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# The critical foundations for Ireland's *Digital Public Services Plan 2030*



Ailish Hansen, Chief Commercial Officer, Fexco Managed and Advisory Services.

Ireland's *Digital Public Services Plan 2030* represents the most ambitious digital transformation agenda the Irish public sector has ever undertaken, writes Ailish Hansen, Chief Commercial Officer, Fexco Managed and Advisory Services.

The targets are clear: 100 per cent of key public services available online and 90 per cent digital consumption by 2030. The vision is compelling: a life events approach that reimagines how citizens interact with government around the moments that matter most in their lives.

But ambition without enablement risks becoming aspiration without achievement. As public bodies begin implementing this transformative agenda, the question is not whether the vision is right, it is whether the enablers for success are in place.

## The challenge ahead

The plan identifies 189 key public services across 17 life events, from the birth of a child to supporting the bereaved. While 58 per cent of these services are already online or due to be by the end of 2026, being 'online' is merely the starting point. True transformation requires services that are integrated, intuitive, and designed around user needs, not around the internal structures of government departments.

Consider the life event of becoming employed. This currently involves engaging with up to 22 separate services. Even when digitally available, these services remain disconnected. Citizens must repeatedly provide the same information, navigate different systems, and understand which department does what. The ambition is to transform this into a seamless journey where government proactively offers relevant supports at the right time.

Delivering this ambition requires more than technology upgrades. It demands fundamental shifts in capability, culture, and collaboration. The plan acknowledges these complexities explicitly, recognising that life events-based services are inherently challenging because they span multiple departments, systems, and legislative frameworks.

What, then, are the critical enablers that will determine whether Ireland achieves its 2030 targets?

### Enabler one: Structured governance and clear accountability

Strong governance structures are essential to ensure digital transformation initiatives are delivered in line with policy commitments. The plan establishes a clear governance framework: the Public Service Leadership Board providing

oversight, a strategic working group for Pillar One coordinating delivery, and Life Events Working Groups bringing together stakeholders across departments and agencies.

This structure is sound, but success depends on execution. Each life event has a lead department responsible for coordinating efforts across multiple public service bodies. These leaders must navigate complex stakeholder landscapes, align competing priorities, and maintain momentum across organisations with different cultures, systems, and constraints.



Effective governance requires more than formal structures. It demands dedicated resources, clear decision-making authority, and mechanisms for resolving blockers quickly. It also requires transparency: regular reporting through tools like the ePPM project management building block ensures progress is visible and issues are surfaced early.

For senior civil servants and technology leaders, the question is whether their organisations have allocated sufficient leadership attention and resources to these coordination roles. Transformation at this scale cannot succeed as a side-of-desk activity.

**Enabler two: Service design capability at scale**

At the core of the life events approach is user-centred design, a fundamental shift from process-oriented service delivery to understanding and meeting citizen needs. The plan recognises this explicitly, committing to build service design capability across the public sector through training programmes, design playbooks, a service standard, and a central design team in DPER.

These are necessary foundations, but the scale of the challenge is significant. Delivering 17 life events by 2030, each involving multiple services across numerous public bodies, requires design capability that is widespread, embedded, and continuously improving.

Building this capability takes time. Training programmes and recruitment of designers at all grades will strengthen internal expertise, but capacity constraints remain. The plan’s ‘learning by doing’ approach, where teams gain expertise through practical application, is pragmatic. However, it requires supporting structures: access to experienced practitioners who can guide teams, frameworks and tools that accelerate design work, and protected time for staff to develop new skills.

The design procurement framework outlined in the plan provides an

important mechanism for accessing external expertise when needed. Public bodies should view this not as outsourcing design work, but as a capacity multiplier that enables internal teams to deliver more ambitious transformation while building long-term capability.

The *Accessing Social Housing* case study demonstrates what is possible when rigorous design methods are applied. The ‘as is’ analysis identified 12 key operational and technological challenges, from inconsistent processes across 31 local authorities to manual effort required by both citizens and staff. The target service offer defined a transformed experience: centralised information, online applications, streamlined back-office processing, and automated updates. This work provides a template for other life events, but





replicating it across all 17 priority areas demands substantial design capacity.

**Enabler three: Digital infrastructure and building blocks**

The plan’s emphasis on shared digital infrastructure is one of its strongest elements. Rather than each public body building bespoke systems, DPER (OGCIO) is providing reusable digital building blocks with identity management through MyGovID, a life events portal, a government digital wallet, data collection tools, payment systems, and more.

This approach offers significant advantages: consistency of user experience, interoperability across services, cost efficiency, and faster time to market. The successful digital wallet pilot demonstrated the potential of these building blocks to enable trusted, user-friendly digital interactions.

However, infrastructure is only as valuable as its adoption and integration.

Public bodies must design services to leverage these building blocks effectively, ensuring they are not simply bolted onto existing processes but integrated into redesigned service journeys. This requires technical capability: understanding how to implement these tools, integrate them with legacy systems, and ensure data flows securely across government.

It also requires standards and governance around data sharing. The Plan references the *Public Service Data Strategy 2030* as a key enabler, establishing secure data infrastructure and interoperable standards. Realising the ‘once only’ principle, where citizens provide information once for reuse across services, depends on responsible data sharing with appropriate safeguards and compliance with GDPR regulations.

The ePPM project management building block deserves particular attention. By providing a common tool for tracking progress, milestones, and resources, it

creates transparency and enables coordinated delivery across departments. But its value depends on adoption and discipline: consistent use, accurate reporting, and embedding it into regular governance processes.

**Enabler four: Funding and resource allocation**

Digital transformation requires investment. The plan notes that departments and public service bodies will continue to fund their own digitalisation efforts as part of business as usual. Additionally, DPER has established a targeted Public Service Digital Transformation Fund for 2024 to 2026 to drive cross-cutting collaboration and accelerate priority life events.

This blended funding model is pragmatic, but it creates coordination challenges. With multiple funding streams and competing priorities, there is a risk of fragmented delivery or duplication of effort. Strong programme management and visibility of investment across life events will be essential to ensure resources are deployed where they deliver greatest impact.

The fund’s focus on co-design, skills transfer, and outcome-based partnerships is particularly important. Funding should not simply pay for deliverables but should build capability and drive measurable improvements in service experience and operational efficiency. Structuring investments to reward adoption and user satisfaction, not just activity or outputs, will focus effort on what matters most: delivering value for citizens.

As the plan evolves beyond 2026, sustainable funding mechanisms will be crucial. Transformation is not a one-off investment but an ongoing commitment. Public bodies must embed transformation capability into their operating models, ensuring they can continue innovating beyond the initial programme phases.

**Enabler five: Strategic partnerships**

The scale and complexity of the *Digital Public Services Plan* mean that public bodies cannot deliver it alone. Strategic



partnerships with experienced advisory and consultancy providers offer critical enablers: proven expertise in service design and agile delivery, capacity to surge resources at critical moments, and cross-pollination of best practice across life events and organisations.

The most effective partnerships are genuinely collaborative. Rather than transactional outsourcing, where work is simply handed off to external providers, successful engagements involve co-design, joint problem-solving, and explicit knowledge transfer. Partners work alongside internal teams, building capability while delivering tangible outcomes.

Fexco's experience demonstrates the value of this approach. Our strategic partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, recognised with the CCMA Outsource Partnership of the Year award in 2024, exemplifies how collaboration focused on the right blend of people, process, and technology can deliver sustainable transformation. Similarly, our work with the PrizeBonds Company, a 50:50 joint venture with An Post operating since 1989, shows how long-term partnerships can reliably deliver complex services.

For public bodies navigating the *Digital Public Services Plan*, the question is not whether to engage external partners, but how to structure those partnerships to maximise value. Relationships should be aligned around outcomes, designed to build internal capability, and flexible enough to adapt as priorities evolve.

This is where Fexco Advisory Services can play a key role in supporting *Digital Public Services Plan*. Our approach to Advisory services is grounded in decades of hands-on expertise in running multinational financial service operations and providing outsourced managed service operations primarily to Irish public sector partners. Our advisory Services leverage all this practical, real-life experience to support clients in achieving tangible outcomes that align with their strategic objectives.

The plan's life events working groups provide an ideal structure for collaborative partnerships. With lead departments coordinating efforts across multiple agencies, there is both the governance framework and the practical

imperative for partners who can work effectively in complex, multi-stakeholder environments.

### Enabler six: Continuous learning and adaptation

The plan is designed as a dynamic framework, intended to evolve based on feedback, emerging challenges, and new opportunities. This adaptive approach is essential in a rapidly changing technological and policy landscape.

Enabling continuous learning requires several elements: mechanisms to capture insights from early life events and propagate lessons to later phases, regular evaluation of what is working and what needs adjustment, transparency in reporting progress and challenges, and openness to changing course when evidence suggests a better path.

The plan's phased approach, with priority life events scheduled for delivery in 2026, 2027, and 2028, creates natural learning cycles. Insights from Phase One life events like birth of a child and accessing social housing should directly inform Phase Two and Phase Three delivery. But this only happens if there are structured processes for knowledge capture and transfer.

Advisory partners working across multiple life events can play a valuable connective tissue role, identifying patterns and helping propagate effective approaches across government. Combined with the plan's commitment to monitoring and evaluation, this creates the conditions for an increasingly sophisticated and effective transformation programme.

The plan's emphasis on the OECD recommendation on human-centred public administrative services provides an important North Star. The recommendation urges governments to design services around people's needs and life events rather than institutional silos, reduce administrative burden, enhance access, and improve equity. Regular benchmarking against these principles and against peer countries pursuing similar approaches ensures Ireland learns from international best practice.

### Looking ahead

The *Digital Public Services Plan 2030* is bold and necessary. The life events approach has the potential to fundamentally improve how citizens experience government services while driving efficiency through reduced duplication and better use of public resources.

But vision must be matched with pragmatism about delivery. Success depends on getting the enablers right: clear governance and accountability, service design capability at scale, robust digital infrastructure, sustainable funding, strategic partnerships, and mechanisms for continuous learning.

These enablers are interconnected. Strong governance creates the conditions for effective partnerships. Digital building blocks enable service designers to deliver integrated experiences. Funding that rewards outcomes drives behaviour toward what matters most.

For senior civil servants and technology leaders across the public sector, the opportunity is significant and the challenge is real. The questions to ask are: Does my organisation have the governance, capability, infrastructure, and partnerships in place to deliver on our commitments? Where are the gaps, and how do we address them?

The pathway to success runs through deliberate attention to these enablers, treating them not as background conditions but as active priorities requiring leadership, investment, and sustained focus. Get these right, and Ireland's digital transformation ambitions become achievable. Get them wrong, and 2030 targets remain aspirations rather than outcomes.

The plan provides the roadmap. The enablers will determine whether we reach the destination.

Fexco Advisory Services works with public and private sector organisations to design and deliver transformation programmes grounded in operational reality and focused on sustainable outcomes.

W: [www.fexco.com/business-services/advisory-services/](http://www.fexco.com/business-services/advisory-services/)

A portrait of Jean Carberry, Assistant Secretary at the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. She has blonde hair and is wearing a dark green blazer over a red top and a white ruffled collar. She is smiling slightly.

# Driving AI adoption

Jean Carberry, Assistant Secretary at the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment with responsibility for Digital, EU, and Climate, talks to Ciaran Brennan about how the Department is driving AI adoption.

### Ciaran Brennan (CB): What is your department is doing to drive AI adoption?

**Jean Carberry (JC):** The first thing we are doing is putting guardrails in place for ethical and safe use of AI because we think that trust is really important. We are also raising awareness of AI and its use cases among SMEs because the most important thing is that they recognise that this is something that can save them money and time; that there is something in it for them. The Department has a range of supports for businesses who want to adopt AI. We provide grants and advice, and vouchers that allow firms to retain consultants. We have also put in place a network of European digital innovation hubs which provide training and advice, and allow businesses to test AI solutions before they invest in them.

### CB: What AI adoption efforts are working well?

**JC:** The Department is responsible for implementing the EU AI Act which provides the governance framework for ethical use of AI across Europe. Public sector bodies and regulators have cooperated very well with us on this. This means we can successfully implement the act in a coherent way in time for the deadlines that have been set by the EU.

### CB: What challenges has the Department encountered?

**JC:** The big challenge is driving awareness and understanding of AI. There is so much misinformation out there; people are nervous of AI. They know it is an important development but they are not quite sure how to approach it. We have programmes to demystify AI and help people understand what they need to know, what they need to worry about, and what they do not need to worry about. Also, we appointed an AI ambassador, Patricia Scanlon, who has done great work in making it easy for people to understand AI and what it means for them.

### CB: How can job security be assured as AI is adopted?

**JC:** The important thing to remember is that AI is coming anyway. It is not something that we can stop. What government needs to do is ensure that there are programmes in place for people to get the skills they need to use AI properly. Ideally, AI should rise all the boats and help business to grow. That will drive increased employment. To not prepare for AI and for businesses not to adopt AI would actually be the worst thing they could do, because their competitors will and that would have a more negative impact on jobs.

### CB: What unique aspects of the economy position the State well to adopt AI?

**JC:** Our biggest selling point is our young, skilled population and our attractiveness as a destination for talent. We are great at innovation which means that this is a great place to be an AI startup, it is a great place to invest if you are an AI company. That is why we have attracted so many new, big AI businesses, our skills base is so good and our people are so good.

### Profile: Jean Carberry

Jean Carberry is the Assistant Secretary of the Digital, EU and Climate Programme Division at the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. She leads Ireland's positions on the EU digital economy platform and AI policy. Carberry led the development of Ireland's AI Strategy, published in July 2021, and is responsible for implementation of the enterprise strand of the strategy.

# Coimisiún na Meán's online safety mission



Niamh Hodnett, Ireland's Online Safety Commissioner.

My name is Niamh Hodnett and in 2023, I became Ireland's first Online Safety Commissioner. The same year, Coimisiún na Meán was established with the ambition to develop and regulate a thriving, diverse, safe, and trusted media landscape for Ireland.

Working alongside my four Commissioner colleagues, An Coimisiún is Ireland's online safety regulator, we also regulate broadcasters and video-on-demand service providers, and we provide funding support for television and radio programming and high-quality independent journalism.

Since our establishment, Coimisiún na Meán have accomplished a lot in a relatively short amount of time. We have grown from an organisation of 40, to over 260 today, and have built our capacity across our functions, including policy, research and strategy, platform supervision and investigations, media development and broadcasting and video-on-demand licensing and regulation.

As Ireland's Online Safety Commissioner, I am responsible for the development of Ireland's regulatory regime for online safety – the Online Safety Framework. Since July 2025, the Framework is now fully in place, consisting of the EU Digital Services Act (DSA), the EU Terrorist Content Online Regulation (TCOR) and the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act, the basis for our Online Safety Code. The Online Safety Framework makes online platforms accountable for how they protect people, especially children, from harm online.

This Framework has rebalanced the relationship between users and online platforms, and has provided new rights for people, and additional obligations on platforms. This includes the right for users under the DSA to report illegal content through a user-friendly and accessible reporting mechanism, and the obligation for platforms to deal with these reports. Platforms also have to establish terms and conditions which outline what content and activity they do and do not allow on their services, and to enforce these terms and conditions diligently. Further, if you report content and the platform decides not to take action on it, you have a right to appeal that decision.

The Online Safety Code was the final piece of the puzzle and is fully in force since the summer. Under the Code, several of the large video-sharing platforms are required to provide additional protections for children. These include restricting videos which promote eating and feeding disorders, suicide and self-harm, dangerous challenges and cyber bullying. It also restricts video content which incites hatred or violence on the grounds of protected characteristics as well as child sex abuse material and terrorism. Video-sharing platforms that allow adult-only video content, including pornography



Coimisiún na Meán's headquarters, Dublin.

and extreme violence, must have in place effective age verification to ensure that children do not encounter these types of content.

The Code was developed following extensive consultation with the public and civil society organisations and was made with the protection of children in mind. Our own Youth Advisory Committee was central to the development of the Code and serves as an important forum for us to hear the views of children and young people when developing policy with their interests in mind.

With the Framework fully in force, we are now supervising the online platforms established in Ireland for their compliance. Our ambition is to drive behavioural change from the online platforms and for platforms to develop their systems with safety in mind. If a platform fails to meet their obligations under the Framework, we will not hesitate to act, with significant financial sanctions as a potential consequence.

A crucial part of my role as Online Safety Commissioner is meeting with other regulators, establishing opportunities for co-operation and listening to those most at risk of harm online. Since I started, I have met with teacher organisations,

parents' groups, cyber safety advocates and representatives of minority communities. We have also established several co-operation agreements with other regulators including the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), the Data Protection Commission (DPC) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). In November 2025, I was selected as Chair of the Global Online Safety Regulators Network, where regulators and observers from across the world work together to ensure that online safety is not limited by national borders.

Our Contact Centre plays a vital role in keeping us informed of people's online experiences and can provide advice and support for people who see or hear something online that they do not think is right. The information gathered by the Contact Centre helps us to build a case for enforcement where we can identify patterns of non-compliance by platforms.

As a regulator, our priority is keeping people, especially children, safe from harm online and informing people about their rights and how to use them. Our message is clear; users have new rights online, and platforms have new obligations that did not previously exist.

By reporting content that you believe to be illegal, or against a platform's terms and conditions, you help us to put the platforms on notice and to hold them accountable. If you have difficulty in reporting content online, or if you are unhappy with the response from the platform then please get in touch with us and we can help provide you with the right kind of support. Every report and every contact we have contributes to our supervision and enforcement work with the online platforms. In turn this helps to make the online space safer for everyone. Your report matters.

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*Coimisiún na Meán's Contact Centre is open from 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday*

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SKILLS

KNOWLEDGE

ABILITY

# Making Ireland a global innovation leader

The Programme for Government (PfG), *Securing Ireland's Future*, sets an aim to ensure the State is a global innovation leader by expanding research capacity and increasing research and development (R&D), while it presents AI as the foremost focus for technology.

The PfG outlines commitments to reform the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, develop an all-island innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem, and review and simplify the existing business and enterprise tax system.

It states that funding of Taighde Éireann, the research and innovation funding agency established in August 2024, will continue. The PfG also commits to the expansion of EU research and innovation partnerships with SMEs. Additionally, it outlines an aim to introduce new academic career paths, contracts, and professorships in technological universities to enable their transformation.

The PfG asserts that the State will ensure it is a leader in the digital economy and artificial intelligence. It contains aims to update the National Digital Strategy and to work with EU partners to ensure the State and the EU are positioned to benefit from new technologies such as AI.

The Government also commits to ensuring skills necessary for AI deployment, innovation, and support are provided through education and professional learning networks.

## Innovation climate

Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures from April 2025 show that R&D expenditure in 2023 stood at €7 billion, 81 per cent higher than 2021. Current expenditure accounted for €4.6 billion (66 per cent), while capital expenditure accounted for €2.4 billion (34 per cent).

Of total R&D expenditure in 2023, 16 per cent (€1.1 billion) came from Irish-owned

enterprises. The top 10 enterprises accounted for 58 per cent (€4 billion) of total R&D expenditure, compared with 37 per cent in 2021.

CSO figures from February 2025 indicate that 15.2 per cent of all enterprises used AI technologies in some capacity in 2024. The most common use of AI was for natural language generation at 7.4 per cent, followed by data mining (6.5 per cent), and automating workflows or assisting in decision-making (6.4 per cent). In 2024, 51.2 per cent of large enterprises used AI, compared with 25.1 per cent of medium, and 12 per cent of small enterprises.

### Digital Public Services Plan 2030

The *Digital Public Services Plan 2030*, published in November 2025, sets two key policy targets. The first is to achieve 100 per cent accessible provision of key public services by 2030 as set out in the *EU Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030*. The second is to have 90 per cent of applicable services consumed online by 2030 as set out in the *National Digital Strategy: Harnessing Digital*.

Aligned with this is the rollout of a life events online portal. This would consolidate government services for administrative processes of life events in one place. The portal will be based on 'digital building blocks', including a new Digital Wallet. This is a platform where citizens' digital credentials, such as their driving licence and birth certificate, can be stored.

### Budget 2026 and NDP Review

Under Budget 2026, €1.3 billion was allocated to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This includes an R&D Tax Credit increase from 30 per cent to 35 per cent, with the first-year payment threshold increased €75,000 to €87,500. This is aimed at supporting smaller research and development projects.

An increase for the existing capital gains tax revised entrepreneur relief from €1 million to €1.5 million was also announced. Budget 2026 states that funding for Enterprise Ireland will be increased to support business in scaling innovation, but does not specify the amount. It also allocates €1.4 million to establish a national artificial intelligence office.

The Department has stated that it will use budget funding to support Enterprise Ireland in delivering green innovation, enable IDA Ireland to invest in innovation, and drive innovation through the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund.

Over the lifetime of the revised *National Development Plan (NDP)* for 2026 to 2030, the Department will oversee a spend of €4.88 billion, which includes €1.2 billion of projected income from enterprise agencies. Of this, €50 million has been allocated for scaling technology centres to drive innovation and commercialisation.

Under Budget 2026, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science was allocated €4.9 billion. This includes a €810 million capital allocation to fund key infrastructure projects including Taighde Éireann, and the development and operation of 11 technological university facilities.

The Department was allocated €4.55 billion over the five-year period of the NDP. Aligned with this, the Department published the *Tertiary Sector Capital Investment Plan 2026-2030* in December 2025. Over €2.45 billion will be invested into research and innovation.

The plan contains the following measures aimed at strengthening innovation and research capacity:

- delivery of new infrastructure programme to replace ageing equipment and enhance institutional capacity;
- invest in a new high-performance computing system with the University of Galway and the Irish Centre for High-End Computing;
- support for Tyndall National Institute in deep-tech research, development, and graduate training;
- €1.4 billion in funding for Taighde Éireann in implementing its first five-year strategy; and
- €60 million contribution to maintain Ireland's membership in international research organisations, including CERN.

Upon publication of the plan, Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science James Lawless TD said: "This plan represents the largest capital injection ever delivered to the tertiary sector. It will strengthen Ireland's research and innovation ecosystem, expand capacity in higher education to meet workforce demands, and support balanced regional development."

# A health system approach to DNS and online abuse

The 84th Public Meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), was held in Dublin, Ireland, from 25-30 October 2025.

**.ie domain names are available to registrants with a provable “Connection to Ireland.”**



This includes 4 categories:

-  **Individuals based in Ireland**
-  **Citizens of Ireland living abroad**
-  **Organisations based in Ireland**
-  **Organisations providing services to Ireland**

- **Technical abuse:** Traditional DNS threats that largely aligns with ICANNs definition of ‘DNS abuse’.
- **Content abuse:** Displaying or distributing illegal content in the .ie namespace.
- **Registration abuse:** Domain name registrations that are carried out in bad faith or maliciously.

While definitions and how we frame issues is important, it is also essential though, that registries have different measures in place to appropriately and proportionately respond to situations. For example, it would not be appropriate for the registry to proactively determine what constitutes a crime, or what is in bad faith. But it is appropriate for the registry to have processes in place to respond to complaints or court orders.

## ATOM: Appropriate technical and organisational measures

A helpful acronym is ATOM, appropriate technical and organisational measures. There is no silver bullet for online safety, and the registry does not rely solely on any one single technical tool or policy to help mitigate abuse. Having a mix of appropriate and complementary measures is essential.

Things like domain name suspensions, for example, are often called a blunt instrument (similar to a hammer). Using that analogy, if one wants to build a birdhouse, but only uses a hammer, it will likely be a very poor-quality bird house. A mix of complementary and layered tools, instruments, and policies are required to create and maintain a safe .ie namespace.

## Types of prevention

In the world of public health, ‘prevention’ is often divided into layers, but it is fundamentally about having proportionate interventions that stop

ICANN works to maintain a stable, secure, and unified global internet by managing the Domain Name System (DNS), assigning IP addresses, and accrediting domain name registrars. During this, I was invited to give the host country presentation to the Government Advisory Committee (GAC).

Rather than simply outlining the policies and processes .ie uses to combat instances of abuse, the presentation highlighted how a prevention framework (borrowed from the public health sector) can help shape effective measures to address technical and online abuse.

## A highly trusted and low-abuse namespace

The .ie domain is unique, even among other country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs), due to one of its long-standing policies: the Connection-to-Ireland. Every registrant must

demonstrate a “real and substantive connection to the island of Ireland.”

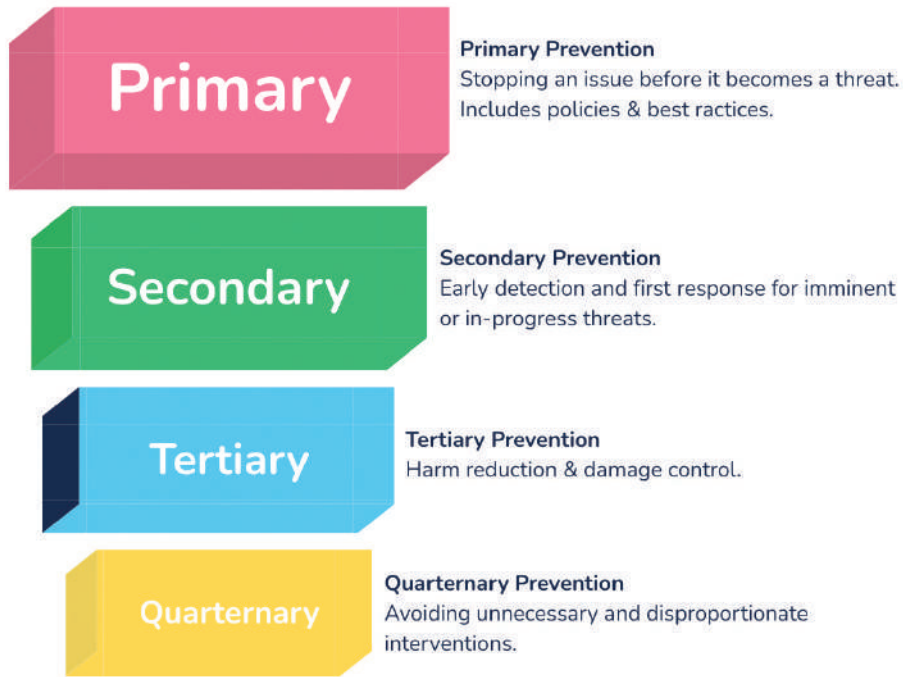
This policy is not only to ensure that the .ie domain name remains a trusted asset for Ireland, it is also a preventative measure. According to the DNS Research Federation, the .ie domain name has one of the lowest rates of abuse among European ccTLDs. NetBeacon’s August 2025 report shows the .ie namespace remained highly secure, with just one detected instance of technical abuse.

## A broader view of abuse

Ourselves in .ie take a somewhat “broader view” of abuse as opposed to the classic ICANN definition of “DNS Abuse.” ICANN defines DNS Abuse as phishing, malware, botnets, pharming and spam when used as a delivery mechanism. However, .ie views three types of abuse:



Public health offers a similar framework of “prevention” to mitigate adverse outcomes for communities.



something bad from happening. This framework is also helpful for the registry to view the different measures in place to prevent abuse from happening.

- **Primary prevention:** Primary prevention is stopping an issue before it becomes a threat. This is preventing a heart attack at 60, by being active at 20. At the organisational level, this is about having the policies, processes, and governance practices in place that stop threats from developing.
- **Secondary prevention:** Secondary prevention is about early detection and first response to an imminent threat. If someone has an illness, secondary prevention is about detecting that illness. In the DNS world, this is about having measures in place that can detect abuse happening and having the ability to rapidly respond in a proportionate way.
- **Tertiary prevention:** Tertiary prevention is about responding to an event that has already happened, or is currently happening, and preventing further damage. In the most extreme situations, for instance, this could be having the ability to perform domain name suspensions or takedowns when necessary.
- **Quaternary prevention:** The last layer of prevention, but just as important as the others, is quaternary prevention. This is about having measures and processes in place to avoid intervening when it is not necessary, or in a way that is not appropriate. These are things like due diligence checks, appeals processes, or policy advisory committees.

### The Regulatory Authority Protocol

An effective example for .ie, is the Regulatory Authority Protocol (RAP). This is an established process where regulatory authorities submit complaints to the .ie registry about problematic domain names. The registry has an established process to conduct due diligence checks, respond to the incident accordingly, and works with the regulator to reach a satisfactory outcome.

### Conclusion

The main takeaways are that effective mitigation requires both technical and organisational measures, that interventions must be appropriate and proportionate, collaboration with regulators is essential for .ie to maintain a safe and trusted namespace, and it is essential to avoid unnecessary interventions and overreach.

*Topics like these will be discussed at the second Ireland Internet Governance Forum taking place in 2026. This event brings together leaders across government, private sector, civil society, and the technical community to discuss internet and digital policy issues affecting Ireland.*

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W: [www.weare.ie](http://www.weare.ie)

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# Ireland among top 20 global innovators

Ireland has further cemented its status as one of Europe's leading innovation economies, rising one position to 18th in the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Global Innovation Index 2025 and remaining firmly within the global top 20.

One of the most significant findings is Ireland's exceptional performance in digital and intellectual-property-intensive sectors. The State ranks first globally in ICT services exports and first in intellectual property (IP) payments. These indicators reflect the deep integration of Ireland's economy into global value chains, which is underpinned by the State playing host to multinational corporations.

Ireland also ranks second in intangible asset intensity and third in software spending. The report also outlines how Dublin has emerged as a top 100 global innovation cluster for the first time.

Ireland's strong standing within Europe is further highlighted in the regional analysis. The continent continues to dominate the upper tiers of the index, and Ireland is one of 13 European economies to improve its ranking through the year. Across the continent,

Ireland ranks in a similar standing to well-established innovation leaders Denmark, Estonia, and Norway.

However, the GII also offers a more nuanced picture of Ireland's innovation ecosystem. While the State achieves a solid overall performance score of 0.83 under the index's data-envelopment analysis (DEA) efficiency model, the report reveals that Ireland relies heavily on its strengths in business sophistication, which accounts for 20 per cent of its DEA score, as well as a moderate contribution from knowledge and technology outputs (10 per cent).

Additionally, while Ireland continues to score strongly on inputs related to digital infrastructure, human capital, and business sophistication, the report points to untapped potential in transforming these inputs into broader innovation outputs. The national innovation model remains

disproportionately reliant on foreign-owned corporations, and there are gaps around scaling indigenous research, commercialisation capacity, and domestic R&D intensity.

However, overall, the report's findings are positive for Ireland. Its performance aligns with a Europe that remains the most innovative region globally, and its ongoing upward momentum signals resilience at a time when global R&D growth and venture capital activity are slowing.

The rise in ranking along with Dublin's entry into the world's top innovation clusters, suggests that the State's strategic focus on advanced digital sectors, higher-value exports, and strong research-industry linkages is paying dividends.



### Top 20 innovation economies

1. Switzerland
2. Sweden
3. United States
4. South Korea
5. Singapore
6. United Kingdom
7. Finland
8. Netherlands
9. Denmark
10. China
11. Germany
12. Japan
13. France
14. Israel
15. Hong Kong
16. Estonia
17. Canada
18. Ireland
19. Austria
20. Norway

Source: GII 2025 rankings table

### Top 20 European innovation economies

1. Switzerland
2. Sweden
3. United Kingdom
4. Finland
5. Netherlands
6. Denmark
7. Germany
8. France
9. Estonia
10. Ireland
11. Austria
12. Norway
13. Belgium
14. Luxembourg
15. Iceland
16. Cyprus
17. Malta
18. Italy
19. Spain
20. Portugal

Source: GII 2025 rankings table



## Beyond English. Beyond compliance

Irish language translation is not just a strategic imperative; it is at the heart of Ireland's digital public service and it is being built into the tech used to make Ireland's top public sector websites, writes Stella Power, Managing Director of Annertech.

In Ireland, the imperative for digital services to be fundamentally multilingual is driven by heritage and law.

The Official Languages Act mandates high standards for Irish translation across all digital touchpoints, recognising the language as a vital part of the nation's cultural fabric.

For the public sector, this is more than just compliance; it is about social equity, heritage and pride. It is also about ensuring every citizen, especially those in the Gaeltacht, can access essential services and democratic processes online, in their preferred language.

The challenge lies in guaranteeing accuracy and accessibility. The multilingual feature of LocalGov Drupal offers the proven, strategic foundation required to transform this legal duty into a successful, inclusive and cost-efficient digital reality.

### How does this multilingual feature work?

The foundation for a successful multilingual strategy is the platform itself. LocalGov Drupal, which is built on the powerful open source Drupal CMS, is created by councils for councils.

Although LocalGov Drupal started in the UK, it is now used by numerous Irish councils. Tipperary County Council, Carlow County Council, Galway County Council, Galway City Council, and Laois County Council have embraced it to implement robust, scalable and compliant multilingual digital platforms.

Tipperary was the first Irish council to use LocalGov Drupal, and laid the translation foundations for other councils to use. Galway City Council added some improvements to the multilingual feature in 2023.

The LocalGov Multilingual feature is designed to seamlessly integrate translation capabilities into the existing LocalGov Drupal platform. It offers:

- **Integrated content management:** The feature enables translations for LocalGov Drupal content types like service pages and guides and other entities like alert banners.
- **Structured data:** Translated content retains the correct structural elements, making it simple to maintain and update.
- **Readability and accessibility:** By providing dedicated fields for human-reviewed translations, the feature protects the quality and accuracy of the content, upholding the crucial standards of readability and accessibility. Partial or missing translations are easily identified and managed, preventing a poor user experience.

Although sophisticated AI tools offer speed, they have significant limitations. AI translation frequently fails to capture the precise, formal and often legalistic language required in government communications.

It still requires a human resource for thorough review to avoid embarrassing or critical errors, which is a requirement that overlay tools cannot currently meet.

## Data sources and APIs

True digital transformation requires advanced service data handling. To fully serve citizens, data models must accommodate country-specific or localised information.

For example, when integrating with data sources and APIs (like those for planning applications), the platform must be able to retrieve or display translated metadata, ensuring a cohesive experience that is not broken by reliance on a single backend language.

Managing static documents is critical. PDFs, still popular in the public sector, often pose accessibility and translation challenges. Leveraging the LocalGov Drupal community's integrated PDF importer tool allows councils to address this.

It enables the rapid ingestion and management of translated documents, simplifying compliance burdens and ensuring content is available to everyone.

## A multilingual future

It is not only for Irish. The multilingual feature can be, and has been, extended to include other languages, such as Welsh, for example.

Looking ahead, the next generation of multilingual services promises to leverage technology while strictly maintaining human oversight. While current general AI remains insufficient for the precise, often legalistic language required in public sector communications, the future lies in sophisticated automated translation. This will rely on highly refined machine translation models that can be specifically trained on government terminology and standardised schemas, dramatically



Stella Power, Managing Director, Annertech

improving output quality beyond generic overlay tools.

However, success will ultimately depend on establishing standard ways of marking up government content. This necessitates standardised schemas and mandated human review.

By defining clear content structures, automated translation tools can be effectively deployed. Crucially, this must be followed by mandated human review to ensure absolute accuracy and prevent critical errors in key service information, balancing the speed of technology with the reliability citizens require.

The path is clear: follow web best practices and standards and adopt a proven, community-supported solution like LocalGov Drupal.

The goal is to move beyond merely meeting compliance, and to instead build a truly inclusive, efficient and future-proof digital platform that serves every citizen.

***Annertech is Ireland's leading open-source digital agency and has become the 'go to' experts for Drupal and LocalGov Drupal. Annertech's mission is to help companies to embrace open-source technology to deliver ambitious digital experiences for their customers.***

***Founded in 2008, Annertech works with many clients in both the private and public sectors.***

***Annertech's work has won all of Ireland's most prestigious digital awards, including multiple Spider Awards (including the coveted Grand Prix award), National Digital Awards and Digital Media Awards.***

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# annertech

# Transforming the delivery of services with AI

Revenue Commissioner Ruth Kennedy discusses how Revenue has integrated artificial intelligence (AI) into its operations.

In 2012, Revenue won a Public Service Excellence Award from the Government for its PAYE real-time risk system which used predictive analytics to detect fraud in PAYE tax refund claims.

“In Revenue, our mission is to serve the community by fairly and efficiently collecting taxes and duties, and implementing customs control,” says Kennedy, who asserts that an organisation’s AI use must align with its mission.

The Commissioner says trust is essential for Revenue to deliver on this mission as its operations hinge on a culture of ‘voluntary compliance’.

## Governance

Kennedy outlines Revenue’s bespoke governance framework underpinning its use of AI. The framework is shaped by the EU AI Act and public sector guidelines. It is designed to ensure there is oversight of AI use, and safeguard human agency and data privacy.

“You can take those overarching guidelines, but you have to localise them and you have to build them into your own corporate governance,” explains Kennedy.

The Commissioner explains why the technology “is actually not intelligent”. She states that AI “does not understand the words you put in”, adding that “each word is merely a token”. The technology then “comes back with a set of tokens that it thinks represent the answer”.



“It does not understand the question nor does it understand the answer,” says Kennedy.

Organisation’s must understand how large language models (LLMs) work, the guardrails they require, and the skills staff need to use them. Decision-making and verification skills must be built into staff to ensure they can use LLMs.

“With the governance and the training in place, we have gone from the pilot stage to rolling things out enterprise-wide,” says Kennedy. “Pilots are quite easy to do. When you need to scale up, that is where it is much trickier.”

## Implementation

Revenue has implemented multiple AI solutions such as RevAssist which was rolled out in June 2024. RevAssist is an LLM used by staff to answer questions on the organisation’s tax and duty manuals (TDMs), of which there are approximately 1,500. It is trained exclusively on these manuals which ensures the data is high quality as it is not built on unverified sources.

RevAssist answers also include links to the sources of the manuals used to create the answer, and staff are obliged to verify the answer provided. A feedback loop is in place for staff to log when RevAssist provides an incorrect answer to ensure it is continuously improving.

“It is extremely useful because if you are answering a phone, you could get a question on absolutely anything,” says Kennedy, who explains that it enables staff to answer queries quickly.

She states that Revenue “took that to the next level” by building an agentic AI model to create or update TDMs. Every year, Revenue must create new and update existing manuals on foot of the Finance Bill which underpins changes to tax legislation following the Budget.

The agentic AI model is trained on Revenue’s processes and guides for creating or updating manuals. It produces draft manuals which Kennedy says “will get you 70 per cent of the way” to a final document.

The same governance applies in that staff must review these drafts, and TDMs are only published after review at senior level. The AI generated draft significantly reduces the time it takes for guidance on new legislation to be created.

As the capabilities of AI evolve, Kennedy says a future development that could be explored is removing the need for TDMs, as AI assistants trained on Irish tax legislation would answer questions without a need for a TDM.

Furthermore, Revenue is using LLMs to identify how users’ enquiries should be directed, analyse documents, and craft legislation. The organisation is developing an AI-enabled self-service hub to include these activities. Crucially, these will be trained using curated data and will provide links to the sources for answers.

Revenue is also assessing how AI can improve every facet of the customer service journey. Currently, clerical staff must summarise each customer call and cannot answer the phone while doing so. AI can be used to complete summaries, freeing up staff.

## Considerations

Kennedy asserts that there is a discipline required in using any technology. This discipline must be exerted during analysis, testing, operations, and ongoing maintenance of technology.

Organisations must also commit to technological developments which require “ongoing investment”. Kennedy continues: “The total cost of ownership is about 20 per cent to implement and 80 per cent to maintain.”

Committing to these developments is also made difficult by their rapid rate of change. Revenue has implemented models in some cases which subsequently needed to be changed “because the underlying vendor has changed what they are doing”.

AI is mostly cloud-based and Kennedy asserts that organisations must be comfortable with their data being processed in the cloud. Because AI use is on a pay-per transaction basis, organisations must budget carefully to ensure continuity of service. Kennedy asserts that providing staff with the requisite skills is critical. “You must ensure that you do not outsource AI. You need to start building the skills internally.”

Concluding, Kennedy states that organisations must ask themselves: “How can we transform public service to be different? If we were designing public service from the get-go using AI, how would we design it?”

“We would not design it the way we have it now, so do not automate what we have now using AI because then we are missing a trick.”

# Leading digital transformation in Ireland



Ronan Stafford, CEO, Codec.

Ronan Stafford, CEO of Codec, discusses the four decades of his organisation's growth from a start-up in the 1980s to one of Ireland's leading digital transformation partners and one of Microsoft's most awarded collaborators.

When Codec first opened its doors in 1985, the workplace looked very different. "PCs were only on about 5 per cent of the desks," recalls CEO Ronan Stafford. "We kicked off in a totally different world."

Four decades later, the Dublin-headquartered company has grown from a small technology reseller into one of Ireland's leading digital transformation partners and one of Microsoft's most awarded collaborators. Ask Stafford

what continues to define Codec, and the answer is simple: its people, its partnership with Microsoft, and its longstanding commitment to the Irish public sector.

Today, Codec's 300-strong team, of which the majority is based in Ireland, works across both public and private sectors to help organisations modernise, secure and accelerate their digital operations. "Codec is a Microsoft partner, and our job is to transform our

customers through digital transformation and AI transformation," Stafford explains. "We work closely with our customers to understand what their strategy and priorities are. We help them to become more efficient, serve their customers better, operate faster, and become leaner."

Codec's journey mirrors the evolution of Ireland's technology landscape. "We have been through all the crazy changes from an economy and technology perspective over 40 years, and we are probably in one of the craziest at the moment because of AI and security," Stafford reflects. "It has been an amazing 40-year journey. It is brilliant to see people come to Codec, stay for a long time or go on to great things."

That people-centric culture is central to how Codec sees itself. "We are a people company," Stafford emphasises. "AI is going to change everything, but what we get motivated by is people. We love working together, taking on challenges and overcoming them. But we also love working with the people in our customer organisations."

Nowhere is that more evident than in Codec's extensive work with the public sector, a relationship that has spanned most of the company's existence. "We have been in business 40 years and for most of those years we have been working with the Irish public sector," Stafford says. "We love working with them, we have great experience, we have great respect for the sector."

That depth of experience can be seen in the company's long partnership with the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). About two years ago, HIQA went to tender for a major digital transformation programme, a project that Stafford describes as both complex and high-stakes.

"HIQA wanted to implement a new digital system to regulate health and social care services that is their responsibility," he explains. "They wanted it to be in the cloud, to be secure, but they also wanted their users to be able to change the system to



The Codec team pictured at an event celebrating four decades of success.

reflect changes in their environment as they go along, so it is quite a challenging system.”

Codec’s approach was rooted in deep collaboration. “We had to work closely with the business to understand what they want to achieve, how their business works, what their business processes are, and then our solution architects work with that information to build the technology architecture behind it,” Stafford says.

“Because the project is multi-year, this alignment is continuously revisited. Throughout the whole build we are continually working with the business owners. If our job was just technical, it would be much more straightforward, but the bigger challenge is delivering what the business wants.”

The result is a platform designed not only on the latest Microsoft technologies but also to reflect the real-world regulatory processes that HIQA must manage every day.

Codec also partnered with the Mental Health Commission (MHC) to launch the Decision Support Service (DSS), a new statutory service for people who face difficulties exercising decision-making capacity to support their rights and autonomy under the 2015 Act. The MHC needed a secure, scalable and easy-to-use online portal that would integrate with its existing systems and support a growing national user base.

Codec developed a greenfield solution to enable the DSS to operate as a modern, digital-first service. The platform now supports 53,000 registered MyDSS users, has facilitated 90,000 queries through the contact centre, and has enabled the registration of 6,000 decision support arrangements, with a further 2,600 already underway. The move from century-old paper processes to a digital, 24/7 online service has transformed how people access and manage support.

“Codec worked very closely with the MHC to understand the requirements for this system: what was important in terms of security, data capture, and how the system would interact with vulnerable people and the people around them,” Stafford explains. “It had to satisfy full legislation. That system is live now, it is successful. The MHC have a modern, digital platform based on Microsoft technologies which runs their DSS.”

Codec’s longstanding collaboration with Microsoft underpins every project it delivers. The company holds some of the highest accreditations in the market, something Stafford sees as core to Codec’s mission.

“We take it really seriously what our role in all of this is,” he says. “Our role is to take very clever products that Microsoft develop and skill ourselves up to the highest accreditation in all of those. Then our role is to advise and work with the

public sector so that they can properly harness these technology products to get the best value out of them.”

Looking ahead, Stafford believes that cybersecurity and AI will dominate the public sector’s transformation agenda. “Security is going to become more of a key issue in the public sector. It is going to continue to become more important,” he notes. “AI will be adopted and it is a question of to what extent the Irish public sector are comfortable adopting it. To take advantage of AI, they need to first digitalise everything and put it in the cloud. AI will not work on-premise, so there is a greater incentive for the public sector to adapt.”

After 40 years, Codec is entering its next chapter with the same values that built its reputation: respect for its customers, belief in its people and commitment to delivering meaningful, measurable transformation.

“Codec’s 40-year journey reflects our commitment to innovation and partnership,” Stafford says, emphasising that as the public sector prepares for the next wave of digital change, Codec stands ready to help shape it.

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W: [www.codec.ie](http://www.codec.ie)

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# eolas AI Forum 2025

Gerard Hayes, BearingPoint; Martin Bailey, European Commission; Jean Carberry, Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment; Tony Shannon, Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation; and Ellie Fitzpatrick, BearingPoint Ireland.

The eolas AI Forum 2025, sponsored by BearingPoint, OpenSky Data Systems and HPE took place on Thursday 6 November in Croke Park, Dublin. Around 180 delegates attended the event, learning about the latest developments in AI. The Forum examined how AI can make an impact on organisations and examined how we can deliver the principles of *AI: Here for Good*; AI that is trustworthy, people-centred, and ethical. Delegates in attendance heard from speakers, both visiting and local, from organisations including the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment; European Commission; OECD; Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation; and Revenue.



Q&A with Sam Waide, Road Safety Authority.



Ruth Kennedy, Revenue, presenting to delegates.



Susan Mulhall, Department of Education and Youth and Anthony Kilcoyne, Oide Technology in Education.



Phil Canny, An Coimisiún Pleanála and John Norton, PublicJobs.



William Flanagan, OpenSky, presenting to delegates.



Kathy Donnellan, HPE, speaking to delegates at their exhibition stand.