

French Minister of Foreign Affairs briefs Irish SMEs on export opportunities

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The Irish Exporters Association's National Export Hub held the first National Export Hub Seminar of 2017 at the Clarion Hotel, Liffey Valley, Dublin.

The event was run by the National Export Hub, an initiative of the Irish Exporters Association, with sponsorship from ABP Ireland, AIB, DHL Express, Euler Hermes and PwC in conjunction with Bord Bia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Its purpose was to educate and inform Irish SME's around the practicalities of exporting, assistance available and solutions they ought to consider to help them to grow their exports and in some cases, export for the first time.

The morning's seminar focused particularly on the French market, existing collaboration between Ireland and France, and the potential opportunities of trade and investment with France, particularly in light of the UK's decision to exit the EU.

The event was headlined with a keynote address from **Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development in France** who highlighted French opportunities for Irish SME's and discussed the Irish-French bi-lateral trade relationship, Brexit and the future of Europe.



Event speakers:

- *Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, France*
- *Ray Lynch, Head of AIB Dublin*
- *Luke Redmond, Advisory Consultant, PwC*
- *Orlaith Sweeney, Export Manager, Keogh's Crisps*
- *Simon McKeever, Chief Executive, Irish Exporters Association*

Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, France speaking at the event said: *“France and Ireland have enjoyed long-lasting bilateral relations and are committed to developing them further. Through trade and investment, not only are we tightening our bilateral ties but we are also strengthening the EU. My message to the Irish companies is ‘think France’. France is your natural gateway to continental Europe, it is a business friendly environment, it is home for more than 25,000 foreign companies accounting for the 7th largest stock of foreign investments in the world. 300 Irish companies have already invested a consolidated €5bn in France to set up branch offices, subsidiaries or manufacturing facilities. We look forward to welcoming many more.”*

Speaking at the event, Simon McKeever, Chief Executive, Irish Exporters Association commented: *“The National Export Hub is a service offering dedicated to helping and supporting SME’s, whether that is assisting them on their current export journey or helping those new to exporting with advice and support as they look to scale their business by entering new markets. We are particularly delighted today to have Jean-Marc Ayrault, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development for France address Irish SMEs on the future of the Irish-French bi-lateral trade relationship. There are definite synergies between industries in Ireland and France, our fourth largest EU export market, and we are committed to deepening the close bi-lateral trade relationship that exists, and to assisting our members to achieve further growth in France. Given the implications that Brexit will have on the Irish export community, it is imperative that we start educating our SME’s to diversify their exports and France is a natural ally.”*

AIB's Head of AIB Dublin West, Ray Lynch said: *“AIB is delighted to be part of the National Export Hub as it provides SMEs with practical export-related information and guidance for exporting. In the wake of the Brexit vote, supporting Irish SMEs further explores markets beyond the UK is critical. With over €5 billion of Irish goods exported to France in 2016, it is an important market for Irish exporters so it's hugely valuable to get this insight into the opportunities and challenges that exist there.”*

Alison Moore, Marketing, Brand & Communication Manager at DHL Express stated: *“As the market leader for express delivery, DHL knows France has always been an important trade partner for Ireland and now more than ever, trade in an open market is pivotal to the success of a market-diversification strategy for Irish companies.”*