

Small businesses urged to avail of new Brexit supports

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Businesses have been urged to avail of a Government fund worth €3.4m to become Brexit-ready.



Minister of state Pat Breen with Catherine Buggy from Boutique Bake, Donnybrook, which business is supported by LEO.

Pat Breen, the minister for small business, said Brexit supports would be made available to SMEs through the 31 local enterprise offices (LEO).

The supports include access to a “Brexit SME Scorecard”, an online tool where micro-enterprises — typically employing nine or fewer people — and other smaller businesses can self-diagnose their readiness for Brexit.

A technical assistance grant will be available to micro-enterprises to help LEO clients to find new markets and exports, while a rollout of a lean management programme will be nationwide to assist small businesses to become more efficient and competitive.

An innovation and investment fund pilot programme will support small business and get them investor-ready to scale their businesses, while a mentoring programme will be put in place to address Brexit-related business challenges.

Training on specific Brexit challenges, and ongoing advice and guidance, will be given by LEOs.

Mr Breen said: “It is imperative micro and small businesses have the tools and supports needed to navigate through what is uncharted territory. This is part of the Government’s Brexit planning... I urge small and micro business owners to get in touch with their LEO to see how they can help.”

The most recent quarterly InterTradeIreland Business Monitor Report found 98% of firms are still not making any plans for the UK’s exit from the EU, while the Irish Exporters Association described Irish businesses as “woefully unprepared for Brexit” at a recent Oireachtas committee.

Chambers Ireland chief executive Ian Talbot said all SMEs should avail of the Brexit Scorecard.

“We urge small and micro businesses across Ireland to access the Brexit SME scorecard, self-diagnose their readiness and avail of the new LEO resources to plan for doing business post-Brexit,” he said.

Meanwhile, a three-day Enterprise Ireland trade mission to Toronto and Ottawa in Canada has begun, with the aim of opening new markets to Irish businesses in a range of sectors.

The itinerary includes a consumer retail showcase hosted in Ottawa and the 25-strong delegation includes businesses all over Ireland.

Neil Cooney of Enterprise Ireland said: “Canada is Enterprise Ireland’s largest market outside the EU, USA and China and figures show export growth of 7.3% in Canada in 2016. More than 330 Enterprise Ireland client companies are already doing business in Canada.”