

Irish trade mission in Johannesburg this week

Enterprise Ireland, a government agency responsible for the development and internationalisation of Irish enterprises, has a trade mission that arrived in South Africa over the weekend, led by Joe Costello, Ireland's Minister for Trade and Development.



As part of a major drive for continued growth in bilateral trade between Ireland and South Africa, 37 companies, representing telecommunications; financial software and services; construction and engineering; education; e-learning and training; beverages; plastics; waste water management; traffic management products; publishing; and pharmaceutical products, will form part of the mission.

The trade mission is being organised by Irish trade and technology agency in close cooperation with Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Embassy of Ireland in Johannesburg.

Exports increase, sub-Saharan Africa next

Last year Irish exports to South Africa increased to €944 million and exports for 2012 are expected to continue this momentum. South Africa exports to Ireland in 2011 were €302, bringing total bilateral trade to approximately €1.2 billion.

This visit underlines the key strategic importance of the South African market for Irish companies seeking to increase trade with the region and recognises South Africa as the economic hub and regional economic powerhouse in Sub-Saharan Africa and the gateway for access to this market.

In February of this year, Enterprise Ireland opened an office in Johannesburg to act as the hub for supporting Irish companies in growing existing trade relationships, developing new ones and increasing trade right across South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Enterprise Ireland's clients provide sales of €100 million

Over 180 Enterprise Ireland clients are now exporting to South Africa and a substantial number have built a local presence, with 30 Irish companies with local subsidiaries employing over 13 000 people. Companies working with Enterprise Ireland increased their sales in South Africa by 29% last year, to over €100 million. Among other objectives, this trade mission aims to build on this growth.

Speaking before his departure Minister Costello said, "Enterprise Ireland's trade mission to the key growth market of South Africa is of critical importance in building on existing links and opening new doors for increased export business and collaborative business ventures that will lead to economic growth and job creation for both countries."

Enterprise Ireland's head of international sales and partnering, Kevin Sherry, who is accompanying Minister Costello on the trip, said, "This trade mission is a very timely and exciting opportunity for Irish companies seeking to expand their business and business partnerships in South Africa and the wider Sub-Saharan

region. This market is growing at a tremendous rate and offers enormous potential for ambitious Irish companies.

"The continuing growth in Irish exports into South Africa shows clearly that there are significant opportunities for increased trade and partnerships between Irish and South African companies. There has been particularly significant growth in sectors where Enterprise Ireland's client companies are strong performers including telecoms, eLearning, financial services technology and pharmaceutical, medical devices and life sciences. We are confident that further growth and business successes will result from this trade mission.

Irish Pavilion to receive visit

Costello's schedule during the visit includes a series of meetings in Johannesburg and Cape Town with Irish companies and their South African partners and customers and events to promote the capabilities and strengths of Irish companies in key sectors.

Also included among the minister's stops will be a visit to the Irish Pavilion at the AfricaCom telecommunications conference and expo on the morning of 14 November at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. The four Irish companies exhibiting at the pavilion are:

- i-conX Solutions, an interconnect billing and routing solutions vendor;
- FCS Global (Flexible Contact Solutions), a global communications company that provides voice, data and networking solutions to small, medium and large corporate clients;
- Escher Group, a provider of retail and message-based software solutions and services; and
- The Now Factory, a company providing Communication Service Providers (CSPs) with customer experience solutions to ensure network profitability and drive service innovation.

During the mission, two industry panels will be announced, which will bring together the Irish technology expertise and the key South African companies in the areas of telco and financial services technology

This latest trade mission further demonstrates Ireland's firm commitment to building on the existing strong levels of bilateral trade between Ireland and South Africa.

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