



Northern & Western
Regional Assembly

Submission on Mid-Term Review of the Regional Airports Programme

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Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland

2040

Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) and Donegal Airport play a key role in supporting economic development in the Northern and Western Region of Ireland, with these regional airports essential in facilitating trade, supporting employment and enterprise development, encouraging tourism growth while enhancing regional connectivity of rural oriented regions.

Having access to international markets and transport links are regarded as being a key consideration for businesses in making strategic investments in locations and when airports have good connectivity they act as a powerful magnet for companies, particularly high-value added firms that produce or could produce goods and services that can be traded globally. The potential of IWAK in this regard has been notably enhanced by the approval of a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) at the airport, with this zone providing an opportunity to develop a sizable employment centre and industrial hub for a large hinterland, encompassing East Mayo, North Galway, Leitrim, Sligo, and North Roscommon.

In conjunction to this, IWAK and Donegal Airport also act as international gateways to the Northern and Western Region of Ireland as well as parts of the Midlands areas from a tourism perspective. Research has shown that airports act as operational spheres of influence in terms of tourism activity – which along with the tourist and recreational sites that they serve – form the starting point of regional tourism activities.¹ An airport’s vicinity to these tourist sites is a noticeable competitive advantage and supports one of the key industrial strengths of the Northern and Western Region, namely our vibrant and robust tourism sector.

Capitalising on these economic opportunities will be key to delivering “better balanced regional development” in Ireland, in line with the vision and objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) of the Northern and Western Region. To address historical overdevelopment in the Greater Dublin Area and overcome regional imbalances in Ireland, the NPF targets that the population of the Northern and Western Region an increase of between 160,000 and 180,000 people by 2040, requiring an estimated 115,000 new jobs. Detailed analysis and stakeholder consultations in the development of the RSES showed that the future growth of IWAK and Donegal Airport were regarded as being instrumental to delivering these targets, with such findings highlighting the importance of the RAP in supporting regional development.

Building on these economic opportunities will also be key to addressing the sizeable economic challenges that have been experienced by the Northern and Western Region’s economy in recent years. These economic challenges are evident from the European Commission’s decision to downgrade the Northern and Western Region from a “More Developed Region” to a “Transition Region” for the funding period of 2021 to 2027 – the only region in Ireland to hold such a status – while the European Parliament’s Committee on Regional Development² has categorised the region as a “Lagging Region”, which is a region characterised by extremely low growth which is divergent from the rest of its country. Furthermore, the Northern and Western Region is the only region in Ireland to record a below average performance in the European Commission’s “Regional Competitiveness Index 2022”,³ with regional infrastructure deficits regarded as the key factor undermining the competitiveness of the region’s economy. The consequences of these challenges are clearly contributing to rising regional inequalities in Ireland, with the difference in disposable income per capita between the Northern and Western Region and the State average rising from a gap of 92 per cent in 2011 to 84 per cent in 2021,⁴ with the European Commission – through their semester country reports – consistently highlighting how rising regional disparities represent a significant challenge for Ireland.

¹ Halpern, Nigel. “Lapland’s airports: Facilitating the development of international tourism in a peripheral region.” *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 8.1 (2008): 25-47.

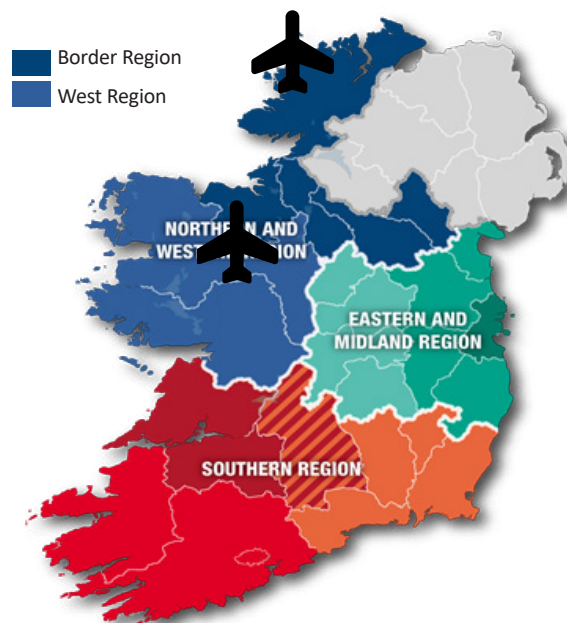
² [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652215/IPOL_STU\(2020\)652215_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652215/IPOL_STU(2020)652215_EN.pdf)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/assets/regional-competitiveness/index.html#/

⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cirgdp/countyincomesandregionalgdp2020/>

As a result of these challenges, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly – at a high-level – believes that the review of the RAP needs to consider how a policy of “*Positive Discrimination*” can be adopted towards the regional airports of the Northern and Western Region, namely IWAK and Donegal Airport. From a regional perspective, “*Positive Discrimination*” is a policy which aims to support regions that are struggling economically speaking by applying above average levels of resources towards that region, which in this case would involve a greater level of resources being provided to IWAK and Donegal Airport. In Section 2 and 3 of this submission, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly has provided strategic and economic justification for the adoption of such a policy, and this evidence base should be considered when examining the Assembly’s recommendation regarding the questions that have been outlined in the consultation paper. On this basis – and having considered the relevant questions in the consultation paper – the Assembly believes that the following recommendations should be taken into account in the mid-term review of the RAP:

- *Enhance the level of capital and operational funding provided to IWAK and Donegal Airport for non-economic measures such as air traffic control, police, customs, security and fire services.*
- *Improve the level of capital investment provided to IWAK and Donegal Airport for economic measures under the CAPEX scheme of the programme.*
- *Support and maintain the current Public Service Obligation (PSO) for Donegal Airport*
- *Maintain the eligibility for the programme, ensuring only airports with less than 1 million passengers per annum can apply for capital and operational funding.*
- *Expand the programme so that other capital investments – such as terminal, landside and transport facilities – can be supported in IWAK and Donegal Airport.*
- *Adopt NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 regional economic metrics in measuring the delivery of regional development over the course of the programme. In this regard, the programme should monitor trends regarding regional GDP, GVA, sectoral employment in high value-added activities,⁵ the infrastructure index score in the European Commission’s “Regional Competitiveness Index 2022”,⁶ export intensity and visitor numbers.*
- *Support the development of integrated transport infrastructure in conjunction with the development of regional airports, with a particular focus on sustainable transport modes such as bus and rail.*
- *Ensure the programme can support the development and utilisation of data and insight-driven technology, sensors and the IoT in IWAK and Donegal Airport.*



⁵ Specifically, employment in “High / Medium High Technology” and “Knowledge Intensive Services” on a NUTS 2 Regional level: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/Annexes/htec_esms_an3.pdf

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/assets/regional-competitiveness/index.html#/

Key messages

- The RAP needs to support the targets of the NPF and the RSES of the Northern and Western Region.
- The delivery of the NPF and the RSES is key to supporting “better balanced regional development”.
- Growth of IWAK and Donegal Airport key to delivering on the region’s population targets.

By 2040, Ireland’s population is expected to increase by around 1 million, requiring an estimated 660,000 new jobs and 500,000 new homes during this period.⁷ To address historical overdevelopment in the Greater Dublin Area, the NPF targets that the population of the Northern and Western Region increase by between 160,000 and 180,000 people by 2040, requiring an estimated 115,000 new jobs.

In this context, the NPF and the RSES⁸ provide strategic investment frameworks that will manage future population and employment growth and support effective regional development in Ireland, as the Greater Dublin Area – historically speaking – has witnessed growth patterns well in excess of other regions. The consequences of these historical trends have been reflected in the European Commission’s 2023⁹ “Semester Country Report – Ireland”, with the commission noting that regional inequalities in Ireland are notably high and are increasing. If these unsustainable trends remain unchecked, it will have a damaging impact on the economic and social wellbeing of all regions in Ireland, particularly rural oriented regions such as the Northern and Western Region.

Therefore, the delivery of the vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES of the Northern and Western Region could not be more important. Launched in 2020, the RSES of the Northern and Western Region – for the first time – brings together spatial planning and economic policy to provide a long term, statutory, strategic investment framework for the region, which will assist in the implementation of the NPF in the region. By focusing on a wide range of interconnected strategic areas – such as population growth, sustainable housing patterns, transport mobility, health, education and social services, climate change and economic development – the RSES of the Northern and Western Region collectively identifies the region’s assets, opportunities and challenges, providing overarching policy responses in the form of “Regional Policy Objectives”. In doing so, the RSES of the Northern and Western Region aims to achieve sustainable population and employment growth in line with the objectives of the NPF, while supporting the Assembly’s ambitions to become a region that is more “**Urban**”, “**Connected**”, “**Smart**”, “**Specialised**” and “**Green**”, consolidated by a settlement strategy focusing on ‘**People and Places**’.

⁷ <https://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

⁸ RSES of the Northern and Western Region available through the attached link: <https://www.nwra.ie/pdfs/NWRA-RSES-2020-2032.pdf>

⁹ https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/IE_SWD_2023_607_en.pdf

Through detailed analysis and stakeholder consultations in the preparation of the RSES of the Northern and Western Region, both IWAK and Donegal Airport were highlighted as being key to delivering on the region's population and employment objectives. As a result, the following "Regional Policy Objectives" were included in this statutory framework to reflect their importance and to support the development and connectivity of the Northern and Western Region:

- ***"Regional Policy Objective 3.8.1": To promote and support the strategic role of IWA Knock SDZ as a significant regional economic driver and to promote the SDZ location as regional economic business and enterprise hub.***
- ***"Regional Policy Objective 3.8.2": To support and promote the implementation of the approved Planning Scheme for the designated SDZ at IWA Knock (including the mitigation measures of the statutory environmental assessment carried out for the planning scheme), which provides the framework for the expansion of the Airport in terms of its transport and business operations and as a new business and enterprise destination.***
- ***"Regional Policy Objective 3.8.3": To support the development of the SDZ in tandem with the required infrastructure for both the expansion of the Airport and in the delivery of the regional business and enterprise hub.***
- ***"Regional Policy Objective 6.1": To support the development of the SDZ in tandem with the required infrastructure for both the expansion of the Airport and in the delivery of the regional business and enterprise hub.***
- ***"Regional Policy Objective 6.2": Support, enhance and enable investment in the development and diversification of our network of key Airports and Seaports/ Harbours, providing them with adequate and efficient capacity and ensuring they have high-quality sustainable transport connectivity, including road, rail, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, as appropriate and subject to environmental considerations.***
- ***"Regional Policy Objective 6.4": Support the development of utilisation of data and insight-driven technology, sensors and the IoT in our airports, seaports/harbours in their transition towards becoming Smart Ports.***

Considering the above, it is imperative that the review of the RAP supports the continued development of IWAK and Donegal Airport in line with the recommendations outlined in Section 1 of this submission, with such support central to supporting the delivery of the vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES of the Northern and Western Region.



3.1: Transition and Lagging Region Status

Key messages

- In 2021, the Northern and Western Region's GDP per capita was 83% of the EU27 average.
- Northern and Western Region's GDP per capita is down 11 percentage points on its performance in 2011
- The Border's GDP per capita has dropped to 52% of the EU27 average, the lowest since records began.

According to the latest available Eurostat statistics,¹⁰ the Northern and Western Region's GDP per capita was 83 per cent of the EU27 average as of 2021. Although this represents an increase of 4 percentage points relative to 2020, the Northern and Western Region's GDP per capita remains 11 percentage points lower than the region's corresponding ratio in 2011, and 22 percentage points lower compared to the region's previous peak of 105 per cent as of 2006, as evident from Figure 1. The Northern and Western Region does not seem to be affected by the distortions associated with regional GDP figures in Ireland, suggesting that these GDP figures do seem to capture the actual economic performance of the region.

Eurostat have also released their latest NUTS 3 Regional GDP figures,¹¹ with these statistics showing the economic performance of the Border and the West relative to the EU27 average between 2000 and 2020. The Border's GDP per capita (PPS¹²) – as a percentage of the EU27 average – was estimated to be 52 per cent in 2020, representing a decline of 13 percentage points compared to 2019; suggesting that the economic impact of COVID-19 in the Border may have been notably acute, in line with the findings of the COVID-19 Regional Economic Analysis.¹³

As evident from Figure 3, the Border's GDP per capita – as a percentage of the EU27 average – was down 46 percentage points on its previous peak of 98 per cent as of 2006 and was down 21 percentage points on its performance a decade ago, when the Border's GDP per capita was 73 per cent of the EU27 average. Encouragingly, the West's GDP per capita – as a percentage of the EU27 average – rose to 103 per cent in 2020, which was the first time the region was above the EU27 average since 2015 and represents a 9 percentage point increase relative to its performance in 2019. That said, the West's GDP per capita remains 8 percentage points below its peak of 111 per cent in 2012.

In addition to the reclassification of the Northern and Western Region's economy, the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development¹⁴ also categorised the region as a "Lagging Region", which is a region that faces specific development challenges, including relatively lower productivity and educational attainment, a weaker skills base and business environment. Current ongoing transitions – such as the transition to a more digital and sustainable society – are accentuating these challenges. As a result, the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development notes that "Lagging Regions" – such as the Northern and Western Region and the Midlands of Ireland – can be expected to experience low economic growth in the coming years.

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/regions/data/database>

¹¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/regions/data/database>

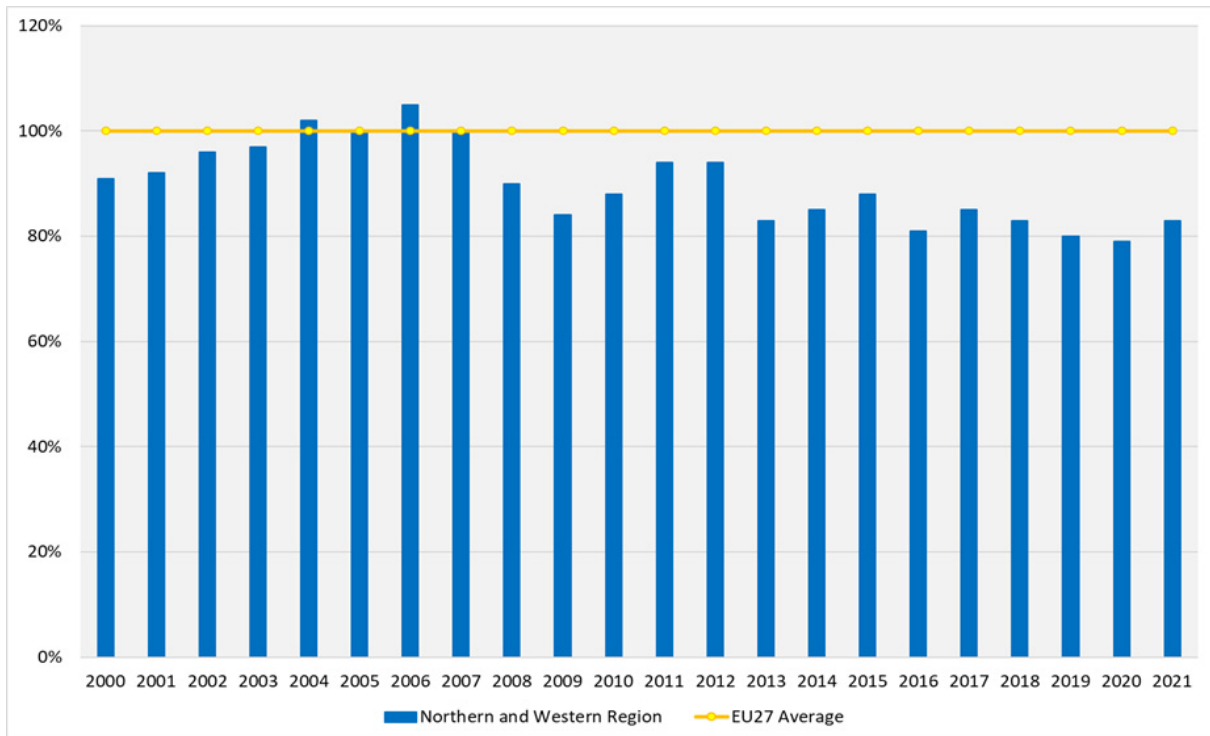
¹² Purchasing power standard

¹³ <https://www.nwra.ie/news/coronavirus-the-towns-most-economically-at-risk/>

¹⁴ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652215/IPOL_STU\(2020\)652215_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652215/IPOL_STU(2020)652215_EN.pdf)

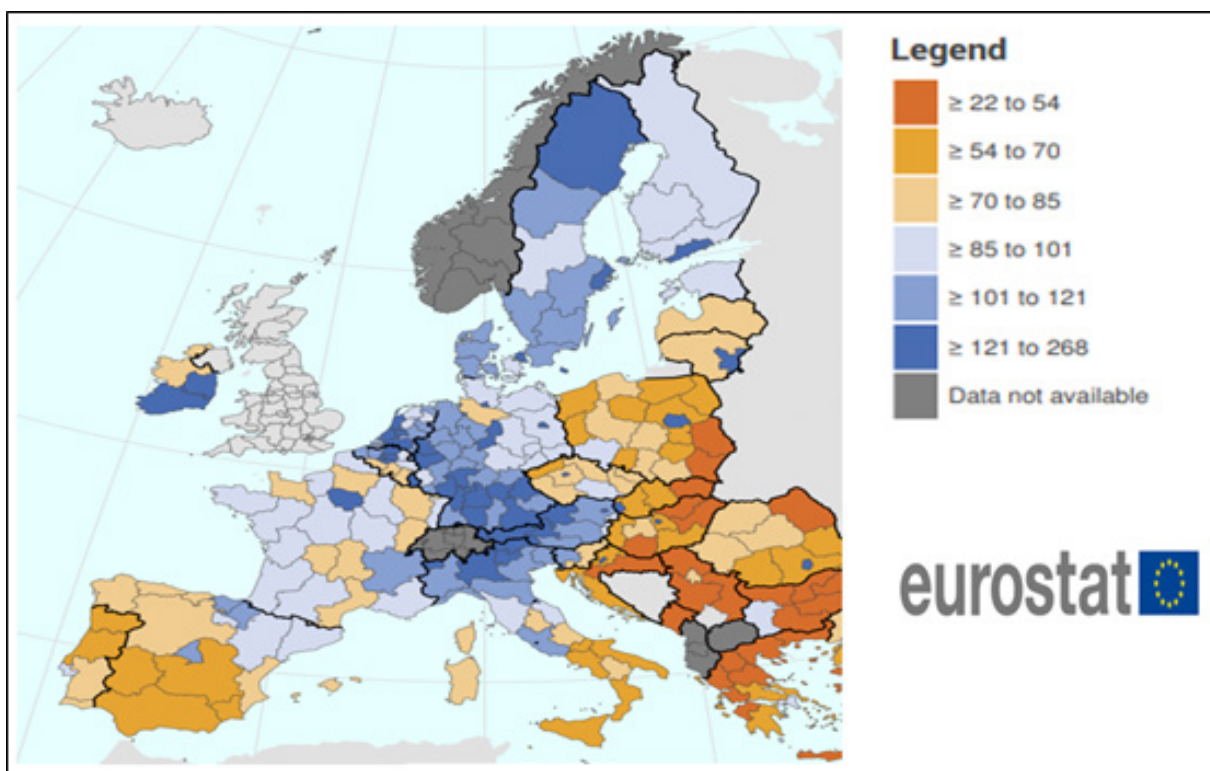
Considering the importance of IWAK and Donegal Airport in supporting employment and enterprise development, these regional GDP figures reinforces the need for the review of the RAP to develop a policy of “Positive Discrimination” in favour of IWAK and Donegal Airport.

Figure 1: GDP per capita – as a percentage of the EU27 average – for the Northern and Western Region, 2000-2021 (PPS)



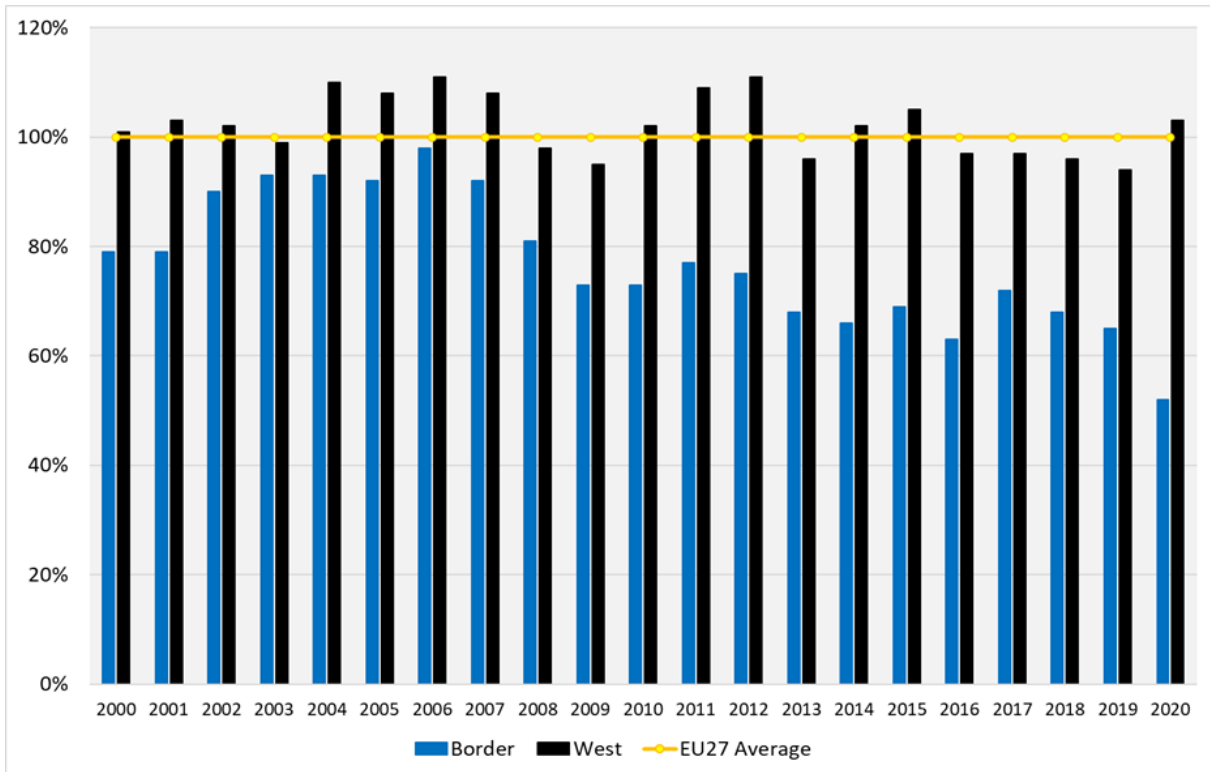
Source: Eurostat

Figure 2: GDP per capita – as a percentage of the EU27 average – for the NUTS 2 Regions of Europe, 2021 (PPS)



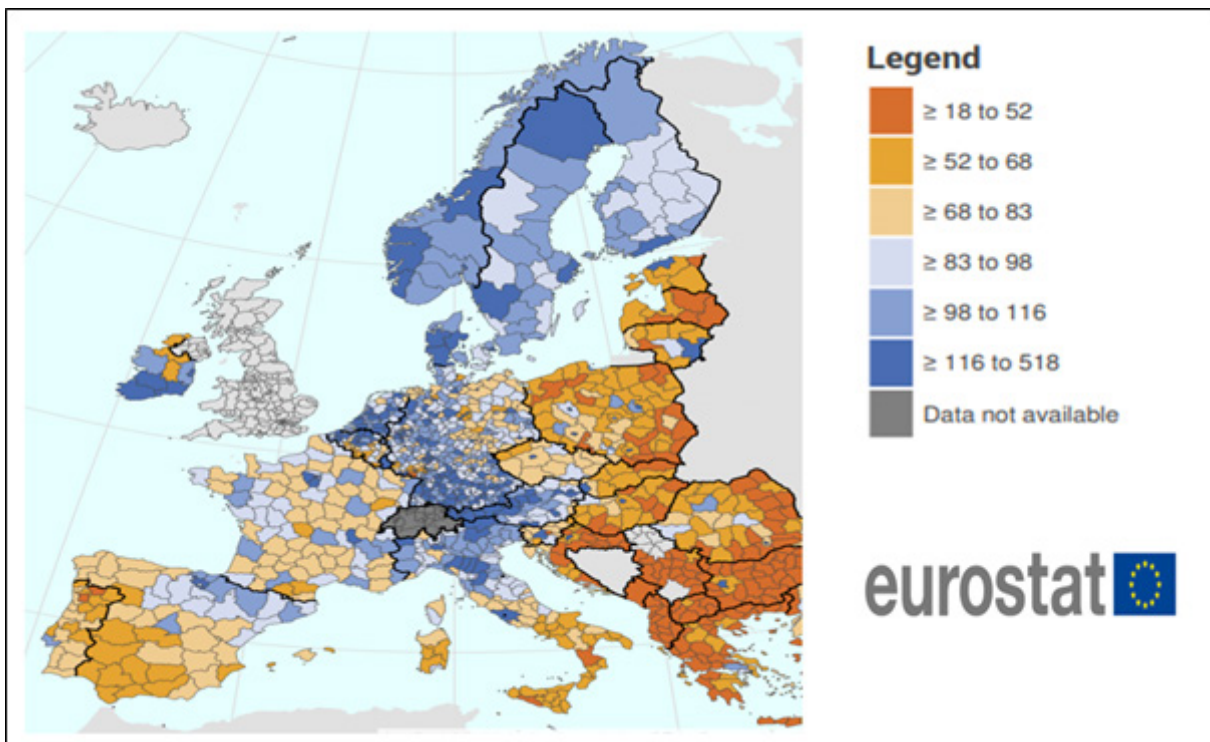
Source: Eurostat

Figure 3: GDP per capita – as a % of the EU27 average – for the Border and the West, 2000-2020



Source: Eurostat

Figure 4: GDP per capita – as a percentage of the EU27 average – for the NUTS 3 Regions of Europe, 2020 (PPS)



Source: Eurostat

3.2: Regional Infrastructure Deficits

Key messages

- New data from the European Commission shows that Ireland is ranked as the 9th most competitive economy in the EU27.
- Data shows that addressing infrastructure deficits in the Northern and Western Region could improve Ireland’s competitiveness ranking.
- The Northern and Western Region notably underperformed with respect to infrastructure.

The European Commission’s “Regional Competitiveness Index 2022¹⁵” found that infrastructure deficits in regions outside of the Eastern and Midland Region of Ireland seem to be undermining the competitiveness of the Irish economy. The “Regional Competitiveness Index” measures the competitiveness of the regional economies of the EU27, measuring the degree to which a region can attract investment, jobs and talent. In this regard, the index measures the performance of NUTS 2 Regions across the EU27 in areas such as – but not limited to – infrastructure, innovation capabilities, technologies readiness, business sophistication, education and labour market conditions, with the index comparing each region to the EU27 average.

The overall score of each NUTS 2 Region – and their subsequent performance with respect to each indicator – is measured relative to the EU27 average which has been set at an index score of 100. Of the 3 NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland, the Northern and Western Region¹⁶ was the only region in Ireland that was below the EU27 average in terms of competitiveness, with an overall index score of 98.2,¹⁷ with above average index scores registered in the Southern Region¹⁸ (105.1) and the Eastern and Midland Region¹⁹ (121.7). As evident from Figure 5, the Northern and Western Region’s score would be in line with overall performances recorded in regions across Eastern and Southern Europe.

The Eastern and Midland Region was ranked 24th out of the 234 NUTS 2 Regions in the EU27, with the Southern Region ranked 94th and the Northern and Western Region ranked 114th. Of the 234 EU regions examined, the Province of Utrecht in the Netherlands was the EU’s most competitive region, followed by another Dutch region – namely Zuid-Holland – and Île-de-France, which is the region of Paris. As evident from Figure 5, the NUTS 2 Regions of the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, all recorded overall index scores which were above the EU average. This highlights the need to deliver on the vision and objectives of the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy of the Northern and Western, ensuring the potential of all regions in Ireland are fully utilised, thereby maximising their ability to attract investment, jobs and talent and to support the quality of life of its residents.



¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/regional-competitiveness_en#:~:text=The%20Index%20measures%2C%20with%20a,referred%20to%20as%20RCI%202.0

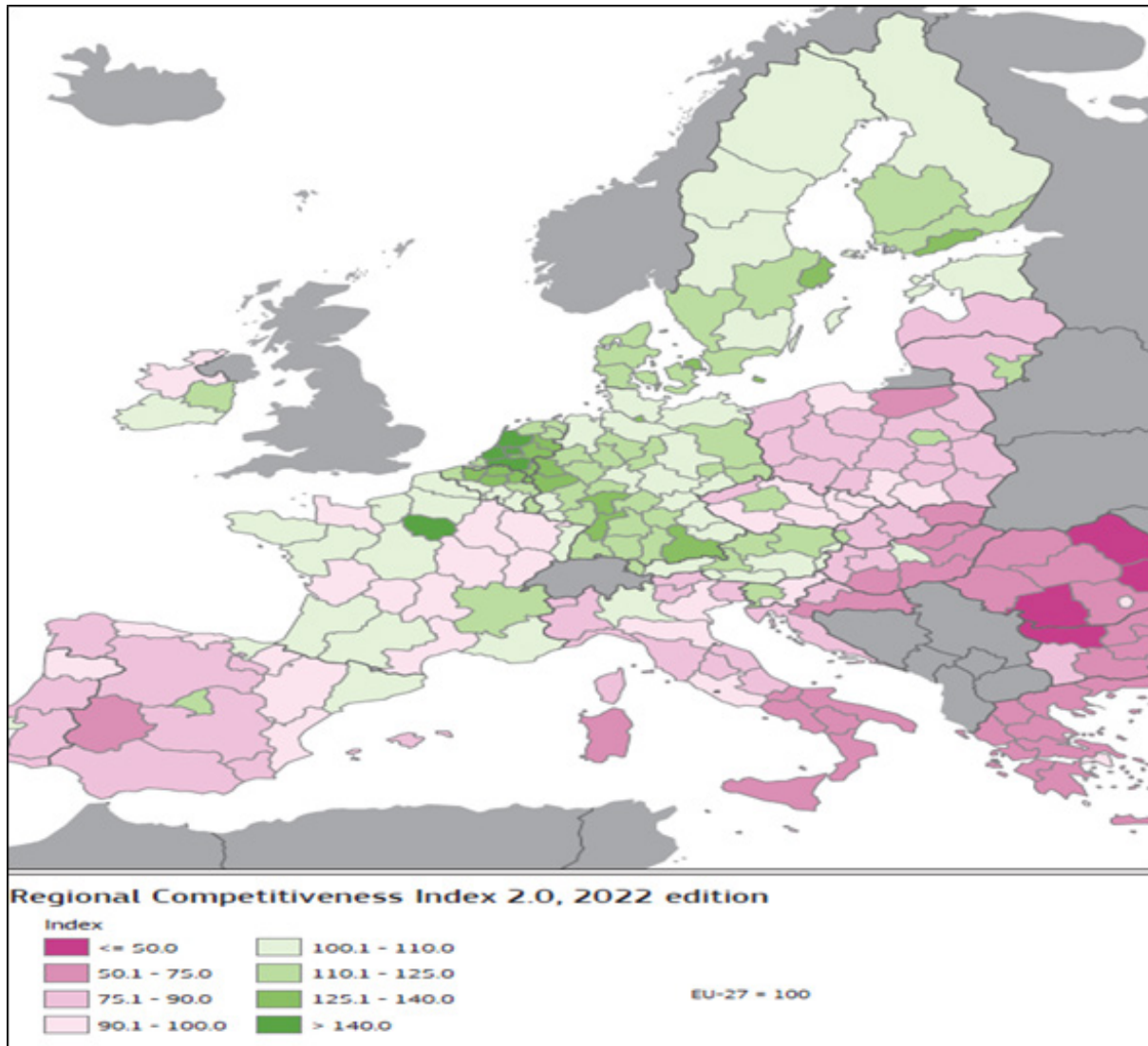
¹⁶ Covers the counties of Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan

¹⁷ An index score above 100 shows an above average performance – compared to the EU27 average – whereas a score below 100 shows a below average performance.

¹⁸ Covers the counties of Clare, Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Kerry, Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford

¹⁹ Covers the counties of Dublin, Kildare, Louth, Meath, Wicklow, Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath

Figure 5: European Commission's 2022 "Regional Competitiveness Index", by the NUTS 2 Regions of the EU27



Source: European Commission. Regions in pink are below the EU average while regions in green are above the EU average

Notably, the index identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each NUTS 2 Region in the EU27. It is important to note that the overall score of each NUTS 2 Region is documented under the title of "RCI 2.0 2022" in Figure 6, while the specific indicators have been categorized under three broad sub-indexes, namely "Basic Sub-Index", "Efficiency Sub-Index" and "Innovation Sub-Index".

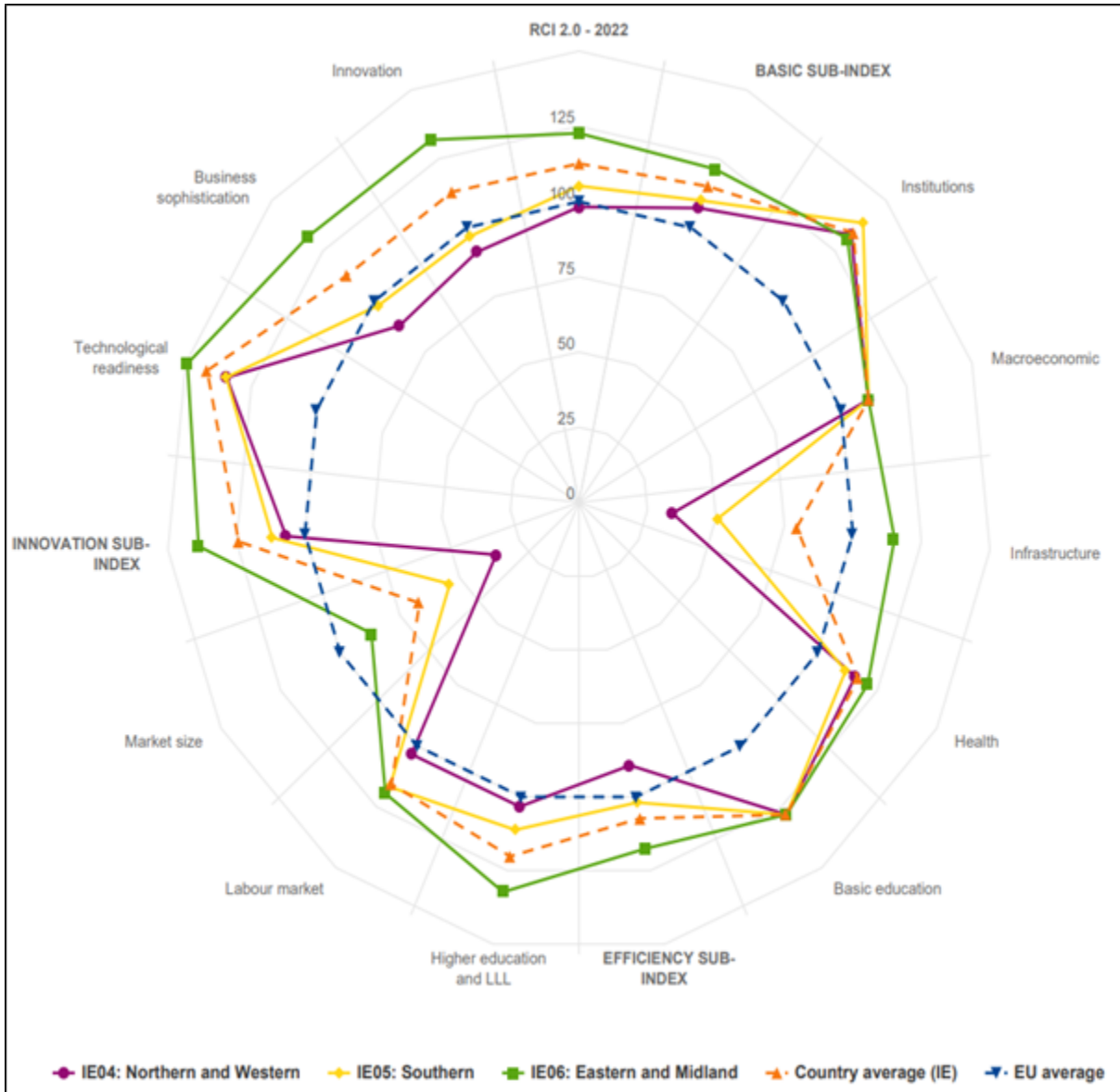
At a national level – and as evident from the orange line bar in Figure 6 – Ireland recorded an above average index score of 112, with considerable strengths – relative to the EU27 average – found in areas such as innovation capabilities, business sophistication, technological readiness, labour market conditions, higher education and lifelong learning, basic education, health of citizens, macroeconomic conditions and institutions. Overall, Ireland was ranked the 9th most competitive economy in the EU27, with the Netherlands classified as the most competitive economy in the EU27, followed by Belgium and Luxembourg.

That said, Ireland recorded a relatively weak index score with respect to market size and infrastructure, with below average performances in the Northern and Western Region (purple line bar) and the Southern Region (yellow line bar) credited to this result, as evident from Figure 6.

In terms of infrastructure, the Eastern and Midland Region recorded an above average index score of 115.2, whereas Ireland's most rural region under Project Ireland 2040 – namely the Northern and Western Region – recorded an infrastructure index score of only 34.1 while the Southern Region also recorded a below average score of 50.7. Similar regional differences were found with respect to market size.

Therefore, if policymakers are to improve the competitiveness of the Irish economy, then it is clear that the ambition, quality and scale of infrastructure assets in the Northern and Western Region – including IWAK and Donegal – will have to be significantly upgraded. This very much underlines the importance of the review of the RAP to acknowledge the need for a policy of “**Positive Discrimination**” towards the Northern and Western Region’s regional airports. In doing so, policymakers can significantly improve the prospect of attracting more investment, jobs and high-quality talent to Ireland, while simultaneously supporting effective regional development and connectivity across all of our regions.

Figure 6: Index scores of the NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland in the European Commission’s 2022 “Regional Competitiveness Index”, (Orange line = Ireland performance) (Blue line = EU27 average)



Source: European Commission

3.3: Regional Imbalance in Aviation Sector

Key messages

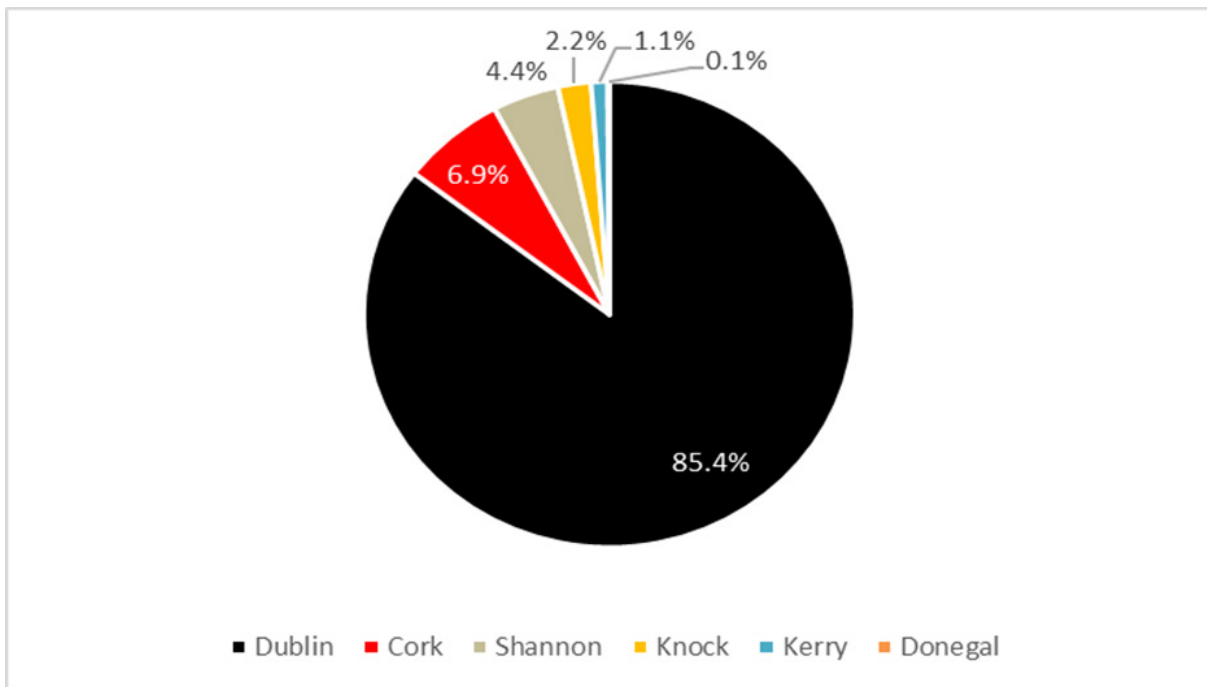
- Number of passengers handled in Ireland is notably concentrated in Dublin Airport..
- IWAK only accounted for 2.2 per cent of all passengers handled in Ireland in 2022.
- Number of passengers handled in Donegal Airport is down 22 per cent relative to pre-pandemic 2019 figures.

In 2022, 32.6 million passengers were handled by Ireland's airports, with Dublin Airport accounting for 85.4 per cent of these passengers. This was followed by Cork Airport which accounted for 6.9 per cent of all passengers, Shannon Airport at 4.4 per cent, IWAK at 2.2 per cent, Kerry Airport at 1.1 per cent and Donegal Airport at 0.1 per cent. These figures remain largely unchanged relative to pre-pandemic 2019 figures. In 2019, 36.6 million passengers were handled by Ireland's airports, with Dublin Airport handling 85.7 per cent of these passengers. IWAK accounted for 2.1 per cent of all passengers handled in Ireland in 2019, with Donegal Airport accounting for only 0.1 per cent of passengers handled.

Compared to pre-pandemic figures, the number of passengers handled in Donegal Airport in 2022 were down 22 per cent, with Donegal Airport recording the highest decline in passenger numbers of the airports of Ireland between 2019 and 2022. Relative to 2019, the number of passengers handled in IWAK in 2022 were down 12 per cent.

Figure 7 below provides good arguments to boost the operations of regional airports. The over reliance on Dublin Airport as an international hub for the country impacts adversely on its operations and facilities. It is not enough however to relieve pressure by switching air traffic to regional airports. Such a strategy should be bolstered by improved and integrated connectivity in the vicinity of regional airports in terms of physical transport infrastructure and public transport services.

Figure 7: Percentage breakdown of passengers handled by all airports in Ireland, 2022



Source: CSO²⁰

²⁰ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-as/aviationstatisticsquarter4andyear2022/>

4:

Recommendations

The NPF and the RSES of the Northern and Western Region provide a strategic investment framework that will sustainably manage future population and employment growth in the region and support the delivery of “better balanced regional development” in Ireland, as the Greater Dublin Area – historically speaking – has witnessed an overconcentration of population, jobs and homes.

Delivering on the vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES could not be more important considering the Northern and Western Region’s economic challenges in recent years. As documented in Section 3 of this submission, the scale of these challenges is evident from the European Commission’s decision to downgrade the Northern and Western Region from a “More Developed Region” to a “Transition Region” – the only NUTS 2 Region in Ireland to hold such a status – while the European Parliament’s Committee on Regional Development has categorised the region as a “Lagging Region”. Moreover, the European Commission’s “Regional Competitiveness Index 2022” found that regional infrastructure deficits in the Northern and Western Region seem to be undermining the competitiveness of the region’s economy as well as the Irish economy.

Considering the scale of these challenges, it is unsurprising to see that regional inequalities in Ireland are notably high and have been rising, with the European Commission – through their semester country reports – consistently highlighting how rising regional disparities represent a significant challenge for Ireland. The continuation of these trends in the long-term will inevitably undermine the ability of policymakers to address regional imbalances in Ireland and to deliver more sustainable settlements patterns.

Within this context, the mid-term review of the RAP is extremely timely and provides an opportunity to examine how further support can be provided to the regional airports of the Northern and Western Region – namely IWAK and Donegal Airport – with the development and expansion of these infrastructure assets considered instrumental in improving the region’s economy and delivering on the region’s population and employment objectives as per the NPF and the RSES. On this basis, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly – at a high-level – believes that the mid-term review of the RAP needs to consider how a policy of “**Positive Discrimination**” can be adopted towards the regional airports of the Northern and Western Region, namely IWAK and Donegal Airport. From a regional perspective, “**Positive Discrimination**” is a policy which aims to support regions that are struggling economically speaking by applying above average levels of resources towards that region, which in this case would involve a greater level of resources being provided to IWAK and Donegal Airport. Failure to do so, could result in the continued underperformance in the region’s economy and could lead to higher regional inequalities in Ireland.



Having considered the relevant questions in the consultation paper – and in order to support a policy of “**Positive Discrimination**” – the Northern and Western Regional Assembly believes that the following recommendations should be taken into account in the mid-term review of the RAP:

- *Enhance the level of capital and operational funding provided to IWAK and Donegal Airport for non-economic measures such as air traffic control, police, customs, security and fire services.*
- *Improve the level of capital investment provided to IWAK and Donegal Airport for economic measures under the CAPEX scheme of the programme.*
- *Support and maintain the current Public Service Obligation (PSO) for Donegal Airport*
- *Maintain the eligibility for the programme, ensuring only airports with less than 1 million passengers per annum can apply for capital and operational funding.*
- *Expand the programme so that other capital investments – such as terminal, landside and transport facilities – can be supported in IWAK and Donegal Airport.*
- *Adopt NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 regional economic metrics in measuring the delivery of regional development over the course of the programme. In this regard, the programme should monitor trends regarding regional GDP, GVA, sectoral employment in high value-added activities,²¹ the infrastructure index score in the European Commission’s “Regional Competitiveness Index 2022”,²² export intensity and visitor numbers.*
- *Support the development of integrated transport infrastructure in conjunction with the development of regional airports, with a particular focus on sustainable transport modes such as bus and rail.*
- *Ensure the programme can support the development and utilisation of data and insight-driven technology, sensors and the IoT in IWAK and Donegal Airport.*

²¹ Specifically, employment in “High / Medium High Technology” and “Knowledge Intensive Services” on a NUTS 2 Regional level: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/Annexes/htec_esms_an3.pdf

²² https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/assets/regional-competitiveness/index.html#/






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