



Standing Up For
the Digital Economy

Our commitments:

- Promote the development of Ireland as a digital society and economy through a renewed National Digital Strategy
- Accelerate direct capital investment in digital investment in health, education, transport, energy, agriculture, tourism, and other sectors
- Promote Ireland as the location of choice for ICT businesses through the IDA and initiatives like the Digital Hub
- Implement the National Broadband Plan, eGovernment, and eHealth strategies
- Introduce a free and secure Digital Portal to transform the interactions of every citizen and business with the State

Introduction

The digital economy in Ireland is already driving sweeping change in the way we communicate, work, live and learn. Digital activity currently represents more than 5% of our economy and supports as many as 100,000 jobs. Investment in the development of the digital economy and society is one of the clearest ways we can invest directly in our future.

Labour in Government has consistently supported the development of Ireland as an increasingly digital society. We introduced the National Digital Strategy to outline the country's priorities and pathway to a dynamic digital future.

We have also funded essential research and development projects through the National Digital Research Centre, the Digital Hub and other key initiatives. Our National Broadband Plan has already quadrupled access to high-speed broadband and ensured quality internet access for every secondary school in the country.

As technological breakthroughs continue to shape all parts of how the global community interacts and functions, keeping Ireland on the cutting edge of digital innovation will be vital to delivering future prosperity and continued security.



Developing A Digital Society

Labour will continue to promote the development of Ireland as a digital society. We will launch a renewed National Digital Strategy aimed at maximising our potential, encouraging digital economic and social networks, and helping citizens and businesses to develop and enhance their digital skills.

Labour is committed to ensuring that the growing digitalisation of society isn't allowed to create new forms of digital exclusion. We have delivered community-based training in basic internet skills to over 135,000 people through the Benefit programme. We also contributed to the landmark EU agreement that will abolish mobile roaming charges within the European Union from June 2017.

All of this will be essential if we are to build a society in which digital fluency and online proficiency become the norm.

Delivering Universal Broadband

Labour is determined to continue and complete our National Broadband Plan and finish the job of bringing universal access to high-speed broadband by 2020. We have already ensured delivery more than 700,000 homes, putting us well on course for 100% coverage by the end of the decade.

High speed broadband has already been made available to all secondary schools. We now want to ensure that all primary schools can access high speed broadband. Overall, our plan is to invest €210 million in school broadband and technology.

We will put further policy and regulatory frameworks in place to stimulate commercial companies to deliver top-quality internet to the maximum number of homes and businesses across the country. State intervention will extend the same service access to premises that commercial investment will not serve.

Maximising Digital Enterprise

A big part of developing our digital potential as a nation has been continued support for new forms of digital entrepreneurship. Labour has ensured real funding for this area and opened up digital opportunities to the small businesses who need them most. We pioneered the successful Trading Online Voucher Scheme to offer grants, training and mentoring to help small indigenous businesses to develop their online trading presence.

We recognise that a true digital economy will be reliant on continuing to unlock the digital potential of small businesses from all parts of

the country.

We will expand State supports for online business activities by rolling out 1,000 new Trading Online Vouchers through Local Enterprise Offices. These will ensure that every Irish small business has the chance to establish a meaningful online presence.

We are also determined to explore the scope and options for supporting digital upskilling within employment. Labour's aim is to support employers who wish to help their workers to retrain in digital skills. This would offer a major boost in expanding digital business opportunities and provide employees with new digital skillsets with a wide range of applications.

We will also continue to promote Ireland as the location of choice for ICT businesses, including start-ups, through the IDA and initiatives like Ludgate@Skibbereen and the Digital Hub.

Digital Strategies across the Economy

We have to understand that it is not just traditional "high-tech" sectors that can benefit from and contribute to Ireland's digital agenda. New technological developments and innovations have expanded possibilities to an incredibly broad variety of areas and Ireland must be well placed to take advantage of these new opportunities.

Labour's plan is to continue and accelerate direct capital investment in digital innovation in health, education, transport, energy, agriculture, tourism, and other sectors. We will fully implement the existing strategies in eGovernment and eHealth and ensure that all such plans remain fully consistent with the latest in digital innovation.

A Safe and Open Internet

Labour understands that the foundations for a strong digital economy are reliant on an internet that can be relied upon as both open and secure. In addition to welcoming the opportunities offered by the ongoing digital revolution, we have been careful to guard

against any potential negative consequences. That is why Labour has delivered Ireland's first ever National Cyber Security Strategy to ensure the country's computer networks remain secure.

We will work to strengthen EU-wide policy on combatting cybercrime, child pornography and breaches of privacy and personal data security. We will also pursue domestic policies to effectively tackle the cyberbullying that can be so damaging to young people online. Labour's plan for the next five years will see the implementation of the recommendations of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group. This will see an expanded role for a number of relevant government departments in coordinating and overseeing internet content policy at a national level.

We will do this while continue to champion freedom of expression and the preservation of an open, neutral and unitary internet.

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