Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Government Trade Forum

Work Plan 2026

Government Trade Forum Secretariat

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

March 2026

Contents

Overview

The Government Trade Forum was established in February 2025. The terms of reference for the Trade Forum are to:

» Enhance multi-stakeholder policy dialogue to foster a broad understanding of Ireland's trade opportunities and challenges;

» Discuss emerging trade policy developments and their implications for Irish sectors, and Ireland's trade promotion and market diversification efforts;

» Share expertise to inform Ireland's trade policy and exchange views on country and regional specific developments;

» Update members on key developments in international trade and their impact on Ireland.

The Trade Forum meets regularly on a scheduled basis with scope to reconvene as required in response to emerging issues. It has met on ten occasions to date, most recently on 23 January 2026. The Forum is the primary mechanism by which the Government engages on trade developments and related issues directly with business organisations, the trade union sector and other representative groups. The Forum is enhanced by the attendance of several senior members of the cabinet, as well as senior officials of economic-facing departments and enables both Government updates and strategic consideration, in real time, of these stakeholders' views.

In 2025, the Trade Forum agreed a Work Plan for its first year. That Work Plan enabled delivery of strategic engagement at the Trade Forum between the Government and Forum members and drove policy change and the direction of Government's approach to addressing economic challenges arising from ongoing uncertainties in the global trading environment.

In its first year, the Government Trade Forum rapidly demonstrated its value and impact. The Trade Forum met nine times in 2025, amidst developments of the utmost seriousness in global trade, geopolitics and international relations. In bringing together the highest levels of government with business and other key stakeholders, the Trade Forum facilitated important sectoral discussions to inform policy direction, including in pivotal areas of the economy, from medtech and pharmaceuticals, to aviation, semiconductors, agri-food and international financial services.

An early decision of the Trade Forum was to approve of the development of an Action Plan on Market Diversification, which was jointly prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. The Action Plan on Market Diversification was published in August 2025, setting out more than 100 actions to be delivered, on a whole-of-government basis, in support of Ireland's businesses as they adapt to new trading environments, striking out into new and diverse markets and deepening engagement in existing markets. The Action Plan seeks to drive Ireland's continued economic growth, increase exports sustainably, deepen and extend our trade and investment relationships, grow quality employment and bolster Ireland's economy. Progress in the Action Plan's implementation will be kept under review by the Trade Forum.

Work Plan 2026

The Secretariat to the Government Trade Forum has developed this year's Work Plan, presented here, in consultation with the Members of the Trade Forum. This Work Plan is informed by the views of these stakeholders and reflects the work undertaken together in 2025 to deliver, via the Forum, on Government priorities. The Forum Work Plan 2026 sets out to drive progress in delivering on these priorities to the end of this year, in cooperation with the Forum membership.

The Work Plan seeks to build on the approach in 2025 by maintaining a number of standing agenda items, while maintaining flexibility to consider emerging issues and events, including on sectoral, thematic and regional bases. The Work Plan also incorporates developments on sectoral / thematic, and regional levels. Where necessary, the Work Plan can also consider planning matters, such as consideration of locations for Team Ireland Trade Mission Weeks. This Work Plan will be reviewed in 2027.

Secretariat to the Trade Forum is provided by officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The agenda and minutes of Trade Forum meetings are published with other relevant documents on Ireland.ie at https://www.ireland.ie/en/dfa/role-policies/trade-and-promoting-ireland/government-trade-forum/.

A. Standing Items

The Forum should continue to have a number of regular agenda items to provide updates on:

- Relevant trade developments in multilateral fora including EU, OECD, UN, WTO, G20 and other multilateral and intergovernmental meetings and negotiations.
- Bilateral trade and investment relationships with third countries and related promotional activities.
- Feedback from and future planning for Ministerial and State Agency-led trade missions and promotional activities, and international engagement by Forum members.
- Government Action Plan on Market Diversification.

In addition to in-person contributions at Forum meetings, there will be scope for advance written contributions by Forum members concerning recent developments.

B. Sectoral Focus

With a view to gaining a deeper shared perspective of the opportunities and challenges in key sectors of the economy, there will be a focus at the Forum on a number of priority sectors. To date, Forum meetings have included specific sectoral focuses on pharmaceuticals, medtech, aviation, semiconductors, agri-food and international financial services. A number of these meetings have included direct engagement with senior industry and company sectoral representatives who attended the relevant Forum meetings. The Forum will continue to engage with these sectors. There is a broad consensus that the discussion benefits from maintaining this approach. Priority sectoral discussions for future meetings, in no particular priority, include:

» Artificial Intelligence,

» Critical Infrastructure,

» Cybersecurity,

» Economic activity relating to security and defence,

» Energy,

» Infrastructure,

» Life Sciences,

» Research and Innovation,

» Tourism,

» Transport.

The above list is non-exhaustive and will continue to be informed by and responsive to wider economic developments and the membership.

C. Thematic Focus

Cross-cutting thematic issues which impact international trade will continue to be considered by the Forum. In many thematic areas, the Forum will not be the primary venue for these discussions and consequently the Forum will limit its discussions on the intersection of these thematic areas with Ireland’s overall trading performance. Where a thematic issue is primarily considered in other fora, Government Trade Forum outputs should be formally referred to the relevant lead Department, cabinet committee, interdepartmental or stakeholder group, which will then be invited to respond to the next Forum if necessary.

D. Regional Items

The Forum may consider developments across markets, including but not limited to the Africa, ASEAN, Canada, China, India, Eurozone / EU, the Gulf, Japan, Mexico, South America, UK, US, and further emerging markets. These discussions will be informed by inputs prepared by Ireland’s Local and Regional Market Teams.

It is important that a direct link be maintained between the work of the Local and Regional Market Teams overseas and the work of the Government Trade Forum. The Headquarters Market Team (description in Annex 3) provides an important role in facilitating a flow of information and direction between the Forum and the Local and Regional Market Teams. This alignment will support a coherent Team Ireland approach to matters related to trade in overseas markets.

E. Other Initiatives

The Forum may be asked to consider other relevant items of a strategic nature, or an item that is considered beneficial for the members. The Forum will take due regard of other relevant processes, such as the elaboration of the Global Ireland 2040 Strategy, the review of the Government's Trade and Investment Strategy 2022-2026, Value for Ireland, Values for the World and its successor strategy, the Government's new Diaspora Strategy and the opportunities it presents for advancing economic interests, as well as the suite of regional strategies to be developed under Global Ireland. All Forum Members, including business and other representative groups, are welcome to prepare and present papers on particular sectors, regions, and themes of interest for discussion at the Forum, working in close coordination with the Forum Secretariat.

F. Membership

The membership of the Forum is well established and benefits from its relatively small size, which keeps discussions focused. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has identified a gap in the composition of the Forum membership in terms of business collaboration from other EU Member States and accordingly, European Chambers of Commerce will be invited to attend Forum meetings on a rotating basis. The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association has also been invited to join the Trade Forum.

Schedule of Meetings

To support good planning, an indicative schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2026 has been prepared below. The Forum may also be convened as required in response to emerging issues. The Secretariat will share the agenda in a timely manner in advance of each meeting, ideally no less than one week prior.

Meeting 10	23 January
Meeting 11	2 March
Meeting 12	Late April
Meeting 13	Late May
Meeting 14	Late June
Meeting 15	Early September
Meeting 16	Mid October
Meeting 17	Mid November
Meeting 18	Mid December

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of reference

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Annex 2: Forum membership

- Department of the Taoiseach
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Finance
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
- Enterprise Ireland
- IDA Ireland
- Bord Bia
- Tourism Ireland
- Research Ireland
- InterTradeIreland
- Ibec
- Irish Exporters Association
- ISME
- American Chamber of Commerce Ireland
- Chambers Ireland
- British Irish Chamber of Commerce
- France-Ireland Chamber of Commerce
- German-Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- Italian Irish Chamber of Commerce
- Ireland Spain Economic Association
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
- Irish Farmers' Association

Membership of the Forum will be kept under regular review. There is scope for broader participation at the Forum for specific sectoral, geographic, thematic, and other discussions as required and with the agreement of the Chair.

Annex 3: Headquarters Market Team / Local and Regional Market Teams

The HQ Market Team (HQMT) is a governmental group, jointly chaired by Senior Officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, which coordinates across Government on international trade promotion and trade missions, including oversight of the Local and Regional Market Teams, chaired by Ambassadors and including State Agency representatives, in priority overseas markets.

ENDS

Government Trade Forum Secretariat,

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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