



Our Ref: 151021/MIN

8 July, 2015



Ms. Dympna Murphy
Senior Executive Officer
Cork County Council
County Hall
Cork
County Cork

Dear Ms. Murphy,

I wish to refer further to your recent correspondence to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mr Richard Bruton T.D., regarding the recent resolution of Cork County Council members on the continuation of investment in education, R&D and broadband.

With reference to investment in research and development, the Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation (SSTI) which was formulated in 2006 formally expired in 2013. In the meantime, the broader context within which the strategy had been set changed radically. The economic downturn nationally and globally and resultant resource constraints meant that, de facto, policy has been focused mainly around five core strategic policies:

- Prioritisation of public funds into areas of research that offer most potential for economic recovery and social progress;
- Consolidation of resources in units of scale with scientific excellence,
- Increased collaboration between academia and industry; and between academic and research performing institutions;
- International collaboration, to maximise return on investment and to optimise success under EU Framework programmes; and
- Facilitating the translation of knowledge and the transfer of technology into jobs

These policies will continue to underpin Government policy going forward. However, in light of a more optimistic economic outlook, there is now an opportunity to set these policies in context and to be more comprehensive in the articulation of STI strategy at national level.

An Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) on Science, Technology and Innovation comprising representatives from key Government Departments along with the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government and representatives from the Higher Education Authority, has been convened to formulate the new Strategy and to help ensure that it benefits from a whole of government perspective. Key areas under consideration by the Committee include:

1. Investment in Science, Technology and Innovation and key goals/targets
2. Prioritised Approach to Public Research Funding
3. Enterprise-level R&D and Innovation Performance
4. International collaboration and engagement
5. Organisational/ Institutional arrangements to enhance research excellence and deliver jobs
6. World class IP regime and dynamic systems to transfer Knowledge and Technology into jobs
7. Government wide goals on innovation in key sectors for job creation and societal benefit
8. Research for knowledge and the development of human capital

Government policy is focused on building excellence in scientific research and maximising its impact on jobs, and on economic and social progress. The Government has introduced a number of policy initiatives targeted at accelerating the economic and societal return on our STI investment. Amongst these was the implementation of the proposals of the Research Prioritisation Group. Following rigorous analysis and intensive engagement with all key stakeholders, this broad based group comprising membership from academia and industry identified 14 priority areas around which the majority of competitive funding should be targeted. The areas were identified on the basis of existing strengths of the public research system and our enterprise base, opportunities that exist in terms of the global marketplace and areas which can address a national or global challenge to which Ireland should respond. The Government is firmly committed to the continued implementation of Research Prioritisation and this will be a key pillar of the successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation. It should be noted that research prioritisation does not apply to the entire science budget. It applies to the majority of competitive funding which does not, of course, include the block grant to Higher Education Institutes.

Excellence in scientific research has been, and will continue to be, a cornerstone in the development of our science base in Ireland and this has been complemented in recent years by a sharper focus on the relevance and impact of research.

Equally important is the translation of research and commercialisation of ideas. Ireland is ranked third in the EU, according to the European Commission's "Indicator of Innovation Output", which measures the extent to which ideas from innovative sectors are able to reach the market, providing better jobs and making Europe more competitive. All of the national indicators show that our focus on commercialisation of research is having an impact. The number of technologies licensed to industry, which is one of the most relevant indicators of commercialisation performance in the research system, rose significantly from 12 in 2005 to 87 in 2012 and invention disclosures and spin outs also increased substantially during that period. The Government established Knowledge Transfer Ireland in 2013 to make it even easier for companies to access and use ideas developed through publicly-funded research

to develop new products and services and ultimately create jobs and exports.

With reference to investment in broadband and education, it may most appropriate to direct your correspondence to the appropriate Ministers for a comprehensive response, if you have not already done so. Broadband provision falls within the remit of Mr. Alex White T.D., Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; and education matters are within the remit of the Minister for Education and Skills Ms. Jan O'Sullivan T.D.

Yours sincerely,



THERESE WALSH
PRIVATE SECRETARY