

S&E Regional Programme – National Broadband Scheme Case Study

With public investment of €38.349m the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) delivered broadband to 1,028 designated Electoral Divisions (ED) during the lifetime of the S&E Regional Programme 2007-2013. 47% of those EDs are located within the S&E region. The number of additional businesses with access to broadband was 25,482, exceeding the target set for the investment. Additional population with access to broadband in the enabled electoral districts was 954,695 to end December 2014.

Building on the investment under the previous programme the National Broadband Programme (NBP) will be delivered under the S&E Regional Programme 2014-2020. While the specific deliverable will be to increase the provision of fibre optic links to all un-served settlements in the S&E Region, the focus is on ensuring access to minimum speeds of

30 Mbps for all premises, thus reducing the digital divide in the region.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is responsible for the implementation of the NBP. The programme is on course to meet the European Commission's Digital Agenda for Europe target of 100% coverage of 30 Mbps by 2020.

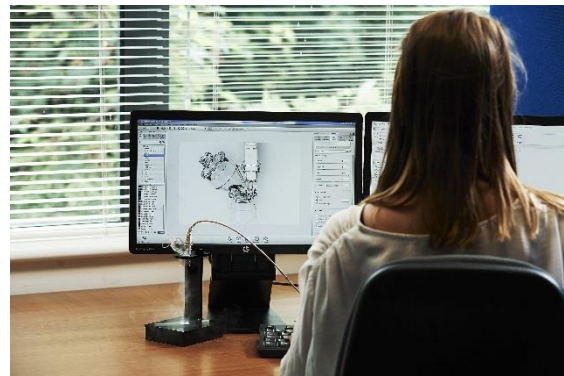


Image courtesy of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.

Studies¹ have indicated that SMEs with a strong web presence have been shown internationally to grow twice as quickly, export twice as much and create twice as many jobs as those who have a minimal web presence. Reliable connectivity to the internet is therefore critically important for business growth and development. In turn,

¹ McKinsey Global Institute

this should have a positive impact on efficiencies, increase sales, grow enterprise and create more jobs.

From a societal perspective, broadband is an important facilitator of many activities including education, entertainment, business, eHealth, eGovernment and is increasingly used as a simple and effective way of communication through social media. It is also an essential requirement for more flexible work patterns which can potentially reduce operating costs for commercial and public sector organisations. The provision of enabling infrastructure will ensure that the benefits of the digital economy will be evenly spread and will allow all citizens and businesses to participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.