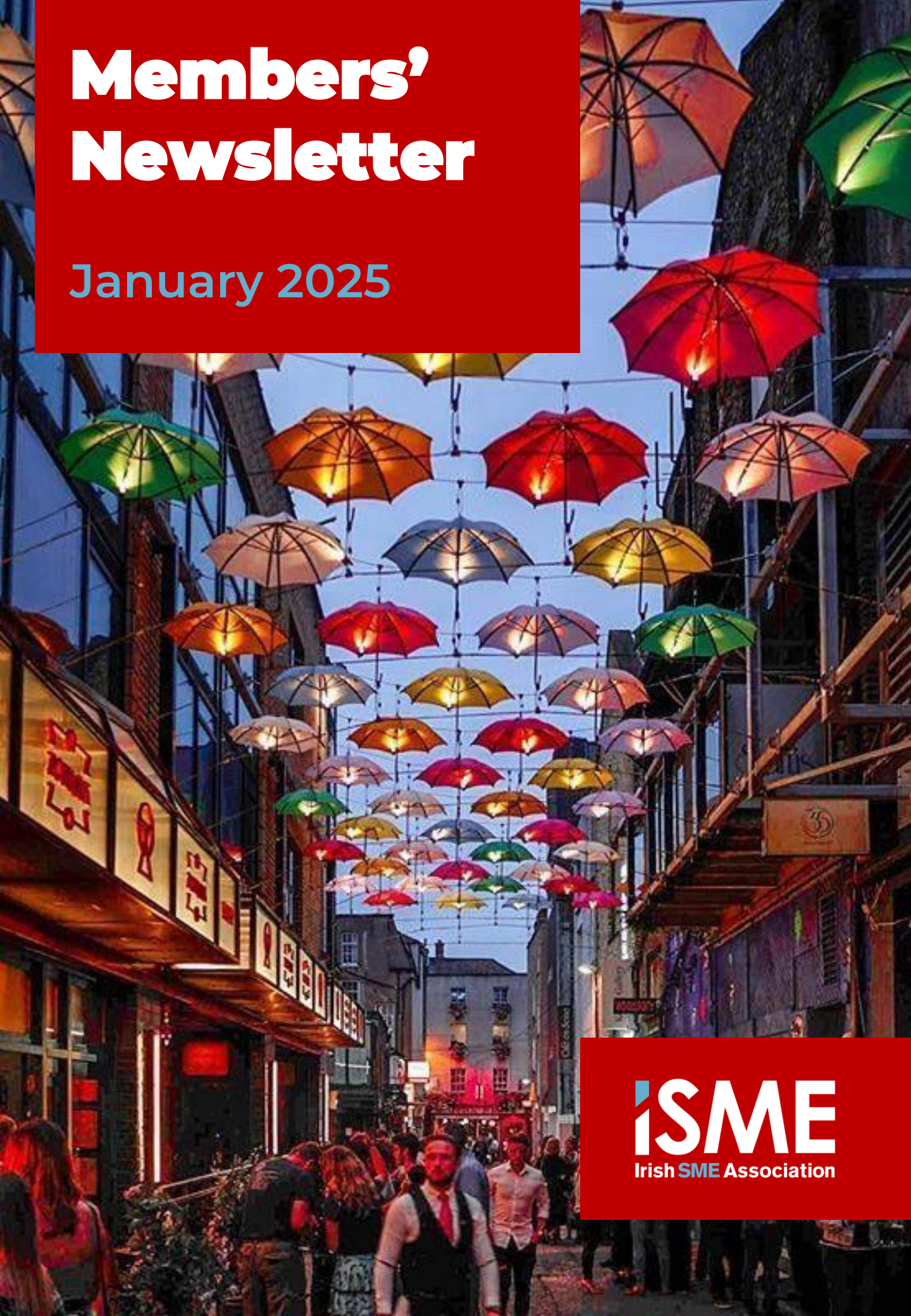


Members' Newsletter

January 2025



iSME
Irish **SME** Association



Dear member,

As of the start of 2025, we have no clear line of sight on the formation of the next government, but it does seem (in early January at least) to be an FF-FG-Ind coalition.

You will have seen me outline ISME's [National Council Priorities](#) last December, and these points were reiterated in the [Examiner](#) and in the [Business Post](#) and in the [Irish Times](#).

While 2025 was to have seen the entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay increase from five to seven days, this has been put to an impact assessment by the outgoing government. So, for the moment, the entitlement stays as is, but we expect an announcement in Q1 this year.

2025 is an election year for the ISME National Council. If you are interested in standing in the election, please let me know as soon as possible. Although the results are not confirmed until the AGM in May, nomination papers will issue in late March, so be ready.

Hopefully your business will be in a position to consider investment in 2025. If you are looking to secure finance, please ensure you use the [ISME Finance Finder](#), which aggregates all the available finance solutions available on the market at the moment.

In next month's note to members, I hope to have news of the new personnel on the Low Pay Commission. The LPC is a key body in deciding the extent of annual adjustment to the national minimum wage. In the meantime, however, I want to congratulate [John Barry](#) of the ISME National Council who has been appointed to the new expert advisory group on labour law, the [Employment Law Review Group](#). We wish him every success for the future.

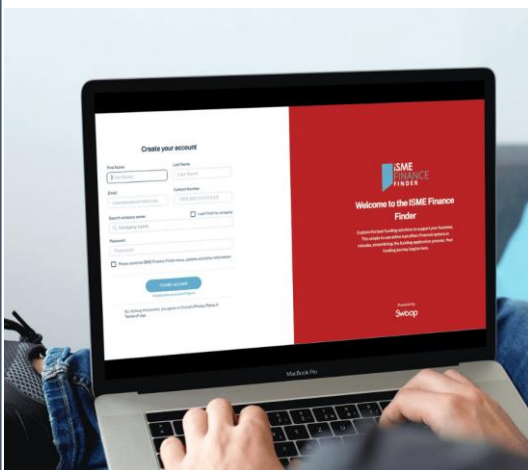
Lastly, at this crucial time of government formation, it is important that you let your local representatives know what is important for your business. While ISME continues to lobby at national level, what is always most impactful for politicians is to understand the contribution YOUR business makes in YOUR constituency. We encourage you to stay in regular contact by email and phone with your newly elected TDs in the 34th Dáil, and you'll find their contact details [HERE](#).

On behalf of the National Council and the ISME team, may I wish you all a prosperous 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niall', followed by a stylized flourish.

- **Boca Sill Ltd**
- **Jkb Consultancy Ltd**
- **Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel**
- **Eliteform Manufacturing Limited**
- **D M O'Shea Engineering Distributors Limited**
- **M & E Controls Ltd.**
- **Samco Engineering Services Ltd.**
- **IPS Limited**
- **The Irish Popcorn & Snack Food Company Ltd**
- **MAPP Foods Ltd.**
- **M & P Fire Solutions Ltd.**
- **Base Computer Systems**

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

Save More This New Year with 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



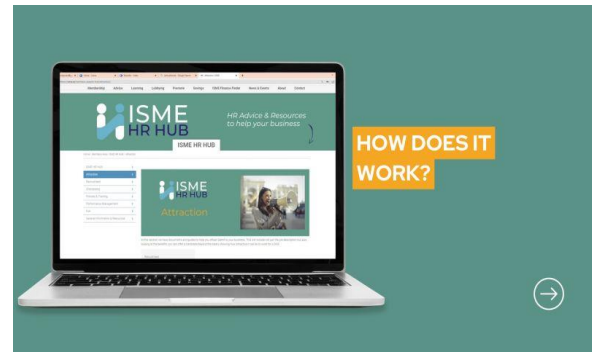
View all our Affinity programmes [here](#). ISME Members can access all offers when they log into the Members Area.

ISME 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.

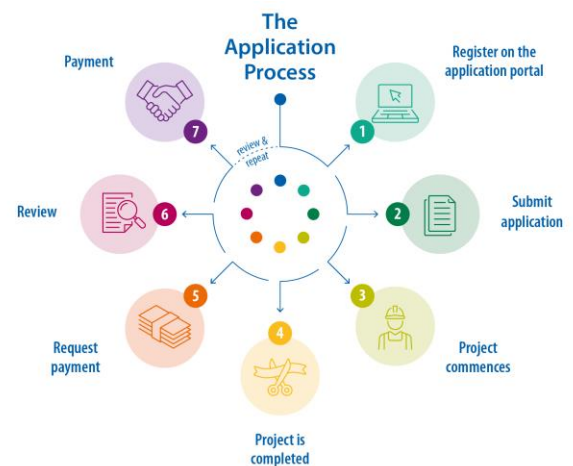


The Business Energy Upgrade Scheme is live

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>



The bISME – Winter Edition out now!

The latest issue of bISME is out now to read and download online.

Take a look [here](#)



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

HR Outlook for 2025

ISME are delighted to introduce this new webinar with keynote speaker Crystel Robbins Rynne, CEO of HR Locker on Thursday 20th January at 10am. The webinar will be hosted by ISME Partnerships and Marketing Manager, Damien Heffernan and will comprise of a 45- minute talk, followed by a 15 mins Q&A session towards the end.

Members can attend the webinar for free and non-member fees for the webinar is €20+ VAT.

Details on how to register for the webinar will be confirmed soon.



HR OUTLOOK FOR 2025

Thursday, 30 January 2025
10AM-11AM

Join Our Exclusive Free Business
Advisory Webinar with Crystel
Robbins Rynne, CEO of HR Locker



www.isme.ie | marketing@isme.ie

Events

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**



Preparing for Employment Law changes in 2025

2025 will continue with the trend of recent years with a number of key developments in our Employment Legislation include enhancements to employee rights, new provisions regarding working conditions, and changes to minimum wage regulations.

Statutory Sick Pay:

In line with the Sick Leave Bill 2022, statutory sick leave entitlement is due to increase from five to seven days, effective from 1st January 2025. **The Department of Social Protection is yet to confirm this change.** As per feedback from Minister of DETE, the government can vary the number of statutory sick leave days provided for by the Act. This is currently under review; a Ministerial Order to increase statutory sick leave days cannot be made until 1 January 2025. Members are advised to await this Ministerial Order or official publications from Department of Social Protection prior to making any adjustments to their company policies.

Minimum wage increase

Budget 2025 announced that from 1 January 2025, the national minimum wage for people aged 20 and over will increase by 80 cents to €13.50 per hour.

Gender Pay Gap reporting in 2025

2025 will see the reporting threshold drop to employers with 50 or more employees.

Many ISME members will be on their GPG for the first time in 2025. Therefore we recommend:

- Familiarize yourself with the 2022 and 2024 GPG Regulations available [here](#)
- Review internal reporting systems to understand if they capture, analyze and report on the company GPG

In prior years, employers had a 6 month reporting deadline from 2025 the reporting deadline will move to November, meaning that employers will have only five months from their snapshot date in June to report on their gender pay gap.

Employment Permits Act 2024

Seasonal Work Permits

The Employment Permits Act 2024 saw the introduction of Seasonal Work Permits with a pilot scheme for this permit launching in early 2025.

This is a short-term employment permit for non-EEA nationals to work for a **maximum of 7 months per calendar year** in seasonally recurrent employment. The SWP is designed to address labour market shortages and support specific economic sectors such as agriculture and horticulture.

To acquire a Seasonal Employment Permit, the employer will need to be pre-register as a seasonal employer and will be issued with a certificate to confirm its status. This certificate will need to be renewed every 12 months, but it will also be transferable. Appropriate arrangements for accommodation and health insurance will also need to be made by the pre-approved seasonable employer.

Once the DETE publish further information of the new scheme, we will share it with all members.

Indexation

Under the 2024 Act, the Minister can carry out a yearly review of the remuneration thresholds for employment permits using average wage growth calculated by the CSO.

It has been confirmed for 2025 the proposed increases to Minimum Annual Remuneration (MAR) for employment permits will not take place in January 2025, pending the outcome of a review. The latest information can be found [here](#).

[Maternity Protection, Employment Equality and Preservation of Certain Records Bill 2024](#)

Late 2024 saw the introduction of the [Maternity Protection, Employment Equality and Preservation of Certain Records Bill 2024](#)

The two most important changes brought about by Bill are that it:

1. allows for the **postponement of maternity leave** in the event of a diagnosis of a serious health condition; and
2. amends the Employment Equality Acts to provide for **a restriction on the use of non-disclosure agreements** in respect of allegations of discrimination, victimization, harassment and sexual harassment, whereby such agreements will be null and void, unless certain conditions are met.

Postponement of Maternity Leave in event of a serious health condition

The Bill outlines provisions for employees who are pregnant or on maternity leave and face a serious health condition. Employees with a serious health condition can notify their employer to postpone all or part of their maternity leave for up to 52 weeks.

Restriction on use of non-disclosure agreements

The Bill introduces a new Section 14B to the Employment Equality Acts, which addresses non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in employment contexts.

Key provisions are:

1. **Ban on Non-Disclosure Agreements:** Employers cannot enter into NDAs with employees that prevent relevant disclosures, making any such agreements void. A non-disclosure agreement is defined as an agreement that restricts an employee from making disclosures related to discrimination, victimization, harassment, or sexual harassment.
2. **Relevant Disclosures:** The term "relevant disclosure" includes:
 - a. Allegations of discrimination, victimization, harassment, or sexual harassment made by an employee regarding their employment.
 - b. Actions taken by the employer or employee in response to such allegations, including any complaints or legal proceedings.

1. **Excepted Non-Disclosure Agreements:** Employers may enter into an NDA only under certain conditions:
 - a. The employee must request it.
 - b. The employee must receive independent legal advice on the implications of signing the agreement.
 - c. The employer must cover the costs of the legal advice.
 - d. If an Excepted Non-Disclosure Agreement is entered into, there are clear provisions outlined in the legislation which must be adhered to.

Pension Auto-Enrolment

Auto-enrolment is a new pension savings scheme for certain employees who are not paying into a pension. They will be automatically included in the scheme but can opt out after 6 months. The scheme is due to commence, for employees who meet the requirements, from 30th September 2025.

If your company does not operate a Pension Scheme and Employees do not have their own provisions for a PRSA or alternative pension scheme, employees who fall into the below categories will be automatically enrolled in the new pension scheme:

- Employees aged between 23 and 60
- Employees who are not currently part of a pension plan
- Employees earning €20,000 or more per year

****ISME Members Webinar on this topic scheduled for January 2025.****

EU Artificial Intelligence ("AI") Act

The long-anticipated [EU Artificial Intelligence \("AI"\) Act](#) came into force on **1 August 2024**; it will be phased into full legislation over the 24 months, subject to certain exceptions.

In particular, the provisions on prohibited AI systems will take effect on **2 February 2025**. However, the related provisions on fines for non-compliance with these rules will, in principle, only start to apply later, on 2 August 2025. The Oireachtas have created a working paper on the Act which can be found [here](#).

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 on the ISME HR Hub.



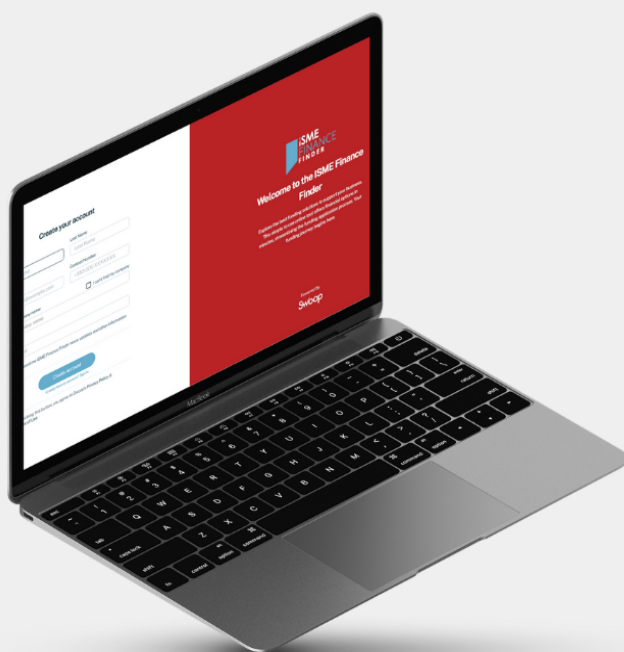
Do you want to...

start or expand your business?

improve cashflow?

acquire a business?

purchase property?



If so, your finance journey starts here

isme.ie/finance-finder