

Highlights from the Irish Exporters Association's 2017 activity

The Irish Exporters Association (IEA), the influential independent representative body for all Irish exporters and internationally trading companies, has published highlights of its activity in 2017.

- *IEA membership has increased regionally by 4% from increased engagement at our regional events and support from our Southern and Western Regional Councils.*
- *Over 1,000 professionals were trained in preparation for Brexit, customs and compliance related courses. 860 of these participants were trained in Good Distribution Practice (GDP), an increase on last year of 23% which included 570 drivers, 205 operational staff and 20 brand new GDP Champions graduated and will oversee the onsite operations of the process. GDP ensures patient safety by compliance throughout all stages of the supply chain and safeguards the quality of medicinal products.*
- *The IEA launched a new training initiative in July titled, "Brexit for your Supply Chain" which provides participants the opportunity to scenario plan for Brexit and delivers practical customs solutions. This course has been a resounding success with many dates over-subscribed. "Brexit for your Supply Chain" made up 34% of all non-GDP training in 2017.*
- *The IEA Supply Chain Series ran eight events around the country, attended by over 400 exporters and manufacturing companies. The four large seminars included IEA Expert Advisory Panels, keynote addresses from industry speakers, panel discussions and breakout sessions including the IEA Multimodal Group. The Revenue Commissioners attended each seminar advising attendees of the opportunities and challenges for their specific region from a customs perspective and discussed customs procedures around dealing with third countries. The four manufacturing roundtables were well attended and discussed local issues and provided solutions to members.*
- *The IEA's National Export Hub held 13 events around the country, attended by over 500 representatives of Irish SMEs. 17 SMEs graduated the second class of the Export Knowledge Programme, an educational programme launched in January 2016 to support SMEs to improve their exporting capabilities.*

- *The IEA lobbied Government under our policy pillars: Brexit and the Diversification of Export Markets, Cost Competitiveness, the War for Talent and Entrepreneurship. Our intervention at Government level and in the media included: Brexit and Ireland's relationship with the UK and the EU post-Brexit; reform in the education sector and the skills shortage; Ireland's cost competitiveness; entrepreneurship; infrastructural improvements, such as broadband and regional connectivity; the expansion of our export base and market diversification.*
- *The IEA provided written submissions to Government on the following: The impact of the UK Referendum on Membership of the European Union on the Irish Agri-Food & Fisheries Sectors; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on Trade Tourism and Investment, Asia-Pacific and Americas Strategies; Public Consultation on Proposed Exchequer – Employer Investment Mechanism for Higher Education and Further Education & Training; IEA Pre-Budget Submission 2018; and the Public Consultation on the draft of the National Planning Framework. The IEA has also provided verbal submissions to Government on: the All-Island Transport Sectoral Meeting on Brexit; DJEI stakeholder engagement on Brexit; Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence, Impact of Brexit; The Committee on Budget Oversight; National Assembly for Wales – External Affairs Committee; The National Economic Dialogue; Brexit Stakeholder Engagement: Enterprise Skills Needs and Brexit; and the All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit.*

Simon McKeever, CEO of the Irish Exporters Association commented: *“It has been a mixed year for Irish exporters amidst a backdrop of political uncertainty in some of our key markets, especially the drawn-out Brexit negotiations. We look forward to further clarity on the future of the EU's trading relationship with the UK. Now that the negotiations can move into the next phase we are preparing to support our members to understand the future shape of the East/West relationship which is imperative for Irish trade and how they can overcome barriers and challenges. The IEA will be launching a new suite of training courses in 2018 including: Food Law and Labelling; Dual Use Licencing; Authorised Economic Operator (AEO); Online Airfreight Security; and Online Dangerous Goods and we will be launching a brand new Supply Chain Series, developing a Markets Diversification Series and the Export Industry Awards will continue to grow.*

Although it has been an uncertain year, it has also been a great year for the Irish economy! Employment growth has been very strong. Unemployment has returned to levels last seen in 2008, and the rate of decline remains strong. Net emigration ended in 2015 which, coupled with

the positive demographic structure of the Irish population, is feeding a continued expansion of the population. Ireland remains an attractive place in which to do business in and from, and secured a record number of investments during 2016, resulting in the creation of 11,842 additional jobs here. Job losses in the FDI sector as a percentage of the overall employment portfolio were at their lowest level in 19 years. Ireland has also been named the best country in the world for attracting high-value foreign direct investments for the sixth year in a row according to IBM's 2017 Global Locations Trends report.

We will continue to develop new and innovative solutions for our members on issues regarding their international trade and we will continue to be the voice of the Irish export industry in the media and lobby Government both nationally and at European level on issues at the heart of international trade."