

# MEMBER'S NEWSLETTER

MAY 2022



**iSME**  
Irish SME Association

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Dear member,

The war in Ukraine drags on, and we are now feeling the acute effects on the costs of fuel and raw materials, which are also feeding into significant pay increase demands. We are unlikely to see a moderation in this before the end of the year, and as I warned last month, we expect to see the cost of credit rise in the near future.

In addition to what you have read recently on statutory sick pay and pensions auto enrolment, you will have noticed the announcement from the Department of Children on the [Work Life Balance bill](#). While there was a great deal of media coverage on it, it is not clear how many of the existing leave family and parental leave entitlements already introduced in Ireland will be deemed to be already part of this EU Commission initiative.

In addition to this, the Tánaiste has stated recently that he will bring proposals to cabinet “before the summer” on a “living wage.” We have said before that bidding up rates of pay is not the solution to the cost of living - it simply makes the issue worse. Government must tackle the cost of living by driving down prices (such as by encouraging the building of more housing) and where it wishes to protect the lower paid, then the social fund must do more of the heavy lifting, as we advocated in our [Jobs Kill Zone Report](#).

Recent survey work by the Alliance for Insurance Reform shows that Employer Liability and Public Liability (especially) remain difficult and expensive areas for a great many businesses. The insurance reform project is far from over with the modest recent reduction in awards levels. This will be an ongoing battle we will need your assistance with.

We will soon be starting to consolidate our “asks” for our Pre-Budget Submission 2023, and our starting point will be our [asks for 2022](#). If you feel there are policy areas we have failed to address in previous pre-budget submissions, please contact me immediately.

I am delighted to confirm that our Chair, [Margaret O'Rourke Doherty](#), will be meeting the Tánaiste in mid-May to discuss these and other issues of importance to the SME sector. Please contact me if you feel there are issues ISME is failing to address in our lobbying activity with the Government.

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



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Card Solutions

Catering Disposables

Central Bearing Supplies

Cool Running Events Limited

Early Years Learning Academy

Eptova Limited

Figlash Catering

Garland Consultancy

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Olympic Amusements

Oxy-arc Ltd

PQR Ireland Ltd Ta Generation Education

Rgdata

Roola Boola

TGF Automotive Ltd T/A Fahy's Garage

The Slaney Language Centre

Village Vets

VK Precision Tool Ltd.

# ISME NEWS



## ISME North West Event

We were delighted to hold our first in-room event in two years in The Landmark Hotel in Carrick-on-Shannon on Thursday 7th April. ISME Chair Margaret O'Rourke Doherty welcomed attendees and introduced the guest speaker, Minister of State Frank Feighan T.D. who stayed for the duration of event and participated throughout. Nigel Heneghan, Managing Director, Heneghan Strategic Communications presented *PR Insights for SMEs* providing tips and ideas on getting media coverage on a small budget on a local and national basis. ISME's L&D Manager, Adam Weatherley gave an update on ISME activities and the event finished with networking and lively discussion on key issues. View photos from the event [here](#).

## New Affinity on HR Services

MSS 'The HR People' are offering 20% discount for ISME Members for the following services:

- HR Compliance
- Employer WRC/ Labour Court Representation
- Recruitment Support
- HR Support Services

To find out more click [here](#).

## Website Development & Design Affinity Programme

ISME Members will receive a 30% discount on website subscription, that's €25 ex VAT per month. The subscription with XYZ offers a simple way to create brochure, e-commerce or wedding/event websites without any technical skills required. It features an eCommerce store, bookings, CRM, Live Chat App to manage your business. You also get access to a personalised web designer to help create, design and maintain the site; a selection of templates and free graphics and photo Library. All of the hosting and support is managed by XYZ.

To access this offer, ISME Members can log into the Members area and click [here](#).

View all our Affinity programmes [here](#).



## View on demand

If you missed our webinar on **Returning to Work: New Guidance for Employers & What the Courts are Ruling** with barrister Katherine McVeigh, you can view a recording of the seminar [here](#).

You can also view for the **ISME HR Updates Series**

- **Managing a remote or hybrid workforce** with Tracy O'Brien & Cait Lynch [here](#).
- **Absence Management, Income & Sick Pay** with Tracy O'Brien & Cait Lynch [here](#)
- **Contracts and Handbooks** with Tracy O'Brien & Cait Lynch [here](#)

# ISME NEWS

## ISME Q1 Trends Survey 2022

How did your business find Q1? We are living in particularly challenging times so we want to hear from you on how your business has been impacted and your thoughts for 2022, by completing our Q1 Trends Survey 2022. All our surveys inform our lobbying on your behalf to Government so it is vital we capture as many experiences as possible.

The Trends Survey provides us with the latest up to date information on pay, insurance costs and confidence indicators in the SME sector. The findings from these surveys will be circulated to media and will feed into relevant groups and committees ISME sit on. Reports will also be uploaded to the ISME website.

You can take the Trends Survey [here](#)

## ISME Skillnet partners with the UCD Professional Academy

To address Irish SME's skill gaps, ISME Skillnet has partnered with The UCD Professional Academy, and will offer members and non-members, a world-class learning experience with career-enhancing qualifications.

This exciting new partnership will provide flexible learning that fits easily into a busy SME's life and easy access to industry-focused courses that deliver job-ready skills. As an alternative to on-campus learning, the academy will deliver all expert instructor-led courses via the UCD Professional Academy's interactive online study environment.

These programmes will be substantially subsidised by the ISME Skillnet by up to 50%. cost for ISME Members is €625 and for non-Members: €675.

Find out more [here](#).



## Insurance costs a cause for major concern in business

In response to the publication of the Alliance for Insurance Reform's survey on insurance, showing that the future of 42% of organisations is threatened by insurance premiums, ISME is calling for immediate government action to reform the sector urgently and adequately, and to seriously look at the behaviour of insurance companies. 90% of the respondents to the survey stated that the government is not doing enough to address the situation.

"One year after the introduction of the Judicial Guidelines for personal injury awards, which has resulted in lower awards in the courts, rather than decreasing insurance premiums, the cost of insurance continues to rise," said Neil McDonnell, CEO, ISME. "Public Liability and Employer Liability insurances continue to rise, and this is a cause of major concern for SMEs and for business as a whole. Insurance companies are enjoying exorbitant profits at the expense of businesses. The research showed that rises in liability insurance renewals were tracking in excess of 16%. The position is indefensible."

"ISME has made it clear for a long time that a small reduction in awards will not suffice in tackling insurance costs. The damage to a small business is incurred not when an award is made in court or by the PIAB, but immediately follows the notification of a potential claim to an insurer," he said.

Read full details [here](#).

# ISME NEWS



## Health Stores Ireland to launch new store finder and tour guide

Ireland has over 200 independent health foods stores that operate in almost every town centre and shopping mall in the country. Health Stores Ireland represents stores across the length and breadth of the country, from large national chains in big city locations to owner-run stores in small towns and villages. To acknowledge this interconnectivity, they are producing a traditional touring map to highlight their network. Each store owner has made a recommendation of something alternative to see and do within their own location and the map features a wide range of places of interest, some well-known attractions, and some hidden gems. The maps are now available free of charge from independent health food stores. To find out more contact Health Stores Ireland [here](#).

## Understanding Challenges, Accessing Talent: UCD and SMEs in partnership conference

The first UCD and SMEs in partnership conference is taking place on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 9am-2.30pm in the UCD University Club, O'Reilly Hall, Belfield, Dublin 4. It is organised by the UCD Careers Network and facilitated by Mr Anton Savage, broadcaster and presenter. ISME members are welcome to this free event which will focus on three areas: Talent Acquisition, Sustainability and Digitisation. Click [here](#) to register.

## New Frontiers Development Programme

Munster Technological University is offering a funding package for early-stage entrepreneurs through the Enterprise Ireland New Frontiers entrepreneur programme run by MTU's business incubation centre, the Rubicon Centre.

New Frontiers is the national entrepreneurial development programme for ambitious early-stage entrepreneurs. The programme offers a funding package valued at €30,000, including €15,000 tax-free cash stipend (with no equity taken), to early-stage entrepreneurs who have an innovative business idea which has the potential to scale and provide employment. In addition to the cash injection, New Frontiers' participants receive free office space for six months, practitioner-led workshops, one-to-one mentoring by seasoned business mentors from the MTU and Enterprise Ireland mentor network, and are generally provided with the skills and support needed to make the leap to starting a successful business. The programme is open to business ideas from across all sectors including food and consumer products, information & communication technology, engineering & electronics, medical devices, biotechnology; pharma, digital media, cleantech/renewable energy, and eligible internationally traded services.

To find out more [click here](#).

## ISME in the news

In the media this month we spoke about:

- Impact of flexible work entitlements on staff costs
- Cost of leaving a business
- New guidelines slashing awards for minor personal injuries
- Our first roadshow of the year which visited the North West of the country

You can view and listen back to a selection of ISME's media coverage from April [here](#).

# ISME NEWS

## Appeal for volunteer teachers to teach English online to Ukrainian adults in Ireland

A call has been made by ISME Member, eTeachers Global, an international online English teaching business for adult students based in County Roscommon, for volunteer teachers to teach English online to Ukrainian adults in Ireland

Horrified by the unfolding events in Ukraine, Joan Gilligan, CEO discussed with her team what eTeachers Global could do to help Ukrainian refugees in Ireland. Their CTO, Stuart McNamara who has spent many years of service on humanitarian and peacekeeping duties in areas of conflict all around the world, recognised that their platform technology could effectively be used to support teachers and students from Ukraine.

"Working with our developers, we have made our platform freely available to teachers who wish to help, and to Ukrainian adults to use. The aim is to help Ukrainians adapt to life in Ireland and support them as they learn English for work and for day-to-day living here," explained Joan.

As part of the initiative, eTeachers Global is waiving all fees for teachers who wish to voluntarily teach English online to adult refugees from Ukraine living in Ireland.

Anyone willing to support or help with this project please contact Joan directly by email at [joan@eteachersglobal.com](mailto:joan@eteachersglobal.com) or register online as a volunteer teacher at <https://eTeachers.ie>. Volunteer teachers can register directly at [www.eteachers.ie](http://www.eteachers.ie) and set up their booking calendar showing their available teaching times.



## Webinar: Learn how your business can save energy and money

Join the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) SME Business Briefing and learn how your business can reduce its energy use and save on energy-related costs through e-learning and energy audits. You will also discover the SEAI grants and supports available to you.

Date: Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Time: 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

To register for this online webinar [click here](#)

## Free online training supports from the 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 [click here](#)

## DPC-hosted conference in support of SMEs

As part of this ongoing work, the DPC will be hosting a free SME conference in Croke Park on 11<sup>th</sup> May specifically focusing on SMEs and their needs. The Conference will have bespoke sessions on Breach Mitigation and Risk Assessment; Legal Bases for Personal Data Processing, and meeting the Accountability Obligation with a focus on providing practical, scalable examples of GDPR compliance that will help delegates in their day-to-day work.

The event is **free to attend, but limited to 300 places**. Those who wish to attend can register by emailing [DPONetwork@dataprotection.ie](mailto:DPONetwork@dataprotection.ie), with the subject line **"ARC Conference Registration"** and include your name and the name of your business or organisation. **Early registration is advised** as numbers are strictly limited and demand is expected to be high.



# ISME NEWS



## Over £60 million reasons to attend InterTradelreland Meet the Buyer event with Translink

There are over £60 million reasons why you should attend our Meet the Buyer event in partnership with Translink on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June at Titanic Belfast.

- Make game-changing connections through 1-2-1 meetings with Translink's key decision makers, as well as a number of its primary contractors.
- Come and hear how to access contracts and frameworks valued at £60m+ over the next 12-18 months across all Translink business functions.
- Find out about funding supports available from key business organisations.

It could be game-changing for your business so register now [here](#).

## Guide on EU funding for tourism

This online guide highlights the wide range of funding programmes financed by the new budget, multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, and Next Generation EU. It contains links to relevant EU programme websites with the latest developments (such as annual work programmes or calls for proposals) and further details per programme. For inspiration, you can also see concrete project examples funded by previous EU programmes. Find out more [here](#).

## InterTradelreland May Events

A selection of events both online and in-room will be available in May including Seedcorn Information Sessions, Customs Q&A, Go-2-Tender Workshops, Equity Advisory Clinic and Funding Advisory Workshops.

View all the events and book [here](#).

## An Post making sustainable living commonplace

An Post launched on 21<sup>st</sup> April its third Sustainability Report, themed "*Making sustainable living commonplace*". The report notes An Post's ongoing commitment to five UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while understanding the interconnectivity of all 17 SDGs and demonstrates An Post's leadership role in Ireland's transition towards a low carbon society.

You can view the report [here](#).



## Round up of Employment Law changes in Q1 2022

### Details of new Public Holiday confirmed

In January 2022, the government announced that there will be a one-off public holiday on March 18, 2022. In addition, from 2023 onwards a new public holiday has been added to the annual public holiday calendar bringing the total number to ten. The new public holiday will be the first Monday in every February, except where St. Brigid's day, February 1, falls on a Friday, in which case that Friday, February 1, will be the public holiday. The introduction of the new annual public holiday brings Ireland more into line with the European average.

### Government Announces Details on Gender Pay Gap Reporting

The government announced that the commencement order for gender pay gap reporting obligations for employers in Ireland will be published. The regulations will require organisations with over 250 employees to report on their gender pay gap in 2022. Employers will be required to identify a specified "snapshot" date for their employees in June 2022 and then report the requisite pay and bonus information for those employees on the same date in December 2022. Employers will also be required to publish a statement setting out, in the employers' opinion, the reasons for the gender pay gap and what measures are being taken or proposed to be taken by the employer to eliminate or reduce that pay gap.

The reporting requirement will initially only apply to employers with 250 or more employees but will extend overtime to employers with 50 or more employees. It is expected that the regulations setting out the precise details that will need to be reported this year will be published shortly.

### Bill to Transpose EU Whistleblower Directive Expands Scope and Breadth of Protections

In February, the government published the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Bill 2022 (the Bill), which will transpose the "EU Whistleblower Directive" (*i.e.*, Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law). The legislation will further extend the scope and breadth of the protections afforded to individuals who make protected disclosures in Ireland.

A wider list of employers will be within the scope of the new legislation and the list of issues that constitute protected disclosures will also be extended. Under the existing regime, only public bodies are required to have reporting procedures in place for protected disclosures. The Bill extends this requirement to include private entities with over 50 employees from December 17, 2021. The new laws will not come into effect for most

# ISME HR UPDATE

## **Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022 published**

The General Scheme of the Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022 (the Bill) was published in January 2022. As proposed, the Bill will require employers to have a written statement specifying the manner in which remote working requests are managed, the time frame within which decisions will be made and the specific conditions which will apply to remote working generally within the organisation. Employees with more than 26 weeks' service will be able to make a formal request for remote working, to which an employer is obliged to accept, refuse or make a counteroffer of an alternative remote working arrangement within 12 weeks. The Bill sets out a non-exhaustive list of 13 potential business grounds for refusing a remote working request.

As currently proposed, where an employer fails to respond to a request or fails to provide a reason for refusing a request, an employee may appeal to the Workplace Relations Commission. The legislation remains at draft and significant changes are anticipated between now and the time at which it is enacted later in the year.

## **Sick Leave Bill 2022 Approved by Government**

The publication of the Government's Sick Leave Bill 2022 (the Bill) was announced in March and will now progress through the usual legislative process. The Bill imposes a mandatory obligation on the part of employers to provide sick pay. No such obligation currently exists.

The Bill provides for statutory sick leave payment (SSP) for an employee initially up to three days absence a year due to illness or injury, which will then rise to five days in 2024, seven days in 2025 and ten days in 2026. An employee becomes entitled to SSP after they have completed 13 weeks of continuous service with their employer and will have to provide a medical certificate confirming that they are unable to work. SSP will be paid at the rate of 70% of regular earnings, up to €110 per day.



# ISME **WELLNESS** PROGRAMME

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AND THEIR FAMILY TO:

- 24/7 Freephone Mental wellbeing support
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- 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 >](#)



# LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT



## Upcoming Short Courses

### LinkedIn & Facebook

Dates: 04-05-2022 to 05-05-2022

### PowerPoint Video Creation Masterclass – how to create an MP4 video (PowerPoint version 2019, 2021, or 365)

Dates: 10-05-2022 to 11-05-2022

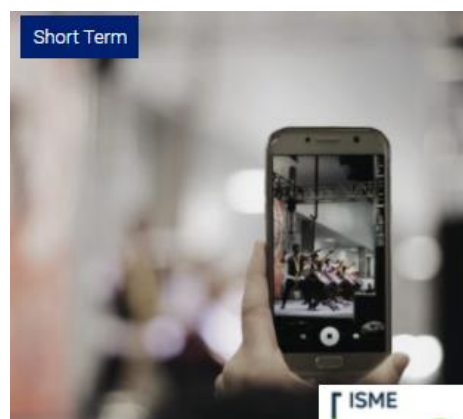
### Creating a YouTube channel

Dates: 25-05-2022 to 26-05-2022

### HR Essentials for SMEs

Dates: 15-06-2022 to 19-07-2022

[Find out more >](#)



# LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

ISME Skillnet partnership with The UCD Professional Academy



ISME Skillnet has recently partnered with The UCD Professional Academy to address Irish SME's skill gaps. The Academy will offer our members and non-members, a world-class learning experience with career-enhancing qualifications.

This exciting new partnership will provide flexible learning that fits easily into a busy SME's life and easy access to industry-focused courses that deliver job-ready skills. As an alternative to on-campus learning, the academy will deliver all expert instructor-led courses via UCD's interactive online study environment.

Each programme comes with a UCD Professional Academy Diploma in an area of your choice. The programme categories have been broken down into five key titles, all of which align to ISME's learning and development strategies:

- Leadership & Management
- Marketing (including Digital & Social Media)
- Digital and IT (eCommerce, Artificial Intelligence, Transformation Management)
- Business Programmes (Sales, Supply Chain, Finance, GDPR etc)
- Data Analytics for Business, Finance and Marketing

These programmes will be substantially subsidised by the ISME Skillnet by up to 50%. They will be highly affordable to companies that would often see these types of programmes out of reach financially.

A full list of all courses can be found and [booked here](#).



# ISME MEMBER NEWS

## Aillwee Burren Experience reopens to the Public Following €1M+ Renovation Project

The multi award winning Aillwee Burren Experience reopened to the public on 15<sup>th</sup> April following an investment of over €1m which has seen a major renovation and upgrade to the tourist attraction. Previously known as Aillwee Cave and Birds of Prey Centre, the unique and magical tourist attraction in The Burren, County Clare will be ready to welcome people back in time for the Easter Holidays.

The investment not only covers a renovation upgrade but also a new brand identity more in line with the new offering. Pre-pandemic, the unique tourist attraction was welcoming on average almost 120,000 visitors per year and the aim is to reach this figure once again as the country prepares for its first Summer in two years without restrictions.



Most importantly, Aillwee Burren Experience currently supports 34 full time jobs in the local area of The Burren, and it is hoped that the investment will see this figure rise providing more local employment in rural Ireland.

Nuala Mulqueeney, Managing Director of Aillwee Burren Experience said, “We have been in business for over 45 years, and this is the biggest single investment we have made since we first opened. Our main driver is being one of the main Tourism employers in the area, we are really proud to be able to say we support 34 full time jobs, and we are currently hiring for new positions. Our aim is to increase this local employment figure. We could not have completed our upgrades without every member of our dedicated team and contracted partners and look forward to delivering our immersive experiences together to our visitors.”

“Given the unique nature of our offering and the spectacular surrounding area of The Burren we have been fortunate to have welcomed on average 120,000 per year and with the new offering our goal is to reach these pre-pandemic figures, and even increase them over the coming years. We’re really excited for the next chapter of Aillwee Burren Experience.”

For more information or to book, visit [www.aillweeburrenexperience.ie](http://www.aillweeburrenexperience.ie)

# ISME MEMBER NEWS

## EU Whistleblowing Directive: All you need to know right now

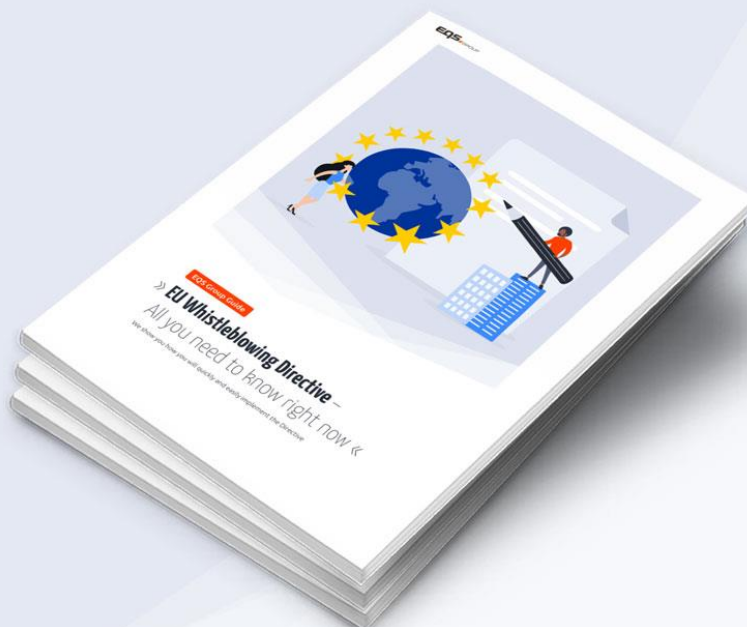
On 16th December 2019, the EU Directive on the protection of whistleblowers entered into force. ISME Members, EQS Group, prepared the below to show fellow members how you can implement the directive quickly and easily in your company.

Download this information for free [here](#).

**The content of this white paper includes:**

- ✓ Overview of the requirements of the EU Whistleblowing Directive
- ✓ Checklist for the EU Whistleblowing Directive – How to choose the right solution for your company
- ✓ Tips on using EQS Integrity Line to meet the requirements and obligations of the EU Whistleblowing Directive – efficiently and on time

EQS Group is a leading international provider of regulatory technology in the fields of Corporate Compliance and Investor Relations. In working with EQS Group, thousands of companies worldwide inspire trust by fulfilling complex national and international disclosure obligations, minimizing risks and communicating transparently with stakeholders. Their goal is to support their clients with their [compliance management](#) programmes and their solutions range from a [whistleblowing channel](#) to policy management..







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An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,  
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta  
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