
White Paper on Enterprise

Response from the American Chamber of Commerce
Ireland (AmCham) to the Department of Enterprise,
Trade & Employment's public consultation on the
preparation of the White Paper on Enterprise

July 2022

AmCham welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department's consultation on the White Paper on Enterprise.

Over 900 US companies call Ireland home, employing over 190,000 people, and supporting a further 152,000 jobs in the Irish economy. The scale of this investment is further visible through their annual expenditure of €12.4bn on payroll, €8.8bn on goods and services, and €6.5bn on capital expenditure. Additionally, in 2021 the OECD reported that, over a six-year period, one of every four multinational employees either moved to an existing Irish company or started a new one.

This is an extraordinary achievement, both by multinational and domestic Irish business. AmCham would welcome an ambitious enterprise strategy for the next decade that preserves and builds upon the significant achievements of business in Ireland, particularly in the context of the scope and scale of geopolitical and economic change.

People

In attracting business, Ireland's competitive edge is its people, however, talent is now more mobile than ever before. Ensuring Ireland remains a destination of choice for talent into the future is essential to the success of Ireland's enterprise policy.

AmCham believes there are several factors which are integral to this:

- Smart policy choices to fund our higher education and research sectors is essential in supporting talent, and ensuring the skills needs of business are met. **Smart investment in higher education will enhance the reputation of Ireland's education system on the global stage and drive greater participation from key stakeholders**, including world-class educators, while also building a world-class talent pipeline.
- The workplace will continue to become increasingly digital in the lifetime of the enterprise strategy. The **advancement of digital literacy and skills** will support both business and talent with hybrid and remote working environments remaining commonplace into the future, and ensuring every person is empowered to avail of the opportunities provided in an ever more digitalised Ireland.¹
- Tackling the gender disparities existing in STEM subjects will support the advancement of women in key industries, including advanced manufacturing and life sciences. The enterprise strategy should **encourage women to pursue careers in the STEM fields** which would result in greater gender balance in the leadership of companies in these fields in the longer-term.
- Ireland's attractiveness for talent is enhanced by the social progress we, as a country, have made in recent years, including in relation to marriage equality and women's rights. **Ireland should continue this progressive journey** making our country a more attractive place for people to live.
- Ireland is globally recognised as a **rules-based democracy committed to international institutions and norms**. This commitment, and the consequent political stability, is greatly

¹ Further information is available in AmCham's position paper on [Digitalisation - How Ireland can accelerate](#)

appreciated by both domestic and international business. AmCham would welcome Ireland's ambitions in this regard being reflected in the economic strategy.

- Quality of life will continue to be integral to Ireland's competitiveness in attracting talent. According to the UN Human Development Index, Ireland ranks second in the world for quality of life. **To sustain a high quality of life in Ireland, key challenges must be addressed.** These challenges include the availability of affordable homes, access to affordable childcare, sustainable public transport, a globally competitive personal tax regime, and fit for purpose healthcare and education systems.
- In supporting job creation and retention, Ireland's enterprise strategy should recognise the importance of the continuation of the direct engagement model regarding industrial relations.

Place

Ireland has many attributes which make it a destination of choice for both talent and business. As the only English-speaking, common-law country in the EU, Ireland is at the heart of the largest set of free-trade agreements in the world. Ireland is also the transatlantic gateway to Europe, acting as a bridge which connects two of the world's biggest economies.

Successive administrations have pursued pro-enterprise policies. AmCham believes an ambitious enterprise strategy provides an ideal opportunity strengthen Ireland's reputation on the global stage for job creation and inward investment. AmCham recommends the following are included in this strategy:

- To adequately address any future economic shocks which may occur, without risking the provision of core services and the development of vital infrastructure projects, government must outline a roadmap for fiscal sustainability, including a **5-year plan to reduce the public debt burden to sustainable levels.**
- In a recent AmCham survey, **100% of respondents identified cost competitiveness as important to maintaining FDI employment in Ireland.** With geopolitical circumstances leading to increased economic uncertainty, ensuring Ireland is viewed as a cost competitive location when compared with competitor jurisdictions is important in sustaining business development and growth.
- It is vital that enterprise is supported in the transition to carbon neutrality. To support this, enterprise policy should provide a comprehensive and inclusive roadmap **outlining how each sector of the economy will adapt to sustainability measures** which lower emissions and advance climate goals, while also outlining how economic growth will be supported.
- Security and cost competitiveness of Ireland's energy and water supply, and capacity for current and future demands will have a direct impact on the ability of business to grow. AmCham recommends a continued focus on the **development of offshore wind, and infrastructure capable of pivoting to green hydrogen.**
- Given the scale of the multinational presence in Ireland, and the importance of digital and data to the Irish economy, strengthening cybersecurity is a necessity. **Greater cybersecurity**

will provide protection for business and public services and safeguard critical national infrastructure from external threats.²

- The **delivery of essential physical and digital infrastructure** will be paramount in enhancing Ireland's enterprise ecosystem. Road, rail, and other key transport projects must be advanced to provide the required connectivity for business. Digital infrastructure, including the rollout of the National Broadband Plan will be essential in supporting enterprise in connecting with key markets, and supporting the increasingly digitalised working environment.
- Clustering has had many benefits for the enterprise ecosystem in Ireland and provides great opportunities to spur further innovation. **The move towards a clustering model within domestic policy is positive** and will support innovation and collaboration between MNCs, SMEs and academia. To further enhance the impact of collaboration, Ireland should consider developing an innovation district which will have a global standing.
- **Reform of the planning process** to provide certainty of timeframe for business is essential. Logjams in the process create a barrier for investment and delay the delivery of vital infrastructural projects. A process which provides stability in terms of the timeframe for a final decision to be reached will support the growth of business in the years ahead and strengthen Ireland's enterprise ecosystem.

Impact

Ireland, as a country, consistently punches above its weight and has been recognised by global leaders as a great place in which to do business. However, Ireland cannot be complacent as competitor jurisdictions seek to emulate and compete with Ireland in attracting investment, business, and talent. In a recent AmCham survey, 95% of respondents said they have a positive view of Ireland as an investment of growth location.

To ensure Ireland is best placed to continue to be competitive on the global stage, AmCham believes that many opportunities exist for Ireland to enhance its impact:

- AmCham welcomes the constant reshaping of government portfolios, including the creation of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. AmCham recommends that future reshaping **reflects the importance of data, digital and cyber to the Irish economy.**
- Industry 4.0 and the development of centres of excellence provide opportunities for Ireland to be at the cutting edge of advanced manufacturing and emerging technologies. Enterprise can be further supported through the **outlining of a long-term funding strategy for Industry 4.0** which focuses on the enhancement of coordination between business and research centres.
- To realise the opportunities provided by Industry 4.0 fields, an enterprise strategy must foster collaboration and cross-sector impact, with a focus on fields **including quantum computing, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, data analytics, and robotics.** A disproportionate amount of the world's top firms in manufacturing have a base in Ireland. Many of these sites

² Further information is available in AmCham's position paper on: [The Strongest Link in the Chain: Ireland's Global Cyber Security Leadership](#)

are of global strategic importance providing Ireland with the opportunity to be at the forefront of technological advancement.³

- Closing the RD&I investment gap will support greater innovation in Ireland and ensure Ireland's reputation as a place to do business is strengthened. In 2020, Ireland's expenditure on RD&I was 1.2% of GDP while the EU average was 2.3%. This discrepancy must be overcome to ensure enterprise in Ireland is best placed to have a global impact. **Ireland must increase its expenditure on RD&I and outline a multi-year plan to bring RD&I expenditure in line with the EU average.**
- The Global Ireland initiative focused on expanding Ireland's footprint must examine how it can be enhanced to have the greatest impact in an ever-changing world. Ensuring Ireland can strategically grow its reputation in global markets and international forums will be essential in supporting business in Ireland. The enterprise strategy should consider **widening the scope of the Global Ireland initiative to encompass key areas**, such as further and higher education, research, innovation and science.
- Ensuring the importance of trade and investment to the Irish economy is recognised within our society should be advanced within an enterprise strategy. AmCham believes a **focus on the benefits of trade and investment for Ireland's open economy should be factored into the curriculum** in second-level education.

³ Further information is available in AmCham's position paper on [Industry 4.0](#)