

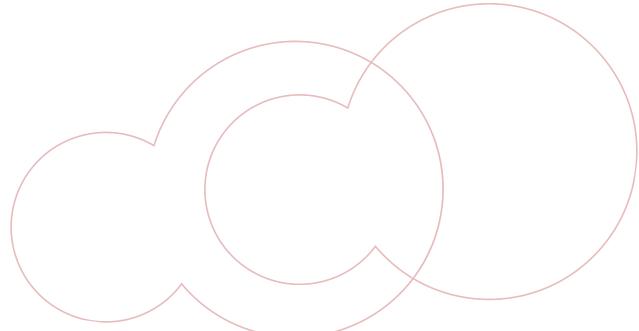
Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt

Southern Regional Assembly



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Cathaoirleach's Foreword

As Cathaoirleach it is my privilege to introduce the 2024 Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Southern Regional Assembly.

2024 was the final year of our 2020 – 2024 Corporate Plan and it is great to look back and see how much significant progress has been made during the year and across the Southern Region. This report highlights the Assembly's activities and achievements over the course of what was another very busy year.

The functions of the Regional Assemblies have become increasingly important as the regional tier of government and a key champion of the regional perspective in economic and spatial development. 2024 saw continued collaboration with key stakeholders to deliver goals and strategic objectives as outlined in our Corporate Plan.

2024 also saw the commencement of a new term for Members of the Southern Regional Assembly, and following local elections in June, we welcomed a new Assembly at our Annual meeting in July. I would like to congratulate former members who were elected to Dail Eireann following the general election in November and congratulations to my predecessor Cathaoirleach Garret Kelleher for his election to Seanad Eireann.

Our statutory monthly meetings continue to be a key forum for discussion and collaboration, with presentations on Energy, Circular Economy, Climate, Infrastructure, and EU Projects, just some of the important topics showcased in 2024.



The second two-year Monitoring report for the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region was drafted, detailing the implementation of the strategy through the support of key stakeholders, particularly the Region's local authorities.

I would like to thank my fellow Assembly Members for their valuable contributions during the year both at our monthly meetings and in representing the Southern Regional Assembly at various meetings and events. I also wish to thank Leas-Cathaoirleach Cllr. John Sheahan for his support.

I extend my sincere appreciation to David Kelly and his team for their continued work across all functions of the Southern Regional Assembly.

Cllr. Ken Murnane

Cathaoirleach

Director's Introduction

I am delighted to present the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Southern Regional Assembly for 2024. The report details a very busy year of activities across all functions as we strive to deliver on the final year of our corporate plan 2020-2024 objectives.

Under the Southern, Eastern and Midland ERDF Regional programme, 2024 saw the launch of THRIVE - Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme, which supports the revitalisation of vacant and derelict heritage buildings and town centres. The scheme was co-designed by the Southern Regional Assembly and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and is aligned with Town Centre First and New European Bauhaus values and principles. This scheme is managed by the Southern Regional Assembly.

There were also launches of the Interreg Europe Proximities Project which promotes accessible services, liveable spaces and sustainable connections in peripheral urban areas, the EU funded FutureECOS project, future-proofing living spaces in growth corridor regions, and the Developing Irish Sea Cooperation (DISC) Project.

Following a successful collaboration between the Southern Regional Assembly and Waterford City and County Council, Kilkenny County Council, SETU, Waterford Chambers and the ETBs, we were proud to see that Waterford has been designated a UNESCO Learning City. The Designation of Waterford as a UNESCO Learning City is strongly supported by regional policy and advances the ambition set out in the Southern Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The Southern Regional Assembly also hosted a number of events and delegations in 2024 such as the Estonian TAIEX TSI Study Visit on



sustainable spatial development, Interreg Europe 3rd Call Information Webinar, Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2024 event and the ROBIN project validation workshop.

2024 was also a very busy year in terms of progressing the implementation of the RSES, with the publication of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Two-Year Monitoring Report 2022-2024.

I wish to express my gratitude to our Cathaoirligh, Councillor Garret Kelleher and Councillor Ken Murnane, for their time and valuable contributions throughout the year. I also extend my thanks to the Assembly staff for their commitment and dedication to the successful delivery of the 2024 Annual Work Plan.

I welcome the new staff who joined the Assembly in 2024 and thank those who have moved on.

Finally, I look forward to the ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, including local authorities, government departments and agencies, and the third-level education sector, as the role of the Assembly continues to evolve in its efforts to support the region.

David Kelly

Director



About the Southern Regional Assembly

Established in 2015, the Southern Regional Assembly is part of the regional tier of government in Ireland.

The Assembly forges links between the EU, and national and local levels through regional spatial and economic planning and European funding (particularly the European Regional Development Fund) for the benefit of the Southern Region. We are responsible for strategic regional and economic planning and supporting balanced, sustainable regional development.

- Regional tier of government, represented by elected representatives nominated by our local authorities and Committee of the Regions.
- Leading the implementation of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy.
- Promoting balanced regional development through the management of, support for, and involvement in European Regional Development Funded programmes and projects.
- Linking local, regional, national and EU policy goals through regional planning and EU regional development.

The Assembly interacts with national government, state agencies, local authorities, and stakeholders from the private and third sectors at local, regional, national and EU levels in relation to its statutory functions.





Assembly Membership December 31st December 2024



Cllr. Garret Kelleher Cathaoirleach Cork City Council



Cllr. Ken Murnane Leas-Cathaoirleach Carlow County Council



Cllr. Ben Ward Carlow County Council



Cllr. Clare Colleran Molloy Clare County Council



Cllr. Tony O'Brien Clare County Council



Cllr. Bill Slattery Clare County Council



Cllr. Dan Boyle Cork City Council CoR



Cllr. Kieran McCarthy Cork City Council



Cllr. Terru Shannon Cork City Council



Cllr. Alan Coleman Cork City Council



Cllr. Gillian Couahlan Cork County Council,



Cllr. Deirdre Kellu Cork County Council



Cllr. Sheila O'Callaahan Cork County Council



Cllr. Norma Moriarty Kerry County Council



Cllr. Niall Botty O'Callaghan Kerry County Council



Cllr. Bobby O'Connell Kerry County Council



Cllr. John Brennan Kilkenny County Council



Cllr. Andrew McGuinness Kilkenny County Council



Cllr. Michael Collins Limerick City & County Council



Cllr. Frankie Daly Limerick City & County



Mayor John Moran Limerick City & County



Cllr. John Sheahan Limerick City & County



Cllr. Máirín McGrath Tipperary County Council



Cllr. Peggy Ryan Tipperary County Council



Cllr. Michael Smith Tipperary County Council



Cllr. Jim Darcu County Council



Cllr. Thomas Phelan Waterford City & County Council



Cllr. Pip Breen Wexford County Council



Cllr. Barbara Anne Murphy Wexford County Council



Cllr. Oliver Walsh Wexford County Council

Cathaoirleach & Leas Cathaoirleach

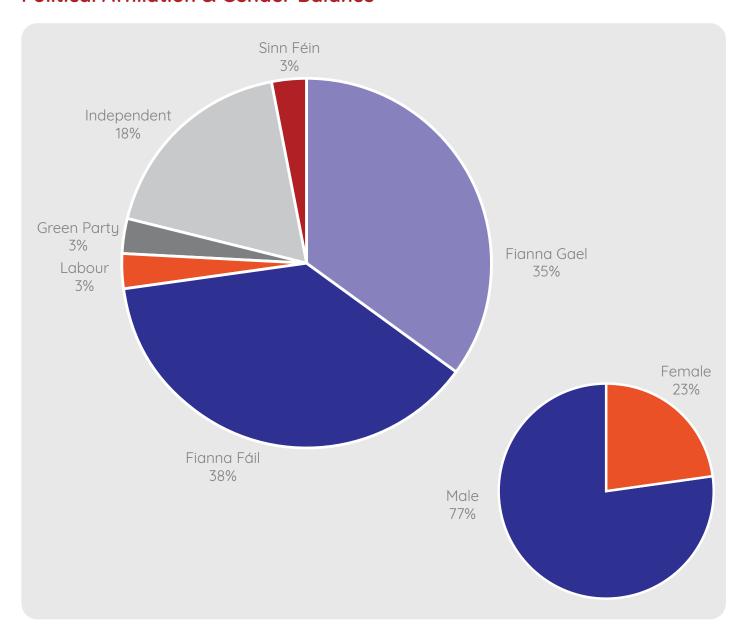
Cathaoirligh

January - July: Cllr. Terry Shannon July - December: Cllr. Garret Kelleher

Leas-Cathaoirligh

January - July: Cllr. Noel Coonan July - December: Cllr. Ken Murnane

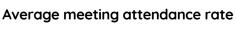
Political Affiliation & Gender Balance



Meetings & Attendance

Ordinary Meetings	12th January	9th February	8th March	12th April	10th May
2024	12th July	12th September	11th October	8th November	13th December







In Person



Remote

External and Assembly Speakers at Assembly Meetings 2024

DATE	SPEAKER / TOPIC
Friday 12th January	Upscaling a Biomethane Industry in Ireland – Policy Context - Redmond McEvoy, Assistant Principal, Climate Change and Bioenergy Policy Division, DAFM (in-person)
Friday 16th February	European Urban Initiative (EUI) programme and its opportunities for local authorities –Dr Karl Murphy, Urban Contact Point, EMRA
Friday 8th March	Green Public Procurement and the CO2 Performance Ladder – Rachel Loughrey, Project Support Officer (Circular Economy), Irish Green Building Council
Friday 12th April	ESB Asset Development & Offshore - Sean Moroney & Keith O'Sullivan, ESB; Thomas McHugh, Ørsted
Friday 10th May	Draft South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) – Officials from DECC
Friday 12th July	Overview of the Southern Regional Assembly – David Kelly Overview of the E.U. Programmes Division – Marie Harnett Overview of the Regional Planning – Dominic Walsh Cohesion Policy Post 2027 – David Kelly
Friday 13th September	RSES: Second two-year Monitoring Report – Brigh Ryan & Kevin Twomey ERDF Regional Programme - THRIVE Scheme – Enda Hogan
Friday 11th October	Developing Irish Sea Cooperation (DISC) Project – Enda Hogan
Friday 8th November	The Economic Impact of Southern Region Ports – Report by Menon Consultants Smart and Sustainable Mobility Accelerator Programme - Track 2 – Eoin O'Connor
Friday 13th December	PROXIMITIES Project Overview – Áine Whelan, Brigh Ryan, Kevin Twomey Seanad Report on Future of Irish Democracy – Kevin Lynch

Conference Attendance 2024

Association of Irish Regions Training Event- Adare, 7th and 8th February

Cllr. Ken Murnane Cllr. Pip Breen Cllr. Thomas Phelan Cllr. Joe Carroll Cllr. Andrew McGuinness Cllr. Noel Coonan

Meet with Estonian Delegation in Assembly House Waterford 24th March

Cllr. Dan Boyle

IPB AGM, Gibson Hotel Dublin, 2nd and 3rd May

Cllr. Noel Coonan

SPA Meeting - Limerick City Hall, 4th September

Cllr. Tony O'Brien Cllr. John Brennan Cllr. Bill Slattery
Cllr. Ken Murnane Cllr. Mairin McGrath Cllr. Bobby O'Connell
Cllr. Jim D'Arcy Cllr. Thomas Phelan Cllr. Ben Ward
Cllr. Niall O'Callaghan Cllr. Barbara Anne-Murphy Cllr. Alan Coleman
Cllr. John Paul O'Shea Cllr. Sheila O'Callaghan Cllr. Oliver Walsh

Cllr. Norma Moriarty

IPB Members Engagement Forum, Mullingar Park Hotel, 4th October

Cllr. Ken Murnane

ICLRD Annual Conference, Belfast Harbour Office, 24th and 25th October

Cllr. Ken Murnane Cllr. Tony O'Brien Cllr. Andrew McGuinness Cllr. John Brennan Cllr. Bill Slattery Cllr. Bobby O'Connell

Cllr. Niall O'Callaghan

Modular Housing Conference, Carlingford 24th to 26th November

Cllr. Michael O'Meara

Members Corporate Plan Workshop, Ballykisteen Tipperary, 3rd to 4th December

Cllr. Jim D'Arcy

Cllr. Barbara Anne-Murphy

Cllr. Oliver Walsh

Cllr. Pip Breen

Cllr. Bobby O'Connell

Cllr. Norma Moriarty

Cllr. Deirdre Kelly

Cllr. John Brennan

EU Programme Monitoring Committee Representatives

31st December 2024

Southern Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027	Cllr. Garret Kelleher Cllr. John Brennan Cllr. Gillian Coughlan Cllr. Bill Slattery
CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023-2027	Cllr. Sheila O'Callaghan
ESF+ Employment, Inclusion, Skills, and Training (EIST) 2021-2027	Cllr. John Sheahan

Committee of the Regions Representatives - Southern Region

Full Members	Cllr. Deirdre Forde Cllr. Kieran McCarthy Cllr. Michael Murphy
Alternate Members	Cllr. Dan Boyle Cllr. Gillian Coughlan Cllr. Conor D McGuinness

Association of Irish Regions Representatives

The Association of Irish Regions is the representative body of the three Regional Assemblies in Ireland (EMRA, NWRA and Southern Regional Assembly). Under Project Ireland 2040, and specifically through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, the three Regional Assemblies play a leadership role in supporting the delivery of national objectives and are at the forefront of best practice across a number of areas in this regard.

The Annual Association of Irish Regions "Regions in Focus" event was held in Adare at the beginning of February 2024. This training event focused on the role of Councillors at local to European levels through various fora.

The Association Cathaoirleach signed the revised Constitution in November 2024.

Cllr Garrett Kelleher (Cathaoirleach)	Cllr Ken Murnane (Leas-Cathaoirleach)
Cllr Terry Shannon (Former Cathaoirleach)	Cllr Niall 'Botty' O Callaghan
Cllr Mairin McGrath	Mr David Kelly, Director

Joint SPA Committee and Members Workshop

In 2024 there were 2 separate Workshops for Assembly Members. The first event, a Joint SPA Workshop held in Limerick on the 4th of September focused on the Draft Revised National Planning Framework.

The second event held in Ballykisteen in on the 3rd and 4th of December; a Members Workshop and consultation had two main topics, firstly as a consultation forum for the next Corporate Plan 2025 -2029 and secondly the Assembly Submission to the Draft Revised National Planning Framework.



Cllr. Garret Kelleher at the Strategic Planning Area Meeting, Limerick, September 2024

Annual Meeting & Election of Cathaoirleach

The Annual Meeting took place on 12th July and Members were invited to propose nominations for the position of Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cathaoirleach of the Assembly, to hold office until July 2025.

Cllr. Garret Kelleher of Cork City Council was elected Cathaoirleach at the meeting. Cllr. Kelleher is a member of Fine Gael and previously worked in the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg, in the Directorate General for Health & Consumer Protection and served on the European Health Security Committee and the European Stockpiling Committee.

Cllr. Ken Murnane of Carlow County Council was elected Leas-Cathaoirleach. A member of Fianna Fáil, Cllr. Murnane was first elected to the Council in 2016 and is serving a second term as a Member of the Southern Regional Assembly.



Outgoing Cathaoirleach Cllr. Terry Shannon welcomes newly elected Cathaoirleach Cllr. Garret Kelleher, July 2024

Southern Regional Assembly Highlights for 2024

- Launch of THRIVE The Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme.
- Waterford designated a UNESCO Learning City.
- Hosted a delegation from Estonia as part of a TAIEX TSI Study Visit on sustainable spatial development.
- Hosted Interreg Europe 3rd Call Information Webinar for Irish Participants.
- Presented at the Irish Planning Institute Annual Planning Conference 2024.
- Launch of the Interreg Europe Proximities Project.
- Nominations of Assembly Members for the 2024 2029 term.
- Launch of EU funded FutureECOS project.
- Launch of the Developing Irish Sea Cooperation (DISC) Project.
- Hosted the Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2024 event and ROBIN project validation workshop.
- Published the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Two-Year Monitoring Report 2022-2024.



Director David Kelly addressing at attendees at the Europe Day event Waterford Library, May 2024

2024 Publications







Online Communications 2024



2,986 followers / average 40k monthly impressions



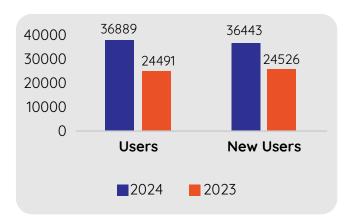
653 followers / average post reach 1,500



483 followers / average post reach 95



927 followers / average 6000 monthly impressions





Climate Action

The Climate Action Plan 2024 reaffirms two high-level targets for public bodies that had been originally introduced in previous iterations of the plan:

The public sector must improve its energy efficiency by 50% by 2030.

This target builds on the previous 33%-by-2020 efficiency target and is based on public bodies' existing baselines, most of which are 2009 (or earlier).

The public sector must reduce its GHG emissions by 51% by 2030.

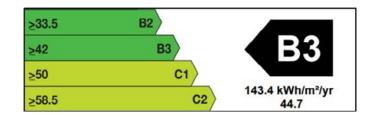
Every public body will be assigned a public-body-level emissions reduction target based on an absolute tonnage of GHG emissions. The total tonnage target will be a 51% reduction of direct energy-related emissions (thermal and transport consumption), plus projected supply side reductions in indirect energy-related emissions from electricity. The baseline for the methodology is the period 2016 to 2018.

The Southern Regional Assembly is committed to playing its part in achieving the improvements in energy efficiency and decarbonisation across the public sector. Based on our reporting to SEAI

the Southern Regional Assembly is ahead of the 2030 targets and will strive to make continual improvements. The Southern Regional Assembly is a member of the SEAI Energy Decarbonisation Partnership Programme. In June 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly published our Climate Action Roadmap.

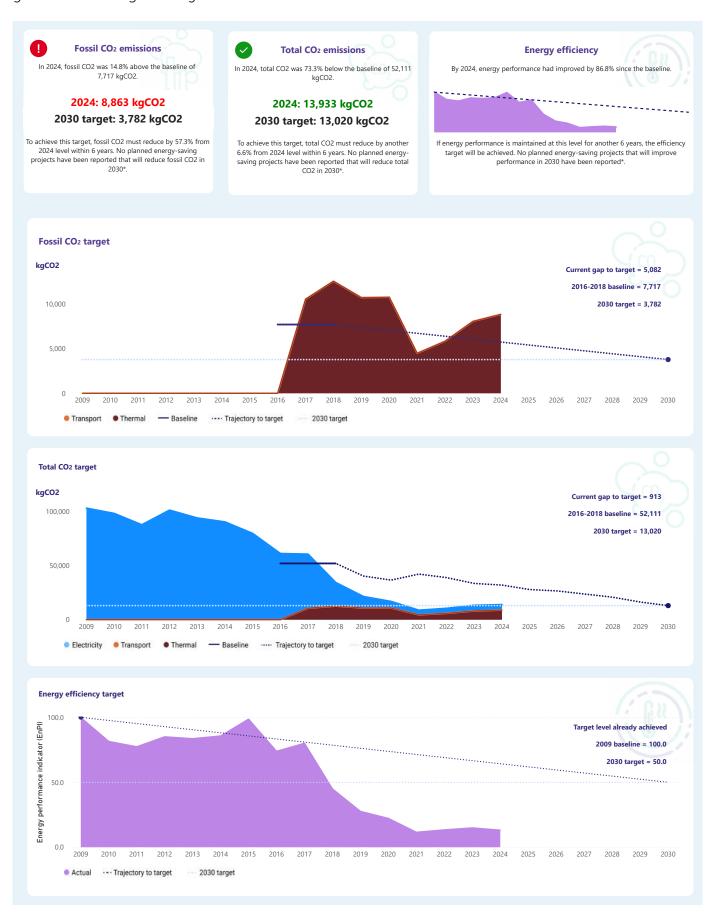
In compliance with the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform Circular 01/2020 on Procedures for Offsetting the Emissions Associated with Official Air Travel, the Southern Regional Assembly records and monitors emissions incurred by staff during official air travel and contributes to the Climate Action Fund to offset those emissions.

Based on the energy used and the GHG emission Assembly House had a DEC Rating of B3 in 2024.



The following key performance indicators show progress towards our energy and greenhouse gas emissions targets. They also show how our

emissions and energy efficiency have changed over time.





Primary energy is the total amount of energy used while final energy describes the energy that is directly consumed by an end-user

Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 both came into effect in 2018. The Assembly continues to review operations against this statutory requirement. There were no requests under data protection legislation during 2024.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 provides that every person has a legal right to access official records held by public bodies, have personal information held on them corrected or updated where it is incomplete, incorrect, or misleading, and be given reasons for decisions taken by public bodies that affect them.

Requests:	2	Granted	2	Part Granted	0
Refused	0	Withdrawn	0	Carried to 2025	0

Irish Language

The Southern Regional Assembly has a dedicated Irish Language Officer, and works to ensure compliance with the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 has been ongoing throughout 2024.

In line with provisions of the amendment to the Official Languages Act, all Assembly advertising and communication activities in the Irish language are being tracked with a view to achieving the goals of Section 10A of Official Languages Act where all public bodies are required to do at least 20% of their annual advertising in Irish and 5% of their advertising in the Irish language media.

The Assembly monitoring process for January -December 2024 revealed that most advertising in 2024 was related EU programmes promotion and recruitment processes; 7% of Assembly advertising was placed in Irish language media, representing 3% of advertising spend. It is of note that 19% of Assembly advertising was placed using the Irish language, although published in the English language media (e.g.: newspapers, online and radio).

The lack of local Irish language press media and radio stations in the Southern region is an important factor when analysing this data.

Assembly Staff Changes

In 2024 the Southern Regional Assembly welcomed the following new staff to the team: Adam Hearne, Clerical Officer, HR & Finance, Ian Ludlow, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Affairs, Lorraine Barron, Clerical Officer, EU Division, **Rhiannon Carey Bates**, Projects Officer, EU Division, Ronan O'Brien, Administrative Officer, Regional Programmes, Padraig O'Shea, Senior Executive Planner/Regional Planning Officer, Planning.

There were also promotions for Colm Walsh, Acting Projects Officer, EU Division, Eoin O'Connor, Acting Senior Executive Planner/ Regional Planning Officer, Planning Yvonne Cooney, Acting Staff Officer, FLC.

We wish **Rebecca Walsh**, Projects Officer, EU Division, the very best after moving to a new career.

Health and Safety in the Assembly

Safety training was provided for staff during 2024. This training covered topics such as safety awareness, legislation, risk assessment, ergonomics, and fire safety. On foot of this training, the Safety Statement was updated and issued to staff.

Expert contractors were engaged to examine and revise where necessary the Safety Statement. A building safety audit was undertaken by the same contractors. All rectifications suggested were actioned. There was one incident reported in 2024.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

The Southern Regional Assembly is conscious of Human Rights and Equality across all its work, and as an organisation. The Assembly's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Working Group (WG), formed in 2023 continues its work. The WG is chaired by a member of the Senior Management team, and includes representatives from each Department (Planning, EU, Corporate, HR), and works to ensure compliance with the statutory obligations of the Irish Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

The WG objective is to foster understanding amongst staff, and to facilitate the three-step process of compliance with the Duty (assess, address, report). With this in mind, during Q2, 2024: each WG representative delivered a short introduction to the Duty to their department colleagues. In addition, all staff - both incumbent and new starters, completed the introductory eLearning module on the Public Sector Duty of Care, and gained a certificate. Completion of this training is now mandatory for all new staff.

Throughout 2024, each department also held a workshop to gather information for the "Assess" step of the Public Sector Duty compliance process. The workshops were facilitated by a WG representative and aimed to identify equality and human rights issues relevant to the purpose and functions of the Southern Regional Assembly. The results of the Assess phase will feed into an Action Plan for the organisation and will be reported upon in the Annual Report.

Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024

While drafting commenced of the new Corporate Plan 2025 – 2029, work continued on delivering the objectives of the previous plan, delivering against three high level goals.

Goal 1

Regional Leadership

- Regional Governance A
 Region driving sustainable
 regional development and
 regional governance in
 Ireland.
- Strategic Collaborations

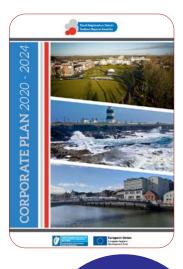
 A Region that engages,
 collaborates, and forms
 partnerships to benefit the

 Region.
- Regional Representation

 Support, foster and develop democratic regional representation.

Goal Valuing Our People 2

- Public Sector Duty Ensure
 we are doing the right
 things in the right way for
 the people of our region
 and our employees, in
 an inclusive, open, and
 responsible manner, based
 on the need to eliminate
 discrimination, promote
 equality, and protect
 human rights of staff.
- Organisational
 Development An innovative, adaptive, and responsive organisation.
- Human Resource
 Management Value and
 Develop our Staff.



Goal 3 Promoting
Sustainable
Regional
Development

- Deliver on the objectives of the RSES.
- EU Programmes and Projects - Harness the potential and opportunities for the Region.
- Research and Regional Data.

Progress 2024

10 statutory meetings of the Southern Regional Assembly

78% average attendance rate at statutory Assembly Meetings

1 Southern Regional Assembly annual report published

34 Implementation Actions of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

3 reports completed for Local & Economic Community Plans (LECPs)

131 project claims worth €3.6 million by Irish partners audited by First Level Control (FLC)

SPA joint workshop on National Planning Framework (NPF) review

1 Regions in Focus event hosted through the Association of Irish Regions (AIR)

Launch of THRIVE, FutureECOS, Proximities, and DISC projects



Regional Planning

Overview

The Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 introduced a strong role for the Southern Regional Assembly in relation to spatial planning and economic development of the Southern Region.

The Assembly's main strategic planning function involves the preparation, adoption, and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region. It also has an oversight role for the preparation of Local Economic & Community Plans (LECP) and the preparation of statutory submissions on City & County Development Plans (CCDP).

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

The RSES published in January 2020 is a 12-year strategic regional development framework for the way our society, environment, economy, and the use of land should evolve. It includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for Cork, Limerick-Shannon & Waterford, and strategies for our Key Towns, towns, villages, and rural areas. The RSES aims to support the delivery of the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040: the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018-27 (NDP). The main focus of work post publication has been on implementation.

Monitoring & Reporting

In December 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly published its second RSES Monitoring Report. The report involved submission of reports from all ten local authorities and public bodies and has presented a valuable opportunity to examine the effectiveness of implementation to date as well as looking at the barriers to progress. The report noted that while significant strides have been made in aligning policies across national, regional, and local levels, supported by the adoption of City and County Development Plans and investments under Project Ireland 2040. concerns remain. There is a need for stronger alignment between government funding and policies to fully achieve the National Planning Framework's (NPF) goals for balanced regional development.

In September, the Southern Regional Assembly made a submission to the First Revision to the NPF, this followed a workshop held with the members of the Assembly in Limerick. The submission included a statement of support for the NPF process as 'providing the potential to address the significant spatial, societal, economic and environmental issues facing Ireland. The Southern Regional Assembly is committed to playing its role in ensuring the success of the NPF.'

The report however also included a Statement of Concern that highlighted that the achievements and potential of the NPF are undermined by embedded geographic investment imbalances inhibiting the achievement of national targets relating to climate change, sustainable growth including balanced regional development, rural development, and the development of our Metropolitan Areas; Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. The submission included an Overarching Recommendation that.

The First Revision to the National Planning Framework should be strengthened significantly to acknowledge and address the lack of alignment between the Regional Parity approach and the structural and funding model to achieve this objective.

Implementation Actions

The RSES has 301 objectives: 229 Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) together with specific objectives



for the MASPs: 22 for Cork, 23 for Limerick-Shannon and 27 for Waterford. These objectives have differing targets and involve specific actions to be taken by stakeholders - Regional, Instructive and Supportive.

The objectives address three over-arching pillars which correspond to the 11 Strategy Statements in the RSFS:

- A Green Region
- A Liveable Region
- A Creative and Innovative Region

Activities, Progress and Milestones in 2024

The priority for 2024 was the continued achievement of RPO 226:

Within a year of the making of the RSES the Southern Regional Assembly will establish robust implementation mechanisms, plans, and structures, including cross sectoral stakeholder and cross boundary local authority steering group committees, to ensure the delivery of the RSES and the MASPs is specific measurable. attainable, realistic and time bound. The implementation phase will include action plans that include time bound targets, progress indicators and a set project tracking plan to ensure effective and efficient delivery. This objective was progressed through the 34 Implementation Actions as follows:

Task No.

1

Task

Ensuring Delivery of NPF/RSES targets for the Southern Region including progressing NPO 1a - 50:50 Split and Implementation of Two-Year Report Recommendations.

Relevant RPO 226: Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs.

Key Area of Progress/Main Issue impeding progress

The Southern Regional Assembly completed the second RSES Two Year Monitoring Report in 2024.

The Southern Regional Assembly has engaged in concerted action in relation to NPO 1a of the NPF, including carrying out a review of the capacity of regional structures to deliver on the NPF and a critique of structural underpinning of investment; engaged with the Expert Group on the NPF Review; engaged with the NPF Planning Advisory Forum and engaged with Local Authorities and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) on this issue.

The Southern Regional Assembly made a submission to the first Revision to the NPF Review following a member's workshop in Limerick.

The Southern Regional Assembly also built on the work of the workshop held in Limerick Junction, Tipperary in June 2023, on the topic Southern Regional Assembly in a changing Ireland - Challenges, issues & opportunities. As well as Assembly Members and staff, representatives from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Maynooth University, and TU Dublin attended. The event was based on three sessions relating to:

Democratic Mandate, Linkage to National Level, and Funding and Structure. The following 9 recommendations were formed from the sessions, and subsequently agreed at the October Assembly meeting:

- 1. Measures to ensure greater awareness of regional assembly initiatives at local authority level should be developed.
- 2. The Southern Regional Assembly, together with EMRA/ NWRA and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage/OPR should prior to the 2024 elections set out a programme in relation to nomination of elected members to the Regional Assembly including briefing

- on role and responsibilities on the Regional Assembly, geographic/population balance.
- 3. There should be a standing item relating to the Committee of The Regions on a guarterlu basis.
- 4. The issue of remote meetings should be discussed in more detail including consideration of national position, other regional assemblies, and measures to optimise participation.
- 5. The issue of EU officers at LA level should be discussed in more detail including with Local Authorities/DHLGH.
- 6. The Regional Assembly should continue to press for greater structural integration with relevant government departments.
- 7. The RSES implementation mechanisms should be improved, and communication of progress should be reported to the members.
- 8. The role and nature of differing regional bodies should be reviewed to improve the effectiveness and coordination between these.
- 9. The regional assembly staffing and financial structure should be reviewed in the context of its role and by reference to other similar public bodies.

This included presentation of the Regional Assembly view at the Seanad Local Government Review.

Task No.

Establishment of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Structures

Relevant RPO 226: Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs.

- There has been ongoing engagement with the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) Steering Committee for the Cork Metropolitan Area.
- Participation in the new DEM Limerick 2040 implementation structures.
- The Southern Regional Assembly prepared an agreed approach 'A Unified Voice' for the Waterford Metropolitan Area which seeks to establish a formal coordination/delivery mechanism linking Waterford City and County Council, Kilkenny County Council, the Southern Regional Assembly, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, DPER, other relevant government departments, and relevant stakeholders, all with the purpose of providing a unified voice for development of the Metropolitan Area. There is ongoing engagement about the establishment of these new structures.

The Southern Regional Assembly has been a key driver in proposing MASP structural change with the DHLGH and as part of the OECD work on the NPF review.

Task No.

Developing Regional Indicators and Monitoring

Relevant RPOs 68: Regional Investment; 71 Shared Evidence Base; and 226 Implementation Mechanism for the Strategy and MASPs. This is a key task and includes tracking of infrastructure delivery for the Region including the development of the Regional Assembly GIS capacity. Tasks included:

- Preparation of the second RSES monitoring report for the 2022-2023 monitoring period.
- Preparation of this Monitoring Report is also a key step in ensuring implementation can be accurately measured.
- Tracking of infrastructure delivery and analysis of key trends including the results of Census 2022, recent data

- on housing delivery, as well as the development of GIS capacity, has been successfully implemented which has fed into this report and will enhance the evidence base for the upcoming review of the NPF and RSES.
- The Regional Development Monitor (RDM) Hub has been developed which is a collaborative project between the three Regional Assemblies, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University and spatial infrastructure partners the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) via the GeoHive platform. It collates and visualises a range of relevant socio-economic and environmental indicators to present the performance of each of the three regions in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in their respective RSESs. It provides a series of new national mapping and visualisation infrastructures to assist Government Departments, Regional Assemblies, Local Authorities, Planners, Policy Makers, Researchers and members of the public in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better decision making. It also focuses on indicators related to the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs)/ Strategy Statements of the RSESs along with their appropriate socio-economic and environmental variables and will be categorised into four key principles: Our People and Places, Our Green & Sustainable Future, Our Region's Economy, and an All-Island Perspective.
- The 3 Regional Assemblies commissioned AIRO to prepare the "National Census Atlas" in 2024, which is an interactive map viewer that presents detailed results from Census 2022 at the Small Area geographic level.
- Appointment of consultants for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the upcoming RSES Review. It is intended to develop indicators for SEA Monitoring with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) as part of their review processes.

Task No. 4

Collaboration between **Metropolitan Areas:** Cork; Limerick-Shannon; Waterford; and Galway.

Relevant RPO 6: Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas.

The Regional Planning team has facilitated a dialogue between the 3 Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford in the Region, focusing on the practical issues including meetings between staff of the Southern Regional Assembly and Local Authorities to support implementation of Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). This work is linked to the wider Regional Nature Forum providing a platform for sharing of good practice and knowledge in this area.

Task No. 5-15

Ensure the RSES Programme for Change is incorporated into the **Local Economic and** Community Plan (LECP) Process.

The Southern Regional Assembly engaged with all the local authorities in the Region as part of their LECP processes, as required under Section 66 of the Local Government Reform Act. At the end of 2024 a Statement of Consistency between the LECPs and the RSES had been issued for all local authorities in the region with the exception of Kerry. The Kerry LECP is due for consideration at an Assembly Meeting in Q1 2025.

Task No. 16 Task No. 17

Implement Learning Region Action Plan.

There has been ongoing engagement with stakeholders including HEIs and DFHERIS on the development of a Unified Tertiary System. The Southern Regional Assembly has also participated in the all-island Irish Network of Learning Cities.

Establish Waterford as a UNESCO Learning City.

Relevant RPOs 39: Economic Opportunities and Choice for all our Citizens; 63 Skills and Talent; 186 Lifelong Learning; 187 Education and Training; 190 Lifelong Learning and Healthy Cities Initiatives; and Waterford MASP PO 23: Following an application in 2023 led by the Southern Regional Assembly Waterford City and County Council, and South East Technical University (SETU), this task was successfully achieved when Waterford became a designated UNESCO Learning City in early 2024. There is ongoing engagement with Waterford City and County Council, SETU and other stakeholders on delivery of a programme for Lifelong Learning and related activity for Waterford.

Implement Southern Regional Assembly Communications Strategy.

Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Relevant RPO 73: International Branding of the Region and Reputation. The Southern Regional Assembly's social media accounts and website are continuously updated on events happening and matters of relevance in the region. The Southern Regional Assembly is currently in the process of developing a new website, which will provide information in a more accessible manner. A new branding portal was also launched in 2023.

Task No.

Develop the Smart Southern Region Action Plan.

Relevant RPO 134: Smart Cities and Smart Region.

The Southern Regional Assembly is progressing implementation of the Smart Southern Region (SSR) initiative, building on its launch on the 18th of January 2023. Developments include: a regional approach for Smart Specialisation (S3); the Smart Southern Region project mapping tool in consultation with Local Authorities and stakeholders; a Smart Southern Region Action Plan; and to establish a Smart Southern Region Network. The Southern Regional Assembly is also exploring potential EU and national funding pathways for specialist services to work with the Assembly on these actions. The Southern Regional Assembly was designated as a Regional Innovation Valley in June 2024 as part of the New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA) by the European Commission.

Task No.

Develop Regional Freight Strategy.

Relevant RPO 141: Regional Freight Strategy.

Action 24 of Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031 requires the Regional Assemblies, with the NTA, to lead the development of Regional Level Freight Strategies in consultation with key stakeholders, consistent with the objectives of the RSESs. Action 23 further requires metropolitan level freight strategies to be prepared for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. The Southern Regional Assembly has prepared a roadmap for the development of this strategy in consultation with the NTA. The process will commence in 2025 following completion of the National Demand Management Strategy and improvements in data through Action 02, 03 and 06 of the Road Haulage Strategy. It is set to be completed by Q3/Q4 2026.

Task No. 21

Develop Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region.

Relevant RPO 145: Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region.

Following the completion of a Project Charter setting out the scope and aims for this work, the Southern Regional Assembly continues to coordinate with the Department of Transport and engage with transport stakeholders, port companies, Local Authorities and other stakeholders to prepare the Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region in 2024. Specialist research services were secured in early 2024 to demonstrate the significance of the socio - economic impact and future growth potential of port and harbour activities and their associated enterprises and supply chains for the economy of the Region (as individual and combined regional assets), the opportunities for a lower carbon future and role of ports to enable offshore renewable energy development. This analysis will also provide an evidence base to communicate the important future role of our ports and harbours to achieve balanced regional economic development. This work will input into the review of National Ports Policy targeted for adoption in Q1 2025 and other strategic plans for our Region's coastal and maritime areas. A submission was submitted to the Issues Paper for the National Ports Policy review in January 2024.

Task No. 22

Develop Airport Strategy for the Southern Region.

Relevant RPO 149: Airport Strategy for the Southern Region.

Following the completion of a Project Charter setting out the scope and aims for this work, the Southern Regional Assembly continues to coordinate with the Department of Transport and engage with transport, airports, Local Authorities and other stakeholders to prepare an Airport Strategy for the Southern Region in 2024-2025. As part of this work, the Southern Regional Assembly intends to procure specialist research services to demonstrate the significance of the economic impact of airport infrastructure and associated services, enterprise and supply chains to the economy of the region (as individual and combined regional assets), the opportunities for a lower carbon future for the sector and communicate the important future role of our airport assets to achieve balanced regional development. This work will input into a future review of national aviation policy scheduled to commence in 2025.

Task No. 23

Sustainable Mobility.

Relevant RPOs 151-174: and RPO 176 for sustainable mobility, enhanced regional connectivity and a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable society.

Progress on the RSES Transport Strategy and National Sustainable Mobility Plan (SMP) includes:

Participation in SMP Leadership Team, SMP Delivery Team and the managing authority for National Pathfinder Project 30, the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Accelerator Programme in each of the three Regions to enable the design and implementation of smart and sustainable mobility projects and achieve greater levels of behavioural change and modal shift to reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector. The Southern Regional Assembly is the managing authority on behalf of the Department of Transport and three Regional Assemblies to deliver this 3-Year project. The Programme was launched in 2023. Quarterly meetings took place with Track One stakeholders (Local Authorities) over 2024. Training for Track Two stakeholders (Councillors) will take place in Q2 2025.

Continued support for capacity building and actions to implement 10–15-minute cities, towns and neighbourhoods in action, building upon the publication of Southern Regional Assembly's 10 Minute Town Methodology and Framework Report. Preparation and implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies (CMATS, LSMATS and WMATS), Local Transport Plans and Sustainable Urban Mobility Liaison with DoT/NTA on Demand Management and submission to initial Demand Management consultation via questionnaire. Implement Blue Green There has been ongoing engagement with Local Authorities Task Infrastructure (BGI) and and other agencies to promote BGI and NBS including working No. with ESPON and Maynooth University on a joint seminar held **Nature-Based Solutions** 24 (NBS) for infrastructure in December 2023. Ongoing meetings of the Regional Nature provision. Forum are held which provide a supporting structure for Local Authorities, agencies and other practitioners involved in the practical application of BGI and NBS and act as a forum to Relevant RPO 124: Green Infrastructure. discuss common issues/barriers and for sharing knowledge.

This task continues the work of the INTERREG EUROPE Blue Green City Project.

Task No. 25

Develop Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy Roadmap.

Relevant RPO 98: Regional Renewable Energy Strategy.

Along with the other two Regional Assemblies, the Regional Planning team has taken part in consultation meetings with the SEAI and Government Departments (DECC and DHLGH) on development of a Roadmap for preparation of Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies (RRES) by each Regional Assembly. This task is an action of the Government's Climate Action Plan and a National Policy Objective (NPO) in the First Draft Revised NPF.

Task No. 26

Regional Decarbonisation.

Relevant RPO 90: Regional Decarbonisation.

Research on Territories and Low-carbon Economy has been carried out as part of the ESPON Locate Project and will provide useful background research for the preparation of a Regional Decarbonisation Plan. The South-East Energy Agency (SEEA) is also undertaking some preliminary work for a Regional Decarbonisation Plan (RDP) as part of the REGIO 1st Interreg Project.

Task No. 27

Co-ordination of Climate Action with Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO).

Relevant RPOs 87: Low Carbon Energy Future; 88 National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework: 89 Building Resilience to Climate Change; and 90: Regional Decarbonisation.

The Regional Planning Team continues to engage in quarterly Steering Group meetings with the CARO Southern Seaboard South, on matters related to Climate Action and the Local Authority Climate Action Plans.

Task No. 28	Identify the scope and role of the Regional Landscape Strategy for the Region. Relevant RPO 129: Landscape.	Progress on this task has been delayed pending the development of the National Landscape Strategy.
Task No. 29	Support the development of the Eastern Corridor and on-going support to the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative. Relevant RPOs 41: Atlantic Economic Corridor and 42: Eastern Corridor.	Details of implementation for the Atlantic Economic Corridor is outlined in Chapter 4 A Creative and Innovative Region. Preliminary research on the Eastern Corridor was undertaken in 2023 has been followed by engagement with Southern Regional Assembly elected members from Wexford and a meeting with the Executive at Wexford County Council. Further engagement with Wexford County Council and other stakeholders is taking place. Substantive engagement with this process has been developed through the FutureECOS project.
Task No. 30	Develop capacity and strengthen the bidding capacity of local authorities, government agencies and regional stakeholders. Relevant RPO 70: Bidding Capacity.	Implementation on this is ongoing through submissions on Development Plans, development of workshops and engagement with Local Authorities and the ETC Network.
Task No. 31	Marine Spatial Planning. Relevant RPOs 76: Marine Economy; 77 Marine Spatial Planning – Consistency and Alignment; and 78: First Mover under the National Marine Planning Framework.	Coordination is ongoing with the DECC- Marine Policy and Legislation Division on regional roles in future Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAPS) processes. The Southern Regional Assembly participated in stakeholder engagement in the development of the Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) for the South Coast (Offshore Renewable Energy) and in the preparation of the Offshore Renewable Energy Future Framework Policy Statement.
Task No. 32	Regional Enterprise Plans. Relevant Regional Strategy Statement: 5 A Strong Economy.	The Southern Regional Assembly continues to participate in the implementation of Regional Enterprise Plans, including taking the role of action leader and action partner to assist thematic working groups convened to implement the SW, SE, MW REPs as required. Participation on implementation steering committees and networking with the three REP Programme Managers also takes place.
Task No. 33	Develop Bioeconomy through the ROBIN Project. Relevant RPOs 57: National Policy Statement on Bioeconomy; and 58 Bioeconomy and Rural Areas.	Led by the EU Programmes Division, the Regional Planning team is involved in the ongoing delivery of the ROBIN project, which aims to empower Europe's regions to adapt their governance models and structures in ways that accelerate the achievement of their circular bioeconomy targets while promoting social innovation and accounting for different territorial contexts. The project has developed ROBIN Support Actions for Bioeconomy Governance and is now testing a ROBIN Toolbox Environmental Protection Planning Tool.

Task No. Develop Southern Regional Assembly's role in Placemaking and Sustainable and Compact Settlements.

Relevant RPOs 31: Sustainable Place Framework; 34 Regeneration, Brownfield and Infill Development; and 35 Support for Compact Growth. The Southern Regional Assembly prepared submissions as part of the consultation for the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements- Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHLGH, 2024). Possible further involvement with the Department was discussed, to promote best practice in design and place-making and assisting local authorities in this area. The Southern Regional Assembly is also a partner in an Interreg Europe project titled PROXIMITIES, which will promote the concept of good place-making and the compact growth approach in peripheral locations of the Region's 3 Cities- Cork, Limerick and Waterford. A Study Visit to Regio Emilia in Italy took place during 2024, which is the lead partner in the project.

Representation of the regional view and engagement in ongoing relevant EU, national and regional policy implementation processes/fora including:

LASNTG – Local Authority Services National Training Group – The Southern Regional Assembly developed on behalf of the three assemblies the Regional Assembly module of the new national planning training course.

Department of Transport - Sustainable Mobility Policy - Leadership Group.

Project Ireland 2040 Board.

National Climate Change Adaptation Forum.

National Strategic Environmental Assessment Forum.

Irish Water National Water Resource Plan and Regional Water Resource Plans.

Regional Enterprise Plans; Steering Group participation for SW, MW, SE Regional Enterprise Plans.

Regional Skills Forum (SW, MW, SE).

Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT).

Town Centre First.

Steering group - Coastal Change Management Strategy.

LECP Advisory Group.

Planning for Climate Change Steering Group.

Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Consultation and coordination with DoT, TII and NTA for the implementation of the RSES Transport Strategy including preparation and implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies (CMATS, LSMATS and WMATS) and Local Transport Plans.

All Island Strategic Rail Review - Department of Transport.

National Rail Freight Strategy review with larnród Éireann.

National Marine Planning Framework – consultation with DHLGH Marine Planning Policy Division.

Engagement, research, and training through OPR Forum.

Academic research with UCD (under the Irish Research Council Enterprise Partnership Scheme) on Achieving Regional Equality – Urban Rural Dynamics in Irelands Southern Region EU-Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Policy.

International Transport Forum (ITF).

Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources Steering Committee.

National Mirror Group for Mission Cities.

Decarbonisation Zones Steering Group.

Irish Planning Institute (IPI) Marine Planning Committee.

Submissions Made by the Southern Regional Assembly in 2024

- Review of National Ports Policy submission 15.01.2024.
- Moving Together: A Strategic Approach to Improving the Efficiency of Ireland's Transport System - Questionnaire submission 21.08.2024.
- Draft Cork Wastewater Strategy Consultation 23.07.2024.
- Cork County LECP Southern Regional Assembly Report, Southern Regional Assembly Statement, Southern Regional Assembly Statement of Consistency.
- Clare LECP Southern Regional Assembly Report, Southern Regional Assembly Statement, Southern Regional Assembly Statement of Consistency.
- ORE Future Framework Policy Statement -19.02.2024.
- Response to Draft South Coast DMAP 14-06-24.
- National Energy and Climate Plan Southern Regional Assembly Submission 27.06.2024.
- Draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050.
- Limerick Blue Green Ring Masterplan.
- Carlow Graiguecullen JULAP Final Submission 2.2.20 24 LS issue.
- Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan Material Alterations Submission Draft for Issue to Members.
- Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2025 Southern Regional Assembly Submission 12.07.2024.
- Draft First Revision of the NPF Review.

Submissions can be found on the Resources and Publications section of the Southern Regional Assembly website.



Southern Regional Assembly's Claire Breen, Kevin Lynch, Kevin Twomey at Strategic Planning Area Meeting, Limerick



ERDF Regional Programmes

Overview

The Southern Regional Assembly is the Managing Authority for the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-27 and the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme 2014-20. Both programmes are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The ERDF aims to strengthen EU economic, social, and territorial cohesion by correcting imbalances between regions.

Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021 - 2027







The Programme invests €663 million (€265 million ERDF, €398 million national) in research and innovation, energy efficiency, and sustainable urban regeneration. In partnership with the European Commission, Member State, Intermediate Bodies, and other stakeholders. the Assembly developed eight schemes to implement the Programme's objectives.

Strategic Priority	Schemes
Developing Smarter More Competitive Regions	ARC Hub, Technology Gateways, Innovators Initiative, KT Boost, Smart Regions, TU RISE
Creating Greener, More Energy Efficient Regions and a Just Transition	Warmer Homes
Sustainable Urban Development	THRIVE - Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme

ARC Hub: Led by Research Ireland, this scheme supports the creation of two regional smart hubs to drive research commercialisation and regional innovation. These hubs were selected in 2024 and will be launched in 2025. The two ARC Hubs funded under the ARC Hub scheme are identified within the Programme as Operations of Strategic Importance and are aligned with Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Enterprise Ireland is the Intermediate Body for four schemes:

Technology Gateways: Funding supports personnel in Technological Universities (TUs) and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) whose roles are to increase their engagement with and support of local industry. The 16 co-funded Gateways, each with their own expertise, act as a bridge between industry and a defined research group who will carry out the technical work for the client company.

Innovators' Initiative: Fuelling the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovation leaders through dedicated needs-led immersive learning, three new Innovators Initiative

programmes were launched in 2024 - Cyber-Innovate, DigiBio (digital health) and FAST-IP (agri-tech). Each programme features a strong focus on market opportunity using design thinking methodologies and a period of immersion for the participants in organisations at the coalface of the relevant sector.



Ronan O'Brien, Southern Regional Assembly, and Mark Whelan, Enterprise Ireland



Karen Coughlan, Southern Regional Assembly, Simon Coveney, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Teresa Hooks, Northern and Western Regional Assembly and Marina Donohoe, Enterprise Ireland, and the KT Boost Launch, December 2024

KT Boost: Delivering skills sets that will support an increase in research commercialisation outcomes within the higher education sector across the programme area and develop a consistent operational quality across the Knowledge Transfer System. These specialist roles supported will continue to develop and new resources to place a focus on knowledge and technology transfer activities including IP Management and prospective licensing, and spin-off creation. With 11 beneficiaries, the scheme ensures Ireland's higher education sector has the capacity to commercialise research effectively.

Smart Regions: The aim of the Smart Regions (Enterprise Innovation) Scheme is to accelerate economic growth across all regions with a focus on enterprise development. It supports the development of innovative services through local infrastructure, innovation clusters, Services to SME's and early-stage feasibility and priming research. This will lead to the establishment of modern innovation infrastructure, research facilities, organisations focused on disseminating knowledge, and innovation clusters. 15 projects were awarded funding at the end of 2024. This funding call remains open.

TU RISE: Enhances research and innovation capacity in TUs and IoTs, fostering collaboration with regional enterprises and advancing national and regional strategic goals. The Higher

Education Authority is the Intermediate Body with 6 higher education institutions benefiting from funding: Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT, Munster Technological University, South East Technological University, Technological University Dublin and Technological University of the Shannon.



Professor Veronica Campbell, President SETU, at SETU TU RISE launch

Warmer Homes: Provides fully funded home retrofits to owner-occupiers at risk of fuel poverty, improving energy efficiency and living conditions through the SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland) Warmer Homes scheme.

THRIVE - Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme: Supports the revitalisation of vacant



Attendees at 'Building the Future' an European Urban Initiative Capacity Building Event for THRIVE Applicants and Beneficiaries, Limerick, November 2024

and derelict heritage buildings and town centres in key towns, strategic growth centres, and cities, fostering vibrant, sustainable communities. 15 Strand 1 projects and four Strand 2 projects were awarded funding in 2024. A further round of funding will be awarded in 2025. THRIVE has been co-designed by the Southern Regional Assembly and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and is aligned with Town Centre First and New European Bauhaus values and principles. This scheme is managed by the Southern Regional Assembly with 100% funding available to Local Authorities.

Southern and Eastern Regional Programme 2014 – 2020

Funded activities under the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme 2014-20 came to an end in 2023 with the completion of the final projects. The focus in 2024 was on processing the final claims from local authorities under

the Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme, supporting Commission evaluation work, and commencing programme closure activities.

The Programme co-financed activities under six priority areas: Strengthening Research, Technology, Development & Innovation, SME Competitiveness, Low Carbon Economy, Coronavirus Response, Sustainable Urban Development and Technical Assistance (programme management supports).



EU Funding Programmes

Overview

European Funding Programmes, which are supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), provides co-funding to a number of Interreg programmes where Irish partners are eligible to receive funding for projects under the 2021-2027 programming period. These include:

- Interreg North-West Europe
- Interreg Northern Periphery & Arctic

- Interreg Atlantic Area
- Interreg Europe
- Urban Innovative Actions and URBACT
- ESPON
- Peace Plus cross border

In 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly was actively involved in the monitoring and delivery of European Funding Programmes in Ireland.

Programme	Southern Regional Assembly Role
Interreg North-West Europe	Member State Representative on the Programme Monitoring Committee
	Contact Point in Ireland
	Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners
Interreg Northern Periphery & Arctic	Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners in the Southern & Eastern region
Interreg Europe	Contact Point in the Southern & Eastern region Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners in the Southern & Eastern region
URBACT	Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners in the Southern & Eastern region
ESPON	Representative on the Programme Monitoring Committee

First Level Control (FLC)

First Level Control (FLC) involves checks or audits of project expenditure during project implementation before a payment claim is submitted. The Assembly's FLC team validates expenditure claims for four E.T.C. programmes -North-West Europe, Northern Periphery & Arctic, Interreg Europe and URBACT.

It is the responsibility of each Member State to set up a control system in its country.

The FLC team verifies and validates expenditure incurred by a project partner/lead partner to ensure compliance with the relevant EU, national, regional, institutional and programme rules as well as with the provisions of the subsidu contract and the approved application form. These controls provide a guarantee for the

Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority and, most importantly, for the project itself, that costs co-financed under E.T.C. funded Programmes are accounted for and eligible.

Previously, FLC covered 100% of all project expenditure declared, however, for the 2021 to 2027 programming period, Interreg has established a risk-based sampling methodology that will be implemented in accordance with the criteria set out by the European Commission.

Controllers will not automatically check 100% of the expenditure declared by the project partners but may decide to check 100% if errors are detected in the sample selected.

The FLC system consists of two types of verification checks:

- 1. Desk based administrative checks using the risk-based sampling methodology on expenditure declared in payment claims.
- On-the-spot checks that take place at the project partner's office and carried out on a sample basis (checking a sample of all certified expenditure over the life of the project).

Activity Update 2024

During 2024, the Assembly's FLC team audited and validated 131 project claims worth €3,695,692.07 to Irish organisations participating as project partners and lead partners on the four European Territorial Cooperation programmes.

The Controllers of the FLC Unit attended a number of online webinars during the year. Details are as follows.

- National Controllers Support Webinar organised by URBACT and held on Thursday 25th January 2024.
- Interreg NWE Controller webinar organised by North-West Europe and held on Wednesday 7th February 2024.
- NWE Reporting webinar for Small-Scale Projects, organised by North-West Europe and held on Tuesday 21st May 2024.
- NWE Reporting webinar for Approved Projects organised by North-West Europe and held on 23rd May 2024.
- A Controller from the FLC unit, Michael Buckley attended the URBACT Ireland APNs network meeting on Wednesday the 21st, February 2024 at the Absolute Hotel, Sir Harry's Mall Limerick City. A presentation on FLC including the URBACT programme

- requirements and the general eligibility rules was delivered at the network meeting.
- A Controller from the FLC unit, Elayne McDonnell attended the national controller training session in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Thursday 25th September 2024. This workshop was organised by the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) Programme Secretariat.
- A Controller from the FLC unit, Michael Buckley attended the second day of the NWE Annual Event in Croke Park Dublin on the 6th of November 2024. The Controller met with a number of project partners to discuss various queries on First Level Control.

The various events as outlined above were organised to disseminate information on the 21-27 Programme requirements (FLC system, on-the spot-checks, procurement, sampling methodology and simplified cost options) to Controllers who are validating expenditure claims for four E.T.C. programmes - North-West Europe, Northern Periphery & Arctic, Interreg Europe and URBACT during the 21-27 programming period.

During 2024, we continued to update the new online resource section on FLC on the Assembly's website with information on audit and programme-specific guidance for project partners, including programme guides to the new programme period 2021 – 2027.

For further information on First Level Control: email FLC@southernassembly.ie Website: www.southernassembly.ie/first-level-control.



European Funding Network

Overview

The European Funding Network is a collaborative forum for anyone working on or interested in European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) projects across the Southern Region. With over 300 members, the network fosters knowledge exchange, peer learning, and partnerships to support sustainable regional development.

Membership benefits include:

- Monthly updates on EU programmes and funding opportunities
- Online and in-person events throughout the year
- Capacity-building sessions shaped by members' needs
- Opportunities to connect Local Authorities, Higher Education Institutions, SMEs, and Civil Society
- Targeted networking and collaboration

Members are involved in a wide range of programmes including Interreg (Europe, North-West Europe, Atlantic Area, Northern Periphery and Arctic, URBACT, ESPON), as well as other EU-funded initiatives such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Creative Europe, LIFE, and Just Transition.

The Southern Regional Assembly facilitates the ETC Network, but it is shaped and driven by its members.

Interreg Europe Call 3 Information Webinar for Ireland

In April 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly's ETC Network and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly's EU Funding Network coorganised the Interreg Europe Call 3 Information Webinar for Ireland in collaboration with the Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat. Both Assemblies act as National Contact Points for Interreg Europe and jointly hosted the session to support Irish stakeholders in engaging with the programme's Third Call for project proposals, which ran from 20 March to 7 June 2024. The event was moderated by Áine Whelan (Southern Regional Assembly) and Travis O'Doherty (Northern and Western Regional Assembly).

The webinar provided practical guidance on the application process, available support services, and opportunities for interregional cooperation. Attendees also heard valuable insights from José Manuel San Emeterio Pérez (ERNACT) and Ronan Gingles (Cork City Council), who shared their experience of delivering Interreg Europe projects. The event attracted strong interest from local authorities, higher education institutions, and civil society, highlighting the importance of cross-regional collaboration for better policy-making.



Áine Whelan, Southern Regional Assembly, at the Interreg Europe Call 3 Information Webinar

ETC Network Webinar - URBACT & European Urban Initiative Overview with Dr. Karl Murphy

In September 2024, the ETC Network hosted a webinar with Dr. Karl Murphy, EU Affairs Officer at the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly and Ireland's National Contact Point for both the European Urban Initiative (EUI) and URBACT. Moderated by Áine Whelan (Southern Regional Assembly), the session provided an overview of both programmes and outlined upcoming opportunities for those working with or within Local Authorities in the Southern Region. EUI was introduced as a key instrument supporting cities to test and scale up innovative, EU-relevant urban solutions. He highlighted the Third Call for Innovative Actions, open from 6 May to 14 October 2024, with up to €5 million in ERDF funding available per project under the themes of energy transition and technology in cities. The webinar also touched on capacitybuilding support, funding mechanisms, and resources available to urban authorities through both EUI and URBACT.

Access Europe Showcase 2024 -Croke Park, Dublin

In November 2024, The ETC Network was proudly represented at the Access Europe Showcase 2024 in Croke Park, Dublin. Organised as part of Access Europe, a support and capacity-building programme for Irish civil society organisations delivered by The Wheel, the event featured an expo of Irish National Contact Points for EU funding programmes.

The Assembly showcased opportunities under Interreg Europe and Interreg North-West Europe, while promoting the role of the ETC Network in fostering collaboration across the Southern Region.

The event provided a valuable platform for civil society organisations to explore EU funding opportunities, engage with National Contact Points, and connect with sector stakeholders.

For further information about the ETC Network:

Áine Whelan, EU Projects Officer: awhelan@ southernassembly.ie

Website:

www.southernassembly.ie/eu-programmes/eufunding-network/



Sarah Davoren & Áine Whelan, Southern Regional Assembly, at the Access Europe Showcase 2024 in Croke Park.

Interreg VB: Transnational Cooperation





North-West Europe

The Interreg North-West Europe (NWE) Programme fosters transnational cooperation to make North-West Europe a key economic player and an attractive place to work and live, with high levels of innovation, sustainability, and cohesion. Interreg NWE supports cooperation across borders in seven countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, and Switzerland). Projects must involve partners from at least three different countries and apply a joint approach to tackle common issues. The aim is to reduce the disparities among regions and raise the overall level of performance across the whole area.

Thematic focus 2021- 2027

The Interreg North-West Europe programme document outlines the five priorities for the 2021-2027 programme to focus on: Climate and Environment, Energy Transition, Circular Economy, Innovation and Resilience, and Inclusive Society.

Southern Regional Assembly and the Interreg North-West Europe programme

Southern Regional Assembly hosts the National Contact Point for Interreg North-West Europe in Ireland and holds a seat on the Monitoring Committee together with Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. The presidency of the Interreg North-West Europe programme was held by Ireland in 2024, and



Lord Mayor Dan Boyle speaks at the Interreg North West Europe Monitoring Committee meeting, hosted by the Irish Member State, Cork, December 2024.

Monitoring Committee (MC) meetings were held in Limerick and Cork in May and December respectively.

Funding awarded in 2024

25 projects from call 4 step 2 were approved after the Monitoring Committee meeting in Cork in December 2024. The projects cover **a wide** range of topics from renewable energy, access to the labour market, digitisation of biodiversity to technology for manufacturing development in the regions, and with an EU contribution of over €97 million across all 7 countries. Throughout 2024, projects from the 2014-2020 funding period also finalised their activities and were closed for expenditure. Call 5 was launched in June 2024 with a deadline of January 2025.



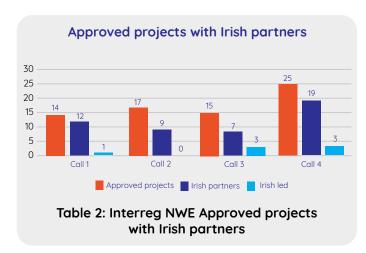
Irish Delegation at the Monitoring Committee, hosted by the Irish Member State in Limerick, May 2024

Irish performance in Interreg NWE Calls 1-4

Irish partners have performed very well in the four calls for Interreg North-West Europe funding launched since 2021. In 2024 alone, Call 4 saw over €19 million investment allocated to the Irish regions due to the success of Irish organisations involved in projects – either as project partners or as Lead Partners. Of the 25 projects approved, 19 projects had Irish partners (76%) there were 3 Irish led projects on the topics of Climate Change adaptation for river sediments, Supporting SMEs to adapt for energy efficiency, and Dairy Calf systems for better grassland management; led by MTU, South East Energy Agency and Teagasc respectively.

Region	Total investment in the region	E	EU Funds
Southern	€15,180,886	€9,108,532	38%
Eastern and Midland	€16,401,303	€9,809,319	41%
Northern and Western	€8,261,727	€4,857,127	21%
TOTAL	€39,843,916	€23,774,978	100%

Table 1: Interreg f investment by region



Promotion and support to project applicants

Activities to promote open Calls 4 and 5 continued throughout 2024, with the National Contact Point as speaker aiming to reach wider audiences with the objective of increased participation of Irish partners, including those from the Southern Region. The Annual Event took place in Croke Park in November 2024, where over 300 participants shared their project ideas, prepared for Call 5 and provided stakeholder input to the future of Cohesion Policy.



David Kelly, Director at the Interreg North West Europe Annual Event, Croke Park, November 2024

Further Information on Interreg NWE in Ireland

Sarah Davoren, National Contact Point: sdavoren@southernassembly.ie Financial Control: flc@southernassembly.ie

Website: www.nweurope.eu





The Atlantic Area programme aims to develop a more prosperous, sustainable and connected Atlantic Area. As a maritime territory, the Atlantic Strategy published in July 2020 (the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0), has been considered in the Programme design. The Interreg Atlantic Area 2021-2027 supports transnational cooperation in the Atlantic regions of four countries: Portugal, Spain, France and Ireland.

The programme budget for 2021-2027 is €113 million euros from the European Regional Development Fund. The co-financing rate for projects approved is up to 75% of the total investment.

The Atlantic Area programme consists of four Priority Axes and associated objectives; projects must fall under these categories if they are to be eligible for consideration:

Priority 1: Blue innovation and competitiveness

Priority 2: Blue/Green environment

Priority 3: Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture

Priority 4: A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic Area

No new projects were approved in 2024. In 2024 there were 2 Programme Monitoring Committee Meetings.

For further information:

National Contact Point: todoherty@nwra.ie First Level Control: flc@nwra.ie Website: https://www.atlanticarea.eu/





Northern Periphery and Arctic

The Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme provides a framework for regions to work together with a focus on promoting sustainable development in remote and sparsely populated communities.

The Programme area covers Northern Finland, the West of Ireland, Northern Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and Northern parts of Norway. The Programme encourages effective cooperation, to maximise place-based development, builds on the strengths within sparsely populated communities, and to find innovative solutions to support links into larger markets and more populated areas. The eligible counties in Ireland are: Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry and Cork.

The main focus of Interreg NPA projects is the transnational learning between project partners. Grant funding rates of up to 65% are provided. The Interreg NPA Programme addresses the challenges and opportunities in the programme area through 3 Priorities:

Priority 1: Strengthening the innovation capacity for resilient and attractive NPA

communities.

Priority 2: Strengthening the capacity for climate change adaptation, and

resource sufficiency in NPA

communities.

Priority 3: Strengthening the organisational

capacity among NPA communities to

make use of cooperation

opportunities.

The Southern Regional Assembly sits on the Programme's Regional Advisory Group and is the designated First Level Control for all payment claims from partners located in the region.

In 2024 a total of 25 main projects were approved, with a total funding amount of just over €14 million ERDF under the 2021- 2027 Programme.

In 2024 there were two Programme Monitoring Committee meetings and two Regional Appraisal Group meetings.

For further information:

National Contact Point: todoherty@nwra.ie First Level Control: flc@southernassembly.ie /

flc@nwra.ie

Website: www.interreg-npa.eu



Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme, co-funded by the European Union. The European Union strives to reduce disparities in the levels of development, growth and quality of life in and across Europe's regions. This programme contributes to this objective by helping regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy and runs from 2021 to 2027. It is dedicated to capacity building through the exchange of experience and good practices in all priorities of the EU cohesion policy via:

- Interregional cooperation projects
- Policy Learning Platform services

The cooperation projects and Platform contribute to all priorities of the EU cohesion policy:













Call 1 was launched in 2022 where 134 applications were received and 72 applications were approved, including 36 Irish organisations involved in 27 projects. Call 2 was launched in March 2023 with the Monitoring Committee approving 78 applications again with very good Irish participation involving 34 organisations participating in 25 projects.

The third, and final open call, was launched in 2024 with the Monitoring Committee meeting in December approving 112 projects, with 17 Irish Organisations participating in 21 projects.

There will be a call for pilot operations in 2025.

Regional Contact Point for Southern & Eastern regions:

David Kelly: dkelly@southernassembly.ie First Level Control: flc@southernassembly.ie / info@nwra.ie

Website: www.interregeurope.eu/

URBACT IV



URBACT is a European programme which promotes integrated sustainable urban development in cities and towns across Europe. URBACT IV speaks to INTERREG Specific Objective (ISO 1): a better cooperation governance by enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement urban territorial strategies. The Programme seeks to improve the ability of all urban stakeholders (as change agents) to design and implement sustainable urban development policies, practices and innovations in ways that are integrated, participative and place based.

A new project type was launched in early 2024 - Innovation Transfer Networks (ITN). a collaboration between URBACT and the European Urban Initiative (EUI). A little different to APNs and TNs, ITNs' main output sees a tailored Investment and Continuity Plan produced for each of the partners' localities. Other important features of URBACT are its emphasis on being participatory and integrated, this seen concretely through the insistence of URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) for each project partner, bringing together the most pertinent stakeholders in each locality, best identified by the project's thematic focus.

In terms of project partners currently active, there are seven project partners participating in APNs from six Irish local authorities. These projects got underway in June 2023 and include Ennis (Clare), Balbriggan (Fingal), Limerick City (1 and 2), Ballymahon (Longford), Navan (Meath) and Sligo Town. Fingal leads their network "EcoCore", the first time an Irish local authority has led an URBACT project. Following the call for ITNs two more Irish partners began their URBACT journeus in September 2024: Dublin City Council (WISH CITIES) and Sanduford Business District (ReCUP).

In October 2024, three Irish local authorities were awarded the URBACT Good Practice label: Dublin City Council, Limerick City and County Council and Cork City Council. Local authorities

from around Europe had been invited to submit effective practices, policies and projects that they have successfully put into place in their locality. Each of the 116 validated Good Practices will showcase their projects during the URBACT City Festival in April 2025 in Wroclaw, Poland.

An URBACT-EUI Ireland Information Session occurred at the Custom House. Dublin in January 2024. This saw the launch of the call for Innovation Transfer Networks (ITNs). A second information session occurred online in April, focusing on the call for URBACT Good Practices. URBACT was presented multiple times throughout the country, including to the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), at the AIR Conference in Adare, the Town Regenerations Officer Network meeting in Athlone, also as part of a Conference on Ireland's Future Towns and Cities, to the Southern Regional Assembly's ETC network online, and was also showcased as part of an exhibition in Dublin Castle during an event on the Future of Cohesion Policy.

A meet-up of the active URBACT network partners in Ireland occurred in Limerick too. This event included project updates, a training session with FLC Michael Buckley and site visits.

A National Campus occurred in Balbriggan which was focused on the implementation and funding stage of the active Action Planning Networks. The event delivered training using resources from the URBACT toolbox to help the partners best implement and fund their Action Plans into the future. Other sessions included one to "meet the funders" (which the Southern



Attendees at the Urbact National Campus, Balbriggan

Regional Assembly participated in), and there was a Climate Fresk Workshop in another session during the two-day event.

During 2024, two of the Irish URBACT APN partners (Ennis and Limerick) hosted the visit of their whole transnational network in their localities in April and June, respectively. The Contact Point also participated in URBACT Local Group meetings of three Project Partners in Ireland.

During the year, there were also two Programme Monitoring Committee meetings held: one in Ghent, Belgium in June and one in Veszprém, Hungary in October.

To learn more:

National Contact Point for Ireland: Karl Murphy, Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly urbactireland@emra.ie/kmurphy@emra.ie





ESPON 2030

The new ESPON 2030 programme, running for the period 2021-2027, bridges research with policy, ensuring policy is evidence-informed. This is achieved through providing territorial analyses, data, and maps to:

- Support EU development policies and particularly Cohesion Policy - with facts and evidence.
- Help public authorities to benchmark their region or city, identify new challenges and potentials and shape successful development policies for the future.

All 27 EU member states and four partner states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) participate in the ESPON programme and contribute to its co-finance.

As with every EU funded programme, ESPON is managed by a Managing Authority, which is the Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning of Luxembourg. The Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute is the National Contact Point for the ESPON 2030 programme while the Southern Regional Assembly sits on the Programme Monitoring Committee.

The programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation), which is a structure, jointly created by Luxembourg together with the three Belgian regions of Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels Capital. During 2024, the ESPON Monitoring Committee met on [x] occasions with the Managing Authority and EGTC to advance the roll-out of the programme, while the National Contact Points met on two occasions to consider its promotion and dissemination.

The total budget of ESPON for the programming period 2021- 2027 is €60m, whereof the EU contribution is 80% (€48m) and the contribution of the 27 member states is 20% (€12m). In addition, the ESPON 2030 Programme receives support of €1.685m from the four Partner States (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland). ESPON creates evidence and knowledge with a territorial focus. This is done in three key ways: (1) European Research Projects, (2) Targeted Analysis Projects, and (3) On-Demand Analysis. ESPON develop studies based on the needs of European public authorities at all levels. Anu local, regional, or national authority as well as an EU institution can become an ESPON stakeholder.

A key innovation of the ESPON 2030 Programme is to take a more strategic approach to investigating territorial challenges through Thematic Action Plans (TAPs). To date, 8 TAPS are in operation, ranging from Climate Neutral Territories to Governance of New Geographies and Smart Connectivity to Living, Working and Travelling across Borders.

The past year saw all aspects of the ESPON 2030 programme rolled-out. This included:

- The continued approval of European Research projects, and initial outputs from those approved in 2023 (ranging from briefing papers, news articles, etc.).
- Two open calls under Targeted Analysis.
- The publication of three issues of the ESPON Journal, TerritoriALL; focusing on Take no land no more: soil matters! (February), Ensuring Quality Services: a territorial perspective (July) which included a focus on remote working trends incl. Ireland's National Connected Hub Network, and Empowering Communities (November);
- The hosting of two international seminars -No net land take trajectories in Europe held in June in Mons, Belgium, and Ensuring

- quality services for all people and places held in November in Budapest, Hungary;
- The publication of policy papers, scientific reports and case studies on topics such as the role of small and medium-sized towns and cities in territorial development, empowering small and medium sized cities for balanced territorial development. digital innovation in governance and public service provision, delivery of services of general interest in lagging regions and areas with special needs and functional urban areas - all of which are available from the ESPON library.

During the course of 2024, ESPON Ireland hosted one on-line event, the focus of which was on Measuring Digital Maturity in Local and Regional Government: Supports from ESPON. Held on the 5th of December, this halfday event introduced attendees to the ESPON LORDIMAS digital maturity assessment tool and the experiences of a number of Irish local authorities in applying the tool to determine their digital maturity. Digital Maturity Assessment provides local (and regional) authorities with a baseline on where they are with their digital transformation journey at a point in time and identifies what opportunities exist going forward.

ESPON LORDIMAS, developed in collaboration with a number of agencies including Living-in. EU, is a free and interactive tool that empowers local and regional governments across Europe to assess their digital progress, foster open data sharing and promote more efficient governance. This is timely given the publication in July 2024 of Ireland's digital and ICT strategy for local government, entitled Digital Local Government: Working for everyone, Ireland's Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy 2030. This strategy, closely aligned to the European Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles, recognises the growing role of technology and digitalisation in the delivery of services at local government level - leading, ideally, to a more effective, efficient and timely delivery.

Further events are planned for 2025 in the thematic areas of governance of new geographies, nature-based adaptation to climate change and living, working and travelling across borders.

For further information:

Caroline Creamer is the ESPON Contact Point (ECP): Email: caroline.creamer@mu.ie

Website: www.espon.eu X Platform: @ESPON_IE



Delegates at the ESPON Seminar, ensuring quality services for all people and places, held in Budapest on 6-7 November 2024.



EU Projects





TALENT4S3

TALENT4S3 - Retention and attraction of TALENT for a better deployment of Smart Specialisation Strategies, brings together territories from across Europe, including the Southern Region of Ireland to address one of the most pressing challenges in the European Union: brain drain and regional depopulation. Through local and regional policy improvements, the goal is to foster an environment where talented individuals choose to stau and contribute to their local economies rather than move due to lack of opportunities.

Interreg Europe



Co-funded by the European Union

FutureECOS

FutureECOS - Future-proofing living spaces in growth corridor regions- brings together territories across Europe, including the Southern Region of Ireland, to work towards transforming growth corridor regions across Europe into sustainable, attractive, and technologically advanced living spaces. Through local and regional policy improvements. FutureECOS seeks to create living environments that are not only equipped for future challenges but also enhance the quality of life for all residents.





Co-funded by the European Union

PROXIMITIES

PROXIMITIES - Promoting accessible services. liveable spaces and sustainable connections in peripheral urban areas, is an Interreg Europe project which brings together partners from nine European regions to help local and regional authorities create greener, healthier, more accessible, and more liveable peripheral urban areas.

Led by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy, the project aims to improve policies that enhance accessibility, liveability, and sustainability in these territories. Running from April 2024 to June 2028, PROXIMITIES fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the sharing of good practices to support better public policy.

PROXIMITIES Kick-off and Masterclass

In May 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly joined eight European partners in launching the PROXIMITIES project. At the project's kick-off in Reggio Emilia, Italy, partners discussed common challenges and shared ambitions for policy improvement and territorial development.

During the first project Masterclass, the Southern Regional Assembly presented the "10 Minute Town" concept, originally developed through the Interreg Europe MATCH-UP project, as a good practice in promoting proximity-based planning. The session, led by the Erasmus Centre for Urban. Port and Transport Economics, also introduced the Proximity Landscape Assessment Tool (PLAT) and explored how proximity-based approaches can shape more inclusive and resilient communities.



Attendees at the PROXIMITIES Masterclass, May 2024

First Regional Stakeholder Group Meeting

In September 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly hosted the first Regional Stakeholder Group meeting for the PROXIMITIES project in Cork City. Stakeholders were introduced to the project's aims to enhance accessibility. sustainability, and liveability in peripheral urban areas, with contributions from national and local authorities, transport, planning, and environmental bodies.

The session featured a workshop on the Proximity Landscape Assessment Tool (PLAT), which will assess case study areas in Cork, Limerick, and Waterford. A presentation from the Department

of Housing also set the national context for sustainable residential development and compact growth.

Southern Regional Assembly represent PROXIMITIES at Interreg Europe Urban-Rural Workshop

The Southern Regional Assembly proudly represented the PROXIMITIES project at an Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform workshop on urban-rural connections, held online in November 2024. The event brought together policymakers and experts to explore integrated territorial development and stronger cooperation between urban and rural areas.

Eoin O'Connor, Executive Planner at the Southern Regional Assembly, presented the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region, which promotes balanced, sustainable growth across all territories. Participants also heard case studies from across Europe, sharing practical approaches to spatial planning, service delivery, and community-led development.

Assembly Members Briefed on PROXIMITIES Project

In December 2024, members of the Southern Regional Assembly were formally introduced to the PROXIMITIES project during the December meeting of the Assembly. Members were briefed on how the project supports regional planning goals, particularly in advancing compact growth and more sustainable, liveable peripheral urban areas.

The session featured presentations by Áine Whelan (EU Projects Officer), Brigh Ryan (Regional Planning Officer), and Kevin Twomey (Executive Planner), covering the project's objectives, policy alignment, and case study areas in Cork, Limerick, and Waterford. Members also learned about the Proximity Landscape Assessment Tool, developed with the Erasmus Centre for Urban, Port and Transport Economics, which will support improved accessibility and urban quality in peripheral areas. The meeting concluded with a discussion on PROXIMITIES' potential to inform policy and strengthen regional collaboration.

For further information about PROXIMITIES:

Áine Whelan, EU Projects Officer: awhelan@southernassembly.ie

Website: www.interregeurope.eu/proximities

Facebook: @ProximitiesProject
X @PROXIMITIES IE

Instagram @proximities_interregeurope

LinkedIn @proximities-project You Tube @PROXIMITIESProject



SMCNetZero was an 18-month Horizon Europe project which concluded in October 2024. The aim of the Project was to create and strengthen local innovation ecosystems in Small and Medium-Sized Cities (SMCs) to achieve net zero through the collaborative efforts of local authorities, SMEs, academia, NGOs, and investors. To achieve this vision, SMCNetZero had the

 Create opportunities and stimulate the dissemination of information and exchange of knowledge on best practices on decarbonization for SMCs (and as a result, SMEs).

following primary strategic objectives:

- Increase implementation prospects between providers of zero-emission solutions and public authorities from SMCs by designing, developing and providing a digital space and accompanying toolkit for collaborating, learning and networking.
- Identify and engage innovation leaders from the public and private sectors from "strong" innovator regions and "moderate" to "modest" innovator regions within the project's focus countries.
- Design and deploy engagement and knowledge-building activities for ensuring wide participation for SMCNetZero in order to maximise impact.
- Facilitate the understanding and implications of the implementation and scale-up of innovation projects in SMCs.

The Southern Regional Assembly engaged with local authorities in the region to participate in a capacity-building programme organised by SMC NetZero for relevant staff working in the areas of planning and climate action on how



SMCNetZero project partners in Copenhagen, Denmark, April 2024

to achieve the NetZero objectives as set out in their Climate Action Plans. This included online webinars which facilitated knowledge sharing and practical workshops for participants to develop a roadmap to net zero for their own local authority or organisation.

In April 2024, the Assembly arranged a study visit to Copenhagen for local authority management and operational level staff working in the areas of planning and climate action from Clare, Cork County and Laois County Councils. There, they engaged in targeted knowledge exchange with key enablers from the other SMC NetZero participating countries in the policy areas of energy efficiency, transport and mobility, and digital transformation and planning. Visits to living labs and demonstration sites in Copenhagen helped to bring case studies to life and imparted to participants an operational perspective of ideas and concepts that can be tailored to local contexts in their own countries.

The SMC NetZero project delivered various media assets during the year, with the Southern Regional Assembly responsible for researching, writing and disseminating blog articles on key thematic topics related to Project capacity-building. The article contents were prepared to inspire simpler, more agile methods of knowledge generation and takeup, both locally and across regions. The topics chosen for the articles covered: (i) Introduction to SMCNetZero Project;(ii) Energy Efficiency; (iii) Sustainable Mobility; (iv) Environmental Sustainability.



ROBIN is a 36-month Horizon Europe project which aims to empower Europe's regions to develop and adapt their bioeconomy governance models and structures in order to accelerate the achievement of their circular bioeconomy targets. ROBIN enables us to learn from and share knowledge with participating European regions and partners from Greece, Spain, Germany, and Slovakia, about ways to co-shape governance structures and models appropriate to our respective regions.

The Southern Regional Assembly and Munster Technological University's Circular Bioeconomy Research Group (CircBio) are the Irish partners for the Southern Region on ROBIN. The project is part of the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI), which was established by the European Commission to support Europe's green transition by boosting circularity at local and regional levels. The project will run until September 2025.

In June 2024, the Southern Regional Assembly and MTU co-hosted a workshop in Assembly House in Waterford on a regional strategy for bioeconomy governance. The event was organised as part of the Project's mission to develop the tools that would be deployed to

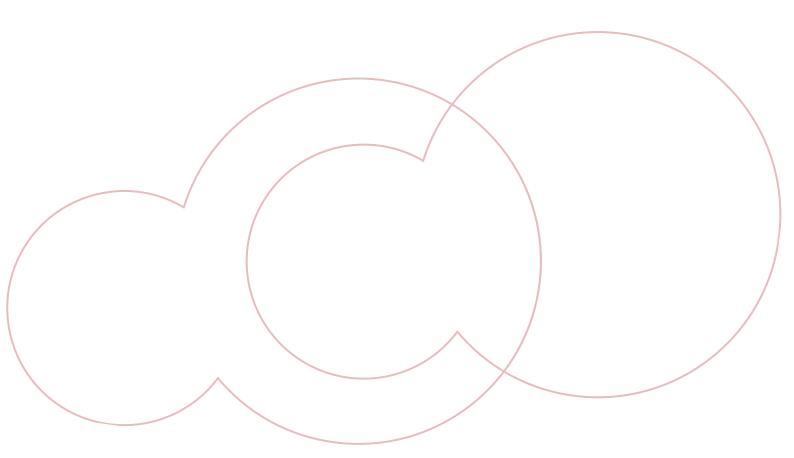
develop a roadmap for the governance of the bioeconomy in the southern region.

We were joined for the event by 14 government, industry, academic and civil society bioeconomy stakeholders who contributed positively to our discussion and offered their expertise and experience of what a regional strategy for the bioeconomy should contain and the priority areas on which attention should be focussed. The event was also an opportunity for stakeholders to be presented with the ROBIN Toolbox and participants worked in small groups to workshop and provide feedback on the tools in an alpha testing validation exercise.

Bioeconomy Ireland Week is an annual national week-long event held each October to highlight innovations and raise awareness of the bioeconomy in Ireland. The Irish partners on the ROBIN Project (Southern Regional Assembly and MTU) organised a seminar in Waterford on the theme 'Towards 2030: Developing a Circular Bioeconomy Governance Model for our Communities, Cities and Regions'. The event consisted of presentations from key stakeholders

in the Irish bioeconomy and was followed by a beta validation workshop of two of the tools in development by the ROBIN Project to support regions to develop bioeconomy governance models and strategies – the Circular Bioeconomy Governance Model Canvas and the Policy Monitoring Tool. Overall, the day was a great success. The quality of the presentations and the ensuing discussion and ROBIN tool validation workshop were of immense benefit to those in attendance based on feedback received, and a great many new contacts were made through informal networking.

In December 2024, the Project organised an online beta testing validation session of two other resources developed by the Project - the Typology Framework and Knowledge Platform. Participants were given an overview of the development of these resources and the potential of their practical implementation utility for policymakers. There followed a hands-on testing and validation of functionality, usability and performance by stakeholders, including by stakeholders representing regions outside of our own.





Irish Regions European Office



The Irish Regions European Office (IREO) is a shared service provides a shared service for the three Regional Assemblies and 31 local authorities of Ireland (LRAs). Operationally, the office is part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, and with the support of the Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government, the focus is on bringing the EU closer to the wider local government sector and vice versa.

The three Regional Assemblies play a vital role in the management and delivery of EU Regional Policy funding programmes in Ireland. All three Regional Assemblies also act as National Contact Points for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and participate in the monitoring committees of those programmes.

2024 was deemed to be an election year with European Parliament elections, local government elections and a general election in Ireland.

The IREO continued to deliver on its strategy, which aims to ensure that the office delivers timely, strategic advice and information on EU policy developments to the three Regional Assemblies and local authorities in Ireland and that it coordinates and supports the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

This strategy will be delivered by:

- Raising awareness and communicating the opportunities for participation in EU funding programmes
- Seeking opportunities for influencing EU policy developments
- Building capacity, networks and partnerships with other regions in the EU
- Signpost to the National Contact Points based in Regional Assemblies, highlighting their role in providing pre and post project development support
- Raising the profile of the strengths of local and regional Government in Ireland to European partners and to the EU institutions.

Raising Awareness and Communication

In February 2024, the IREO presented at the annual Association Irish Regions training seminar 'Shaping Ireland's Regional Development' which was held in Adare, Co Limerick. Teresa Lennon, Head of Office provided an overview of the work of the IREO and updated delegates on the work of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

The 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities took place in Mons on the 18th and 19th March 2024. A key feature of the regional agenda for the Belgian Presidency of the EU, the Summit was attended by over 3500 local and regional leaders from across Europe who gathered to shape the agenda for Europe's future, highlighting local and regional authorities' power to deliver and tackle challenges. Alongside the plenary and workshop sessions was a two-day Festival of Regions which featured regions from across Europe presenting their assets and their involvement in EU funding programmes.

Ireland was represented at the festival with the very popular Irish stand, which showcased the work of Ireland's Regional Assemblies including the Southern Regional Assembly and the Irish Regions European Office in Brussels. The stand offered the opportunity for Ireland to exchange ideas and build partnerships with regions from across Europe!

Influencing European Policy

In June 2024, the Minister of State for European Affairs, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill met with the Irish Delegation to the CoR in Government Buildings. The meeting with the Minister was used to highlight the work of the Delegation over the past five years and to discuss the new mandate for the Committee of the Regions. Members of the Delegation also briefed the Minister on the strategy for the IREO and the EU Local Government Support Service. The Minister assured the Delegation of her support for their work and the importance of local government participation in EU decision making through the Committee of the Regions.

The IREO has held regular meetings with Irish MEPs and the Irish Permanent Representation to stay informed about EU policy developments and has ensured discussions with Irish local authorities and regional assemblies. This has particularly

been the case for the future of cohesion policy post 2027. The IREO coordinated a Joint Assembly position paper on the future of cohesion policy and the Director of the Southern Regional Assembly, together with two Directors from the other Regional Assemblies visited Brussels in October 2024 to meet and lobby Irish MEPs on the need for a place-based approach to the future of cohesion policy.

The IREO has ensured Irish representation in position papers in correspondence with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on the future of cohesion policy and with Commissioner Fitto, the Commissioner for Cohesion Policy and Reform. The IREO organised for Regional Assembly participation in a seminar in the European Parliament and Irish representatives participated in meetings with three European Commissioners: Piotr Serafin, Raffaele Fitto and Roxana Minzatu.

Building capacity, networks and partnerships

The IREO continued to meet with a range of organisations in Brussels to promote the work of the Irish regions. The IREO has joined the Capital Cities and Regions Network (CCRN) and aims to

ensure the views of Irish Cities and Regions are presented to the EU institutions, particularly on regional policy.

In March 2024, the IREO joined the EURegions4Cohesion network, which represents over 130 regions across Europe. The group has sought to protect regional voices in the future of EU cohesion policy.

The IREO is advising local authorities on a regular basis on the types and forms of networks that can assist with understanding EU policy and funding programmes, as well as assist with building partnerships.

The IREO meets with counterparts from across the UK through attendance at regular events with the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish offices. This is to ensure that there is ongoing communication and exploration of any potential collaboration opportunities with local authorities and other stakeholders in the UK.

During 2024, the IREO worked with the Committee of the Regions to promote the Young Elected Politicians (YEP) programme across Ireland. This programme is a network of politicians who are no

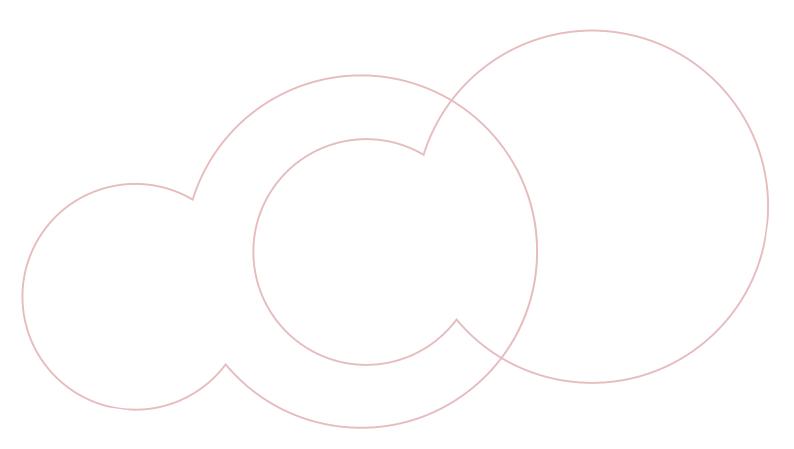


Directors of Regional Assemblies meet with Maria Walsh MEP and Teresa Lennon, Irish Regions European Office, in Brussels

older than 40 and hold a mandate at regional or local level in the EU. A call for applications to join the programme is published each year and YEPs have the opportunity to get in contact with other young politicians through the YEP Community, to attend trainings on EU topics, and to participate in activities organised by the CoR, including meetings with rapporteurs, events and seminars organised by the CoR, and communication activities.

Raising the profile of the strengths of local and regional Government

The IREO has organised meetings for all 3 Regional Assemblies to meet with the Irish MEPs, highlighting their role as Managing Authorities of ERDF and JTF funding programmes. In addition, at end of 2024, the IREO produced a booklet on the Impact of the Irish Delegation to the CoR for the 2020 – 2025 mandate. This highlights the 11 opinions produced by Irish Members and highlights the work and initiatives of the Irish delegation.





Committee of the Regions



European Committee of the Regions

IIREO is the secretariat to the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions and co-ordinates the work of the members of the national delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

The European Union's assembly of local and regional representatives, the CoR has 329 members from across the 27 EU Member States, all of whom are democratically elected and/or hold a political mandate in their home country. The CoR's role is to inform the development of EU legislation and future European policies through the input of those most closely representing communities, with a focus on those EU policy areas and proposals that most greatly affect regions and cities.

The CoR mainly presents its views through written opinions or resolutions, which are developed in one of six thematic commissions covering the following policy areas:

- Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)
- Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER)
- Economic Policy (ECON)
- Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)
- Natural Resources (NAT)
- Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)

Each Commission generally meets on five occasions during the year to prepare the opinions for adoption at the 5-6 plenary annual sessions. Commissioners, Presidency Ministers and MEPs regularly attend CoR meetings, and there is an ongoing exchange between the institutions on policy issues.

The Irish Delegation – Southern Region Representatives

The Head of the Irish Delegation was Cllr Michael Murphy, a Southern Regional Assembly representative from Tipperary County Council (up until and below is a list of CoR representatives for the Southern Region for 2020 – 2025.

Full Members	Council			
Michael Murphy	Tipperary County Council			
	*Resigned in Sept 2024 and			
	elected to Dail Eireann in			
	November 2024			
Deirdre Forde	Cork City Council			
	*Mandate ended in June 2024			
Kieran McCarthy	Cork City Council			
Alternate Members Council				
Gillian Coughlan	Cork County Council			
Conor McGuinness	Waterford City and County			
	Council			
	*Elected to Dail Eireann in			
	November 2024			
Dan Boyle	Cork City Council			

Further information on the Irish Delegation can be found at www.ireo.eu

Legislative Works

Irish Members continued to present opinions and make an impact in the Committee of the Regions. In total, Irish Members had three opinions adopted in 2024:

- SME Relief Package and BEFIT proposal Cllr. Kate Feeney
- EU Framework for Foreign Direct Investment Screening – Cllr. Michael Murphy
- Addressing Territorial Inequalities by Improving Access to Social Services – Cllr. Declan McDonnell

SME Relief Package and BEFIT proposal – Cllr. Kate Feeney

February 2024 saw the adoption of Cllr. Kate Feeney's opinion "The SME Relief Package and the BEFIT Framework". During her presentation Cllr. Feeney urged Europe to embrace the "think-small-first" philosophy which her opinion embraced. Following interventions from the floor the opinion was adopted.

EU Framework for Foreign Direct Investment Screening - Cllr. Michael Murphy

In November 2024 Cllr. Michael Murphy's opinion "EU Framework for Foreign Direct Investment Screening" was adopted unanimously at plenary. The opinion noted the threat of rising geopolitical tensions and security threats to the EU's critical infrastructure and subsequently the importance of investment screening regulations to protect essential sectors such as energy, healthcare, food supply and information networks. Crucially the opinion argued that in order to best protect these sectors the EU must involve local and regional authorities.

Addressing Territorial Inequalities by Improving Access to Social Services -Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Also, in November 2024 Cllr. Declan McDonnell had his opinion, "Addressing Territorial Inequalities by Improving Access to Social Services", adopted at plenary. The opinion emphasises the vital role of local authorities in ensuring equal access to social services, despite challenges such as insufficient infrastructure, lack of qualified professionals and financial constraints, especially in remote areas. The Delegation continued to act as the key link between the Committee and the Irish Representation. The Delegation also held meetings with Irish MEPs as well as with the Irish Commission representatives to voice the needs of the Irish local government on the EU stage. The Delegation, assisted by the IREO, continued observing all relevant policy dossiers and made interventions, via amendments as well as commission and plenary interventions.

Overview of the work of the CoR in 2024

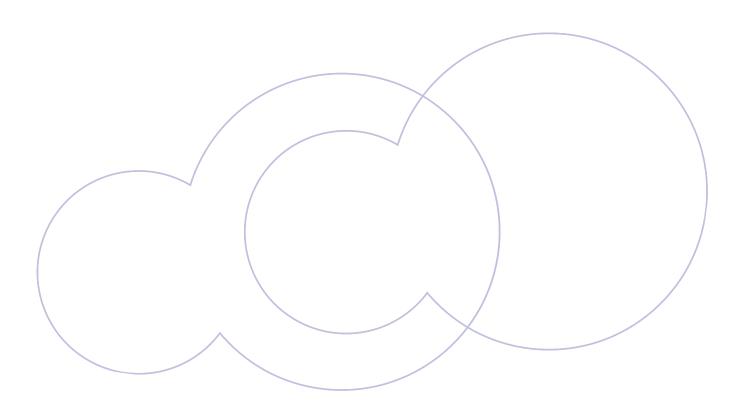
In 2024, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) adopted 53 opinions and 4 resolutions, slightly fewer than previous years but more than in 2019, a comparable year in the EU's interinstitutional cycle. A major highlight was the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities in Mons, which brought together thousands of local and regional leaders to shape Europe's future and influence the EU's Strategic Agenda and Political Guidelines. The summit underscored the critical role of local governance in EU cohesion and policymaking, drawing a record 7,500 participants online and in person.

The CoR advanced its political priority of bringing Europe closer to its citizens through several initiatives. A key achievement was the memorandum of understanding with the European Parliament to support democratic engagement during the European elections, coinciding with multiple local elections across member states. The CoR's input influenced the European Commission's commitment to locallevel engagement, and its advocacy on territorial impact, skills policy, and better regulation was acknowledged in major institutional reports. Notably, the merger of its councillor network with the European Commission's local initiative marked a milestone in institutional cooperation.

On the front of building resilient local and regional communities, the CoR played a visible international role, particularly in climate and biodiversity policy through COP29 and COP16. Its positions helped shape Council conclusions and EU strategies, while also influencing the designation of a new European Commissioner portfolio to address housing, energy poverty, and sustainable development. Its longstanding advocacy on water and fiscal policy bore fruit with new appointments and financial rule changes, enhancing investment capacity at the local level.

Cohesion policy remained a core focus. The CoR contributed significantly to shaping the debate on post-2027 cohesion, including through key opinions and participation in high-level institutional meetings. Its recommendations were adopted in several Council conclusions related to demographic change, social services, and the Common Fisheries Policy. The CoR's influence extended to enlargement policy as well, particularly in the Western Balkans and Ukraine, where its efforts on multi-level governance and decentralisation reform were formally recognised and supported.

Lastly, communication efforts in 2024 significantly raised the CoR's profile, with over 17,600 media mentions, the highest since 2017. Visibility was strong both in local and national outlets, reinforcing the CoR's position as a credible and influential EU body. These communication results reflect growing recognition of the CoR's contributions in driving EU policy from the ground up and connecting European institutions with local realities.



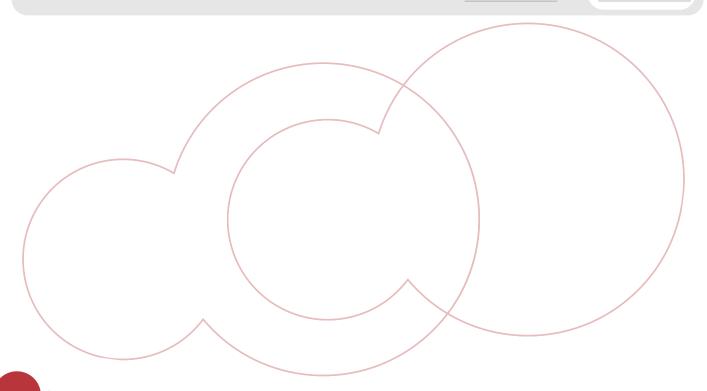
Annual Financial Statements

Income and Expenditure Account at 31st December 2024

Income	2023 €	2024 €
Local Authority Contributions	1,444,696	1,577,867
Technical Assistance Recoupment	694,497	928,466
Interreg Recoupment	6,107	2,225
Salary Recoupment - EU Programmes/Projects	266,413	279,425
Travel Recoupment - EU Programmes/Projects	14,733	7,303
General Recoupment EU Programmes/Projects	7,395	175,580
Designated Urban Centre Grants Scheme	2,500,000	2,723,506
First Level Control (FLC) Fees	103,289	121,240
Association of Irish Regions (AIR) Conference Fees	37,397	19,990
Local Government Payroll Allocation	0	59,601
Miscellaneous	1,867	4,706
Dividend (IPB)	1,647	1,176
Total	5,078,040	5,901,085
Expenditure	4 0 45 047	0.077.770
Payroll Costs	1,865,913	2,277,332
Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC)	60,554	59,884
Superannuation SSP Scheme	30,401	45,901
Travel & Subsistence – Staff	111,146	149,173
Members Annual Allowance	92,900	72,038
Members SPA / Other Travel Members Training / Conference Allowance	6,805 32,212	3,330 14,063
Members Training / Conference Allowance Conference Fees	750	14,003
Office Equipment & Supplies	36,299	40,036
Energy Costs	21,416	19,445
Post & Phone	18,493	17,477
Rates & Water Charges	6,733	6,285
Repairs, Maintenance & Office Costs	26,231	11,155
Consultancy/Professional Fees	51,711	37,346
Annual Contracts	94,885	103,425
Insurance	14,441	17,030
Annual Report & Corporate Plan	10,803	8,018
Information & Communications	166,808	155,689
Contributions/Fees/Levies (LGMA)	14,147	8,471
Association of Irish Regions (AIR) Event	47,397	32,969
Bank Charges	741	813
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	1,828	9,297
Regional Planning RSES	62,536	172,505
Depreciation Charge	5,154	4,174
Gateway Grant Scheme - Project Payments	2,500,000	2,723,506
ETC Network	1,481	17.155
VAT Miscellaneous	0 16,507	13,155 11,510
Total Expenses	5,298,292	6,014,027
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-220,252	-112,942

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2024

	2023 €	2024 €
Fixed Assets	1,004,445	1,016,295
Command Assets		
Current Assets Cash at Bank	2.020.157	2 551 107
Debtors	2,020,153 867,482	2,551,103 343,376
Debiors	2,887,635	2,894,479
	2,007,033	2,094,479
Current Liabilities		
Creditors & Accruals	126,060	198,475
Credit Card	202	542
	126,263	199,018
Net Current Assets	2,761,372	2,695,461
Net Assets	3,765,818	3,711,756
Financed by		
Balance at beginning of year	3,986,258	3,765,818
Previous Year Adjustment	-189	0
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-220,252	-112,942
Superannuation Reserve	0	58,880
	3,765,818	3,711,756



Staff of the Southern Regional Assembly 2024

David Kelly Director

Kevin Lynch Assistant Director Enda Hogan Assistant Director

Dominic Walsh Regional Planning Officer **Brigh Ryan** Regional Planning Officer **Eoin O'Connor** A/ Senior Executive Planner

Administrative Officer **Sharon Murray** Administrative Officer Vincent Dunphy

Michael Buckley **Auditor**

Karen Coughlan Administrative Officer Administrative Officer **Rose Power** Administrative Officer **Marie Harnett** Ronan O'Brien Administrative Officer

Sarah Davoren **FU Executive**

Ian Ludlow Senior Staff Officer

Breda Curran Staff Officer A/Staff Officer **Yvonne Cooney Eoin O'Connor Executive Planner Executive Planner Mary Molloy Executive Planner Kevin Twomey Catherine Connaughton Projects Officer**

Samantha Richardson **Development Officer** Lisa Moran **EU Projects Officer** Áine Whelan **EU Projects Officer Rhiannon Carey Bates EU Projects Officer**

Colm Walsh A/ EU Projects Officer **Eve Hayden** Senior First Level Controller Senior First Level Controller **Edel Hunt Elayne McDonnell** Senior First Level Controller

Pauline Toomeu Assistant Staff Officer **Denis Cotter** Assistant Staff Officer

Róisín Slattery Clerical Officer **Anna Higgins** Clerical Officer Clerical Officer **Oonagh Messette Elaine Gallagher** Clerical Officer Maria Murphy Clerical Officer Omer Sunguroglu Clerical Officer Claire Breen Clerical Officer **Lorraine Barron** Clerical Officer

Appendices

1 Glossary of Terms

AGM Annual General Meeting
AIR Association of Irish Regions

AIRO All-Island Research Observatory

APN Action Planning Network

ARC Accelerating Research to Communication
BEFIT Business In Europe Framework for Taxation

BGI Blue Green Infrastructure
CAP Common Agricultural Policy

CARO Co-ordination of Climate Action with Climate Action Regional Offices

CCDP City & County Development Plans
CCRI Circular Cities and Regions Initiative
CCRN Capital Cities and Regions Network

CircBio Circular Bioeconomy

Cllr Councillor

CMATS Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

CO2 Carbon Dioxide

CoR Committee of the Regions

CSP Regulation for Establishing Rules on Support for Common Agricultural Policy

DAFM Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

DEC Display Energy Certificate

DECC Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

DFHERIS Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

DHLGH Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage

DISC Developing Irish Sea Cooperation
DMAPS Designated Maritime Area Plan

DoT Department of Transport

DPER Department of Public Expenditure & Reform EIST Employment Inclusion Skills And Training

EGTC European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation

EMRA Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
ERDF European Regional Development Fund

ERNACT European Regions Network for the Application of Communications Technology

ESF European Social Fund ESB Electricity Supply Board

ETB Education And Training Board ETC European Territorial Cooperation

EU European Union

EUI European Urban Initiative

FLC First Level Control
GHG Greenhouse Gases

GIS Geographic Information System

HR **Human Resources**

ICT Information And Communications Technology Irish Human Rights And Equality Commission **IHREC**

IoT Institutes of Technology

IPB IPB Insurance

ΙΡΙ Irish Planning Institute

IREO Irish Regions European Office Innovation Transfer Networks ITN

JTF Just Transition Fund LA Local Authority

LECP Local Economic & Community Plan LGMA Local Government Management Agency

local authorities of Ireland **LRAs**

Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy LSMATS

MASP Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan

MC. Monitoring Committee

MEP Member of the European Parliament **MRTT** Midlands Regional Transition Team MTU Munster Technological University

Nature-Based Solutions **NBS** National Development Plan NDP Non-governmental organisation NGO NPA Northern Periphery and Arctic **NPF** National Planning Framework NPO National Policy Objective NTA National Transport Authority

NWE North-West Europe

NWRA Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD

OPR Office of the Planning Regulator **RDP** Regional Decarbonisation Plan

REP Regional Enterprise Plan RPO Regional Planning Objective

RRES Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies **RSES** Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy SEAL Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland **SETU** South East Technological University

SMC Small and Medium-sized City

SMF Small and medium-sized enterprises

SMP Sustainable Mobility Plan SPA Strategic Planning Area **SEEA** South East Energy Agency

SSP Single Public Service Pension Scheme

SSR Smart Southern Region

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange **TAIEX**

TAP Thematic Action Plan TEN-T Trans-European Transport Network
TII Transport Infrastructure Ireland

TN Transfer Networks

TSI Technical Support Instrument

TU Technological University UCD University College Dublin

UK United Kingdom

ULGs URBACT Local Groups

UNESCO The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

VAT Value Added Tax

WMATS Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

WG Working Group

YEP Young Elected Politicians