

Member's Newsletter

July 2023

iSME
Irish SME Association



Dear member,

With the Dáil about to go into recess, there is a lot of “consultation” material coming from Government departments before Ministers and Civil Servants head away on summer holidays. Some of this is important for your business.

Given the fact we’re close to full employment, and the difficulties of hiring staff, you should respond to the current consultation on [Occupations under the Employment Permit System](#) if you are interested in bringing in workers from outside the EU. This consultation is open until 18th August

While we did a lot of work on cyber security in our Roadshows this year, we continue to get calls about serious breaches, penetrations and fraud from the membership base. Much of this is avoidable if banks and mobile telephony operators improved their security protocols.

Invoice re-direct frauds could be significantly reduced if Irish banks employed [Confirmation of Payee](#), a simple protocol whereby the bank checks that the IBAN matches that with the payee name registered for that IBAN. Such a system is already in place in the Netherlands and the UK (despite the fact the UK is no longer an EU member, it remains a member of SEPA).

Scam texts could also be radically reduced if telephone operators improved security. Mobile phone manufacturers have been putting software into mobile phones that can detect spam and smishing texts for several years. Yet the mobile network operators continue to allow them to be sent. In many cases they are using unallocated or spoofed numbers. This is ridiculous. In the US, telcos are required to block suspect numbers. Comreg estimates the cost of spam texts at about €300m per year, yet nothing is being done about it.

ISME will be in contact with the Department of Finance, the Central Bank, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and Comreg about the matter. In the meantime, please take the protective measures you can [here](#), and please report all cases of fraud to the Gardai.

The ESRI last month published a report into [Cliff edges in the Irish tax-benefit system](#). A very fine report produced at your expense, but it simply rehashes issues raised by ISME in our [Jobs Kill Zone Report](#) more than two years ago. Workers should never suffer a loss in net income for earning a higher gross wage. Work must always pay!

Don’t forget – if you need money, use the [ISME FINANCE FINDER](#)!

Lastly, as our politicians return home to nest for the summer recess, please be kind to them – it’s a tough job! However, if you do bump into them, please make sure that you relay your personal priorities from our [Pre-Budget Submission 2024](#) to them!

Advanced Technical Concepts Limited

Irl Equip Ltd.

SolarShare

Abbeyleix Manor Hotel

New Weigh MWMI Ltd

TRUMPF Laser + Machinery Ireland Limited

Me2You Gift Card Company

Aran Health Pharmacy

HR and Governance Suite

Meet our 2023-2025 National Council



Some members of the ISME National Council Members pictured at the AGM on 23rd May.

The 2023-2025 ISME National Council was appointed at ISME's AGM in the St. Stephens Green Club, Dublin on 23rd May. Outgoing Chair Margaret O'Rourke Doherty presented incoming Chair, Marc O'Dwyer with the ISME medal at the AGM.

The 27 strong Council members are elected owner/managers of SMEs from all over Ireland and from a variety of sectors. You can find out more about the current National Council members [here](#).



Summer Spending

We want to continue our **Shop Local** message with our Summer Spending campaign encouraging people to Think Local for holidays, activities, entertainment and shopping.

ISME Members can advertise for free so please add your details [here](#) if you would like your business featured or to update your existing ad in our [Shop Local portals](#). To find out more please contact marketing@isme.ie



ISME celebrating 30 years – what do you think?

2023 marks 30 years since ISME's founding in 1993. For our "pearl" anniversary, we intend to mark the occasion with an event in late November or early December. It's for all our Members so we want to get your thoughts and suggestions on how you would like ISME to mark the occasion.

Please complete this brief form [here](#) (only takes 3 minutes) to have you say.



New Affinity Programme



Take a look at the most recent addition to the ISME ADVANTAGE Affinity programme from ISME Member business [AJ Products](#).

ISME Members get **10% discount** on orders over €250 for office furniture, school furniture, warehouse shelving and more. Other benefits include free standing desks installations, free delivery on orders over €199 (ex VAT) and a 7-year warranty. Find out more details about the programme [here](#)

Review of occupations eligible for employment permits

Neale Richmond TD, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail launched on 26th June a review of the occupations on the Critical Skills Occupation List and Ineligible Occupations List for employment permits and has called for employers and stakeholders to make a submission.

Submissions are invited from representative bodies, Government Departments, Agencies, and other interested parties to a public consultation to review the eligibility of occupations appearing on the Critical Skills Occupations List and the Ineligible Occupations List for employment permits.

If you feel that there are skills/labour shortages or surpluses in relation to occupations in your sector and that these are adversely affecting your industry, you are invited to make a submission.

You should include in your submission any relevant actors that you consider are impacting on your sector so that consideration can be given to making adjustments to the lists, for example, data on the skills or labour shortages, information on recruitment efforts undertaken, retention difficulties, relevant training incentives, impact on business, expansion plans etc., and any other evidence or data such as industry surveys or reports and views within your sector.

Submissions will only be accepted using the form made available on the department's website open now with a closing date of **Friday, 18 August 2023**. Find out more [here](#).

ISME Research

Please take our Bank Watch Survey for Q1 2023 based on your experiences of accessing finance and engaging with lenders [here](#).

The Bank Watch Survey provides us with the latest up to date information on SME's access to finance. The findings of 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, view previous reports [here](#).

Please share this survey with your network.

We also want to close off our 2022 research, so it's your final chance to complete the **Q4 Trends Survey 2022** [here](#).

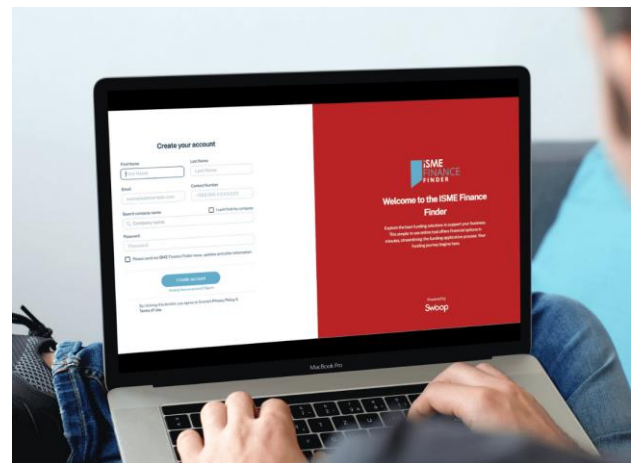
The Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme on the ISME Finance Finder

Has your business been affected by inflation and rising energy costs? The Ukraine (inflation) Credit Guarantee Scheme supports Irish SMEs affected by rising costs. If your business has been adversely affected by rising energy and other day to day costs, you may be eligible for a low-cost business loan.

The Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme is designed to provide short and medium-term finance for businesses in Ireland facing supply chain disruptions, increased energy costs and other economic consequences of the crisis.

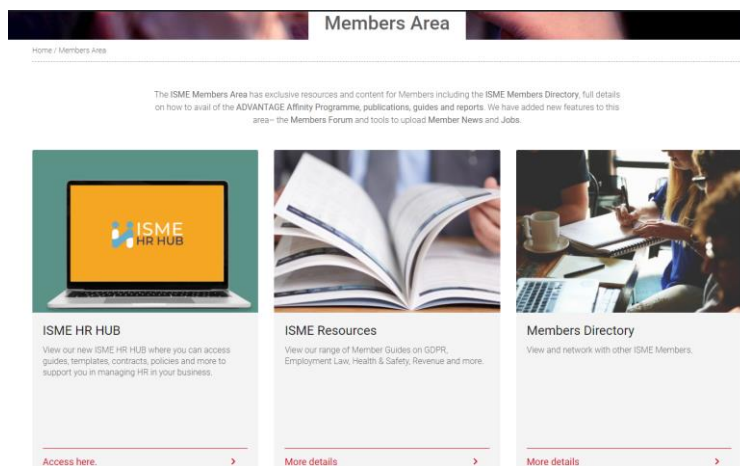
The scheme offers loans unsecured with no requirement for a Personal Guarantee on amounts up to €250,000. Amounts greater than €250,000 may be secured. Interest rates are also offered at a discount on standard rates.

More information on the Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme is a click away on your [ISME Finance Finder](#).



SEAI Awards

Still time for you to get your applications in for the [SEAI Awards 2023](#). The categories for 2023 cover a wide range of areas and activities that reflect SEAI's key focus areas including SMEs. The deadline to enter has been extended to 5pm on Friday 7th July! The SEAI Energy Awards recognise and reward excellence in all aspects of energy efficiency and renewable energy.



ISME HR Hub – your HR support

To support Members to deal with the ever-changing world of HR and employment law, we have created a portal to give you access to guides, templates, contracts, policies and more to support you in managing HR in your business. We have curated the information based on the HR Life Cycle: Attraction, Recruitment, Onboarding, Policies & Training, Performance Management and Exit.

You can also find information from government agencies and other third parties in our General Information & Resources page, links to the top downloads and view our selection of blogs including Statutory Sick Pay FAQs and EU Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions.

To find out how it works and looks, click on the video about the portal [here](#). To use the ISME HR Hub log into the Members Area, click on the top left button.

Health & Safety Authority Update

The HSA are delighted to announce that they have reached a huge milestone with [BeSMART.ie](#) with over 100,000 users.

[SunSMART Employee Information sheet](#) is written primarily for employees and safety representatives to raise awareness about the risk of skin cancer from sun exposure.

[New Code of Practice for Indoor Air Quality](#) provides practical guidance as to the observance of the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 299 of 2007), as amended by S.I 255 of 2023. This Code of Practice comes into operation on 26th May 2023. Notice of the publication of this Code of Practice was published in Iris Oifigiúil on 6th June 2023.

[Use Chemicals Safely – Read the Label information sheet](#) provides information about how to read the label on containers – in particular, understanding the dangerous properties of a chemical. The information sheet also provides information about hazard pictograms.

[Using Chemicals safety at home and in the garden information sheet](#) provides guidance about the safe use of chemical in both the home and garden.

[Information Leaflet: Risk Assessment of Chemical Hazards](#) is intended to help employers in assessing the risks that relate to chemical agents in the workplace and in determining adequate precautions or control measures to safeguard health and safety.



Healthy Workplace

The Healthy Workplace Framework is a government strategy to enhance the health and wellbeing of Ireland's workers. A committee led by the Department of Health and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment oversaw the development of this Framework and set the strategic direction for workplace policies and programmes to enhance the health of workers.

A new Healthy Workplace website was recently launched and features interactive tools to facilitate the delivery and evaluation of health and wellbeing initiatives in workplaces of any size. This website aims to be the one-stop-shop for everything you need to make your workplace a Healthy Workplace. It is designed to cater for the needs of public and private organisations and is targeted towards members of staff from Wellness/Health Promotion, Human Resources, Occupational Health, Health & Safety, decision-makers in senior management, and employees hoping to champion a Healthy Workplace.

Find out more on <https://healthyworkplace.ie/>



Advertise in The bISME

The next issue of The bISME will be out at the end of August and we are taking bookings now for this issue and the final issue of 2023, due out in November. ISME Members get reduced rate on ads, find out more [here](#) and to book contact marketing@isme.ie.

Events

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive webinar, Tuesday 4th July, 3.00-4.00pm. Details [here](#).

Trade Horizons Conference - on the benefits of Free Trade Agreements for Irish businesses, particularly SMEs, Thursday 6th July, 9.30am-1.30pm, Dublin Castle. Register [here](#).

Concerned about rising business costs?

Access up to 50% in
discounts on business
products & services
with the **ISME ADVANTAGE**
Affinity programme

**ISME members can save
now on
www.isme.ie/advantage**



Workplace Relations Commission – Annual Report 2022

The WRC has recently published its Annual Report. Here at ISME, we wanted to save you the time of reading the comprehensive report released by the WRC and instead give you an overview of the aspects of the activities of the WRC that may be of interest to you. The number of hearings and decisions processed by the Workplace Relations Commission last year soared by nearly 30%, as the pandemic became less impactful on case scheduling.



Complaint Breakdown:

6,263 complaint applications encompassing 12,790 individual complaints were received by the WRC in 2022, a decrease of 4.5% and 6.5% respectively compared to 2021. The main types of complaints were as follows:

- **Pay** (3,363) – by far the main complaint received by the WRC
- **Discrimination/Equality/Equal Status** (1,851)

- **Unfair Dismissal** (1,518)
- **Working time** (1,470); - Breaches of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997
- **Terms & Conditions** (1,222)
- **Trade Disputes/Industrial Relations** (1,176)

Second on the list being Equality which is increasing year on year in recent years. Under this particular legislation the most notable complaints were in first place **Age** – incredibly a 176% increase on 2021. Given the grey area that is now retirement age for working in Ireland, this is no big surprise. Next was under **Disability** and finally **Gender**.

The WRC conducts hearings "*in person*" and "*remotely*" with an average of 70% being "*in-person*" and 30% conducted remotely. A total of 4,253 hearings were held in 2022. This is an increase of 28% of the 3,320 hearings held in 2021.

Mediations

In 2022, 1,546 cases were selected for mediation, 658 of these cases progressed to full mediation where both parties agreed to participate. This represents an increase in participation by 31% compared to 2021 and the number of cases resolved by mediation also increased by 30%.

Something of note here for employers is the reminder that the WRC provides two distinct forms of mediation service: pre-adjudication mediation (face-to-face and by telephone) to assist with the resolution of a specific complaints referred to the WRC, and workplace mediation to resolve ongoing interpersonal issues between persons or groups of persons. The latter can be applied for by all employers that require the service.

Decisions

A total of almost 2,000 decisions were issued in 2022, which is an increase of 27% compared to 2021. In 2022, the WRC was notified of 310 Labour Court decisions in relation to appeals from the WRC. Of the decisions made, 166 were upheld, 70 varied, 68 were overturned and 6 failed.

Most notable cases

➤ Ray Walsh v Econocom Digital Finance Ltd

Legislation: Unfair Dismissals Act 1977-2015, Redundancy Payments Act 1967-2022, Consultation, Unfair Procedures

Complainant was made redundant in July 2020 according to the Respondent due to the closure of the company's sales operation in Dublin. In April 2020 the Complainant was invited to a Microsoft Teams Meeting with the Managing Director and HR Director to advise that his job was redundant. There was no Consultation Process prior to this meeting.

Learning from Case: Engagement of the employee in the Redundancy Process is the cornerstone of fair process.

€120,000 compensation awarded to the complainant. This equates to 1 year's salary.

➤ Administrator v Golf Club

Legislation: Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Employment Equality Acts 1998-2021

Alleged that there were 23 incidents of consistent unwelcome comments. Jokes, gestures and contact of a sexual and private nature by the General Manager that caused her offence and humiliation. Evidence corroborated by 2 co-workers.

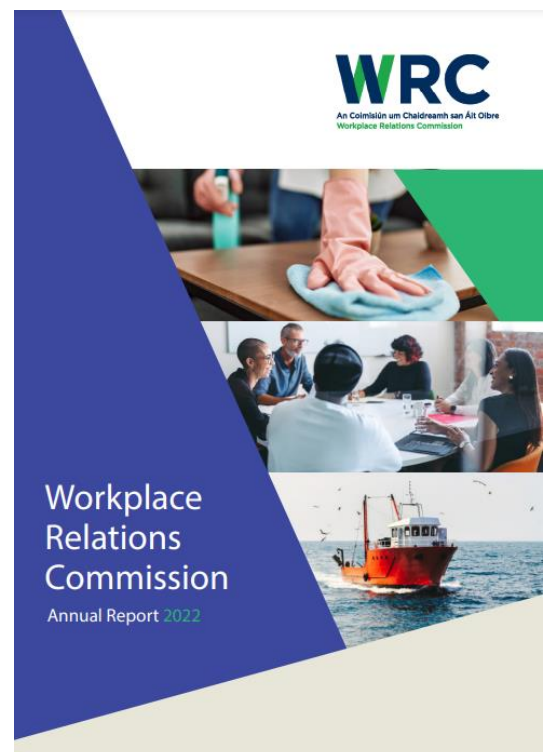
Learning from Case: Definition of Sexual Harassment is key and as per Section 14A of the above act which defines sexual harassment as *"unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct which is of a sexual nature. The intention of the Perpetrator is irrelevant."*

The duty of employer is to adapt, implement and monitor a comprehensive and effective policy on Sexual Harassment in the workplace. Employer vicariously liable unless such steps which were reasonably practical to prevent sexual harassment are put in place.

€25,000 compensation awarded to the complainant.

The complete WRC Annual Report 2022 can be found on the General Information & Resources page on the [ISME HR Hub](https://www.isme.ie/hrhub).

If you require any HR assistance for your business don't hesitate to contact the HR Team via HR@ISME.ie, or alternatively phone 01 6622755 Option 2.



ISME Wellness Programme

Partnering with Laya healthcare and their health and wellbeing provider, Spectrum.Life

Offering ISME Members a **24/7 Employee Assistance Programme**, with unlimited access for members, their employees & families to:

- 24/7 EAP service accessible via website, app, or live chat
- Up to 6 sessions of face-to-face counselling
- Video/telephone counselling
- Support across finance, legal, mediation, parenting coaching, life coaching & more

Special Member Rate:

€500 + VAT (fixed cost per year) for up to 30 employees. Each subsequent employee €9 + VAT per employee per year

Learn more here:

isme.ie/isme-wellness-programme

Empowering HR Professionals: Exploring the Benefits of the "HR Essentials for SMEs" Online Course

In the dynamic landscape of HR, staying up-to-date with the latest practices, policy changes and trends is essential for professionals aiming to excel in their roles. The "Bite-Sized HR" online course offered by the ISME Skillnet provides a convenient and comprehensive platform for HR professionals to enhance their knowledge and skills. In this article, we will delve into the benefits of this online course and explore how it empowers HR practitioners to navigate the ever-evolving field of human resources.

Our "HR Essentials for SMEs" course covers a wide range of HR topics, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the field. From talent acquisition and performance management to employee engagement and workplace diversity, the course offers insights into the fundamental aspects of HR management. The curated curriculum combines theoretical knowledge with practical applications, equipping HR professionals with the tools and strategies needed to address real-world challenges effectively.

The course is designed by the ISME HR Team with Tracy O'Brien from The People Password who will deliver the training. Tracy is an experienced HR practitioner and subject matter experts. Tracy brings a wealth of industry knowledge and practical insights to the course material. Her expertise ensures that participants receive up-to-date information and best practices in HR management. Participants will gain valuable perspectives and learn from real-world examples, enhancing their ability to apply the acquired knowledge in their daily HR operations.

This series follows a bite-sized learning format, breaking down complex topics into manageable modules. Each module is designed to be concise and focused, allowing participants to absorb information effectively. This format is particularly beneficial for busy HR professionals who can engage with the course material in short, digestible segments. Bite-sized learning enhances retention and enables participants to immediately apply their newly acquired knowledge in their HR roles.

The course breakdown is as follows; all sessions will run from 12.00 -1.30pm

- **Week 1 – Recruitment and Selection** | Monday 18th September
- **Week 2 Contracts and Probation Management** | Friday 22nd September
- **Week 3 – Managing Performance** | Monday 25th September.
- **Week 4 – Managing Absence and Statutory Leave** | Monday 2nd October.
- **Week 5 – Wellbeing and Diversity** | Friday 6th October
- **Week 6 – Must have policies, managing data & WRC Investigations** | Friday 13th October.
- **Week 7 – Learning and Development** | Monday 16th October
- **Week 8 – Dignity at Work** | Friday 20th October
- **Week 9 – Understanding and managing conflict** | Monday 23rd October.
- **Week 10 – Culture** | Friday 27th October

In the fast-paced and ever-evolving field of HR, continuous learning and professional development are paramount for success. The "HR Essentials" online programme is a valuable resource that empowers HR professionals to stay ahead of the curve. With its convenient and accessible format, comprehensive curriculum, expert-led instruction, bite-sized learning modules, interactive experience, and networking opportunities, the course equips HR Professionals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities in their roles. So, take the leap and enrol in today.

Full course breaking and a link to book can be found [here](#).



The ISME Learning & Development service is here to help both the business owner and their employees. ISME Members can receive up to 40% discount for ISME Skillnet training, view courses below.

Value for Innovation

Dates: 07-07-2023 to 07-07-2023

[Find out more](#)

Business Writing and Email Etiquette

Dates: 20-07-2023 to 20-07-2023

[Find out more](#)

Customer Service and Complaints Handling

Dates: 20-07-2023 to 27-07-2023

[Find out more](#)

Introduction to Canva: Unlock Your Design Potential

Dates: 28-07-2023 to 28-07-2023

[Find out more](#)

Coming Up:

Customer Service and Complaints Handling

Dates: 17-08-2023 to 17-08-2023

[Find out more](#)

Effective Telephone Sales Techniques

Dates: 31-08-2023 to 31-08-2023

[Find out more](#)

HR Essentials for SMEs

Dates: 18-09-2023 to 27-10-2023

[Find out more](#)

Excel: Creating And Working With Pivot Tables – An Introduction

Dates: 25-09-2023 to 25-09-2023

[Find out more](#)

**FIND THE FULL LISTING ON
WWW.ISME.IE/LEARNING**



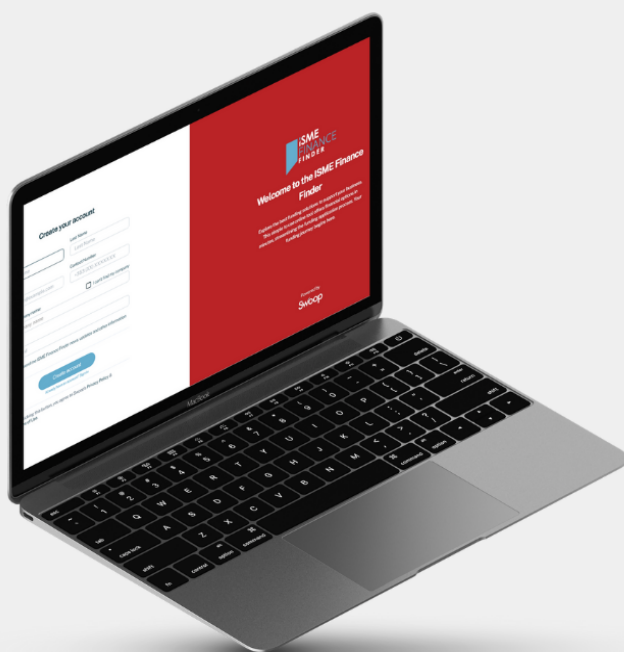
Do you want to...

start or expand your business?

improve cashflow?

acquire a business?

purchase property?



If so, your finance journey starts here

isme.ie/finance-finder