



# Access Asia Exporting to **CHINA**

A guide for clients



Going Global

#GlobalAmbition





**Home**

**China at a Glance**

**Why Export to China**

**Get Ready to Do Business in China**

**Things to Consider**

**Key Opportunities in China**

**Legal and Taxation Information**

**Helping You Win in China**

**Contact Us**

**References**





# Beijing

Capital



# Renminbi

Currency



# 1.41bn<sup>1</sup>

Population



# €8,918<sup>2</sup>

GDP Per capita  
2020



# 8.4%<sup>3</sup>

GDP Growth  
Rate 2021  
(projected)



# 5.5%<sup>4</sup>

Unemployment Rate  
2020



# €850m<sup>5</sup>

Enterprise Ireland  
Client Exports  
(2020)



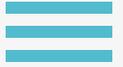
# Why Export to China

China is not only an economic superpower but it is also one of the most diverse and exciting countries in the world. It is a vast country with the world's largest population, highly developed cities, a rich cultural heritage, breathtaking countryside and, of course, its treasured pandas.

In recent years China's economy has grown in both size and importance and the country has transformed into a highly developed nation. As the economy transitions away from investment and manufacturing-driven growth to a model based on services, the opportunities for foreign companies increase. The ambitions of both the Government and the private sector to improve the competitiveness of Chinese products drives demand for foreign technology and expertise to satisfy gaps in the domestic market. This, too, creates opportunities for overseas businesses.

Enterprise Ireland client companies are currently selling into China across a broad range of sectors. China is currently the 8th largest export market for Enterprise Ireland client companies and HSBC forecasts that Irish exports to China will grow by approximately 6% year-on-year between 2016 and 2030<sup>6</sup>, making China Ireland's fourth biggest export market.

## Reasons to include mainland China in your export strategy



China currently has the world largest e-commerce market.



China is the largest mobile phone market in the world.<sup>7</sup>



China's pharmaceutical market has been constantly growing in recent years. It is estimated to reach €137.3 billion by 2023 and take a 30% share of the global market.<sup>8</sup>



China is by far the largest force in global clean energy development.<sup>9</sup>



China has about 500 smart city pilot projects, the highest in the world.<sup>10</sup>



China accounts for 42.9% of the Asia-Pacific aerospace and defence sector.<sup>11</sup>



Three Chinese universities are placed in the top 50 universities in the world.<sup>12</sup>



The Chinese Government's R&D expenditure per capita is among the highest globally.<sup>13</sup>



# Get Ready to Do Business in China



## Travelling and geography

China is a vastly diverse country, with wide geographic variations in language, ethnicity, industrial specialty and level of development. The wealthiest cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, rival many European cities in modernity. But driving a few hours into the countryside shows that China is still in parts, a developing country. China's transport infrastructure has experienced major growth in recent years, with comprehensive air and rail networks facilitating travel between cities.



## Business culture

Building good business relationships takes time in China. Many businesspeople emphasise interpersonal relationships as key to successful business there. Chinese business culture puts an emphasis on maintaining harmony and the "face" of others. Open conflict is usually avoided, as it would cause one party to "lose face". "Giving face" is as important as not taking it away and such actions as politely ignoring a mistake, showing humility and giving a toast are all ways of "giving face".



## Language

Standard Chinese, which is a form of Mandarin Chinese, is the official national spoken language for the mainland and serves as a lingua franca within the Mandarin-speaking regions. But as China continues to develop, more and more people are learning and speaking English, making it a more accessible country for foreign nationals. Approximately 390<sup>14</sup> million people in China claim they either speak English or are in the process of learning it.

In light of global travel restrictions in, we are advising all clients to regularly review the Government of Ireland advice at [www.gov.ie/](http://www.gov.ie/), travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs, business continuity advice from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the World Health Organisation website.



# Get Ready to Do Business in China

(continued)



## ROUTES TO MARKET



### *Direct presence*

Having a physical presence in China can be part of a long-term strategy to enter the country. It can be done relatively easily within a few months. A representative office has been traditionally used as a first step to gaining a foothold in China. Having local staff on the ground can help generate business leads and provide a good understanding of the culture, supply chain and business relationships. Once a company has progressed in China they may consider setting up a Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprise (WFOE). Enterprise Ireland can advise and connect companies with the relevant experts to assist in this.

### *Outsourcing sales*

Outsourcing sales involves working with a Chinese import agent or distributor to establish a sales network, selling products directly to the end user. The choice between using an agent or a distributor depends on the level of control a company wishes to maintain, the level of risk it is willing to take on, and the profit margin they are seeking. But whichever route is selected it is crucial that the company performs extensive due diligence on the chosen agent or a distributor and gives careful attention to the proposed contractual agreements, particularly with respect to payments and Intellectual Property (IP).

### *Selling online*

Most local and international brands selling into China have some form of e-commerce presence. The number of online shoppers in China has been increasing exponentially in recent years and reached over 710 million users in 2020. Depending on the level of commitment and capital available, Irish companies can consider several options when choosing to sell online in China. China's cross border e-commerce sector has also been experiencing exponential growth, with the Chinese Government setting up several free trade zones and preferential tax policies to attract international companies to sell in China.

### *Joint ventures and mergers*

A joint venture with a Chinese partner can provide access to an otherwise restricted industrial sector or quick access to resources and assets such as a distribution network, brand reputation, a special manufacturing process or other tangible assets such as land or special licences.

In recent years foreign investors have made increasing use of M&A strategies with established Chinese entities. This approach not only allows investors to forego lengthy set-up processes, but enables them to better understand the market and any problems they may encounter ahead of entry. However, when entering into a M&A in China it is important to remember that irrespective of the ownership, the company and its staff are inherently Chinese. Trying to bring in new practices and procedures could hinder progress and create problems in the long term.



# Things to Consider

**While every situation will be different, there are several key considerations Irish companies should take into account before entering the Chinese marketplace.**



## Market landscape

In 2020, China started the year with a historic GDP decline of 6.8% caused by the impact of the pandemic. After reopening its factories, China's growth rebounded dramatically.

The country's economy is currently in a period of transition. Previously high levels of foreign investment and a large labour force with low average wages meant China was in a prime position to undergo a manufacturing boom as it opened up its economy. However, as the country's economy expanded at double digit levels, rising wages and other factors, including pollution levels, have resulted in the Chinese Government becoming increasingly intent on focusing less on the secondary manufacturing sector and more on the tertiary sector.

The Chinese Government has started to put into place several reforms intended to support the desired transformation from a manufacturing-orientated economy to a service-orientated one. Good policy, the formation of funds to be utilised by companies operating in the tertiary sector and reforms allowing foreign services company to enter the Chinese market with greater ease are just a few of the measures it is enabling this transition. This new direction of "supply-side structural reform" aims to boost consumption by reducing the supply of low-end goods and boosting that of mid- to high-end goods. The reforms hope to reduce inefficiency and emphasise quality over quantity.



## Market segmentation

With the world's largest population and a huge landmass, treating China as one large market is difficult. It is important that companies have a clear understanding of where their niche lies both demographically and geographically. Regardless of which method you choose, market segmentation strategy in China is critical to identify, evaluate and target potential consumers.



## Market research

Being prepared is vital to success in the Chinese market. This preparation should start with thorough market research to identify niches and how a company can exploit them. Foreign SMEs that fail in China share common characteristics; a lack of market knowledge being one. These companies base key decisions or transactions by trusting content they have read on websites or people they have met after one or two visits to China, rather than doing their own "on the ground" research.



## Customer service

Customer service expectations in China have evolved in recent years due to increased incomes, higher levels of education, more opportunities to travel abroad and the increasing availability of goods and services from overseas. Since 2013, the Teleperformance Customer Experience Lab (CX Lab)<sup>15</sup> has undertaken research in several countries around the world, including China, across 15 industries. Overall, it found that customers in China are generally more satisfied than in previous years with their service experience and as a result are more likely to recommend a brand and remain loyal to it.



# Key Growth Opportunities in China



**There are many key sectors in China offering Irish companies opportunities. While food products currently represent a large proportion of Ireland's exports to China, exports in sectors such as education, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), medical devices and agritech have grown strongly in recent years. The opening up of China's economy affords increased opportunities for foreign companies in the Chinese market.**



## Geographic Focus

Enterprise Ireland clients have had success throughout Greater China but predominantly in the Tier 1 cities. We have offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong and much of the focus is on these 3 cities and their surrounding areas.

The Chinese government sits in Beijing, so it is obviously very important. Sectors of focus there include Education and Life Sciences/ Pharmaceuticals. The Beijing area also expands to Tianjin and China's newest city Xiong'An. Xiong'an is being designed to relieve Beijing's capital function. They hope to have stage one complete in 2035.

The aim of this economic zone is to broaden out the capital function as: medication, education, financial institutions and HQ for state owned companies and government agencies.

Shanghai is located on the East coast of China at the mouth of the Yangtze River Delta. This area is China's most advanced region. 25 cities here count for 2% of China's land, 10% of China's population and 20% of China's GDP. Our clients in the Engineering, ICT, BPO and Pharmaceutical sectors have had success in this region.

Lastly is the Greater Bay Area in Southern China, which contains Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Macau amongst others. This is the most active trading zone of China and a center for electronics, Fintech, logistics, Technology Innovation and also small and medium sized technology companies. Clients have had strong success in the region and we have just recently appointed a new presence in the city of Shenzhen.

Other areas of note include, Xi'An, Chengdu and Hainan. These are also fast growing areas with various opportunities for Irish businesses.



## Education

China is the world's largest source of international students and this continues to grow at a steady pace. In 2019, approximately 703,500 Chinese students went abroad to study.<sup>16</sup>

China's youthful population, its rising income levels and increasingly service-oriented economy fuel demand for high quality education. Although traditionally Chinese students studied abroad predominantly for postgraduate education, today the numbers of undergraduate students studying abroad increase significantly.

This continued growth has created favourable economic conditions for students to travel abroad to pursue an international education. Irish higher education institutions have invested time and resources into building long-term, strategic relationships with Chinese counterparts, with the aim of securing a consistent and predictable intake of Chinese students. With the tightening up of the policies surrounding joint programmes and colleges, however, some institutions are looking at the possibility of diversifying their offerings to include foundation programmes and academic training to the staff of Chinese universities keen to develop their own internationalisation strategies.



## Healthcare, Medical Devices, Pharmaceuticals

**Healthcare:** With a population of 1.41 billion, including an elderly population of around 190.6 million (according to National Bureau of Statistics of China)<sup>17</sup>, China's medical and health development is crucial to people's livelihood. The Government is striving to develop a highly effective medical system.



# Key Growth Opportunities in China

(continued)



It has deepened medical reform to establish a basic medical and health system covering both urban and rural residents with a view to ensuring that everyone can enjoy safe, effective, convenient and good value basic medical and health services.

As a result, there has been rapid expansion of China's healthcare infrastructure, with a sharp increase in the number of general and specialist hospitals. Of its 34354 hospitals in 2019, about 2 thirds are designated as private<sup>18</sup>, in line with the Government policy of placing greater emphasis on the role of the private sector in delivering healthcare services. Covid-19 pandemic will lead to a rise in healthcare spending and aim to make markets more insular and self-sustainable. In its 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), the government announced a 10.6% increase in funding for technology projects, which includes clinical medicine and health, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence and quantum technology, which can be used to aid drug discovery.

**Medical devices:** The Chinese healthcare equipment and supplies industry has experienced very strong growth. The Chinese healthcare equipment & supplies market grew by 9% in 2020 to reach a value of €56.1 billion. In 2025, the Chinese healthcare equipment & supplies market is forecast to have a value of €83.4 billion. an increase of 48.7% since 2020<sup>19</sup>.

**Pharmaceuticals:** Despite China's large and growing pharmaceutical market, cost-control measures to rationalize healthcare spending will weigh on revenue-earning opportunities for drug makers. In the short term, the new public drug procurement mechanisms will pose new challenges to drug makers. Given cost-control measures, generic medicines will account for an increasing share of the medicine market, creating improved opportunities for the segment.



## ICT Sector

China is both the largest importer and the largest exporter of electronic/ICT products. China's ICT market receives considerable Government support, in line with its "Made in China 2025" campaign which set ambitious goals for the development of China's high-tech industry, innovation, R&D capabilities and information systems. There are exciting opportunities for Irish companies in such key subsectors as mobile, e-commerce, Internet of Things (IoT), software and Traveltech.

**E-commerce:** China has overtaken the US as the world's number one online shopping market. Over the last five years through 2017, industry revenue has been to reach OVER 1 BILLION EURO in 2020<sup>20</sup>. This high growth is due to the increasing penetration level of e-commerce in China and the development of online businesses and the services they provide.

The Chinese B2C e-commerce market is made up of cross border and inland e-commerce and is currently dominated by third party platforms such as Alibaba, JD, NetEase, Ctrip and Tencent. The opportunities for Irish brands in China are increasing, as signalled by the increasing number of cross-border e-commerce pilot zones in China. This creates an opportunity for companies to access the world's largest online shopping market. There are a growing number of cross-border e-commerce platforms which seek to exploit this growing market.

**Smart cities/Internet of Things (IoT):** China is the world leader in 5G, both in terms of equipment and roll out. A 5G Internet of Things (IoT) facility is expected to give a lift to domestic sales of TVs, PCs, tablets, augmented and virtual reality technology, drones, and robots. China is estimated to have 10 times as many 5G base stations in operation and aggressive plans by China Mobile, China Telecom, and China Unicom aim to accelerate the nationwide build-out of base stations to hit 600,000 by the end of 2020, with 3 million by 2025. China is driving the development of 6G and aims to set the international standards governing it. It seeks to be the major force in the cyber-physical Internet of Everything that will be enabled by 6G and will have formed by the latter part of the decade.

It has launched an experimental 6G terahertz satellite to test whether using high-frequency waves to transmit data at up to 50 gigabits per second, 100 times faster than current 5G speeds, works.



# Key Growth Opportunities in China

(continued)



**Software:** The Chinese software market has experienced strong growth in recent years. It is predicted that future growth will be driven in particular by increasing revenues from key business segments, including enterprise mobility management, software infrastructure and information management. While domestic Chinese companies have a significant presence, international software companies dominate the higher end of the market. During the first half of 2020, the country's software industry reached a business revenue of 3.56 trillion yuan (about 508 billion U.S. dollars), an increase of 6.7 percent year on year, and 12.9 percentage points higher than the first quarter of the year. 50% of that revenue. Chinese software companies are increasingly looking to gain access to new technological developments through partnerships. Such relationships can be mutually beneficial for foreign companies, affording access to the Chinese market and providing local knowledge and expertise<sup>21</sup>.

**Traveltech:** China is Asia's largest and the world's second-largest travel market. The market grew by 1.5X in the half-decade from 2014 through 2019. Increasing internationalization has characterized the Chinese market for the past several years, as inbound visits and outbound trips surged.

Provinces have invested billions of renminbi in air infrastructure, and even low-cost carriers (LCCs) have beefed up their international networks.

China also has one of the world's most robust domestic travel markets, which has allowed it to remain relatively healthy as COVID-19 has severely limited global international trips. Domestic travelers account for nearly all rail bookings - China's fastest-growing segment, which makes up about a third of travel bookings. The hotel segment has experienced growing pains, marked by continued consolidation and needed adjustments to supply by category. Across segments, third-party online distribution is dominated by Ctrip, which acquired its biggest competitors several years ago, but faces perpetual threats from upstarts, superapps, and suppliers' own efforts to reach more travelers directly. China's travel market contracted by 53% in 2020. We expect that domestic travel demand in 2021 will approach 2019 levels<sup>22</sup>. International travel, both inbound and outbound, will continue to struggle with restrictions in the near future. Consumer behavior is a major driver for the best-case and worst-case scenarios, but government has a big role to play, too.



## Electronics

Southern China is the main hubs for the electronics industry in China/Asia. Hongkong offers a solid research base, rigorous intellectual property protection, excellent communications and transportation networks as well as easy access to Guangdong province. Shenzhen which is one of the world's most exciting electronic innovation hubs in China, is located just one hour from Hong Kong. Hong Kong is also an ideal place to test and launch new products, applications and services before entering the Mainland China market.

Mainland China's manufacturing capability and demand for consumer products is growing fast, but preferences differ from other regions. So, entering Hong Kong first can help to localize a company's offering. Since 2014, China has been the world's biggest consumer electronic market and it is still achieving double digit growth each year. China imports c. over US\$ 320 billion worth of electronic items and exports more than US\$ 600 billion each year. Imports include IoT related devices, automobiles, medical devices, data-centres, cloud computing, aerospace and mobile communication applications.

**Data Centres (equipment supply or project management):** eCommerce and cloud computing sectors have experienced exponential growth in Greater China over the last 10 years. The sectors are valued at approx. US\$24 billion.



# Key Growth Opportunities in China

(continued)



More than 100 data-centres were built in China in recent years. Internet speed is rapidly improving in China and the development of 5G technology is expected to roll-out in 2021, further stimulating demand for new data centres.

**Semiconductor Industry (chip design or fables):** China recently released its Technology China 2025 strategy, outlining an upgrade of the Chinese manufacturing sector. The strategy emphasised innovation-based production and will lift the country into a higher value-added economy. This transformation of the manufacturing sector will create demand for Irish Semiconductor design chip-set companies in the areas of IoT, Smart-cities, public transportation and indoor location-based applications.

**Automotive:** Hong Kong can benefit greatly from China being the 2nd largest automobile manufacturing producer in the world. Global automobile parts manufacturers are continuing to move their facilities to China. The government has started to encourage more R&D on clean fuel and electric vehicles and to support this development more electronic components and programming PCB will be embed into the vehicle system. This trend creates business opportunities for Irish electronic companies with appropriate capabilities.



## Agritech/Equine

**Agritech:** By 2025, the localization rate of agricultural machinery varieties will reach 90%, and the product quality and reliability will reach the international advanced level.

The comprehensive mechanization rate of farming, sowing, and harvesting of agricultural crops across the country has reached 75%, and the comprehensive mechanization rate of animal husbandry, aquaculture and primary processing of agricultural products has reached about 50%. Especially in the dairy sector, the output of raw milk output has reached 45 million tons, and dairy farms with more than 100 cows will account for more than 75%. In particular, the construction of digital and intelligent farms will be strengthened. These will provide Irish clients with more opportunities to introduce the Niche products or services in China market.

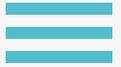
**Equine:** China's professional horse sports and leisure industry has benefited from an increase in middle class disposable income. From In 2019, the equestrian population in China was 1,195,100, an increase of 9.8% over 2018. The number of equestrian clubs in China has increased by nearly 20% compared to 2018, and is projected to reach 2,160 by the end of 2019...and it is expected to grow strongly in the future.

90% of equestrian club members are under the age of 18, and female members have become the main consumers. This is a very healthy trend when predicting future growth. In 2019, the number of registered horses in the Chinese equestrian club increased by 77,557, of which 35,415 were imported, an increase of 26% over 2018. The number of club horses owned by individuals is 23,655, of which 19,009 are imported from overseas.

The Chinese Government's "Made in China 2025" strategy is an initiative to comprehensively upgrade Chinese industry. This strategy is creating opportunities for Irish companies in many sectors including ICT, agritech and medical devices.



# Legal & Taxation Information



## Visa requirements

- Irish citizens require a visa and a passport valid for at least six months to enter China, as well as proof of onward travel intentions (e.g. a return air ticket) and hotel details. There are several types of Chinese visas, the most common being tourist (L) and business (M) visas, which are issued with different lengths of stay and have different requirements.
- For requirements and an application form, check with the Chinese Embassy in advance of travelling. A visa can take up to five days to process at the Chinese Embassy in Dublin.
- For more information see the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Ireland website: [\(http://ie.chineseembassy.org/eng/\)](http://ie.chineseembassy.org/eng/)



## Import rules and regulations

- Any required product or service certification will need to take place prior to commercialisation in China. Chinese product certification standards are not vastly different from those in Europe, as they are mostly in alignment with the International Standards Organisation (ISO) and American Standard Test Methods (ASTM). However, companies must be aware that China has its own applications for testing procedures that must be conducted in a licensed Chinese laboratory. UL, ISO or ASTM certification may not be recognised.
- For services, such as engineering and architecture, there is verification of home country documentation and companies may be required to have appropriately licensed Chinese staff within the applying company.



## Data & Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

- In recent years there have been a number of improvements in China's data and Intellectual Property (IP) laws. Several standards and general practices have been implemented to help to further protect businesses and consumers based in China.
- During China's Fourteenth Five-Year Plan(2021-2025), China's State Council released an ambitious plan proposed to implement the strategy of strengthening the country with intellectual property rights, implement a strict intellectual property protection system, improve laws and regulations related to intellectual property rights, and accelerate intellectual property legislation in new fields and new formats.



## Chinese labour law

- Chinese labour law is designed to protect employees based in China. Among other stipulations, it includes detailed regulations on contracts, so consulting a professional on this matter is advised. Rising wages and improvements in the quality of life means China is increasingly protecting its citizens from poor employment conditions.
- Most private sector employees in China are hired on fixed-term contracts and the length of contract to be offered to each staff member is a key consideration for employers. A fixed-term contract can be of any duration and can be used for part-time or full-time workers. The length of the fixed-term contract offered has a major effect on the employer-employee relationship because it determines the maximum length of the probation period that can be required. Furthermore, it can only be renewed once, effectively becoming a non-fixed-term contract on a second renewal.
- More and more companies are turning to third parties to handle their payroll in China to increase efficiency, accuracy and confidentiality of salary information.



# Legal & Taxation Information

(continued)



## Key taxes

There are a wide range of taxes, including income taxes (corporate income tax and individual income tax), turnover taxes (value-added tax, business tax and consumption tax), taxes on real estate (land appreciation tax, real-estate tax and urban and township land-use tax) and other taxes, such as stamp duty, custom duties, vessel tax and resource tax.

When a non-resident enterprise provides services to a Chinese company, the service fees are subject to a varying range of VAT, where applicable, and surcharges. The surcharges include the urban construction and maintenance tax, education surcharge and local education surcharge, which need to be taken into account in calculating tax liability. Indirect taxes are withheld by the Chinese service recipient when it remits the payment to the foreign service provider and are paid to the tax authority.

*If you have any legal or taxation questions or issues, working with a consultant or law firm who have local market access and knowledge is vital. Enterprise Ireland in China can link you with consultants/law firms who will be able to assist you navigate the Chinese legal system.*



# Helping You Win in China



Enterprise Ireland is committed to assisting and supporting clients to enter new markets and expand in their current markets. Our team of experienced marketing professionals in our overseas offices are ready to help you. Enterprise Ireland offers flexible solutions for client needs, as well as business supports for success in the market. This includes our Market Research Centre and local market supports, our experience in building selling capabilities, and our assistance with trade events and missions.

In Greater China, we have three offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong, servicing key sectors for Irish companies.

## Pre-visit support

Prior to engaging with an overseas market, client companies should engage with their Development Adviser (DA) and the Enterprise Ireland Market Research Centre in Dublin to ensure they leverage the full range of possible supports in preparation for engaging with the Enterprise Ireland team in the market.

- General market and country level information
- Sector overview
- Validation of the opportunities for your product or service
- Evaluation of your market entry strategy
- Suggested channels to market
- Competitor analysis
- Relevant contacts/suggested itinerary
- Summary of relevant market information resources

## In-market support

- Introductions to buyers and decision-makers
- Identification of potential partners
- Facilitation of buyer visits to Ireland
- Assistance with product launches/workshops
- Securing reference sites

## International trade events programme

Every year, Enterprise Ireland organises an extensive programme of events to support your business abroad. These include:

- Inward buyers' missions to Ireland
- Group stands at important international trade fairs
- Overseas trade missions

- Study visits to gain knowledge of overseas markets
- Client knowledge events including seminars, workshops and online events
- Networking events to build and enhance relationships with market contacts
- Further information is available at: [www.enterprise-ireland.com/events](http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/events)

## International market contacts

Enterprise Ireland has built up an excellent network of individuals in China who are able to work with Irish client companies on developing their business. This includes market and sector specialists, business accelerators and members of Irish business associations.

## Additional supports

- Access to translation and interpreting services
- Introductions to specialist expertise such as legal, recruitment, public relations and taxation
- Access to mentors

*Enterprise Ireland's Market Research Centre offers client companies access to market intelligence in the form of company, sector, market, and country information to explore opportunities and compete in international markets.*



# Contact Us



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Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Ireland's EU Structural and  
Investment Funds Programmes  
2014 - 2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government  
and the European Union



**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund

Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2021.  
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union.

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