



Border, Midland & Western
Regional Assembly
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PRESS RELEASE

“Forfás Report Highlights the Economic Agenda for Enterprise Development in the BMW Region”

The Director of the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Regional Assembly, Mr. Gerry Finn has welcomed the recent publication of the *Regional Competitiveness Agendas Report* by Forfás. These set out the key challenges and opportunities for enterprise development in Ireland’s regions, including those faced by the Border, Midland and Western Regions in the context of the challenging economic conditions. Mr. Finn stated, “this report by Forfás represents a significant contribution to further understanding the competitive position of each of the BMW Regions. It identifies opportunities for each region to maximise its economic potential by overcoming barriers to development, by optimising the economic impact of enterprise assets and taking advantage of new opportunities as they arise”.

The report calls for the prioritisation of targeted investments in Ireland’s Gateways to be supported by the reinstatement of the deferred Gateway Innovation Fund. The Director commented, “the Regional Assembly fully supports this call and urges the need for strategically focussed investment supports in the Gateways of Dundalk, Galway, Letterkenny, the Midland Gateway (Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore), and Sligo. The Assembly’s commitment to prioritising these areas for economic development is reflected by the recent announcement of the allocation of €17.1m under the European Regional Development Fund to fund urban development and regeneration projects in all Gateways and Hub Towns in the BMW Region and by the publication of the Assembly’s Gateway Development Index which benchmarks the performance of Ireland’s Gateway and identifies areas where for further investment is required”.

Forfás recommends the establishment of a Regional Economic Forum in each region to drive the outcomes of this report in order to deliver a more coherent regional

response involving enterprise bodies, planning and local authorities. The Regional Reports also emphasise the importance of compliance and ‘buy-in’ from relevant actors with the updated and strengthened Regional Planning Guidelines, which are currently being finalised by the Regional Authorities.

Forfás – Ireland’s policy advisory body for enterprise and science stresses the value of improving the relationship between academia and industry at regional level and removing barriers to cooperation. The Director added, “One of the priorities under the BMW Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013 is to enhance the research and innovation capacity of the BMW Region. The Assembly has outlined its recommendations to remove these barriers to partnership in a presentation to the high level Innovation Taskforce in November. These recommendations included the need for a re-focus of R&D policy towards setting up the appropriate structures and programmes to facilitate greater academia/industry collaboration and towards the development of Regional Innovation Strategies for each Regional Authority Area”.

Mr. Finn concluded, “I would like to congratulate Forfás on this significant body of research which forms the basis of an envisaged commitment to a biennial analysis of the competitive position of regions in Ireland and will ultimately complement the work of the nationally based analysis conducted annually by the National Competitiveness Council. Given the differences in regional endowments, capacity and potential identified in the Competitiveness Agenda Reports, we would urge the National Competitiveness Council to take these into account in future analysis. We look forward to working with Forfás to facilitate the implementation of their recommendations, which will ultimately benefit enterprise development in the BMW Region”.

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