

Members' Newsletter

December 2024



iSME
Irish SME Association



Dear member,

As I write this monthly update, the election is over, but it is unclear whether a new FF-FG coalition will be joined by a small party, or a group of independents. That is no small issue, since the two potential party alliances are both committed to even more significant current expenditures than the outgoing government was.

The agreement of a program for government over the next number of weeks will obviously be crucial. We see seven broad issues as essential from the small enterprise point of view:

1. SMEs employ 60% of the workforce, but have no representation in industrial relations matters with Government. ISME wants pro-rata representation on the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) and on the Low Pay Commission.
2. Government must recognise that raising the minimum wage is not the solution to all social ills. From last January to next January, the minimum wage will have risen almost 20%. Continually driving the minimum wage upwards is both crippling small service businesses, and contributing to inflation.
3. The EU is falling far behind the US and China, and has regulated its way into a cul de sac. All regulation affecting labour and overhead costs for SMEs whether from Dublin or Brussels, must be subject to the SME Test and regulatory impact assessment.
4. Ireland's standard and reduced VAT rates are excessive in European terms, and must be reduced.
5. Our taxation system is anti-SME and anti-scale. We will never have a thriving SME sector until our taxation system and our indigenous enterprise policy are pointed in the same direction. At the moment, they are pulling against each other.
6. Everyone must pay something. It has been popular to tell the electorate that we can take more people out of the tax and social welfare net. This is why we have an unfunded deficit of over €350bn in our old age pension fund.
7. We must recognise that the legal system is the roadblock to infrastructure development, affordable housing, affordable family law, free speech, affordable dispute resolution, and is discouraging inward investment by FDI. Our retailers and hospitality businesses see the law not merely failing them, but actively assisting shoplifters, vandals and racists who attack and assault our staff. The criminal law does nothing to stop them, and the civil law encourages miscreants to sue them, and to sue ISME when we try to defend them from Better-Call-Saul personal injury lawyers. The Defamation (Amendment) Bill as currently drafted is not acceptable to us.

These policy prescriptions we see as absolutely essential, given the direction that President-elect Trump is already taking in his cabinet picks.

Ireland cannot assume the FDI goose will continue laying golden eggs for the Exchequer. We already see a number of warning signs of possible recession, from Trump tariffs, recession in the UK, France, Germany or China (or all five!); and we must take back control of our own economic destiny.

Lastly, to those of you we met at the Annual Lunch on 29th November, thank you for your support, and we hope you enjoyed the evening. The staff and National Council of ISME wish you a Happy Christmas and a prosperous 2025.

- **Peter O'Leary Wood Products Manufacturing Limited**
- **Mallory International**
- **Kerwin Investments Ltd T/A The Exchange**
- **Tammdek Tooling Ltd**
- **Grow Remote**
- **McHugh Timber Products Ltd**
- **Irish Spa Association ISA**
- **W Display**
- **Automation Supplies Ltd t/a Seagate Automation**
- **Irish Bakery Association**
- **RCC Engineering- Right Group**
- **CAFL Partners**
- **Rev1 Precision Engineering**
- **Johnnie Cupcakes Ltd.**
- **Comsave Ireland**

Celebrating SME Success at the ISME Ireland 2024 Annual Business Lunch



Photo Courtesy: Siobhan Taylor

On Friday, 29th November, the ISME Ireland 2024 Annual Business Lunch brought together business leaders, entrepreneurs, and policymakers at the Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel for an afternoon of inspiration and collaboration.

The event highlighted the critical role small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play in Ireland's economy. ISME Chair Marc O'Dwyer and CEO Neil McDonnell delivered compelling addresses, calling for increased government support to ensure the sustainability and growth of this vital sector.

A standout moment was the keynote speech by Oonagh O'Hagan, owner of Meagher's Pharmacy Group. O'Hagan shared her journey of transforming a single pharmacy into a thriving business, accompanied by actionable life lessons on entrepreneurship. Her insights on resilience, purpose-driven leadership, and the importance of self-care left a lasting impact on attendees.

The afternoon concluded with lighthearted entertainment by Paul Howard, creator of the iconic Ross O'Carroll Kelly series, providing laughter and a perfect close to the day's proceedings.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all attendees for their enthusiasm and support, which made this event such a resounding success. ISME Ireland remains committed to championing the SME community and fostering innovation, resilience, and growth.

This event showcased the valuable work ISME Ireland continues to do in supporting SMEs and fostering a community of innovative, resilient entrepreneurs.

New ISME Affinity Partners

Take a look at the most recent additions to the ISME ADVANTAGE Affinity programme :

ISME Members who are new to Fexco, can now avail **No transaction fees** on all foreign currency payments and **Free FX Assessment** to identify and mitigate potential currency risks in your business.



Davy offers a planning-led approach with a team of pension and tax specialists to help clients assess their options to avail of pension saving opportunities while they exist

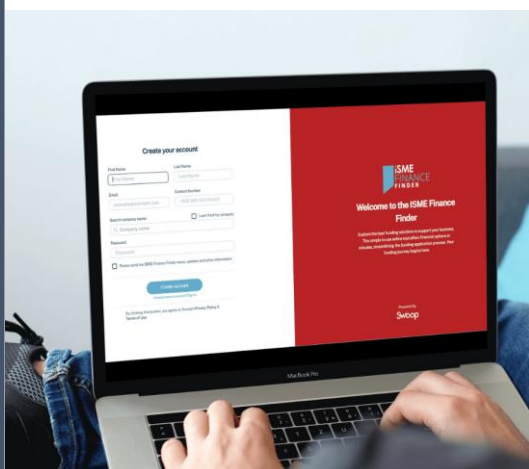
Our new lead generation partner, **Lead Forensics** offers ISME members the ability to set up free tracking on their website(s) to uncover the 98% of website traffic that is currently being lost. There is no commitment to subscribe at this stage, and the report may highlight website traffic you previously did not know the origin of. In addition, ISME members can receive their first full months tracking completely free of charge, should they decide to sign up for the service after running the free test



View all our Affinity programmes [here](#). ISME Members can access all offers when they log into the Members Area.

ISME Finance Finder

To support businesses in accessing funding the ISME Finance Finder, powered by Swoop Funding, has updated and improved its online platform by introducing cashflow and forecasting tools, banking and accounting system integration, as well as equity funding. Register here now to explore the funding options available or to start a conversation about how much you could raise through equity. Your funding journey starts now by going to www.isme.ie/finance-finder

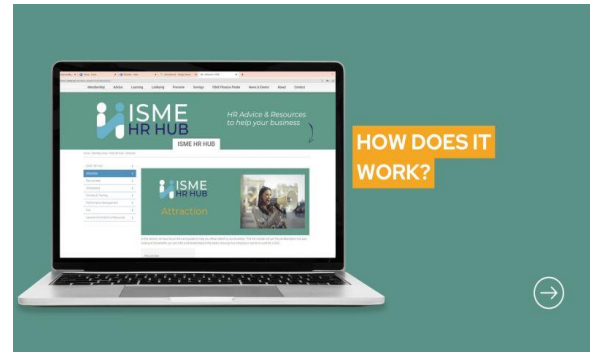


ISME HR Hub – your HR support

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.

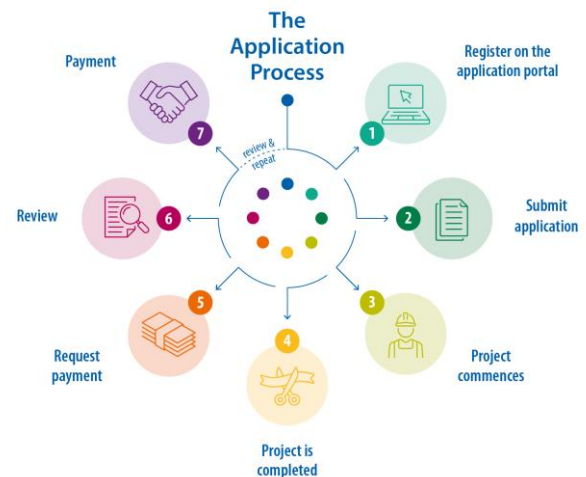


The Business Energy Upgrade Scheme is officially live

This week Minister [Eamon Ryan](#) [Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications](#) launched a new €50 million Business Energy Upgrades Scheme to support small and medium sized businesses to carry out energy efficiency upgrades.

SMEs can now get immediate grant approval for a wide range of building energy efficiency and renewable measures including solar PV and thermal, heat pumps, fabric, and air handling upgrades. There is support available for design assistance and for optimising existing BMS systems.

Please find the link to the supports here: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/business-grants/rapid-approval>



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

Health & Safety Authority Update



An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta
Health and Safety Authority

- ❑ [Employing Apprentices: Safety On the Job](#) information sheet is written for people who employ apprentices. It provides a summary overview of how employers should fulfil their duties as an employer and protect apprentices, who may be more at risk of injury and ill health.
- ❑ [Safety On the Job for Apprentices](#)- This information sheet is written for Apprentices. It provides some essential tips to help Apprentices stay safe and healthy as they start their career.
- ❑ [Small Business Start-ups](#) : This short introductory course is suitable if you are starting a small business or have a new business. You will learn about the role of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the importance of managing safety, health and welfare in the workplace. The elements of a health and safety management system are outlined on the course and the main duties of employers and employees under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Risk assessment and meeting Safety Statement requirements for your business is another key part of this course.
- ❑ [Small Business – Employees](#): This short introductory course is suitable for employees that are working in a small business. The course outlines the main duties of employers and employees under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. It also addresses the impact of positive safety behaviour in the workplace. The course also includes key health and safety information required to keep you safe at work, including information on the roles of a Safety Officer and Safety Representative.
- ❑ [Small Business – Employers](#): This short introductory course is suitable for employers and the self-employed who are running a small business. The course outlines the role of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the general duties of employers under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Information on vulnerable workers, including those in a sensitive risk group is provided. Risk assessment and the Safety Statement, and reporting accidents to the HSA is also covered on the course. The content is suitable across all work sectors
- ❑ [Occupational Health and Safety Guidance on Vulnerable Workers in the Workplace](#) guidance is written for employers and employees in all work sectors, including agency workers, contractors, migrant workers, part-time and temporary workers, and gig workers.

Green Business Supports

Ireland has a target to reduce carbon emissions (greenhouse gas emissions) by 51% by 2030, and to achieve a climate neutral economy by 2050. (source: Government Report). The sectoral emissions ceilings (SECs) agreed in July 2022 put in place targets for each sector to achieve this. The target for the enterprise sector is to reduce emissions by 35% by 2030. In order to do this, businesses are encouraged to invest in a greener future, through sustainable products, services and business models.

Whether your business is big or small, it is important to reduce emissions and promote sustainability in how you work. Click [here](#) to find a number of training, mentoring and financial supports for companies trying to reduce their carbon footprint

Events

Gifted - Contemporary Craft Fair, Wed, December 4 – Sun, December 8, Hall 1, RDS Dublin, Book [here](#)

Ireland Electrified Conference 2024, Thur 5th Dec, Clontarf Castle Hotel Dublin, Book [here](#)

Pendulum Summit 2025, Wedn, January 8 – Thurs, January 9, 2025, The Convention Centre, Dublin, Book [here](#)

Showcase Ireland 2025, Sun, January 19 – Tue, January 21, 2025, RDS Dublin, Book [here](#)

Concerned about rising business costs?

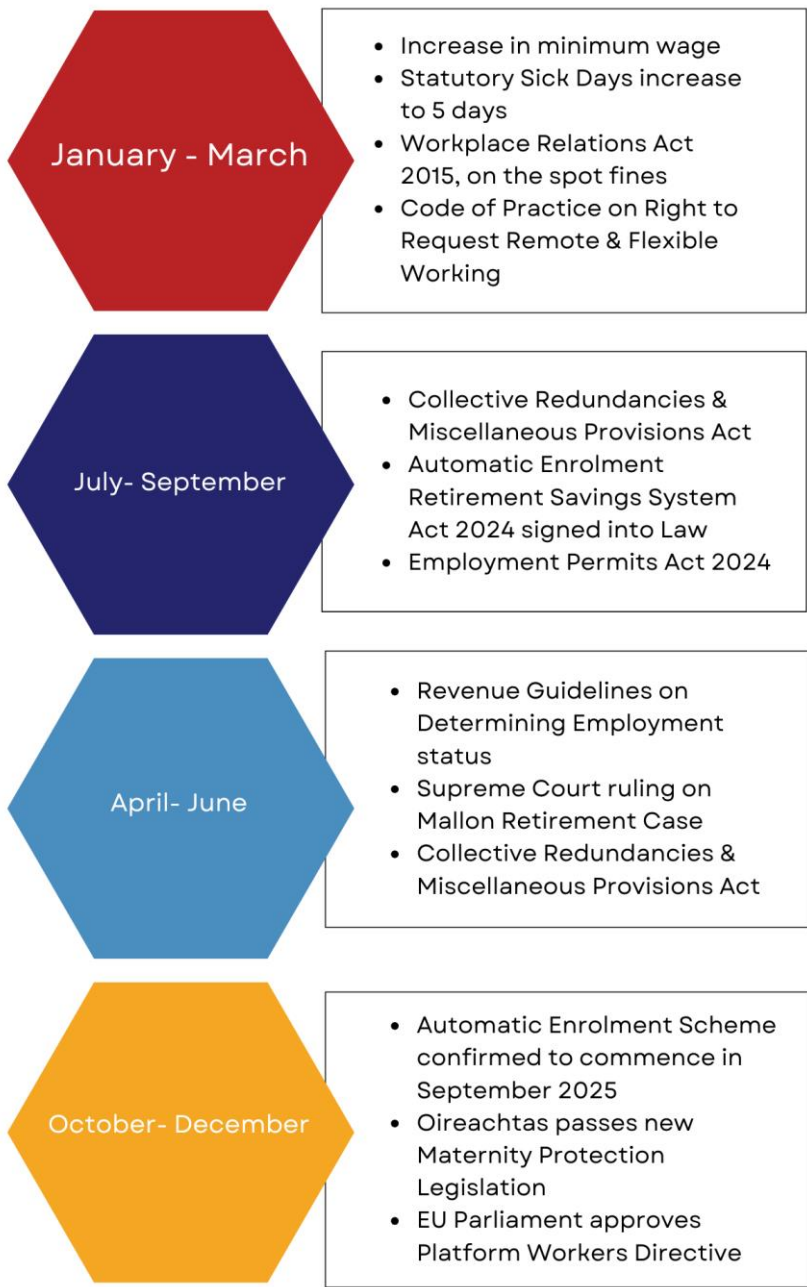
Access up to 50% in
discounts on business
products & services
with the **ISME ADVANTAGE**
Affinity programme

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



Employment Law changes in 2024

As with recent years in the Employment Law sphere, 2024 saw a number of changes in Ireland with many regulatory updates coming into effect as illustrated in the below image;



While each change outlined in the above has a great impact on the day to day operations of your business, below is a deep dive into some of the more pertinent legislative updates that we would advise are included in your end of year review process.

On the Spot Fines:

January saw the introduction of the Workplong-awaitedons Act 2015 (Fixed Payment Notice) Regulations 2023 (the “**Regulations**”) providing WRC Inspectors with the power to issue on the spot fines up to €2000 for a number of factors. Notably:

- €2,000 - Employer fails in a **collective redundancy** situation to consult with employees’ representatives and to provide them with mandatory specified information.
- €1500 – Employer failure to issue **Terms of employment** to Employee within 1 month
- €500 - Employer does not display a ‘**tips and gratuities notice**’ or a ‘contract Workers Tips and Gratuities Notice’.

Work Life Balance - Code of Practice on Right to Request Remote and Flexible Working:

March 2024 saw the introduction of the [Code of Practice on the Right to Request Remote and Flexible Working](#). This long awaited code outlines in great detail the role of the Employer, the Employee along with Health and Safety and Working Arrangements requirements. It is an excellent tool to use once a request for remote or hybrid working has been received. In addition, there are forms that can be used by all businesses.

In summary, when an employee submits a request to a flexible or remote working arrangement, the employer should ensure that:

- Written decision is provided to the employee within 4 weeks of submitting their request; or advise employee if there is a need to extend for further 4 weeks
- Employer gives fair consideration to the Business and Employee needs
- Provide reasons why it is or is not viable at this time in writing to the Employee
 - If declining the request, consider providing a reasonable timeframe when can be reviewed again – while this is not a legislative requirement, it certainly eases the message if not approving the request at the time.
- Where an agreement has been reached, it will likely effect the terms of the employees Contract of Employment. The Employer should draft up a contract amendment letter with both parties signing off on the agreement
- The WRC heard it’s first case under this legislation in the case of Alina Karabko vs Tiktok Technology Ltd; the full case can be read here: [Alina Karabko vs Tiktok Technology Ltd](#)

Guidelines for Determining Employment Status for Taxation Purposes

Following from the Supreme Court ruling in the case of *The Revenue Commissioners v. Karshan (Midlands) Ltd t/a Dominio’s Pizza*, Revenue have recently published its “Guidelines for Determining Employment Status for Taxation Purposes”.

This allowed for employers to make an informed decision to determine if someone is Self Employed or an Employee.

The five-step framework is outlined in [here](#) provides for 5 questions on the Decision Making

Pension Auto-Enrolment Scheme

Budget 2025 confirmed the commencement of Auto Enrolment Scheme will commence in on 30th September 2025.

The Government have prepared papers on Auto-enrolment Retirement Savings System for Employees and Employers along with a Q&A document; these documents can be found [here](#).

As the table above identifies, there are continuous legislative changes impacting on Employers and Employees in Ireland.

In October 2024, Employment Law expert *Katherine McVeigh*, Barrister-at-Law, hosted a 2024 Employment Law Update providing exceptional insights Mandatory Retirement Age, Self Employment v Employee, Statutory Sick Pay and some fantastic insights in 2024 judgements from the WRC and beyond.

This webinar can be viewed using the link below at a cost of € 65 for non-members plus a 10% discount code for members. <https://isme.ie/watch-back-your-2024-employment-law-update/>

As always, if you require any support with HR or Employment Law you can contact the ISME HR Team on 01 6622755 Option 2 or via HR@ISME.ie. Members also have access to a full suite of HR templates regarding Absence management on the ISME HR Hub

2025 will undoubtedly bring more changes from both an EU and national perspective.

This will be outlined in the next ISME publication.



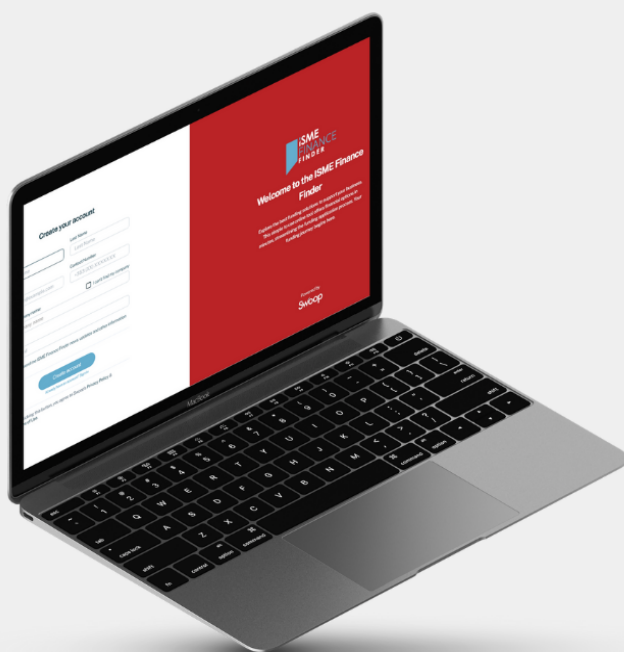
Do you want to...

start or expand your business?

improve cashflow?

acquire a business?

purchase property?



If so, your finance journey starts here

isme.ie/finance-finder