



Exporting to **FRANCE**

—
A guide for clients



#GlobalAmbition

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Enterprise Ireland in the Eurozone

The Eurozone markets are a cornerstone of Enterprise Ireland’s strategy to accelerate market diversification in order to continue to deliver sustainable economic growth. The ability to seek out new international opportunities and capitalise on them will be a key success factor for Irish companies in the period ahead. In addition, as part of the governments stated ambition to grow the domestic SME sector, Enterprise Ireland is committed to increasing the number of new exporters in the Eurozone.

The EU single market is particularly attractive for Irish exporters thanks to the absence of customs and tariffs as well as regulatory alignment in many areas. The absence of foreign exchange costs in the Eurozone market is an additional attraction in those 19 countries who have adopted the euro.

While the multinational sector has reaped the benefits of the single market, Irish owned businesses have yet to take advantage of what is the biggest Free Trade Agreement in the World.

Enterprise Ireland client exports to the Eurozone (2020: €5.8bn) are less than 80% of the value of those to the UK (2020: €7.51bn) despite the fact that the Eurozone population and Eurozone GDP is 5 times that of the UK.

Enterprise Ireland’s Eurozone Strategy aims to inspire and support more companies to enter and scale in Eurozone markets. Since it was launched in 2017 exports to the Eurozone have increased by over 33% (to 2019); growth in Enterprise Ireland client exports increased by 15% in 2019 alone and increased by 1.6% in 2020 despite the challenges of Covid. However, the markets still remain relatively untapped and Enterprise Ireland is committed to continuing this strong growth.

Enterprise Ireland’s Eurozone Strategy ultimate goal is for the Eurozone market to become an extension of the Irish domestic market for Irish businesses. It seeks to do this by creating an awareness of the opportunities afforded by a single market and a single currency and by providing the necessary supports to Irish owned businesses to exploit them.



Enterprise Ireland currently has 8 offices in 6 countries across the Eurozone

| Country | Offices | 2020 exports |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Netherlands | Amsterdam | €1.71bn |
| Germany | Dusseldorf, Munich | €1.29bn |
| France | Paris, Lyon | €1.1bn |
| Belgium | Brussels | €546m |
| Italy | Milan | €431m |
| Spain | Madrid | €356m |
| Total Eurozone | | €5.856bn |





Paris

Capital



Euro

Currency



\$38,625¹

GDP per capita 2020



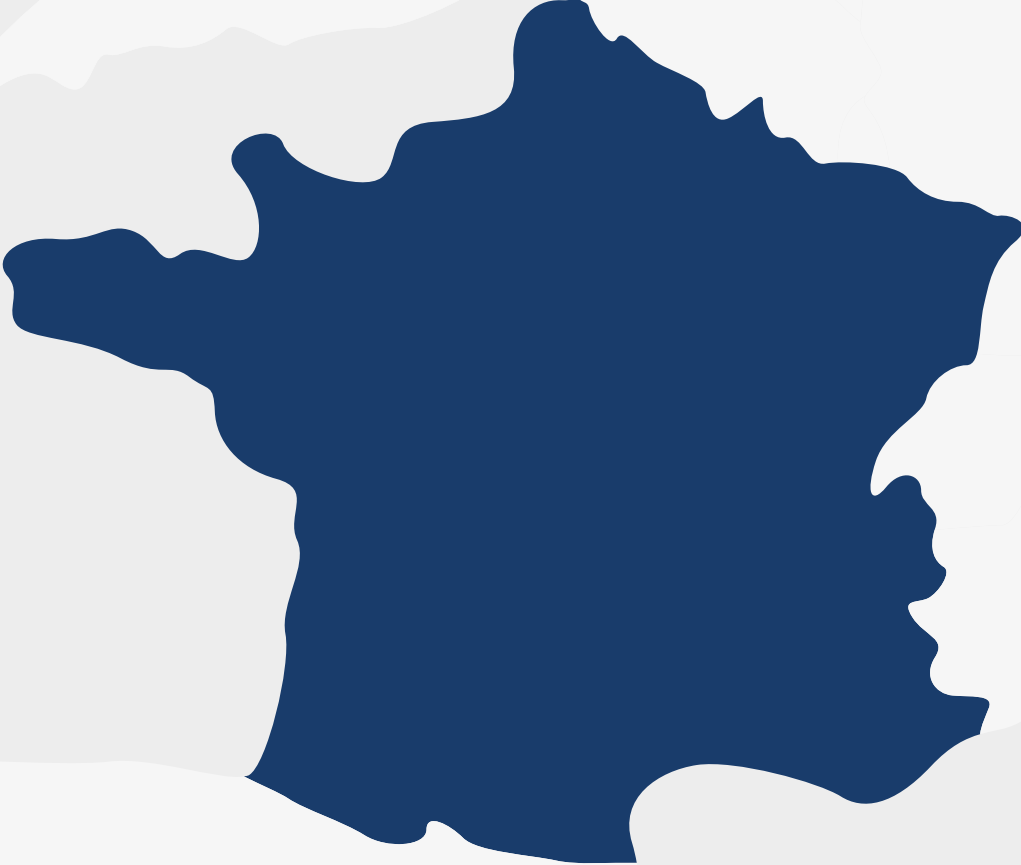
67m²

Population



€1.10bn³

Enterprise Ireland Client Exports (2020)



For more information: Watch video



Why Export to France

France is the 7th largest global economy and the 3rd largest in Europe.⁴ A strong and influential country, it is committed to, and is one of the central drivers of the EU.

At 546,630 sq. km⁵ France is around eight times the size of Ireland⁶ and its population of over 67m is similar to that of the UK.⁷

A member of the G7, France is one of the world's biggest and wealthiest industrial powers. Its stable economy has proven resilient to boom and bust cycles. With the exception of the Covid-19 pandemic period, economic growth in the market has been consistent in recent years, on the back of strong exports and steady domestic demand.

For the second consecutive year, France is Europe's number 1 destination for foreign direct investment.⁸ Recent reforms, such as reduced capital taxation, lowered corporate tax, and labour market reforms have significantly increased France's attractiveness to foreign investors. Moreover, Brexit has caused decision-makers to take into consideration the relative security and stability of France over the United Kingdom at this time. In 2020, 985 FDI projects were agreed with 20,000 foreign firms based in France creating 2 million jobs.⁹

These opportunities add to the huge 100 Bn€ investment envelope made available by the French government for post-COVID economic recovery 'France relance' to be spent in areas such as Sustainability, Infrastructure and Digital transformation.¹⁰

France is among the leading global industrial economies in the automotive, aerospace and railway sectors, as well as in cosmetics, luxury goods, insurance, pharmaceuticals, telecoms, power generation, defense, agriculture and hospitality. It is also the world's leading tourist destination in terms of visitor numbers each year.¹¹

Reasons to include France in your export strategy



France is the **3rd largest European economy**¹²



Paris is a frontrunner to replace London as **Europe's financial hub after Brexit**¹³



The French government have launched a strong and comprehensive push towards digital transformation in France, assigning 7bn€ to digital transformation as part of the 'France relance' budget.¹⁴ The Paris Region is a digital hot spot and offers exceptional growth opportunities in digital technologies.



France is the **2nd largest health care equipment and supplies market in Europe**.¹⁵



France has a **12.6% share of European construction industry value**¹⁶



France is the world's **6th largest and Europe's largest agricultural producer**, driving huge demand for agricultural machinery imports¹⁷



Get Ready to Do Business in France

Business culture in France is guided by principles of hierarchy, tradition and attention to detail.

As such, logical reasoning and high levels of analysis are used to guide the culture, which can be seen as slow and procedural. It is different to the “transaction-based” markets of the UK, US and the Netherlands. Sales cycles are often longer because French organisations like to go through extensive due diligence before choosing a new supplier. This means “me too” companies are unlikely to succeed in the market.

This comes with its own unique advantages as it creates a stable and loyal relationship between buyer and supplier that can lead to strong references in the market.

Being part of a local, on-the-ground network is important in the French market. Recruiting an in-market business developer or creating a partnership with a French organisation will improve chances of success.



Travelling and geography

The French market is geographically close to Ireland, with numerous air routes and sea crossings. Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris is ranked second for cargo and second by passenger numbers in Europe.¹⁸ France also boasts a number of advantages in maritime transport with 66 commercial maritime ports, and more than 500 decentralized ports.¹⁹

In the wake of Brexit, France acts as an ideal land bridge to the rest of the continent. In recognition of this, dozen of new ferry routes have been established between Ireland France.²⁰

In response to Brexit, there has been in a tenfold increase of maritime transport capacity between France and Ireland since January 2021. These direct routes are favourable as they cut out the delays that were seen due to the additional customs and regulatory checks imposed by Brexit when using the land bridge.²¹

Opportunities are not limited to the capital, from aerospace to pharmaceuticals and agribusiness to online selling, many of France’s world leading industries are powered from outside of Paris. As France has reformed its administrative regions, reducing 22 regions to become 12, Enterprise Ireland has seen an increase in regional competition for FDI - solidifying the opportunities for overseas firms looking to relocate outside of Paris. These locations are accessible through an extensive rail network.²²

In order to seize potential within the regions, Enterprise Ireland opened a second office in Lyon, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, in 2019.

It is France’s second-most prosperous region, with a GDP and a surface area roughly equivalent to the island of Ireland.²³

Located in the south-east of the country, it also provides easy access to the whole of the south of France, with the cities of Marseille, Nice and Grenoble all less than three hours by train. It also borders Italy and Switzerland, making it an important hub in France and a centre of activity in the transport and logistics sector. The region is highly industrialised, boasting 55,000 manufacturing sites employing half a million people, and is known for its capabilities particularly in the automative, chemicals and plastics industries.²⁴ The city and region have a long history of excellence in Life Sciences and world leaders such as Sanofi and bioMerieux are headquartered in Lyon.

In light of global travel restrictions, we are advising all clients to regularly review the Government of Ireland advice at 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 France

(continued)



Language

Although there are increasingly more business-level English speakers in France, it is advised to enquire prior to a meeting if your interlocutor is comfortable communicating in English. If not, hire a professional interpreter. Make sure that documents (e.g. business cards, contracts, marketing material, websites etc.) are translated professionally into French. This will contribute to your credibility as a company committed to doing business in the market.

ROUTES TO MARKET



Commercial agents

An agent is a self-employed individual who acts as an outsourced sales resource for a company. Working with an agent can be less costly than employing a full-time member of staff. Using a native French speaker will help build sales leads more effectively from an early stage.

Partners

A partnership agreement with a local organisation may act as a way of gaining foothold in the market or building sales opportunities in sectors that might be difficult to penetrate as a new entrant.

Distributors

The advantage of a distributor is that they have an extensive list of leads and potential clients, a strong distribution network and facilities to serve large areas.



Things to Consider



Market landscape

Irish companies may face challenges in the French market because of the time and patience needed to manage lengthy sales cycles and due diligence processes. However, if approached correctly, France can be a very significant and lucrative market for innovative, leading-edge Irish companies. Irish companies that are best positioned to win in France tend to have the following attributes:

- A world-class technology, product or service innovation
- A clear, market-specific value proposition
- The commitment to stay the course over lengthy sales cycles
- A budget to travel regularly initially and ultimately to have in-market representation
- The ability to deal with demanding technical and customer servicing requirements
- Language capabilities and resources



Market trends

It is necessary to understand the current market trends for the sectors you will be targeting. If there is an obvious gap in the market, find out why. Learn about the size of your target market, growth rates (historic and projected), main players and segmentation. This is an important step for you to put objectives in place around the revenue you will generate in the market over a specific period.



Target market

When considering the French market, Irish companies must understand how buying decisions are made in the market. It is also important to learn who the relevant decision-makers are within your target client companies. Understanding who is responsible for making buying decisions and the budgets they control will increase your chances of penetrating the market.



Market segmentation

With a population of over 67 million²⁵, France is a large and diverse market. It is essential to have a clear understanding of the market dynamics of the specific industry sector you are targeting.



Competitors

Before approaching French buyers or decision makers, Irish companies need to research their in-market competitors and thoroughly refine their value proposition to ensure that they offering something different. French buyers won't disrupt their supply chain just to bring a new provider on board with a broadly similar product or service to one currently being sourced. Before approaching French buyers or decision makers, Irish companies need to research the market opportunities thoroughly and refine their value proposition.

Things to Consider

(continued)



Market research resources

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, see <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/export-assistance/market-research-centre/>

Business France provides comprehensive and regularly updated information and support for companies trading in the French market, see <https://www.businessfrance.fr/en/home>

Paris Region is the local agency supporting incoming international companies with their development in the Paris area, see <https://investparisregion.com/>

Aderly Invest in Lyon provides assistance to international companies setting up in the greater Lyon metropolitan area, see <https://www.aderly.com/>

Les Echos is one of the main business information publications in France, see <https://www.lesechos.fr/>

La Tribune is the main economic and financial publication, see <https://www.latribune.fr/>



Boots on the ground

French business culture favours some form of regular or permanent presence by a would-be supplier; this could be a sales agent, consultant or even a direct employee, supported from head office in Ireland. Because of the significance of relationship building, it is important to build a strong and visible local presence. Depending on the nature of the business, aiming for in-market representation in the longer term can be important, especially for products and services that require demanding technical and customer support.



Customer service

Prospects in France will expect to see strong customer service. Update your website to accommodate for French enquiries and purchases. Set up a French landing page, with customised information for a French audience. Have a presence on French social media.

Factors such as salary, working hours, opportunities for promotion, work-life balance and working environment are important for employees and failure to meet expectations could negatively affect standards of customer service.



Key Growth Opportunities in France



Financial Services

The French financial sector has experienced significant growth in recent years and employs over 1 million people.²⁶ Among some of its principle draws are its large asset management sector, its skilled financial professionals and the presence of major international players. In fact, five of the Eurozone's top banks are French.²⁷

In France, 48% of financial services organisations have embedded fintech fully into their strategic operating model and 37% of financial services organisations have incorporated emerging technologies into the products and services they sell.²⁸

Following Brexit, Paris is set to be one of the main beneficiaries of the transfer of financial services activities, further strengthening its status as the financial centre of Europe.²⁹

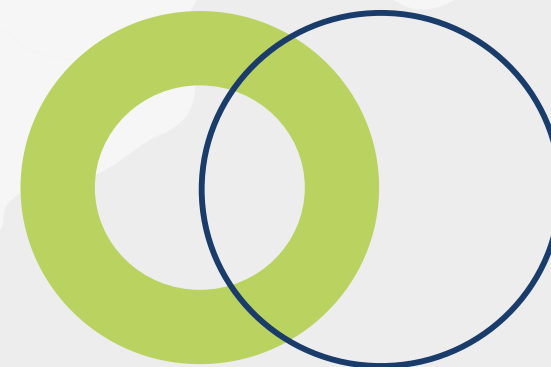
Digital Technologies

The digital technology market in France is one of the most vibrant in Europe, benefiting from a strong R&D framework and advanced infrastructure. France is the second leading European country for the number of fast-growing companies in the technology sector.³⁰ The French Government plans to invest over €9 billion into digital projects for public services, health and social cohesion systems as part of the 2018-2022 "Big Investment Plan"³¹. The government has also launched a major effort, 'La French Tech' to bolster the growth of start ups in France and create a 'Digital Republic'. The initiative provides specific support to both French and international start-ups.³² Paris is also home to the world's largest start-up incubator, Station F.³³

Particularly within tech and digital sectors, the emergence of open innovation departments has been capitalised on by Enterprise Ireland through partnerships with networks such as Paris Region. This has afforded clients the opportunity to pitch in front of companies such as Total, Citroën, Orange International and Accenture and has led to discussions between our Irish clients and many large French companies.

Telecommunications

France has been ranked as the number one market in Europe for cheap ultra-high-speed broadband connectivity. The French Government's high-speed internet plan aims to ensure 100% nationwide coverage of very high-speed internet by 2022 through combined public and private investment of some €20 billion. Priority is being given to business parks for the rollout of fibre-optic connections.³⁴ In 2020, 99% of the French population had access to 4G internet³⁵ and French telecoms providers are currently rolling out 5G internet in urban locations. With 23 million Wi-Fi hotspots, France has more than any other country in Europe.³⁶ Several lucrative Franco-Irish partnerships have been formed over the past year in this area and Enterprise Ireland expects to see continued success in France.



Key Growth Opportunities in France

(continued)



Tourism and TravelTech

With a winning combination of outstanding cultural heritage sites, renowned cuisine, high quality hotels and business venues as well as major cultural and sporting events, In 2019, 85.7 million international tourists visited mainland France,³⁷ contributing \$211 billion to the French economy.³⁸ In 2024, the French travel & tourism industry is forecast to grow to a value of \$274.8 billion.³⁹ The strength of the tourism industry in France makes it a very attractive market for travel technology solutions as well as products and services for the hospitality industry.



MedTech

France has a well-established medical device manufacturing industry dominated by multinationals and a well-developed base of indigenous SMEs as medical sub-suppliers. Their production is focused on diagnostic imaging, orthopedics and prosthetics and other medical devices, particularly hospital furniture. The market was valued at €13.5 billion in 2019⁴⁰, and is number three in the OECD for healthcare spending.⁴¹ France is Europe's second leading market for medical devices.

The French government is acutely aware of the importance of digital technology in the healthcare sector and has placed it at the heart of its “Ma santé 2022” strategy.⁴²

There are several key trends in this area, most notably: the pro-growth agenda of President Macron's reform programme, increasing life expectancy, healthcare needs of elderly population, more competitive hospital purchasing, initiatives to further develop ambulatory care and telemedicine.



Pharma

It is home to Sanofi, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, and is a base for many other major multinationals, including Pfizer. The market is valued at €29 billion in 2019⁴³ and is the world's fifth largest market for medicinal products for human use.⁴⁴ The Government's pro-business agenda and lower corporation tax are increasing market attractiveness among pharmaceutical investors.

There are several key trends in this area. The potential for the generic drugs market growth in France is considerable as the Government expands cost-containment measures and the number of patent expirations on blockbuster drugs increases. Reimbursement of some over the counter (OTC) medication by insurance companies should stimulate growth of the OTC market, along with the ageing population increasing demand for chronic treatments.



Construction

The French construction market was valued at \$342bn in 2019 and is anticipated to grow to \$346bn in 2024.⁴⁵ Non-residential is the largest segment of the construction industry in France, accounting for 59.5% of the industry's total value.⁴⁶

The French construction industry grew by 2.2% in 2019.⁴⁷ Dynamism in this sector is driven by increased activity in the domain of residential construction, encouraged by tax exemptions supporting real-estate investment and assisting first time buyers. Renovation activity will remain stable while public construction activity will remain low due to constraints within the public spending budget. Despite this, France remains the third largest market in Europe in the construction industry.⁴⁸

There are currently opportunities in the construction sector thanks to the roll-out of the largest transport project in Europe, the “Grand Paris” (2015-2030). This strategic urban development plan involves investment of €35 billion, the creation of four new automated metro lines and the expansion of two existing lines in the Paris area representing over 200km of new network. It will also see the construction of 70,000 new homes per year.⁴⁹



Key Growth Opportunities in France

(continued)



The building of data centres also represents a key growth opportunity in construction. COVID-19 has been a major boost to the French data center market, with increased colocation uptake by existing customers, and increased investments in new data centers and cloud regions. Increasingly data centers are being powered through 100% renewable energy in France.⁵⁰ Several data centre clusters exist throughout the country, primarily in Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Lille and Strasbourg, providing opportunities for colocation in these areas.

Other key growth areas in French construction lie in high tech construction opportunities in BIM and the building of pharmaceutical plants and a move toward energy efficient construction and green building.



Aerospace

France accounts for 8.1% of the European aerospace & defense sector value.⁵¹ The French aerospace & defense sector grew by 1.1% in 2019 to reach a value of \$25,043.9 million.⁵²

Obviously the sector was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic but it is anticipated that the sector will recover throughout 2021.

Opportunities have been identified in specialised tool manufacturing, geolocalisation components and precision engineering.



Agriculture

France is among the largest agricultural exporters in the world and a major agricultural power in the EU, accounting for 16% of all its agricultural land. 50% of the French territory is agricultural land.⁵³ Agriculture employs 2.5% of the population in France⁵⁴ and French agricultural products account for 46% of the European market value.⁵⁵ The agricultural machinery sector in France is made up of 39,000 companies and 185,000 employees. Agricultural machinery imports are worth €4.5bn in France, which represents huge opportunity for foreign manufacturers.⁵⁶



Cleantech and Renewable Energy

Following on from the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015, France witnessed the introduction of new regulatory measures concerning environmental policies. This has already created a range of opportunities for Irish companies in the cleantech space in smart energy, marine energy, water treatment and smart city.

Key trends in this space include energy digitalization, industry 4.0 and mobility of the future.



Retail

France is the Eurozone's second largest economy⁵⁷ and second largest consumer market⁵⁸ offering significant commercial opportunities nationally as well as direct access to the European Single Market. While sales through bricks and mortar retailers still account for a significant amount of revenue generated in this market, due to the transport strikes, and the COVID-19 pandemic, online retailing is growing in significance. One third of French consumers, or up to 21 million people, now say they see themselves visiting shops less and prioritising online purchases.⁵⁹ E-commerce giant Amazon dominates the market but is closely followed by French websites E.Leclerc, Cdiscount and Veepee.⁶⁰

The largest online retail categories in France are food, electronics, apparel and home and garden.⁶¹ Across the board, French consumers are concerned more than ever with the environmental impact of their purchases, the sustainability of the products they are consuming, and their ethical production.⁶²



Legal & Taxation Information



Intellectual Property (IP)

The Institut National de la Propriété Industrielle (INPI) has a patent database which contains information on French patent applications, utility certificates and supplementary protection certificates (SPCs), as well as European (EP) and international (PCT) patent applications.

For more information, see:

<https://bases-brevets.inpi.fr/en/home.html>



Visa requirements

Irish passport holders do not require a visa to enter France but must have a valid passport. For more information on travel to France see the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs website:

<https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/france/>



Customs and currency information

France is a member of the EU Customs Union and as such Irish companies are not subject to customs duties on goods moving between Ireland and France. More information on the customs union can be found at:

<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp/eu-customs-union>

The single currency within the Eurozone means that there is no currency risk when exporting to France. This reduces financial management costs to both the exporter and importer, facilitating business and simplifying transactions and record keeping.



Contractual terms and conditions

Companies beginning operations in France must ensure all contracts adhere to French law, for legal and commercial reasons.



Corporate structures

There are three main ways for a foreign company to establish a business in France:

- Establish a French subsidiary
- Open a branch office
- Open a liaison office

More information on incorporating in France can be found at:

https://www.businessfrance.fr/Media/Production/INVEST/Invest-DEA/DB%20Business%20livret%201_UK_2017.pdf

France is one of the easiest countries in which to establish a business and only 4 days are required, compared with 4.5 in the United Kingdom and 8 in Germany.⁶³ The guichet-entreprises.fr service encourages business creation in France by enabling anyone to complete the formalities necessary to create their activity (registration, applications for licences or permits, etc) in one place online. It is the official government website for creating, modifying or closing business activity, set up by the French Ministry for the Economy and Finance. More information can be found at: <https://www.guichet-entreprises.fr/en/>



Tax structures

The standard corporate tax rate was 33.3% but is slowly falling to 25% by 2022. From 2018, a tax rate of 28% applied to the first €500,000 of all company earnings, and 33.33% applied above this threshold. The 33.33% tax rate was lowered to 31% in 2019.

For SMEs, a 15% reduced rate continues to apply.⁶⁴ More information can be found at:

<https://www.impots.gouv.fr/portail/internationalenbusiness/corporation-tax>



Employment

French labour law regulations are contained in the Code du Travail (Labour Code). Employment law in France is being modernized and aims to become more pragmatic and flexible with a more open dialogue between employers and employees. More information on French employment law can be found at: https://www.businessfrance.fr/Media/Production/INVEST/Invest-DEA/DB%20Business%20livret%201_UK_2017.pdf

Helping You Win in France



Enterprise Ireland assists clients entering new markets with:

Pre-visit support

Prior to engaging with an overseas market, client companies should engage with their Development Advisor (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 EI team in the market.

- General market and country level information
- Sector overview
- Validation of the opportunity 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

- Market Discovery Fund grant support: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/Eestablish-SME-Funding/Market-Discovery-Fund.html>

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

Mentors

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

International trade events programme

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

- Inward buyer missions to Ireland
- Group stands at international trade fairs
- Overseas trade missions

- Market study visits to gain knowledge of overseas markets
- Client knowledge events such as seminars and workshops
- Networking events to build and enhance relationships with market contacts.

Further information is available at: www.enterprise-ireland.com/events

Additional supports

- Recommendations for translation and interpreting services
- Introductions to specialist expertise for legal, recruitment, public relations and taxation requirements

Irish networks in France

Irish in France: <https://irishinfrance.wixsite.com/irishinfrance>

Embassy of Ireland, France: <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/france/>

IDA Ireland France Office: <https://www.idaireland.fr/>

Ireland France Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.franceireland.ie/>

Network Irlande: <https://www.networkirlande.com/en/>

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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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