

# MEMBER'S NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2022



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Dear Member,

The 21<sup>st</sup> announcement of the lifting of restrictions by the Government came as unexpected but great news to us all. However, it also left many businesses, especially in the services and hospitality sectors, with little time to plan for resumed operations.

Government has published its draft [Sick Leave Bill 2021](#) which will confer the right to a minimum of three days statutory sick pay. We will issue guidance on this in due course. It has to make its way through the Oireachtas, and we also expect Government to delay until the amount of Covid-related illness falls.

Government has also published its [Draft Scheme of the Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022](#). While there are 13 grounds on which an employer may refuse the right to work from home, there is also an appeal mechanism for the employee.

A great many businesses have successfully managed trade with home-based workers throughout the pandemic, but this was effectively done on a force majeure basis. Certain issues, especially those around employee liability and workplace health and safety (in the home) have never been addressed or teased out. In view of the highly litigious nature of society here, we need to see the Government and the HSA address these issues formally before this right is enshrined in law.

Our Pension Equity Challenge will take place later this year. We will be holding a [Pensions Equity Q&A](#) webinar on 10<sup>th</sup> February to give an outline explanation of the issues involved. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

We are delighted to report that a member company which successfully defended a personal injuries action in the Circuit Court sought referral of the case to the DPP on the basis that false evidence was used in the case. Their employee (the plaintiff) is now being formally investigated by the Gardaí for perjury. We also have nine live complaints of professional misconduct against solicitors in personal injuries cases. The Government may have stalled insurance reform, but rest assured ISME will not stop.

Lastly, and despite the assurances to the contrary by the Central Bank, we believe that a significant rate of inflation is likely to be maintained into the medium term. This will inevitably lead to an increase in interest rates (which are already high for SME borrowers in Ireland). Our economist colleagues advise us to expect a 0.2% increase in the ECB rate later this year, with that rate climbing by 1.5% by mid-2024. This will impact what is already an expensive cost of credit for Irish consumers and businesses. Start planning for it now.

Neil McDonnell | CEO | [neil@isme.ie](mailto:neil@isme.ie)

CB Media

CMS

Enniscorthy Farm Systems Ltd.

Finnegan Steel Fabrication Ltd

Jeanius

John Cronin & Associates

Le Masney Orthodontics

O'Reillys Hair & Beauty Limited

Pointer Control Systems Limited

Rainbow Amusements Limited

Ryan & McGinty Chartered Certified

Accountants

Spireco

Treehouse Childcare



# ISME NEWS

## ISME's Pension Equity Campaign Q&A

Join us on **Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> February at 12 noon** for a webinar with ISME CEO, Neil McDonnell and Eamonn Kiely, Managing Director, Money Plus who will be discussing why ISME's Pension Equity Campaign is so important and how businesses can get involved. The discussion will be chaired by Newtalk presenter, Vincent Wall. This event is free of charge and you can add any questions you wish to ask Neil or Eamonn about this issue into the form when you register [here](#).



## Business Crime Survey 2021

We have launched our annual Business Crime Survey and will be asking you to share your experiences with business crime during the 12 months of 2021. The results of the survey are published on our website and shared with media to show the impact of crime on businesses in Ireland. You can complete the survey [here](#).

## Promote your business with ISME

The next issue of [The bISME](#) is out later in February and there's still time to advertise in this issue, view details [here](#). We offer reduced rates for members.

Don't forget our **Shop Local B2C and B2B platforms**, advertise your products and services by completing the form [here](#). This is a great opportunity to promote your business and the opportunity for inclusion is free with your ISME Membership. Take a look at the portal [here](#)

You can also upload your business news and job vacancies in the Members Area. For further information please email [Marketing@isme.ie](mailto:Marketing@isme.ie)

## It pays to refer

Did you know that when you refer another business(es) to join ISME, you receive 10% discount when you renew your membership but make sure they mention you when they join! We want to continue to grow ISME so we can represent and support more Irish businesses.

# ISME NEWS

## Last call for our Q4 Trends Survey

We are getting very interesting feedback from our Business Trends Q4 2021 survey that asks business owners/managers about their business performance, needs and concerns. Each quarter in 2021 tells its own story so what's Q4? Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey [here](#).



## ISME Wellness Programme

In these unprecedented times of a global pandemic, the health and wellbeing of employees is more important now than ever. As we support our members and their employees working remotely, we are committed to delivering the best, most appropriate, and most accessible solutions along with our partners, Laya healthcare and their health & wellbeing provider, Spectrum.Life with our ISME's Wellness Programme.

This 24/7 Mental Wellbeing Support Programme (EAP) offers unlimited access to employees and their families. For members with up to 30 employees the fixed cost is €500 + VAT and each subject employee is €9 for one year. To find out more go click [here](#).



## Cost saving with ISME in 2022

As business costs continue to rise and income for so many at the moment has been challenged, we want you to take **ADVANTAGE** of your ISME Membership to reduce your costs and add value to your business through [ISME's ADVANTAGE Affinity programme](#).

Members can save up to 50% on broadband, insurance, accounting & HR software, advertising, merchant services and much more. To access these offers, Members need to log into [isme.ie](#) via the Members Area.



# ISME NEWS

## ISME calls for integration of the Taxation and Social Welfare systems

ISME sent a submission to the Commission on Taxation and Welfare calling for the integration of the taxation and social welfare system. ISME has highlighted how the taxation and social welfare system are inherently interlined for the taxpaying-citizen, but has noted that the pace of reform in Ireland is too slow. ISME has outlined a number of recommendations for consideration by the Commission, including:

- Raising the Standard Rate Cut-Off Point to 95% of the average industrial wage as soon as possible.
- Pending removal of the 3% USC surcharge on the self-employed earning over €100,000, and apply this surcharge to all workers earning over €100,000.
- In order to encourage the stated goal of increasing private sector pension coverage:
  - end the discrimination against private sector pension savers in the amount of income they can save for pensions;
  - maintain marginal rate relief and extend it to all savers; and
  - allow private sector workers with a chargeable excess tax liability, to discharge it in the same manner as a public sector worker.
- Set the basic rate for qualifying for the medical card at more than 30% above the comparable Jobseekers assistance rate.
- Replace the child element in the Jobseekers' payments and all other welfare schemes by substantially increasing Child Benefit, phasing out Working Family Benefit, and at the same time making the Child Benefit taxable.
- Significantly increase the income thresholds for access to social housing and reform or remove the link between income and local authority rent.

You can view the full submission [here](#).

## Legislation to establish Corporate Enforcement Authority (CEA) has passed

New milestone law will see CEA crack down on larger scale and more complex breaches of company law. Minister of State with responsibility for Company Law, Robert Troy TD, welcomed the passing of the Companies (Corporate Enforcement Authority) Bill 2021 through all legislative stages in the Houses of the Oireachtas on Wednesday the 15th December. The Bill will now be sent to the President for his signature and enactment into law.

The landmark Bill will transform the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) into a statutory and independent agency entitled the Corporate Enforcement Authority with additional resources to investigate and prosecute white collar crime. Find out more [here](#).

# ISME NEWS

## An Tánaiste Announces Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme Extension

An Tánaiste published on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January the Redundancy Payments (Amendment) Bill, which gives employees who have lost out on reckonable service while they were on lay-off due to Covid-19 restrictions, and have subsequently been made redundant, a special payment of up to a maximum payment of €1860 tax-free to bridge the gap in their redundancy entitlements. Find out more [here](#).



## Government agrees Covid Recognition Payment and New Public Holiday

The Government has announced a COVID recognition payment of €1,000 (tax free), for eligible frontline health and ambulance workers and a new public holiday on Friday 18th March. In 2023 there will be a new permanent public holiday established in celebration of St Brigid's Day. This will be the first Monday in every February, except where St. Brigid's Day, the 1st day of February, happens to fall on a Friday, in which case that Friday 1 February will be a public holiday. Read full details [here](#).

## Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF)

The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) is a €500 million fund established under Project Ireland 2040. It is managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and administered by Enterprise Ireland. The fourth Call was launched in November 2021 and offers funding collaborations that demonstrate technology-based disruptive innovation. The deadline for receipt of applications is Thursday, 10th February 2022. Find out more [here](#).

## National Minimum Hourly Wage

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, the national minimum hour rate will be €10.50 for those aged 20 or over; €9.45 aged 19; €8.40 aged 18; and €7.35 under 18 years of age. In order to ensure that the increase in the minimum wage does not result in employers attracting a higher level of PRSI charge solely due to this increase, the employer PRSI threshold will increase from €398 currently to €410 from 1 January 2022. Find out more [here](#).



## The Transitionnel Protocol

New guidance for workplaces has been published on 31<sup>st</sup> January to reflect the recent relaxation of most public health measures. The Transitional Protocol eases many requirements on businesses but says good practices should be maintained, find out more [here](#).



# ISME NEWS

## Health and Safety Authority's Strategy Statement 2022-2024

Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, Damien English TD, launched the Health and Safety Authority's new Strategy Statement 2022 – 2024 on 1st January. The HSA's Strategy Statement 2022 – 2024 sets out continued goals to promote, regulate and influence the areas across its wide and varied mandate. It also highlights key goals in tackling current and emerging challenges and opportunities in Ireland's workplaces including the introduction of remote/hybrid working, advancements in technology and the green economy, the 'gig economy', and the particular needs of vulnerable workers and migrant groups. To download or read in full please visit [The HSA's Strategy Statement 2022 – 2024](#) and [Programme of Work 2022](#)

## Health Information and Awareness calendar 2022

The Health Information and Awareness calendar 2022 contains links to different campaigns and events, national and international for 2022. View the calendar [here](#).



## Upskill your employees with free online training supports from SEAI

To help your business get started on your energy saving journey, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has developed free online training supports. The SEAI Energy Academy can help you reduce your energy costs by 10% or more by educating employees on changing their energy use behaviours and effective energy management.

To register for the SEAI Energy Academy go to [www.seai.ie/energyacademy](http://www.seai.ie/energyacademy)

## Small Companies Administrative Rescue Process

The Companies (Rescue Process for Small and Micro Companies) Act 2021 inserts a new Part 10A into the Companies Act 2014 to provide for a dedicated rescue process for small and micro companies, the "Small Companies Administrative Rescue Process".

While examinership is internationally recognised and successful in its own right, the associated costs mean it may be beyond the reach of small and micro enterprises. This new rescue process is designed to make rescue and restructuring more accessible and affordable to fundamentally viable companies experiencing temporary difficulties. These companies will now have access to an alternative framework which incorporates key elements of the existing examinership model in an administrative context, demonstrating Government's commitment to providing a sustainable regulatory response to the challenges facing small and micro companies across the country.

The Act came into effect on 7 December 2021. Read about the Eligibility criteria [here](#)

# ISME NEWS

## InterTradelreland Chairman appointed

InterTradelreland, the cross-border trade and economic development body, has announced the appointment of Richard Kennedy as its new Chairman.

Mr Kennedy is Chief Executive of Belfast-based Devenish. Under his guidance, the agri-tech firm has transformed from a company focused on the Northern Ireland market to an international research, development and innovation business trading in over forty countries.

Welcoming the new Chairman to the InterTradelreland board, CEO Margaret Hearty said: "Richard is an expert in growing a business in new markets and has an outstanding record of achievement. We have no doubt that he will make a very significant contribution to InterTradelreland. We look forward to his innovative vision and considered input."

Commenting on his appointment, Mr Kennedy said, "I am delighted to be appointed Chair of InterTradelreland – a vital organisation that helps power economic prosperity across the island of Ireland. This is a pivotal time to be joining the board, as InterTradelreland builds on the next chapter of its evolution and growth. It's an exciting prospect to work with the rest of the board, CEO Margaret Hearty, the senior leadership team and all of the InterTradelreland team. "

With this new appointment, InterTradelreland continues to focus on helping firms to grow. To date over 48,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradelreland to identify and develop trade and innovation opportunities. The organisation has created over 18,000 new jobs and generated more than €1.3bn/£1.2bn in business development value, with cross-border trade currently sitting at €8.4bn/£7.4bn, its highest level in 20 years.



## Upcoming events from InterTradelreland

### Go-2-Tender workshops

[Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, Supplies and Services Workshop](#)

- [Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Construction Workshop, Ireland](#)
- [Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, Supplies and Services Workshop, Ireland](#)

### One-to-one Equity Advisory Clinics

- [Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February](#)
- [Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February](#)
- [Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February](#)

### Funding Advisory Service Workshops

- [Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February, 10.00am-11.00am](#)
- [Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March, 10.00am-11.00am](#)
- [Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 10.00am-11.00am](#)

# ISME **WELLNESS** PROGRAMME

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

UNLIMITED ACCESS FOR AN EMPLOYEE  
AND THEIR FAMILY TO:

- 24/7 Freephone Mental wellbeing support
- Up to 6 Sessions of face to face Counselling
- Video/telephone counselling option
- Support across finance, legal, mediation, parenting coaching, life coaching and more

€500 p.a. for up to 30 employees, for each subsequent employee €9 per employee p.a.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

# HR UPDATE

## Employment Law Update 2022

As Employers enter 2022, there are three key pieces of employment legislation that they will need to consider.

The **General Scheme of the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Bill 2021** seeks to give effect to the EU Whistle-blowing Directive and broaden the provisions of existing protected disclosures legislation. Private sector companies will be brought in scope for protected disclosure obligations, which will eventually apply to all employers with 50 or more employees. The Bill is due to be enacted in Q1 2022.

The **Sick Leave Bill 2021** proposes a statutory sick pay scheme that is expected to commence on a phased basis in 2022. As currently drafted, employees with a minimum of 13 weeks' continuous service will be entitled to sick leave payments from their employer up to three days per annum. The government intends to increase this benefit to five days in 2023, seven in 2024, and ten in 2025.

The level of sick pay will be a percentage of normal wages and will be capped. Breach of the legislation will result in a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), and the WRC can award compensation of up to 20 weeks' pay. Employers experiencing financial difficulties may seek an exemption from the obligation to pay sick leave. Exemptions may be granted for a minimum of three months to a maximum of one year.

Finally, following enactment of the **Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021**, from 2022 public and private sector employers will have to report on any differences in male/female remuneration, including bonuses. Where a gap is identified, employers are obliged to outline measures proposed to reduce the discrepancy. Initially applicable to employers with over 250 employees, this will reduce to firms with over 150 staff members in 2023, and to over 50 employees in 2024.

These changes mean that in 2022 employers should set aside time to review policies including grievance, protected disclosure, as well as sick pay policies and contracts in order to allow for compliance with the sick pay bill once it is enacted.

Employers should also begin to review pay structures, identify any issues which may give rise to equal pay risks.

For more information on these or any other HR issues please contact [HR@isme.ie](mailto:HR@isme.ie)





# LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

## February Short Courses

### Master Your Pitch

Dates: 02-02-2022 &  
03-02-2022

[Book here](#)

### Storytelling for Business

Dates: 08-02-2022 to  
09-02-2022

[Book here](#)

### Creating Videos with your mobile phone

Dates: 16-02-2022 to  
17-02-2022

[Book here](#)



## February Long Courses

### Business Fit 2022

Join us for an interactive, highly practical programme – using breakouts, discussions & polls of working examples to bring out the key issues & take-ways for the participants.

The course will run over 5-weeks, commencing Tuesday 15th February. The modules will be every Tuesday and Thursday, with exception of the very last module which will be Wednesday 16th March.

Full course breakdown available [here](#)



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