



Border, Midland & Western **Regional Assembly** *Investing in Your Future*

2011 Annual Conference

Innovation & Competitiveness – Restoring the Regional Economy

**Friday 6th May, 2011
Sheraton Hotel, Athlone**



Ireland's EU Structural Funds
Programmes 2007 - 2013

Co-funded by the Irish Government
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Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly



Keynote Speaker
Mr. **Richard Bruton**, T.D.,
Minister for Enterprise,
Jobs and Innovation



Welcome Address
Councillor **Joe Flanagan**
Cathaoirleach
BMW Regional Assembly

PROGRAMME

9.00 – 9.30 a.m. REGISTRATION - TEA/COFFEE

First Session Chaired by Cllr. Connie Hanniffy, Member of the Committee of the Regions and Rapporteur on Europe's Small Business Act

9.30 – 9.45 a.m. WELCOME
Councillor Joe Flanagan
Cathaoirleach, BMW Regional Assembly

9.45 – 10.15 a.m. "The Role of the Higher Education Institutes in Promoting Innovation and Knowledge Intensive Services"
Prof. Ciarán O Catháin, President Athlone Institute of Technology

10.15 – 11.00 a.m. "Audit of Innovations System in the BMW Region : An Evaluation of a Regional Knowledge Economy"
Mr. Gerry Finn, Director, BMW Regional Assembly

11.00- 11.20 a.m. TEA/COFFEE BREAK

Second Session Chaired by Mr. Gerry Finn, Director, BMW Regional Assembly

11.20 – 11.50 p.m. Launch of "Audit of Innovations System in the BMW Region : An Evaluation of a Regional Knowledge Economy" and KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Mr. Richard Bruton, T.D., Minister for Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation

11.50 – 12.20 p.m. "Enterprise Ireland – Driving Innovation and Competitiveness in Irish Business"
Mr. Frank Ryan , CEO, Enterprise Ireland

12.20 – 12.50 p.m. "Promoting Regional Innovation and Competitiveness – Meeting the Needs of SMEs"
Mr. Mark Fielding, Chief Executive, ISME

12.50 – 1.20 p.m. PANEL DISCUSSION
Questions and Answers

CONFERENCE CLOSURE
Councillor Joe Flanagan
Cathaoirleach, BMW Regional Assembly

1.30 p.m. LUNCH



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The conference will be held in The Sheraton Hotel, Athlone on Friday 6th May 2011



Conference Fee

There is no fee for attending the conference.

Lunch, tea/coffee and documentation will be provided as part of your Conference attendance.

For Bookings and or Enquiries Contact:

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Email: EDowd@bmwassembly.ie

Please Complete

(Block Capitals)

Name(s): _____

Title(s): _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____ No. of delegates: _____

Special Requirements: _____



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Innovation & Competitiveness – Restoring the Regional Economy

There is a growing recognition of the regional foundations of national competitiveness and that regions are the pivotal sites for gaining comparative and collaborative advantage, through local nodes of knowledge and innovation and interactions among knowledge creators, intermediaries and commercial users of knowledge intensive services.

Enhancing innovation capacity at regional level in private firms and among public and third level institutions is therefore critical to future growth and prosperity. Promotion of Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy are the first priorities of the EU co-financed BMW Regional Operational Programme 2007-13.

Educational institutions and R&D facilities are essential “Infrastructure” for promoting regional innovation and by enhancing the enabling conditions. State agencies play an important facilitating role in increasing the levels of innovation through providing finance in the form of grants, loans or equity and are major stimulants of company innovation.

An increased emphasis is needed on regionally-relevant applied research and development initiatives that have the potential to be translated into commercially viable projects or have commercial application in the short to medium term, particularly those which respond to the needs of SMEs. These initiatives will become the cornerstone of regional innovation policy and will play a key role in supporting the overall research and development infrastructure at regional level.

The National Recovery Plan 2011-14 acknowledges that knowledge and innovation have a key role to play in driving future competitiveness and plans to make Ireland a Global Innovation Hub. Continued targeted investment in education and innovation will enhance future economic growth prospects. Under the plan, core R&D supports and innovation vouchers will continue to help small firms acquire cost-effective R&D and to move up the value chain.

The Programme for Government 2011 commits the Government to target key technology areas and sectors where innovation can be applied and will promote Ireland’s full engagement with the ‘Innovative Union’ proposals issued by the European Commission in October 2010 as one of the seven flagship initiatives under European Union’s 2020 Strategy – the replacement for the Lisbon Strategy.

This conference provides a unique opportunity for the key policy makers and delivery agencies to present their current strategies for restoring regional and national competitiveness. The results of a comprehensive study of innovation and knowledge-intensive services in the BMW Region will be presented. The current and potential role of the higher education institutions in promoting regional innovation will be discussed. The conference also will hear from the businesses sector on their enterprise development and innovative needs.

This Conference is a major information activity as part of the BMW Regional Assembly’s obligation to promote the EU Co-funded BMW Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013



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