

REGIONAL SURVEY REVEALS OPPORTUNITIES OF REMOTE WORKING

Analysis from the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland has revealed that remote working, which has become the norm since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, has the potential to open up economic and environmental opportunities for all regions across Ireland.



Remote working is very much becoming part of normal working patterns in certain sectors.

The development of co-working hubs with high speed broadband has the potential to open up an array of economic and environmental opportunities and stimulate inclusive recovery across the regions, according to the findings of a new report.

The 'Regional Co-Working Analysis' – prepared by the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland – found that 387,000 private sector workers are capable of operating remotely in Ireland; with just over 186,000 likely to be based in Dublin.

The comprehensive analysis provides critical data that will assist in developing

the potential of remote working in our regions, a pattern which has become the norm since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a share of total employment across the public and private sectors in the Eastern and Midland region, private sector workers living in the region and capable of operating remotely accounted for 22.3 per cent of all workers within the region. The corresponding ratios for the Southern region and the Northern and Western region were 12.8 and 11.3 per cent respectively.

The local authorities with the highest

number of private sector workers capable of operating remotely were likely to be in Dublin City (84,702 remote workable private sector workers), Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (39,982), Fingal (34,178), Cork County (29,074), South Dublin (27,614), Kildare (18,475), Meath (14,659), Wicklow (12,887), Limerick City and County (10,555) and Cork City (10,333).

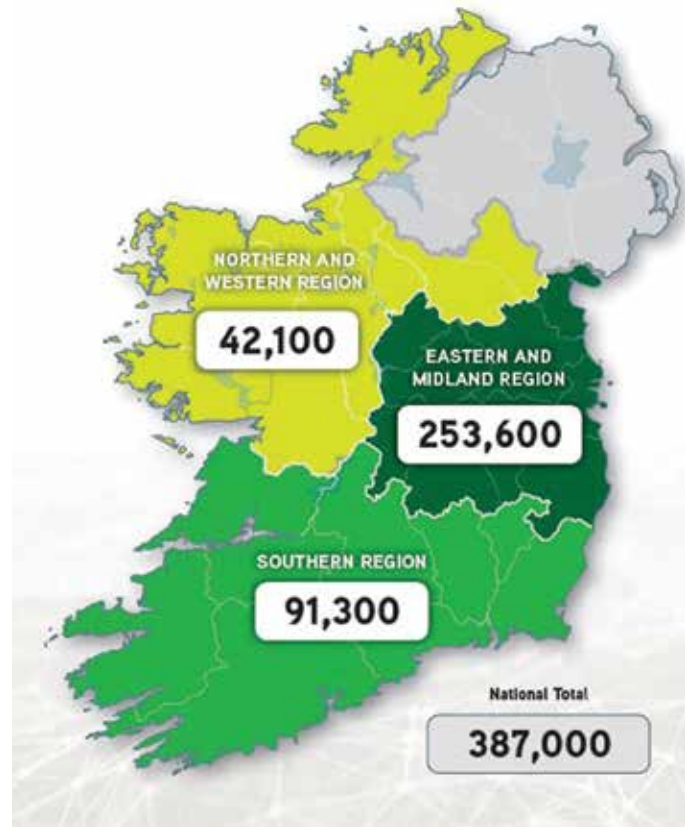
The local authorities likely to have the next highest number of private sector workers capable of remote working included Galway County (9,739), Louth (8,478), Donegal (8,001), Wexford (7,163),



CO-WORKING HUBS – REGION BY REGION

Co-working hubs were identified by the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland (as of September 2020) as follows:

- 67 co-working hubs (privately and publicly owned) in the Northern and Western region.
- 158 co-working hubs (privately and publicly owned) in the Eastern and Midland region.
- 105 co-working hubs (privately and publicly owned) located in the Southern region.



Of the 387,000 of private sector workers capable of operating remotely (according to the analysis carried out earlier this year):

- * 253,600 (65.5%) were based in the Eastern & Midland region
- * 91,300 (23.6%) were based in the Southern region
- * 42,100 (10.9%) were based in the Northern & Western region

Kerry (6,775), Galway City (6,620), Tipperary (6,396), Clare (6,350), Kilkenny (6,061), Waterford City and County (5,761) and Mayo (5,043).

EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

John Daly, Economist with the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland, said that the outbreak of Covid-19 has had a profound impact on our working environments. “With remote working very much becoming part of normal working patterns in certain sectors it is clear that such changes have the potential to open up an array of economic and environmental opportunities for all of our regions.”

He said that policy makers could help provide a wider range of options for workers and open opportunities for business solutions. “This includes allowing some workers to live and work in geographical areas of their own choice, reducing business costs associated with commercial properties, staff retention and wellbeing benefits, access to a greater pool of applicants and talent, increasing productivity, reducing traffic congestion, enhancing quality of life and family time and reducing the level of greenhouse gas emissions from car usage.

“From a strategic perspective the ability of policy makers to utilise the potential benefits of remote working will also be



The analysis suggests exploring the possibility of providing employers with a tax credit for employees, to enable them to work in geographical locations of their own choice.

a key factor in ensuring the vision and objectives of each Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) can be implemented, allowing for effective economic development to be achieved across Ireland."

SURVEY OF CO-WORKING HUBS

The eight areas of consideration for policymakers include detailed consultation with private firms in sectors that are capable of operating remotely, seeking their views on factors that need to be addressed to allow employees to work remotely from co-working hubs on a permanent basis.

It also suggests a nationwide survey be carried out on the current capacity of co-working hubs – both privately and publicly owned – in consultation with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Enterprise Ireland, the Regional Assemblies of Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices.

The regional co-working analysis proposes a nationwide survey that identifies the ideal work location of private sector workers whose jobs are considered to be remote workable, while

simultaneously identifying the up-to-date habits of commuters who have remote workable jobs.

The joint analysis suggests exploring the possibility of providing employers with a tax credit for employees, as a means of encouraging private firms to let employees work in geographical locations of their own choice.

The analysis also urges policymakers to enhance the level of funding provided to the Regional Enterprise Development Fund and explore a range of match funding opportunities to deliver more co-working hubs within or close to Designated Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns as defined by each Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and prominent rural communities. Resources from the European Regional Development Fund for such works should also be considered.

The final recommendation is to safeguard funding for the National Broadband Plan to allow for the delivery of up to 300 Broadband Connection Points across Ireland, providing remote working opportunities in rural communities.



John Daly has been the economist of the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland for the past year. Prior to this, he spent a number of years working as an economist with EY Economic Advisory Services and DKM Economic Consultants, undertaking economic research for a wide range of private and public sector clients.

Eight Areas of Consideration for Policymakers

1. Prepare detailed consultation with private firms in sectors capable of operating remotely, seeking their views on factors that may allow employees to work remotely from co working hubs on a permanent basis.
2. Prepare a nationwide survey of the capacity of co-working hubs (both privately and publicly owned) in consultation with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Enterprise Ireland, the Regional Assemblies of Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices.
3. Prepare a nationwide survey that identifies the ideal work location of private sector workers whose jobs are considered to be remote workable, while simultaneously identifying the upto-date habits of commuters who have remote workable jobs.
4. Explore the possibility of providing employers with a tax credit for every employee allowed to operate outside of their head office in Ireland, as a means of encouraging private firms to let employees work in geographical locations of their own choice.
5. Enhance the level of funding provided to the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) in order to deliver more co-working hubs in line with the findings of the consultation process. Such funding should also be delivered using local knowledge from appropriate local authorities and the Regional Assemblies of Ireland. Additional funding in this regard should be concentrated on delivering high quality co-working hubs of scale within or in close proximity to designated Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns as defined by each Assembly's RSES and prominent rural communities.
6. Explore a range of match funding opportunities for REDF projects that will deliver additional co-working hubs of scale within or in close proximity to Designated Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns as defined by each Assembly's RSES and prominent rural communities. This could involve – but wouldn't be limited to – encouraging private sector companies to provide an element of match funding for these type of REDF projects or possibly removing the 20 per cent match funding requirement for these type of REDF projects that will provide a sizeable economic uplift to a geographical area.
7. Utilise resources from the European Regional Development Fund to assist in developing high quality co-working hubs of scale within or in close proximity to designated Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns as defined by each Assembly's RSES and prominent rural communities. Such funding should be delivered using the findings of the consultation process and local knowledge from appropriate local authorities and the Regional Assemblies of Ireland.
8. Safeguard funding for the National Broadband Plan to allow for the delivery of up to 300 Broadband Connection Points across Ireland, providing remote working opportunities in rural communities.

