

## **IEA Submission: The Second Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan**

*Irish Exporters Association submission to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications*

10 September 2021

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### **Overview: The Irish Exporters Association**

The Irish Exporters Association (IEA) is the leading independent representative body and voice for exporters based in Ireland. The IEA represents exporters and supply chain operators across the country and works at regional, national, and European level, representing its members in front of legislators to create a regulatory and legislative framework that supports, drives, and fosters Irish exports.

We assist our members to grow their exports to world markets and drive the growth and development of all exporting businesses based in Ireland. We provide a set of highly relevant business services and products to assist our members with international trade.

- We **represent** the needs of members in the development of policy, lobbying, intervention at Government and EU level and in the media. Brexit and the Diversification of Export Markets, Trade Compliance, Climate Change & Sustainability and their impact on Irish exporters are core to our work.
- We offer **trade services** in the form of practical training, support, and advice right across the supply chain including our Sustainable Supply Chains Programme, customs awareness short courses, Good Distribution Practice (GDP), export and import compliance, business travel support (visa and export documentation), route to market and general assistance with trade related queries.
- We have created **knowledge networks** among our membership to support our members in exploring new markets, route to market scenario planning, understanding customs and supply chain challenges and providing thought leadership through a series of events and webinars. Networking and connectivity remain an important part of membership benefits. Our Export Industry Awards programme is our flagship event that celebrates the achievements of exporting companies and highlights the importance of the export sector to Ireland.

The IEA represents the whole spectrum of companies within the export industry including SME's who are beginning to think about exporting for the first time right through to global multinational companies who are already extensively exporting from Ireland as well as the providers of key services to the sector. The IEA is the connecting force for Irish exporters, providing practical knowledge and support across the Island of Ireland and in foreign markets.

## Introduction

Given the breadth of issues that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cover, implementing the United Nation's (UN) SDGs will require an all-encompassing governmental, interdepartmental, and multi-stakeholder approach. We are working with our members through our [National Council](#) and [Regional Network Groups](#) to raise awareness of the Goals and how they can be incorporated into member's business operations. The SDGs are all interlinked and therefore successful implementation of each Goal cannot be achieved in isolation.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the second SDG National Implementation Plan and would like to thank the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) for facilitating this consultation with interested stakeholders. We note that the aim of the National Implementation Plan is to support and promote policies across government that work towards meeting the Goals.

## Recommendations

We call on Minister Ryan and the DECC, to consider the four recommendations outlined below, that aim to support interdepartmental coordination, stakeholder engagement and actions required for further SDG implementation from 2021 to 2023:

- Communicating how the SDGs can fit into daily business life is an area that could be explored further. The IEA would like the DECC to identify the policy activities, measures, and supports that the government propose to include a reference outlining which SDGs the policy, measure and/or support is aiming to contribute to. Including the UN image of the Goal/Goals in communication campaigns and in policy documents would significantly raise awareness among the public and the business community.



Source: <https://sdgs.un.org/>

- The IEA would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our call for the establishment of a Cross Government Business Focused Stakeholder Group led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) with involvement from DECC, the Department of Transport (DoT) and with input from other relevant Departments and

Agencies. Such a stakeholder group would bring together businesses representative bodies from across many sectors. The establishment of such a stakeholder group would illustrate the importance and priority the government would be placing on supporting the business community to understand and consider the SDGs. In addition, it would make an important contribution to the country's overall efforts towards achieving a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and indeed towards carbon neutrality by 2050.

- In addition, the IEA calls for industry stakeholder groups to be set up across the Departments such as a business focused group within DETE, a transport focused group within DoT etc, resulting in the establishment of a Network of stakeholder groups. The industry stakeholder groups would meet as often as necessary, with a meeting of the Network on an annual or biannual basis to update and discuss actions and implementations that have been taken by each Department to implement their respective SDGs and share learnings to achieve carbon reduction. Such a Network would also serve as an important platform for Ministers and Department officials to communicate what changes must be made to achieve a net-zero carbon economy.
- Specifically looking at SDG 13 on climate action, [our submission](#) to the Climate Action Plan 2021 highlights the need for an information campaign on the long-term benefits of adopting practices that will lead to carbon neutrality. The IEA advocates that the Government should adopt a similar communications approach to that of Brexit and Covid-19, led by the DECC. The campaign should be centred on calling out the challenges and come forward with solutions, training courses and supports. We call for funding to be made available to conduct information campaigns on: the aims of the Climate Action Act 2021, sectoral targets that will be set out in the forthcoming Climate Action Plan 2021, an overview of measures that businesses need to integrate into operations and why businesses need to act. We believe that such a campaign would significantly contribute to achieving national climate targets and indeed the related SDGs. The campaign could be driven by the Network of stakeholder groups.

## Conclusion

We look forward to the publication of the second SDG National Implementation Plan and remain available to the DECC for any follow up questions and/or clarification on the proposals laid out in this document. As an organisation we incorporate sustainable trade and investment in our engagement with members. We continue to grow and adapt our services to ensure that Irish exporters, importers, and supply chain actors are adopting practices in line with international, EU and national climate targets and as an organisation we have recently adopted our own internal sustainability policy to ensure that we are playing our part in implementing the SDGs and to support achieving carbon-neutrality. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our views.

On behalf of the IEA,

Simon McKeever  
**Chief Executive**

**DATE: 10.09.21**