

LIONRA

Heads of Agreement

A Collaborative Research and Innovation Strategy
for the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) Region

Higher Education at the Service of the Region



lyit

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta
Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny
Institute of Technology



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



The Lónra Network

The Lónra Network comprises the seven partners in Higher Education in the Border Midland and Western (BMW) region,

**Athlone Institute of Technology,
Dundalk Institute of Technology,
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology,
Institute of Technology, Sligo,
Letterkenny Institute of Technology,
National University of Ireland, Galway,
St Angela's College, Sligo,**

The Lónra Network was established in 2001 to create a collaborative response by the third-level sector to the development needs of the BMW region.

Research and development in the BMW region

Significant differences between the regions in Ireland are evident in terms of technological development and innovation as well as in terms of human resources. This disparity is impeding the transition of Ireland to a knowledge based economy. To date most of the benefits from increased public investment on higher education research and development have accrued to university cities outside the BMW region.

While exemplary research activities are being undertaken by the individual members of the Lónra Network, all the available evidence points to the need for the Higher Education sector in the BMW region to raise its research capacity. The region has a well developed education infrastructure but the status of third level / industry linkages and collaborative R&D are relatively low. In addition, the need to address the research needs of SMEs is particularly important to the region.

Lónra Collaborative Research and Innovation Strategy

This Lónra Collaborative Research and Innovation Strategy for the Border, Midlands and Western Region (BMW) has been produced in response to the need for a co-ordinated approach to Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) across the region.

In order for Ireland and more particularly the BMW region to succeed in its transition to a knowledge economy, a focused R&D policy is required to stimulate innovation and facilitate economic development. At present the BMW region has no co-ordinated research and innovation strategy that adopts a truly region wide approach. This strategy is a collaborative response by the partners to the challenges facing the region.

The Lónra vision for the BMW—a fully functioning research space

The Lónra partnership believes that in order to gain the benefit of added value in terms of RTDI capacity they must embrace a regional leadership role and thereby facilitate the development of a comprehensive regional RTDI strategy.

The partners envisage that the BMW region will become a fully developed, functioning and interconnected RTDI environment, in which barriers will disappear, collaboration will flourish and where functional integration can take place. It will be an environment conducive to research and innovation, one in which research policy is tuned to the socioeconomic needs of the region and is responsive to the expectations of the local economy.

One of the central goals of the Lónra Business Plan is to raise the research profile of the constituent member colleges. This has been a priority within the Lónra Partnership and over the past few months we have shared research strategies, held a Research Forum and examined priority areas of research for collaboration. This joint agreement on a Collaborative Research and Innovation Strategy for the region will serve to further enhance research activity and industrial R&D linkages.

The Research Collaboration Imperative

The founding principle underpinning the Lónra Network is the collaborative imperative i.e. that collaboration is in the strategic interests of all the institutions, enabling members to achieve goals collectively that cannot be achieved individually.

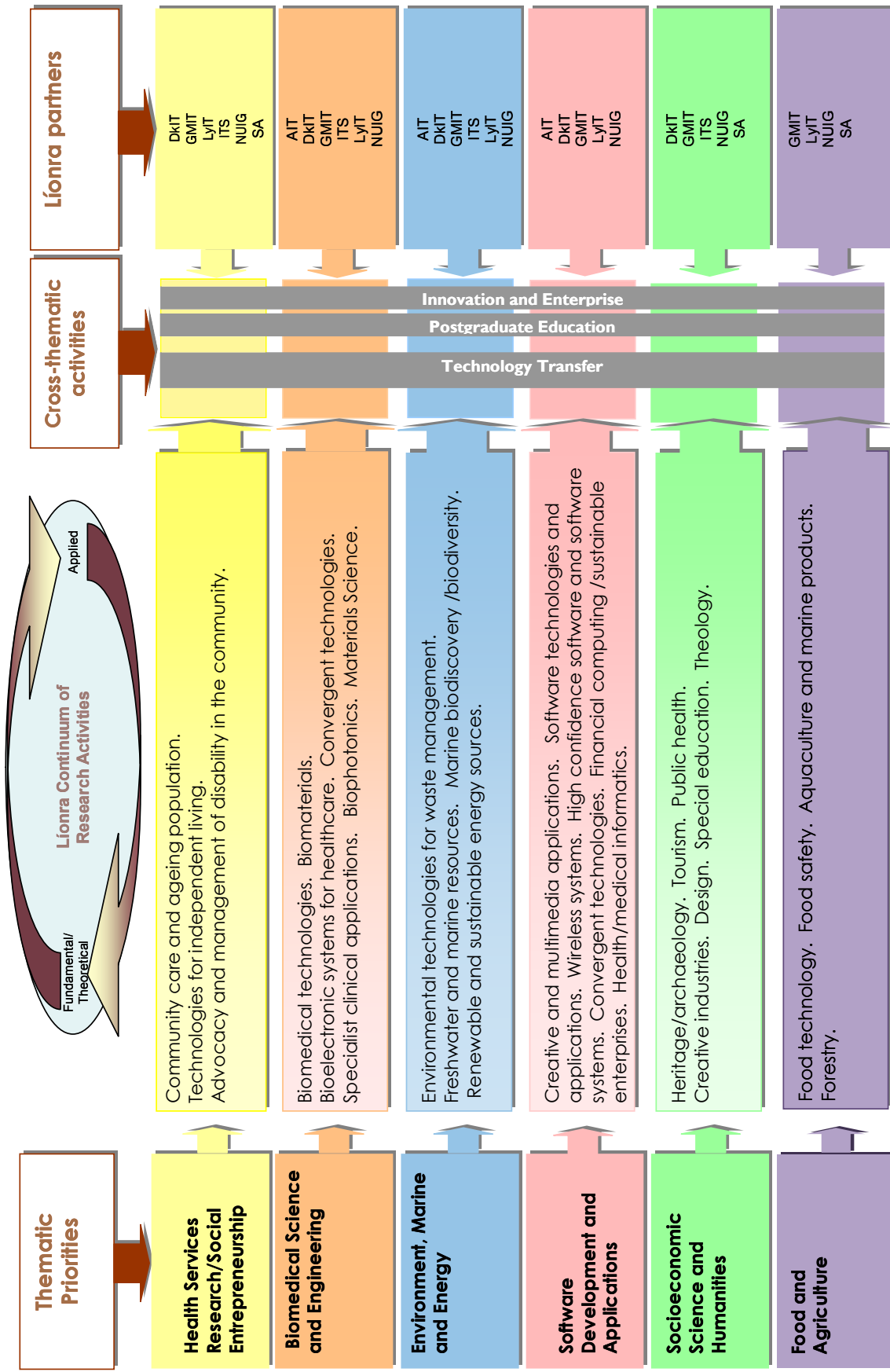
Implementation of collaborative actions and projects will help build world class capacity and capability in terms of achieving the stated Lónra goals in research.

The Partners envisage collaboration between institutions and between research centres, academia and industry. Collaboration between academic partners and industry will strengthen the ability of the sector to attract funding, utilise the complementary strengths of each partner and facilitate research to address the challenges of greatest priority to the BMW region.

By collaborating together we will:

- **Boost research resources for the benefit of the economy**
- **Strengthen networking and partnership platforms**
- **Develop major strategic R&D projects**
- **Boost human resources for research and innovation**
- **Foster facilities for innovative enterprises**
- **Develop the regional innovation network**
- **Ensure cost effectiveness by sharing resources**

The initial thematic research priority areas have been identified as suitable for collaboration by the partnership and are presented in the following table:



Heads of Agreement

The Higher Education members of the Lónra Partnership have agreed on a Collaborative Research and Innovation Strategy for the BMW region.

This agreement is focused on the following collaborative research action platforms:

With respect to **Developing Partnerships and Collaborations between Institutions and Research Centres in Thematic Research Priority Areas:**

- We will create effective research structures by developing inter-institutional collaborations.
- We will create networks and clusters to provide common access and make the optimum use of major equipment and R&D facilities.
- We will achieve cost effectiveness by sharing resources where appropriate.
- We will facilitate the exchange of staff and students between research institutions.
- We will use our efforts in research to strengthen the teaching and learning mission of the partners.

With respect to **Building Research Capability:**

- We will build world class research communities within our member institutions, capable of becoming internationally competitive.
- We will take measures to increase the percentage of our existing staff who are actively involved in research and to attract new high quality research active staff into the sector.
- We will develop appropriate recruitment and employment policies to attract the best researchers.
- We will commit ourselves to increasing the Ph.D. output from the sector.
- We will deliver collaborative research training programmes designed to support researchers at all stages of their careers.

With respect to **Building Research Capacity:**

- We will develop research capacity, physical and organisational infrastructure in areas of strategic importance to our individual member colleges and of relevance to industry both regionally and nationally.
- We will upgrade our capacities through collaborative partnerships and create critical mass in leading edge technologies.
- We will cooperate to build a research agenda which includes not only the science and technology fields but which also encompasses the humanities, social science and human health areas.

With respect to **Building on Existing Strengths and Achieving Critical Mass in Certain Research Activities:**

- We will build research strengths in our member institutions that are of high quality and relevance in a regional context.
- We will establish centres within our individual institutions that can grow their applied research in the areas identified as important for regional growth.

With respect to **Stimulating Innovation, Technology Transfer and Commercialisation:**

- We will collaborate with local industry on the basis of applied research and technology development directed at the challenges facing companies.
- We will establish a mechanism for co-ordination which spans all members of the Network and which empowers the individual Liónra partners and the network as a whole.
- We will share and pool technology transfer and commercialization resources and expertise across the Network.
- We will raise awareness in the commercial sector of the research activities of the HEIs and their potential for positive business impact.
- We will aim towards achieving a full understanding of the R&D requirements of our commercial partners. This understanding will be built on a close, mutually beneficial relationship.
- We will develop the technology transfer culture in the research community across the region so that it becomes more pervasive.
- We will put a comprehensive commercialisation strategy in place.

With respect to **Enhancing Knowledge Diffusion:**

- We will stimulate a more effective transfer of research results into the local socio-economic fabric.
- We will develop partnerships and clusters to reflect the technological challenges facing local industry and develop regional scientific and technological competence in identified fields.
- We will increase public understanding of our research activities through wider dissemination of our research output.

With respect to **Increasing Interaction with MNCs and Indigenous SMEs:**

- We will develop a closer relationship between our members and regionally based enterprises, focusing on applied research. In particular we will address the specific issue of SMEs that have technical needs.
- We will examine how the scientific expertise in the research system can be more closely coupled with the express needs of enterprises. This access to a wider research system will give local companies an advantage and enable them to introduce new technologies.
- We will endeavour to create a strong link between industry needs and the research agendas of our colleges.

With respect to **Advocacy and Communication:**

- The partners will deepen their work with both national and regional agencies in order to give the region a strong voice in developing research policy and in promoting the region as a magnet for high quality research.

For
Athlone Institute of Technology

Signature _____

Name: Professor Ciarán Ó Catháin
Title: President
Date: June 2009

For
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Signature _____

Name: Mr. Paul Hannigan
Title: President
Date: June 2009

For
Dundalk Institute of Technology

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Name: Mr. Denis Cummins
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For
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Name: Dr. James J. Browne
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Date: June 2009

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Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

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Name: Ms Marion Coy
Title: President
Date: June 2009

For
St Angela's College, Sligo

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Name: Dr. Anne Taheny
Title: President
Date: June 2009

For
Institute of Technology, Sligo

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Name: Professor Terri Scott
Title: President
Date: June 2009



LIONRA

Regional Higher Education Network
An Gréasán Réigiúnach Ardoideachais

