to the installation of an Irish Water Foul Sewer along the line of this roadway. Council staff continue to liaise with IW staff to expedite this work and minimise the impact on the project.

4. Information and Publicity Requirements

Project 1:

Joe Bonner Road:
The ERDF Contribution to this project was previously highlighted during the statutory development consent in 2016. There will be a public opening event of the new road when works are programmed to be completed in 2020 and the commemorative plaque and all literature will highlight the ERDF contribution.

Project 2:

Town Centre Linkages:
The planning process has been completed for the three elements of this project that require it and the ERDF contribution was highlighted in the Part 8 Planning Documentation. In addition, the ERDF’s contribution will also be acknowledged at public openings, and both literature and commemorative plaques will highlight the ERDF’s contribution.

5. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

5.1 Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
- Promotion of sustainable development
Promotion of Social Inclusion

Project 1: Joe Bonner Road:
There have been no specific actions to date to promote the Horizontal Principles listed above however the scheme when completed will support sustainable mobility initiatives by improving pedestrian and cycle access in the Letterkenny town environs via extension of existing pedestrian walkways and cycle lanes.

Project 2: Town Centre Linkages:
There have been no specific actions to date to promote the Horizontal Principles listed above however the scheme when completed will support sustainable mobility initiatives by improving pedestrian and cycle access in the Letterkenny town environs via the improvement of existing facilities.

Social Enterprise Centre project – Letterkenny

- Part 8 planning approval obtained for iconic 1250sq. metres building in July 2019 (see attached 3D image of proposed building)
- Estimated cost in excess of €5m incl. of VAT and professional fees (DUCGS funding €1m)
- Ground/site investigation works to take place during April/May 2020 (pending lifting of COVID-19 restrictions on construction activity)
- Detailed design ongoing and programmed to be complete by 23rd June 2020
- Procurement of contractor being initiated in parallel with detailed design (restricted procedure, pre-qualification of contractors)
- Contractor to commence on site in late October/early November 2020
- Completion by December 2021 with occupation in January 2022.

Additional information
- Irish Water, in consultation with Donegal County Council, has progressed the extension of the foul sewerage network to the boundary of the Social Enterprise Centre site, to facilitate its development, during 2019 with this work is due to be fully complete by September 2020.
- The construction of the Joe Bonnar Link Road has also been progressed by Donegal County Council’s Roads Department in 2019 with its completion following immediately after the works being undertaken by Irish Water.
- Part 8 approval to develop a Linear Park project linking the proposed Social Enterprise Centre project to Letterkenny Town Centre was obtained in September 2019. This project is being developed over a number of phases.
Mullingar Town Centre: €1.5 million for enhancement of town civic areas and linkages between them: The focus of this initiative is to make the town centre a distinctive and attractive place to live and work, with an urban design to promote quality of the public realm, ease of movement, legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions, diversity and choice, continuity and enclosure and character in townscape.

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial data in Section 2 below.

2. **Expenditure 2014-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUCGS Scheme</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE 2014-2019</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.
- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.

4. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

5. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

5.1 Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan
• Promotion of equality between men and women
• Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
• Promotion of sustainable development
• Promotion of Social Inclusion

SLIGO

Sligo: €2million for two projects: This is for enhancements to O’Connell Street to provide limited vehicular access with pedestrian priority, new widened pavements, new street furniture and landscaping, reduced traffic flow, and shared space for cyclists. The money will also be spent on the provision of a new community centre in Cranmore to regenerate an identified disadvantaged urban area.

Community Centre in Cranmore

1. Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year

Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial data in Section 2 below:

• The Sligo East City, Cranmore and Environs Masterplan was adopted by the members of Sligo County Council at the Council meeting on the 5th September 2016 and was formally launched by the Minister for Housing Planning Community and Local Government, Mr Simon Coveney on the 1st December 2016. €20m has been allocated to deliver a wide range of projects identified in the plan including €2m for a Community facility. Stage 2 approval was received on the 23rd November 2018 from the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government and the level of funding for the Centre was increased to €2.7m.
• Notice under the Local Government (Planning and Development Regulations 2001, Part 8) was published on 12th December 2019 and Part VIII Planning Submission documents were on Public Display from 12th December 2019 to 24th January 2020.
• The Planning Report will be considered by the members of Sligo County Council at its March 2020 meeting.
• Consultants for Quantity Surveying, Mechanical and Electrical, Fire, Civil and Structural Services were appointed on 22nd October 2019, and detailed design work is underway, with a view to preparing Tender Documents.
2. **Expenditure 2014-2019**

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3. **Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)**

- Please include a short description of any issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken, if any.

There are no issues affecting the performance of the programme.

- Please also include details of future prospects for the implementation of the Scheme.

As outlined above Planning will be sought from the members of Sligo County Council at the March 2020 County Council meeting. Work is continuing on detailed design and it is anticipated that following DHP&LG approvals works can commence by early 2021.

4. **Information and Publicity Requirements**

- General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the ERDF contribution.
- Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
- Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

Please note that all presentations and publicity complied with the Structural Fund information and publicity requirements. See the following information:

Part 8 submission – Cover sheet including logos
Part 8 submission – 3d images
5. **Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles**

5.1 **Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation Plan**

- Promotion of equality between men and women
- Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities
- Promotion of sustainable development
- Promotion of Social Inclusion

**Equality, Prevention of Discrimination & Accessibility**

The process of developing the Regeneration Masterplan for the Sligo East City, Cranmore and Environs was built on detailed analysis, extensive consultation and engagement. The
Masterplan and its associated Action Plans and Underpinning Strategies take into consideration the four Horizontal Principles mentioned above. The Masterplan was developed over a four-stage approval process with the DHP&LG.

**Stage 1 - Social and Economic Appraisal**

The regeneration project was challenged with addressing the particular needs of communities in Sligo East City who are experiencing significant social and economic disadvantage, living in areas of poor-quality housing and lack of infrastructure.

The Regeneration area has been profiled under a number of headings:

- Demographic profile of the area
- Disadvantage and affluence
- Employment, unemployment and economic development
- Education, family support and youth
- Community safety, housing management and support
- Community development, arts, culture, sport and recreation
- Health and wellness

**Stage 2 - Social, Economic and Physical Appraisal**

Stage 2 provided an assessment of the physical environment, its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. A range of resident and stakeholder consultations and technical analyses were undertaken to compile the physical, social and economic appraisal.

**Stage 3 - Ideas for Regeneration**

In Stage 3, Masterplan ideas were presented for the physical, social and economic regeneration of the area. Ideas were reviewed and tested in consultations undertaken through social plan workshops, reference group meetings, economic agency interviews, economic round table sessions and a weeklong public display of social and economic strategies and physical plan ideas.

The emerging Social Plan built on the information from the Stage 1 Socio-Economic Profile and was informed by eleven workshops that examined and made proposals in relation to each of the key strategic areas that make up the plan.

**Stage 4 - Refining the Regeneration Masterplan**

In Stage 4, the draft social and economic regeneration plans were revised and refined, and the action plans were developed further. A series of templates were produced and circulated to lead agencies, who were asked to identify any participating partners.
The provision of a sustainable community building in Cranmore, which is cognisant of Horizontal Principles and which provides a collaborative working environment based on the provision of services and supports within a socially disadvantaged area, is central to the overall development of the area.

The Masterplan deals with the provision of quality spaces for community facilities, which will be socially inclusive and accessible and which meets the needs of the community across the lifecycle. The proposed building is also fully disability proofed and will comply fully with Part M of the Building Regulations 2010.

This collaborative environment will house services with shared social programmes for all members of the community while also promoting a new culture of entrepreneurial spirit within the community. It will build confidence to progress and engage with other needs specific support structures planned in other parts of Sligo and the Region.

**Sustainability**

- Sligo County Councils detailed Business Plan for the Centre addresses organisational structures and financial projections for the New Community building.
- The Design takes into consideration accessibility, orientation for sun paths and views, proximity to new pedestrian links that pass through the site and links to landmarks in the wider Sligo City area.
- Design and landscaping features mitigates the potential for anti social behavior.
- Key to minimizing the risk of ASB will be the sense of ownership within the community for the building. This will be supported by an active and engaged Community Development organisation.

**Enhancements to O’Connell Street**

1. **Overview of the implementation of the scheme during the reporting year**

   Key information on the implementation of the scheme for the year concerned, with reference to the financial data in Section 2 below.

2. **Expenditure 2014-2019**
2014
2015
2016
2017: 72,059
2018: 228,953
2019: 1,131,017

TOTAL: 1,432,029

3. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken
(Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Delivery of granite material from China for footpath construction was delayed. The
construction start date was delayed by 4 months. Initial start date for construction was
January 2019 – actual start date was April 2019.

The project is now at construction stage and any further issues in relation to the
completion will depend on construction issues.

4. Information and Publicity Requirements

General outline supplemented with specific examples of actions / plans to publicise the
ERDF contribution.
   ERDF logos used on paper for Minutes – sample attached
   Proposed to use Logos for contract correspondence – sample attached
   Sample of Scheme Sign attached
   Before and after video presentation – highlight ERDF funding
   SCC website
   Evidence of compliance with Structural Fund information and publicity requirements.
   See attached Site Memos used in the contract See website: http://www.sligococo.ie/FeaturedContent/OConnellStreetEnhancementProject/
   Samples of press statements for major launches, announcements etc.

5. Actions taken to meet Horizontal Principles

Please provide a brief assessment of the implementation of specific actions undertaken
regarding the following Horizontal Principles in accordance with the Implementation
Plan

Promotion of equality between men and women. The overall strategic objective of the
project will promote equality between women and men. At its core the project, under the
umbrella of equality based on the following principles: equal opportunities for women and
men in all spheres of social, economic, cultural and political life.
Promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination; and accessibility for people with disabilities. The design elements of the scheme required detailed consultation with advisory bodies. The main elements were focused on the transportation model, including public transport, facilities for persons with disabilities, pedestrian facilities and the approach to the motor vehicle. Detailed discussions were concluded with the National Council for the Blind (NCBI) in relation to provision of controlled pedestrian crossings. The significance of colour contrast within materials was established, and a strategy to use colour in the pavement design to represent changes in pavement orientation, level and use was defined. Similarly, Bus Eireann entered into detailed discussions to establish their preferred options.

A joint examination of the preferred bus routes and upgrade plans was carried out and these recommendations were employed to inform the design. The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) support the proposal for disabled parking on the street and have provided advice in relation to siting and design of car parking facilities. This method of gathering information to inform the design of the scheme concretes the vision of targeted structured investment that will deliver a successful project. Through a broad spectrum of inclusion the enhancement scheme has cemented decision making across multiple stakeholders. This approach has provided significant insight into the requirements of the multiple sectors that will use the street. It has produced a design of significant value and has provided opportunities for significant targeted investment.

Promotion of sustainable development Recent Publications in relation to the occupancy of retail units in city centres indicate that Sligo city has one of the highest levels of commercial and retail vacancy. Geoview, a geographical representation of commercial building stock in Ireland, identifies Sligo City as having the highest vacancy rate (18.8%) in the second quarter of 2018. In the same period Sligo had the 7th highest urban vacancy rate at 22.11%. If Sligo City is to achieve the critical mass required to sustain balanced regional development, it must be capable of attracting both people and investment. The aim of the O’Connell Street Enhancement project is to create a vibrant, sustainable inner-city core, to which outsiders will want to re-locate, where local people want to remain, where emigrants want to return and where business and employers want to settle.

The O’Connell Street Enhancement Project will deliver a quality metropolitan space with unique characteristics while maintaining its identifiable cultural and heritage features. The scheme will maximise linkages to other pedestrian areas within the city core and will cement the foundation for the creation of a dynamic and vibrant modern city area. The global public realm enhancement strategy for Sligo City recognises the amenity value of the Garvogue River and the web of linkages that connect between O’Connell Street and the River. The enhancement project will emphasise these thoroughfares and enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience, while providing improved mobility for people with disabilities within the inner-city.

Promotion of Social Inclusion. The project will improve social development and interaction with the provision of improved public spaces. These areas will facilitate human interchange and actions in a safe, accessible and sustainable manner. O’Connell Street is
an important urban district for Sligo City. It represents an area for the trading of goods and services, the exchange of ideas and information and the provision of entertainment with a multitude of bars, cafes and restaurants. The project will provide residential opportunities for Sligo’s inner-city area, by providing a foundation for urban community growth and viability, and by extension, a safer and sustainable inner city centre. Additionally, the project will secure substantial steps to addressing disadvantage and decline in the urban area.

TULLAMORE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tullamore: €1.5 million for Street Enhancement Project: The money is granted for a focused facelift project to enhance the central streets of Tullamore, to include a new pedestrian link from Distillery Lane to Millennium Square requiring a new pedestrian bridge, to provide new undergrounding cables, new paving, lighting, street furniture, planting, new layout of public areas including wider footpaths and increased pedestrian priority.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Overview of Implementation

A Grant Agreement between the Northern & Western Regional Assembly and Offaly County Council was signed on 2nd February 2016, following the approval for the Tullamore Street Enhancement Scheme from the Designated Urban Centre Grants Scheme Fund. Grant aid of 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of €1.5m was made available to Offaly County Council under the scheme. The Project is being managed by an Offaly County Council Project Management Team, as below:

Chief Executive  
Director of Services/ Town Manager  
Senior Executive Architect  
Town Engineer  
Town Planner

The approved Project aims to rejuvenate and redevelop the public realm of the retail core of Tullamore town. The plans include undergrounding cables, new paving, lighting, street furniture, planting, new layout of public areas including wider footpaths and increasing pedestrian priority within O’Connor Square and on High Street. The Project also includes provision for a new pedestrian bridge and walkway to link the modern Millennium Square with the historic and retail core of the town.

Extensive consultation took place prior to the completion of the application for funding, both with the business community through the Forum of a Working Group, and also by way of open days/public events. Following the approval for the Project, Tender Documents for the Design Consultants were prepared and advertised. The successful tenderer was
subsequently appointed in July 2016. The Design Team prepared a number of options, considering the views expressed in the earlier consultation process, following which further non-statutory public consultation took place throughout Oct/Nov 2016. Extensive consultations continued in 2017, prior to the preferred option progressing to Part VIII approval in December 2017.

The Tender Documents for the Project were completed, prepared and advertised in 2018, with the successful tenderer being appointed in October 2018, following negotiation regarding starting date. Whilst the starting date for the on the ground works was agreed for early January 2019, to allow traders grace for the busy Christmas period, planning works were ongoing from the appointment date. An extension of time for the completion of the project to 31st December 2019 was granted by the ERDF Steering Committee in July 2018.

The financial management of the project is managed through the local authority Agresso/Milestone 4 Financial Management System. At the end of 2019, the sum of €3,878,455.15 had been directly expended on the project, annual expenditure below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUCGS Scheme</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE 2014-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€32,686.97</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€53,155.99</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€226,100.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€3,566,511.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>€3,878,455.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Issues affecting performance of programme
The Programme was at Design Stage only during 2016, and progressed to Part VIII approval in 2017 following an extensive consultation process. The Contractor was appointed in October 2018 and construction works on the ground commenced in January 2019. The original programme was eleven-month duration and the project was split into seven phases for programming and logistical reasons.

In the last quarter of 2018 Irish Water made it known to Offaly County Council of their desire to rehabilitate the sewer network in Tullamore, by January 2019 Irish Water were in a position to reveal the areas that were selected for rehabilitation and this included sections of the ongoing street scape works. To avoid the newly rehabilitated street scape being excavated in the very near future as a result of this proposed sewer rehabilitation, Offaly County Council negotiated a contract with Irish Water whereby Irish Water would fund the rehabilitation of the sewer under our current contract. This volume of work has impacted on the programme adding four months to the initial programme.

The original contract had some sections of footpath to be completed in concrete while the core of the project was to be completed in granite paving. Due to additional financial resources becoming available Offaly County Council upgraded phase four of the project from concrete footpaths to granite footpaths, this upgrade has also affected the initial programme. The current programme estimates a completion date of June 2020.
Border, Midland, and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020

Report on Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination Horizontal Principle to the Monitoring Committee

June 2020
1. Introduction

The horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle is set out in Article 7 of the Common Provisions Regulation for the ESIF. This requires that Member States “shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation”. It further requires that Member States “shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation and implementation of programmes. In particular, accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes”.

The priorities for the BMW Regional Operational Programme, funded under the ERDF, are:

- Strengthening Research, Technological Development & Innovation (RTDI) in the BMW Region;
- Enhancing access to, and use and quality of ICT;
- Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs;
- Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors; and
- Sustainable Urban Development.

2. Overarching Comment

Introduction

The reports received on the implementation of the horizontal principle across the priority areas of Border, Midland, and Western Region Operational Programme reflect a valuable engagement with the horizontal principle, an engagement that is central to achieving outcomes for all, within the groups targeted by the various initiatives. There remain, however, a number of significant challenges and these are set out below with suggestions as to how they might be addressed.

2.1 Ambition and Outcomes Focus

The horizontal principle is concerned with: ensuring non-discrimination across the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation; addressing multiple discrimination on more than one of these grounds; implementing reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities; and achieving more substantive forms of equality from ESIF funded initiatives. Many of the reports, however, articulate an ambition that is limited to non-discrimination.

The ambition to advance substantive equality, for the groups covered by the horizontal principle, points to the need for steps to secure participation by these groups in the initiatives, and outcomes for them that are on a par with the general population. This emphasises the need for equality mainstreaming and specific targeted actions across all the grounds covered. It involves a proactive approach to address barriers, take account of

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1 This report was prepared for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission by Values Lab www.values-lab.ie for submission to the Monitoring Committee of the BMW Regional Operational Programme for the 2020 reporting cycle.

disadvantage, and respond to specific needs of people from these groups. While little detail is provided, this approach is evident in some of the initiatives and could be further extended to others.

It would be important to: establish and report on the ambition to advance substantive equality for all groups covered by the horizontal principle in the initiatives. This ambition would encompass commitment to: achieving outcomes for people from these groups; addressing specific needs of these groups and removing barriers they experience; making reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities; and preventing discrimination.

2.2 Systematic Approach

The horizontal principle, with its focus on both the preparation and implementation of initiatives, requires a systematic approach by implementing bodies. This approach needs to include: establishing and applying an equality and non-discrimination standard for the initiative; learning from and disseminating good practice from the initiative; strengthening the equality capacity of staff involved; gathering and analysing equality data on groups covered by the horizontal principle; and participation by people and organisations from these groups, in the design, planning, implementation and review of initiatives.

A number of reports provide valuable evidence of the different elements in such a systematic approach:

1. **Standard set:** A number of reports identify the location of the initiative within relevant national equality policy strategies and the targets set in these policy strategies, some identify obligations on contractors or beneficiaries with regard to non-discrimination, and some note that communication of calls for proposals and preparation of guidelines for applications reference a concern for, and commitment to equality and non-discrimination. However, such standards are not widespread, it is not clear how those in place are supported, tracked and required, and, in a number of instances, the standards are limited to compliance with equal treatment legislation rather than a more substantive approach.

2. **Coherence in good practice:** Many reports document and report on good practice instances of promoting equality and preventing discrimination. This needs to go further to disseminate the good practice across those involved in the initiative and stimulate a coherent and consistent approach based on this good practice.

3. **Capacity building:** Some reports note provision of training on equality and non-discrimination in relation to the horizontal principle. However, few initiatives identify steps taken to strengthen the knowledge, skills and awareness of staff members involved.

4. **Data gathering and application:** Some reports provide data on participants from the groups covered by the horizontal principle, in particular women. This needs to go further to: provide data on all groups covered by the horizontal principle; provide such data in relation to outcomes for the various groups; provide intersectional data regarding people who are vulnerable to discrimination and inequality on more than one protected equality ground (especially where an initiative is targeted on a particular group); and identify how these equality data are used in planning and ongoing implementation of the initiative.

5. **Consultation process:** A number of reports set out an engagement with organisations that are representative of the groups covered by the horizontal
principle. This needs more detail in identifying how this engagement informs the preparation and implementation of the initiative. This engagement needs to be more widespread across the groups covered by the horizontal principle and across all initiatives.

It would be important to: establish a standard for each of these five elements of a systematic approach to the horizontal principle and to report on their implementation within each initiative.

2.3 Private sector engagement

There is a range of ways in which private sector organisations participate in the initiatives reported on. Industry partners are identified as delivering certain initiatives, private sector companies have been contracted to implement some initiatives, and private sector companies are direct beneficiaries of other initiatives.

The reports indicate, in a number of instances, an intent to ensure the private sector entities involved respect the horizontal principle. However, beyond the stated commitment there is little detail provided on the steps taken to achieve impact in this regard. One report usefully identified a focus on this in RFTs issued. It would also be important that this commitment be extended beyond respecting obligations under equal treatment legislation to achieving substantive equality, encompassing: prevention of discrimination; making adjustments for diversity; ensuring reasonable accommodation for disability; and using positive action to achieve equality outcomes.

It would be important to: establish a standard, based on substantive equality goals to be met by these private sector entities, and report on the steps taken to support, monitor, and ensure this standard is met.

2.4 Ensuring Accessibility

While a number of initiatives report the inclusion of participants with disabilities, there is limited information provided on the steps taken to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities.

Reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, in the provision of services, is a requirement under the Equal Status Acts. It involves dialogue with people with disabilities and their organisations about access barriers, and with the individual participant or potential participant about their specific needs. It encompasses a focus on communication and outreach, internal policies and procedures, physical environment, and delivery systems for any initiative.

It would be important to: establish a standard for reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities and report on its implementation within each initiative.

2.5 Intersectionality

Intersectionality and multiple discrimination address the situation and experience of people who are vulnerable to discrimination and inequality on more than one protected equality ground. It is important to address intersectionality in ensuring progress for all members of a particular group covered by the horizontal principle. This is particularly valuable in initiatives targeted on a particular group.
It would be important to: establish a focus on intersectionality in the reports, identifying steps taken to address intersectionality and providing data on participation by and outcomes for people at the intersections.

2.6 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a statutory obligation on public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of staff and service users. All public sector providers of initiatives under the Border, Midland, and Western Region Operational Programme, therefore, are subject to this public sector equality and human rights duty (the Duty). This Duty requires public bodies to: undertake an assessment of the equality and human rights issues relevant to their function and purpose; take actions to address these issues; and report on progress made. The Duty provides an important and enabling framework within which to fulfil the requirements of the horizontal principle.

None of the reports reference the Duty. It is not clear that an assessment of equality and human rights issues has been undertaken by the public bodies involved and, if such assessments have been undertaken, it is not known if they have been used in the design and ongoing implementation of the initiatives.

It would be important to: establish and report on how the Duty is being applied within the planning for, implementation of, and reporting on initiatives.

2.7 Technical Assistance

Information provided on technical assistance available under the programme identifies that it is used to fund the management of the Operational Programme itself, covering such as office costs, promotion of the programme, and holding of meetings. There is no reference to applying the technical assistance to support the capacity of implementing bodies to apply the horizontal principle, an approach that might usefully be pursued given the needs in this area.

It would be important to: explore, develop, and apply a strand for the technical assistance budget that would support a more systematic implementation of the horizontal principle and report on the implementation and impact of this.

2.8 Reporting Process

The commitment and engagement of the initiatives under the Border, Midland, and Western Region Operational Programme in implementing the horizontal principle, and in this process of reporting annually on their progress, is welcome and is of benefit to the groups covered by the horizontal principle.

Many of the reports submitted, however, do not reflect any significant response to the recommendations made in the previous report of 5 June 2019. This process of engagement with, and reporting on the horizontal principle needs to be dynamic in order to serve as a source of learning and evolution for the operational programme and its initiatives over

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time. It is only in this way that the aspirations that inform the horizontal principle are to be fully realised.

**It would be important to:** establish and implement a system of exchange on the horizontal principle, over the period between Monitoring Committee meetings, that would allow an exchange of good practice by project implementers to support mutual learning, and that would enable discussion on and a practical response to the suggestions made in relation to each initiative in this report.

### 2.9 Learning for the Next Programming Period

This report and its predecessor reports offer learning for implementing the horizontal principle over the next programming period. Three key elements to this learning are evident. These are the importance of:

1. **Solid foundation:** The public sector equality and human rights duty provides an important impetus and framework for implementing the horizontal principle to a high standard\(^5\). In particular, the assessment of equality and human rights issues required under the Duty provides a key frame to assist in ensuring initiatives include the appropriate actions and processes necessary to fully respect the horizontal principle. The Duty and its requirements need to be formally integrated into the preparation, planning, and implementation, monitoring and reporting of programme initiatives.

2. **Systematic approach:** The horizontal principle requires a systematic approach by programme implementers. The key elements to such an approach need to be agreed and pursued coherently by all programme implementers at the start of the programming period. They could usefully include the elements identified in 2.2 above: standard set; coherence in good practice; capacity building; data gathering and application; and consultation.

3. **Technical assistance:** Programme implementers are at different stages in their approach to implementing the horizontal principle. The technical assistance budget could usefully be deployed to support a shared capacity for a more uniform approach among programme implementers. This capacity building could be reinforced by a networking process for peer support and peer stimulus in relation to the horizontal principle.

**It would be important to:** take steps to identify, agree on, and apply the key learning from this programming period that would inform the approach to implementing the horizontal principle over the next programming period.

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3. Summary Remarks on Actions

3.1 Strengthening RTDI

The SFI Research Centres initiative seeks to develop large scale research centres organised on a hub and spoke model with specific projects undertaken in partnership with industry connected into a central hub for platform research and hub operations. Fourteen research centres are co-financed under the programme. The SFI Research Spokes initiative seeks to enable the addition of new academic and new industrial partners to existing SFI research centres. Nineteen awards are set out in an appendix to the report. The SFI Investigators Programme initiative supports research capability and human capital in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics through funding people with innovative ideas and strategic partnerships.

The report makes detailed reference to the SFI Gender Strategy 2016-2020 in addressing actions taken under the horizontal principle. Three strands are examined: gender in education and public engagement; gender balance in research teams; and integrating gender in research and innovation. National action by SFI under each strand is detailed. National targets are referenced. While data limitations are noted, some national results are set out: about 30% SFI funding success rate for women; and about 26% of funding applications received being from women. SFI staff training on unconscious bias and on integrating gender in research is noted. The report reflects an ambition for gender equality that goes beyond non-discrimination in seeking to achieve more substantive outcomes.

While the commitment to gender equality is well informed and well developed it would be important to:

- report on the specific participation by and outcomes for women from project funding in the Border, Midland, and Western Region, in terms of research project applications, research project funding, and research benefit,
- include an intersectional focus in relation to promoting gender equality and report on participation by and outcomes for women from each of the other groups covered by the horizontal principle,
- report on the positive actions taken to secure participation by and outcomes for women and for women from the other groups covered by the horizontal principle,
- identify the limitations noted in data gathering in relation to gender and the other grounds covered by the horizontal principle, and how these are to be addressed,
- report on the participation by, and outcomes for members of the other groups covered by the horizontal principle, in particular young people, minority ethnic people, and people with disabilities, and
- report on steps taken to ensure access and make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

The reports do not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle.

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6 Ibid.
The Marine Research Programme involves industry-led awards, a large-scale project with two academic institutions, and post-doctoral fellowships.

The report identifies that women applicants, as project-leads, are encouraged and this is referenced in the application guidelines. It notes a commitment to gender parity in project and evaluation panels and identifies a ratio of 11 women to 13 men on the panel to evaluate responses to the call for post-doctoral fellowships. In the education and outreach work free taster sessions for sailing and canoeing are provided in a manner tailored for children with disabilities.

While these commitments to gender equality are positive, it would be important to:

- report the number of project-leads in the Border, Midland, and Western region projects that are women, and include information on the steps taken to ensure substantive equality outcomes,
- report the number of project-leads in the Border Midland, and Western region projects that come from the other grounds covered by the horizontal principle, and include information on the steps taken to ensure substantive equality outcomes,
- report the number of industry partners that are owned by and/or managed by people from across the grounds covered by the horizontal principle, in particular women and minority ethnic people,
- include information on the steps taken to ensure industry partners implement the horizontal principle and achieve substantive equality outcomes,
- report the breakdown of post-doctoral fellowships in the Border, Midland, and Western region that are from across all grounds covered by the horizontal principle, and include information on the steps taken to ensure substantive equality outcomes,
- identify the manner in which the horizontal principle is addressed in the communication of calls, the application guidance for calls, the evaluation criteria for calls, and the briefing of evaluation panels,
- identify the manner in which reasonable accommodation is made, for people with disabilities, in the application process, and
- report on the beneficiaries from across the grounds covered by the horizontal principle of the education and outreach activities implemented, and include information on the steps taken to ensure this participation.

The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle.

The Commercialisation Fund is an Enterprise Ireland initiative to support researchers in third level institutions and research organisations in applied research projects generating outputs to the economy. Project outputs are commercialised by licensing agreements with existing companies or new start-up companies.

The report notes that the number of projects awarded to female Principal Investigators was 4 out of 10 projects. The language and expressions in Commercialisation Fund documentation was reviewed in 2019 to ensure that it is appropriate and encouraging to all prospective applicants. A maternity cover policy is in place. The report notes, positively, 

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Ibid
that third level institutions that apply have robust human resource policies in place. It notes that good diversity practice is supported by the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Direction participating in the TAFTIE diversity group led by UK Innovate, and the Commercialisation Specialist team members receiving diversity and inclusion training from the DCU Diversity Centre.

While these developments and results for gender equality are positive, it would be important to:

- identify the steps taken to stimulate and support an increase in the number of female Principal Investigators and the further steps that might now be required,
- include an intersectional focus in relation to promoting gender equality and report on participation by and outcomes for women from each of the other groups covered by the horizontal principle,
- identify the steps taken to stimulate and support a diversity of Principal Investigators from across the other groups covered by the horizontal principle, and
- include information on the steps taken to ensure applicants have and implement the equality and non-discrimination policies as part of their human resources policies, including policies in relation to reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle.8

The **Innovation Partnership Programme** is an Enterprise Ireland initiative that encourages companies to cooperate with Irish research institutes. Applications are submitted by the research institute on an open call basis and evaluated by an independent evaluation panel. The programme was evaluated in March 2018.

The report notes the Enterprise Ireland action plan for women in business. It notes that applicants are required to consider equality issues, which is highlighted in application forms. The gender balance is tracked and in 2019 there were 43 male and 9 female Principal Investigators funded under the programme.

While these developments and results for gender equality are positive, it would be important to:

- identify the steps taken to stimulate and support an increase in the number of female Principal Investigators and the further steps that might now be required,
- include an intersectional focus in relation to promoting gender equality and report on participation by and outcomes for women from each of the other groups covered by the horizontal principle,
- report on the manner in which the 2018 evaluation addressed implementation of the horizontal principle and the developments on foot of any such findings, and
- include information on the steps taken to ensure applicants actively consider and act on equality issues, including implementing equality and non-discrimination policies as part of their human resources policies, including policies in relation to reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities.

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8 Ibid.
The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle.\(^9\)

The **Industry R&D Fund** is an Enterprise Ireland initiative to assist companies to engage in innovation and research activities. The report notes that enterprise Ireland has a Female Entrepreneurship Unit and that in 2019, of 91 High Potential Start Ups supported, 19 were female-led and of 36 companies supported under the Competitive Start Fund, 19 were female-led.

While these developments and results, for female entrepreneurship, are positive, it would be important to:

- identify the steps taken to establish, stimulate and support an increase in the number of female-led companies benefiting from the Fund and companies led by people from other groups covered by the horizontal principle, and
- include information on the steps taken to ensure applicants actively consider and act on equality issues, including implementing equality and non-discrimination policies as part of their human resources policies, including policies in relation to reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities.

The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle.\(^10\)

### 3.2 ICT Infrastructure

The **National Broadband Plan** aims to increase broadband connectivity, with every home/business to have access to high-speed broadband with a choice of service providers.

The report notes strict adherence protocols in the procurement process to relevant EU Directives and legislation on equality, in all RFT documents. It notes the benefits to all citizens and all genders from the provision of high-speed broadband to all citizens. It sets out an aim that people with disabilities would have access on an equal basis with others to facilities and services provided to the public.

The report notes a concern to strengthen digital adoption among citizens and references 6,599 small businesses having received funding under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, and the Digital Skills for Citizens Scheme providing free, basic digital skills training to over 55,000 citizens.

While these commitments and developments are positive, it would be important to:

- identify the manner in which the concern for affordable service provision has integrated a perspective on the particular economic circumstances of groups experiencing inequality and discrimination, in order to underpin their access,
- identify the content of the protocols relating to equal treatment legislation in RFTs and how these are monitored and enforced,

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\(^9\) Ibid.  
\(^10\) Ibid.
• identify the specific steps taken to establish and respond to the reasonable accommodation requirements, for people with disabilities, so as to ensure their equal access to services and facilities,
• report on the gender breakdown and the level of inclusion of diversity, in particular ethnic minority people, in the ownership or management of businesses benefiting from the Trading Online Voucher Scheme and include information on the steps taken to ensure substantive equality outcomes, and
• report on the gender breakdown and the level of inclusion of diversity, in particular older people, minority ethnic people, and people with disabilities, on the training programmes provided and include information on the steps taken to ensure substantive equality outcomes.

The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle11.

3.3 SME Supports

The Supporting the Capacity of SMEs initiative is implemented by Enterprise Ireland. The High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) Feasibility Grant assists an early stage company or entrepreneur to investigate the viability of a new export orientated business or proposition. The Competitive Start Fund is to accelerate the growth of start-up companies that have the capacity to succeed in global markets.

The report notes that Enterprise Ireland has a Female Entrepreneurship Unit and that, in 2019, of 91 High Potential Start Ups supported, 19 were female-led and of 36 companies supported under the Competitive Start Fund, 19 were female-led.

While these developments and results for female entrepreneurship are positive, it would be important to:

• identify the steps taken in the Border, Midland, and Western Region to stimulate and support an increase in the number of female-led companies benefiting from the initiative and the further steps that might now be required,
• report on an intersectional focus in relation to female-led companies benefiting being led by women from each of the other groups covered by the horizontal principle,
• identify the steps taken to stimulate and support an increase in the number of companies benefiting from the initiative that are led by people from the other groups covered by the horizontal principle, including minority ethnic people and people with disabilities, and
• include information on the steps taken to ensure applicants have and implement equality and non-discrimination policies as part of their human resources policies, including policies in relation to reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

11 Ibid.
The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle\textsuperscript{12}.

The \textbf{Entrepreneurship in Micro enterprise scheme} involves\textsuperscript{13} Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in the Border, Midland, and Western Region seeking to increase employment in such enterprises, through business start-ups, business expansion, and higher levels of innovation. This is a well-developed and thorough report.

The report identifies a number of overarching commitments to: generally pro-actively gender mainstream their operational activities and structures; ensure the right to equal treatment is upheld; ensure offices, facilities and resources are accessible to people with disabilities; positive interventions targeting women; and specific initiatives targeting non-Irish nationals. It sets out a variety of targeted initiatives taken by some of the LEOs in the region. A small number of these provide some data on gender equality participation.

The level of activity in relation to the horizontal principle and the overarching commitments reported are positive, but it would be important to:

- establish a commitment both to non-discrimination and to substantive equality outcomes for all groups covered by the horizontal principle,
- identify the development or existence of a shared standard for the commitments made in relation to the horizontal principle, based on the evident good practices,
- identify the development and implementation of a strategy to put this standard into practice and to do so in a coherent manner across all LEOs,
- provide data on the ownership and/or management of beneficiary enterprises, both new and existing, in each LEO area, from across all the grounds covered by the horizontal principle,
- provide data on the increase in employment in the beneficiary enterprises that is from across all the grounds covered by the horizontal principle,
- identify the manner on which beneficiary enterprises and contractors are required to implement EU and national equal treatment legislation and reflect the horizontal principle in their operations, and how this is monitored and enforced by the LEO,
- provide data on training participants in each LEO area from across all the grounds covered by the horizontal principle,
- provide data on the level of participation in activities targeted on particular groups covered by the horizontal principle and an intersectional breakdown of this data across the other grounds covered, and
- identify the manner in which the LEOs in the region make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, in their offices, facilities and resources, and also in the services that they provide.

The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle\textsuperscript{13}.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
The **New Frontiers Programme** is an Enterprise Ireland initiative to develop entrepreneurs, delivered by Institutes of Technology and Universities.

The report notes that, in the period 2014-2019, the number of female participants for the Border, Midland, and Western region was 87 (29.8%). It identifies that all institutions of higher education are statutorily obliged to ensure equality in all their activities, and application documentation includes that: “Applications are welcomed from both male and female candidates”. Individual Institute of Technology Programme Managers are encouraged to promote participation by female applicants.

It would be important to:

- identify the steps taken in the Border, Midland, and Western Region to stimulate and support an increase in the number of women participants,
- report on the participation in the Border, Midland, and Western Region by people from the other groups covered by the horizontal principle,
- identify the steps taken in the Border, Midland, and Western Region to stimulate and support an increase in the diversity of participants from the other groups covered by the horizontal principle, and
- identify the steps taken to support and ensure Programme Managers promote women’s participation and participation by other groups covered by the horizontal principle.

The report evidences some limited response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle\(^{14}\).

### 3.4 Low Carbon Economy

The **Better Energy Warmer Homes** initiative is an ongoing demand-led scheme with an established panel of contractors to deliver energy efficiency measures in residential homes. Ongoing evaluations of the scheme are carried out. The scheme is targeted at people experiencing fuel poverty.

The report notes that SEAI ensures that all services and communications are accessible to people with disabilities. It makes particular reference to older people as beneficiaries. It states that SEAI has utilised organisations embedded in local communities (community-based organisations) to address eligible homes. The specific role of such organisations is not made clear. A partnership approach in the delivery of the programme is emphasised including with community organisations: specific reference is made to Age Action.

While these commitments and actions are all positive, it would be important to:

- report a breakdown of beneficiary households from across the grounds covered by the horizontal principle, and include information on the steps taken to ensure substantive equality outcomes,
- identify the specific steps taken to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities as beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries,

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
• report on the contractors involved in delivery of the programme that are owned and/or managed by people from across the grounds covered by the horizontal principle, in particular women, and minority ethnic people,
• include information on the steps taken to ensure contractors implement the horizontal principle and achieve substantive equality outcomes, and
• identify and report on: the role of community-based organisations in delivery of the programme; the scale of this community organisation involvement; and the extent to which these organisations represent the grounds covered by the horizontal principle.

The report does not evidence any significant response to the suggestions made under the previous review of implementation of the horizontal equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle\textsuperscript{15}.

No report was received in relation to implementation of the horizontal principle in the Social Housing Retrofit (Voids & EE) initiative.

\textbf{3.5 Sustainable Urban Development}

The Designated Urban Centres Grants Scheme supports local authority projects to implement their integrated urban strategies. Local authorities consult extensively with relevant stakeholders regarding the impact of the proposed projects.

The report sets out that the projects are to promote accessibility for all in and ensure a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities. Local Authorities are required to provide evidence of community consultation including all relevant groups and interests. Details are provided on projects in seven cities and towns, in the region, which include some reference to provision for people with disabilities and older people.

While, these commitments and requirements are positive, it would be important to:

• report on the standard set for accessibility promoted by the projects, how this addresses the specific needs of groups covered by the horizontal principle including people with disabilities, and the manner in which this is monitored and reported on, and
• report on how the consultation engaged with groups covered by the horizontal principle, the focus for these consultations, and the standard set and achieved in this regard.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
ShowerGem is a shower caddy that is manufactured in Ireland. It uses a patented design to store shower essentials by attaching the caddy to tiles, using transparent glue. Sean McGarry is from Westport and graduated from NUIGalway with a Bachelor of Physics Degree in 2016.

As a young teenager, Sean had a strong entrepreneurial spirit and would pick blackberries and sell them to local shops and hotels.

According to Sean, ShowerGem was created almost by accident as having two teenage sisters meant razors, soaps and bottles were always left on the shower floor. Sean’s dad thought that there must be a better way to design a shower caddy and that’s when the first design of the Showergem was developed.

Sean turned the invention into a business and now the ShowerGem is placed in homes and showers throughout Ireland and the UK, following a successful appearance on Dragons’ Den on the BBC in 2019.

In September 2019, Sean won the ‘Best Established Business’ national title as part of Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (#IBYE) competition, which is organised by the Local Enterprise Offices to support youth entrepreneurship.
STRENGTHENING RDTI

Loci Orthopaedics is a new spin-out company which has licensed the outputs of a Commercialisation Fund project

The project developed a new clinically proven solution to address the increasing unmet need for thumb base joint arthritis. This need was identified by the Principal Investigator Gerry Clarke and clinician Dr Brendan Boland, when they were Research Fellows on the BioInnovate Ireland Programme, which is co-funded by Enterprise Ireland.

The spin-out company will further develop the orthopaedic implant to access a market estimated at more than €550m per annum. Loci Orthopaedics has raised €2.75m in venture capital seed funding to bring the solution to market.

www.lociorthopaedics.com
Atrian Medical is another new spin-out company which has licensed the outputs of a Commercialisation Fund project.

Existing treatments for atrial fibrillation include anti-arrhythmic drugs and cardiac ablation. These treatments have limited efficacy and require repeat treatments. The NUIG team identified the unmet market need for new atrial fibrillation treatments as Fellows under the BioInnovate Ireland Programme, which is co-funded by Enterprise Ireland.

Under the Commercialisation Fund, the NUIG team developed, a new device which can deliver short and precise electrical signals that ‘knock-out’ hyperactive neuronal cells at five locations on the outside surface of the heart. The technology was licensed by NUIG to Atrian Medical and further clinical trials are taking place before full market release. The spin out company has raised €2.3m venture capital seed funding investment to bring the product to market.

www.atrianmedical.com
Xerotech is a company which has benefited from the New Frontiers Programme

Xerotech designs and manufactures next-generation battery systems for automotive, industrial, marine, aerospace and defense applications.

Xerotech is at the forefront of electrification and is actively engaged in projects with some of the world’s leading electric vehicle manufacturers. The company has 8 patents related to its Xerotherm® thermally managed battery pack architecture. It is the only company in Ireland engaged in hands-on hardware development of advanced battery system technology. They currently employ 8 full-time staff with planned significant expansion.

In 2019 Xerotech completed one of the largest seed investment rounds in Ireland. This recent investment is fueling the rapid expansion of the company and the construction of Xerotech’s new 10,000 sq. ft Design and R&D center in Claregalway.

"Xerotech would not exist today without my participation on the New Frontiers programme. It was an essentially formative step, in the journey towards where we are today. Xerotech is targeting employment of 30 people and revenue of €50M by 2022. In particular the support of the New Frontiers Programme Manager in helping me secure Enterprise Ireland Competitive Start Funding was a key credibility milestone that enabled future success."

Dr. Barry Flannery, Founder, Xerotech
STRENGTHENING RDTI

Science Week is an annual week-long event in Ireland each November, celebrating science in our everyday lives

Science week, promoted by Science Foundation Ireland is the largest science festival in the country, engaging tens of thousands of members of the general public in workshops, science shows, talks, laboratory demonstrations, science walks and other science-related events.

Science Week is a collaboration of events involving industry, colleges, schools, libraries, teachers, researchers and students throughout Ireland. Science Week encourages people of all ages and from all walks of life to be informed, inspired and involved in STEAM through fun, engaging and interactive events and initiatives.

In 2019, Science Week had 13 regional festivals offering a range of opportunities for the public to engage with STEM in Cavan/Monaghan, Cork, Carlow, Festival of Farming and Food (Teagasc), Galway, Limerick, Mayo, the Midlands, Sligo, Southeast, Tipperary, Wexford and Kerry. Science Week 2019 featured family open days, schools outreach events and public talks across more than 20 counties around Ireland.

The theme for Science Week 2019 was Climate Action. It focused on what climate change means and how science can help us understand the facts behind climate action and potential solutions. As part of the effort to help people understand the part trees can play in climate action, forestry agency Coillte provided Science Foundation Ireland with 30,000 trees which were distributed planted around the country during Science Week.
SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Church Street Enhancement Project in Athlone

The project which cost over 4 million euro is one of 7 sustainable urban development projects funded under the 2014-2020 Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme.

The work looks to revitalise the heart of Athlone’s central shopping area by creating an attractive and vibrant town centre which contributes to the sustained and future growth of the town.

The native natural materials of granite and Irish blue limestone blend aesthetically with the heritage buildings of Athlone.

Church Street provides an important link between the historic Shannon area of Athlone and the contemporary Civic Square and Athlone Town’s Shopping Centres and the enhanced streetscape leads visitors through the centre of Athlone and across the historic Town Bridge which is flanked on the Westside by Athlone Castle and the Luan Gallery.

Church Street is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area and includes a range of heritage buildings and independent shops and by widening the pavements and allowing pedestrians to move freely down the street, the public are able to take the time to enjoy this conservation area.

The newly enhanced Church Street is now a welcoming, attractive and enjoyable space for shoppers, tourists, pedestrians and the wider local community, allowing the area to flourish as a thriving shopping, business and social district.

The project was officially opened on the 12th April 2019.
Throughout 2019 the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) continued to support the Insight and CURAM Research Centres at the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), Micro Enterprises throughout the region through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network, Enterprise Ireland’s SME clients through a suite of Industry Research and Business expansion supports, Energy Efficiency works through SEAI’s Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme and Urban Enhancement works undertaken by Local Authorities throughout the region.

2019 marked an important year for our Programme with the achievement of key financial milestones set down by the EU Commission under the Performance Framework. By the end of December 2019 the Northern & Western Regional Assembly as Managing Authority had overseen the declaration of €90.64m in eligible expenditure to the European Commission.

In 2019 The Northern & Western Regional Assembly continued to enhance the competitiveness of our region by maximising exchequer and EU Funding into the region and building new partnerships with regional stakeholders. The Assembly actively pursued new opportunities across EU Programmes in areas such as Smart Regions, Digital Technology, Greenways and Gastronomy. New Funding applications were prepared comprising partner organisations across the EU which addressed emerging growth sectors within the regional economy.

By the end of 2019 a total of €90,643,530m in eligible expenditure was declared to the EU across five the Programme priorities:

Throughout 2019 the ROP staff engaged with all key Implementation Bodies - Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Departments of Communications Climate Action and the Environment, the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government as well as Local Authorities throughout the region in the provision of Financial Management assistance in the preparation & submission of declarations of expenditure.
Managing the Operational Programme

The Northern & Western Regional Assembly continued to work closely with the ERDF Audit Authority overseeing the Annual Assurance Package to the EU Commission.

In February Assembly Staff participated in a Training Programme organised by DG Regional and Urban Policy of the EU Commission in Brussels focusing on Risk Assessment and Fraud Prevention in EU Programmes. The Programme was organised in co-operation with the European Institute for Public Administration.

Throughout 2019 the Assembly also participated in the EU Commission’s Expert Group on Structural and Investment Funds (EGESIF) as well as feeding into the planning process for the MFF 2021-2027.

The Assembly is also an active member of the EU Inform Network and engaged in a number of communications activities including print publications, website news items, social media activity, newsletters and promoting the OP at the national ploughing championships.

A full reporting PMC meeting was held in May and for the first time, students from a local school were invited to attend and contribute at that PMC meeting.
10 Things We learned in 2019
Ok so we learned more than ten things last year (well we certainly hope that we did). This chapter may not even be the most important ten things that we learned but it is ten of our favourites.

1. Websites still work

In this social media age, websites may be considered a bit old hat however our site, while in need of a refresh is still incredibly important.

During 2019 over 17 thousand people visited our site with almost 60 thousand page views and visitors spent on average over two minutes each time they looked us up.

Our top 10 most read news items during 2019 were:

1. Planning for the next 5 years….. our new Corporate Plan
2. First Level Control Team Host an Atlantic Area Training Workshop
3. Northern & Western Regional Assembly elects new Cathaoirleach
4. The North & West has formally endorsed the first Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy
5. EU Regional Policy: Impacts for Local Government
6. EU Studies Programme
7. Northern Periphery and Artic Programme 7th Call
8. Minister Donoghue marks Europe Day with launch of EU in my Region Publication
9. Helping Towns and Villages Drive Rural Revival across the EU
10. The ERDF Funded Church Street Enhancement in Athlone is now Complete

There is potential to increase the number of news stories on the site in 2020 and also to issue those news stories to print and radio in the form of press releases so we need to hear those stories.
2. People still use Facebook even if they are not looking for us

Most people on Facebook may be keeping an eye on their friends and family rather than all things EU but there are a lot of people, 2.8 million Facebook users in the republic of Ireland alone. Facebook works for us only with a nudge (well a small financial outlay). Compare our new years greeting on Facebook which reached 72 people, got one like and one share to our boosted Killybegs redevelopment post which reached over 6 thousand people (for a 30 euro boost fee) got 6 comments, 13 shares and 58 likes.

3 Instagram is all about the quality Photos

During 2019 we experimented with using text within photos, this did not really work, our posts without text consistently out performed those with text.

Instagram is all about the photo, we have some really good photographers amongst us, good cameras (basically every smart phone) and some very photogenic projects (hands up who thought that I was going to say staff).

We are very capable of improving our instagram presence in terms of quantity and quality.
4. NWRA Staff like Twitter

Twitter is our gold medal social media platform, we are really good at keeping the world in the loop here, we have over 1800 followers and we’ve done some tweet of the month analysis:

**Most Impressions**

**January**
Best of luck in the @traffordrowing Head tomorrow @Carrickrc and great to see crew making use of facilities made possible by European Regional Development Funding #EUinMyRegion

**February**
Excellent and productive day with our colleagues from @ESF_Ireland and @SouthernAssembl, working on new and innovative ways to share the #EUinMyRegion story

**March**
NWRA contributing to today’s EU Conference in Brussels showcasing Macro Regional Strategies & ESIF Post 2020 supporting Atlantic Regions #EUINMyRegion @INTERREGADRION @EusairPoint

**Most Engagements**

**January**

**February**
Great to get MEP support @MaireadMcGMEP with #euinmyregion initiative laying out our plans for #Regiohub #reghub 2019 @NWAssembly

**March**
#GreenSuiteSPH Great event in Sligo tonight recognizing leadership in business from the north west @NWAssembly
April

Ever visited Clara Bog? You can experience over 10,000 years of history here thanks to its award-winning €2.1 million visitor centre.

May

Did you know that Marine Test Centre is the only one of its kind in Ireland and one of few throughout Europe? EU funding has been a considerable driving force behind renewable energy projects, supporting the site and ancillary projects. #EUInMyRegion

June

See how @EUREGAproject is promoting the strength and variety of locally influenced cuisine in Galway and other regions across Europe by protecting and stimulating gastronomy as part of cultural heritage. #EUInMyRegion #EUlocal #MadewithInterreg #RegHub

Helping strengthen Education / Health in Gastronomy through the @EUREGAproject @interregeurope project with St. Angela’s College Sligo, @NWAssembly @podevine @amccloat @drelainemooney

Great feature on the West and shout out to the @portershed in today’s Sunday Independent Featuring @jessfrock @TheKnotWW @mmurphycmcn @cmcnjobs @RenttheRunway @am_roux @IDAIRELAND @GalwayTech @TBBsligo @NWAssembly @SeamusCoyle10 @Allergan #westport #sligo #galway

Thanks to my @EU_CoR colleagues for hosting the 2nd #RegHub event in a really hot🥵 Brussels, great initiative driven by @ToWob and his team #regionalvoicesinEU @NWAssembly
July

Signing our @TRINNO_project action plan today, the plan looks at ways of promoting competitiveness in the traditional sectors through digital innovation @West_BIC @interregeurope #EUinmyregion

Exploring the impact of cluster dynamics with some incredible start up companies @TBBSligo @almulrooney @IDANorthWest @BertKuby @EU_CoR @NWAssembly

Helping share the ERDF supported @listokedistill story with our @EUinmyRegion Road Trip Project visitors today @LEOLouth @ESF_Ireland #EUinmyregion

We continually aim to improve how we engage with stakeholders across all aspects of our programme of work – allowing stakeholders to influence, guide and steer our activities, enabling us to better deliver our vision @NWAssembly nwra.ie/?p=7216 We want your views

August

Delighted to welcome @MariaWalshEU to our little corner of the ploughing championships today #Euinmyregion @ESF_Ireland @EUFunds_Ireland @SouthernAssembl @eurireland

Great days meetings with @EUREGAproject partners today in. Debrecen, Hungary 🇭🇺, lots of work to do! Followed by the flattest run I ever did!! @NWAssembly

September
Two things that we could improve on though, we could get more content through the @NWAssembly account rather than retweets and we should grow more of the tweets into full blown stories for the website, press releases and newsletter.

October

Our loss is @roscommoncoco ’s gain, missing ya loads Ger...

November

If you would like to create assets to combat global warming using renewable resources, join us by registering for our free info event. @HUGE_Project_EU @nuigalway @Act_Renewables @NPA2014-2020

Without coherent regional policy, increased autonomy and metrics these trends will continue. Report being published in January @NWAssembly

December

NWAssembly and @SouthernAssembly working closely today in Helsinki with INTERREG EUROPE EU 28, EU Commission and Finnish Presidency on post 2020 Programme Development. @interregeurope @eurireland #EUinmyregion

A taster of upcoming publication on achieving effective regional development. Being published in January by @NWAssembly #goodplan #goodpeople #bucketsofcash

#Galway2020 and the @NWAssembly hosted the European launch of the Galway 2020 official programme at a special event held in Brussels last night.
5. Students crave knowledge (and maybe alcohol)

We finally figured out how to divert the road trip project from mainland Europe to Ireland: show them really interesting projects (and maybe, just maybe include some gin).

The Road Trip Project is above all an adventure: young travellers embark in a van for a journey across Europe. They meet locals and explore a variety of EU-supported projects and activities. They share their experiences through videos, photos and blog posts on this hub and on social media platforms. Exposure as part of this Project is invaluable and we will look at repeating in 2020, Shed distillery anyone?
6. There is more to the Ploughing Championships than Ploughing

The ploughing championships are Europe's largest outdoor event and attracts all aspects of Irish life, almost 300 thousand of them, an ideal opportunity to tell our story face to face.

In 2019 we were part of the team in the EU Commission tent with our ESF, FIFG and Southern Assembly Colleagues and we had a speaking role in the Government of Ireland tent, there was no escaping us.
7. Europe Day is a Biggie

Managing to get EU House and The Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform on Europe Day for the launch of our EU in my region Publications was a major coup reflected in the quantity and calibre of the attendance on the day.
8. Post Cards are making a comeback

Anecdotal research from two voluntary groups on our radar have indicated that the day of the post card is back and fringes are

9. If you publish a book, put it in the libraries

Our EU in my region books are available to browse or download in electronic format from our website. Paper is still an important and often more impactful medium and copies winged their way to stakeholders during the year.

With over 17 million visits annually, libraries play an important community role as centres of knowledge, information and culture and we have ensured that our EU in my region book is available from public libraries in every county in our region.
We worked with some wonderful groups during the year but working with the teachers and transition year class from the Convent of Mercy in Roscommon were amongst our highlights. The class were part of our open day project which kicked off with an easy contest, then a visit to the Marine Institute which coincided with a social media photography contest.

The aim of the visit to the Marine Institute's facilities was to encourage the female students to explore subjects in science, technology, engineering and maths and potential careers in STEM. A number of female scientists and staff from the Marine Institute spoke to the 30 transition year students about working in fisheries science, marine chemistry, data and applications management.

The project concluded with interaction between students and members of the BMW OP Monitoring Committee at our spring PMC meeting.