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Focus On SMEs: Growth & Exporting 31

Thinking global holds the key for Irish SMEs

BY RUTH WILDGUST

A range of government and private initiatives are supporting the growth of Irish SMEs by encouraging internationalisation and expansion in overseas markets.

With total exports exceeding €18.6 billion in 2014, Enterprise Ireland's clients exported more last year than at

any time in the history of the state," said Enda McDonnell, manager of the potential exporters division at Enterprise Ireland (EI).

"These exporting companies created 19,705 new jobs last year. The direct impact that increasing exports has on job creation in Ireland has never had greater importance."

Both Enterprise Ireland and InterTradeIreland provide a range of supports to SMEs to

help them expand into export markets.

Thomas Hunter McGowan, InterTradeIreland's chief executive, said the cross-border market between Ireland and the North could provide a first step to wider export markets. "Once companies have mastered exporting across the island, this makes

looking at European markets a more realistic prospect," said McGowan. The National

Export Campaign (NEC) is led by the Irish Exporters Association and partners - AIB, AIB, DHL, Euler Hermes and PwC - in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia.

"With this coming together, there is a powerful support structure there from the public and private sectors to help potential exporters," said Simon McKeever, chief executive at

the Irish Exporters Association. "We're taking the campaign around the country to help firms understand how to export and bringing them in contact with a range of experts.

"At NEC events, potential exporters can meet experts from a bank [AIB]; an exporting company [ABP]; Euler Hermes, which provides export credit insurance; DHL, for the logistics perspective; and

PwC, for the business services point of view."

The next event will be held in Limerick on June 25 at the Radisson Blu hotel.

"We will hold a networking session beforehand where people can meet all of the stakeholders, including representatives from Enterprise Ireland, AIB, Euler Hermes and the other partners and get advice from them," said McKeever. "At the presen-



Simon McKeever of the Irish Exporters Association

tation which follows, and in conjunction with EI's Get Export Ready programme, we invite experienced exporters to address delegates on their experiences of exporting, what to do and what not to do.

"It's an excellent event for companies interested in exporting to learn about supports available, and about what's happening in the export space."

See irishexporters.ie