

€570M STIMULUS NEEDED For Northern And Western Region – NWRA

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) claims that a stimulus package of €570m should be provided between now and the end of the current EU funding period of 2027, with calls for the delivery of high-level priorities to support balanced regional development and to reduce regional inequalities in Ireland in its Pre-Budget Submission.



NWRA's Pre-Budget 2024 submission outlined high-level priorities to support the delivery of balanced regional development and to reduce regional inequalities in Ireland.

The gap in disposable income per head of population between the Northern and Western Region and the Eastern and Midlands Region was 25 percentage points in 2021, compared to 10 percentage points in 2010.

The region is also underperforming compared to Irish and European counterparts in areas key to developing high-valued economic growth; for example, it ranks 218th out of EU 234 regions in terms of infrastructure.

HIGH-LEVEL PRIORITIES FOR NORTH-WEST

1. Provision of stimulus package amounting to 2% of the NWR economy; to amount to €570m provided between now and the end of the current EU funding period of 2027.

2. Policy of 'positive discrimination' for National Development Plan, achieved by:

- * Prioritising the delivery of infrastructure projects in the Northern and Western Region currently identified and committed to in the NDP.
- * Increasing the level of capital expenditure committed to under the NDP to deliver other projects of scale for the Northern and Western Region.
- * Reform the public spending code in a manner that reflects the comparative disadvantage of the Northern and Western Region, having regard to legacy underinvestment and the need to address its weak urban structure.

3. Explore how greater regional autonomy can be delivered in Ireland: Budget 2024 should ensure sufficient resources are made available to examine how a process of regional decentralisation can take place, ensuring greater regional autonomy implemented in Ireland from a public policy perspective. The Oireachtas could develop a Citizens Assembly to examine how greater levels of regional autonomy could be implemented in Ireland.

A LEGACY OF UNDERINVESTMENT

John Daly, NWRA's Economist, said that a legacy of underinvestment continues to inhibit the growth ambitions of the Northern and Western Region. "Without access to modern road, public transport, health and port services, our region will never be able to provide a meaningful counterbalance to the rapid expansion of the Greater Dublin Area and avoid the overconcentration of population in the east of Ireland.

"Our proposal for this €570m stimulus package would support projects and initiatives to stimulate high-value economic activity in the region. It would help to ensure our region becomes smarter in how we educate and train people, more specialised in the types of enterprise we attract and more urban in how we grow our housing stock."

NWRA Director Denis Kelly commented: "It's important that the Government recognises the specific economic challenges faced in the region as well as the opportunity that such a stimulus package would present in terms of rebalancing development for the benefit of the whole country. Failure to do so, will see population and employment to be overly concentrated in the Greater Dublin Area, to the detriment of the rest of the country."

Cllr John Naughten, NWRA Cathaoirleach, noted that for decades the region has suffered from underinvestment in critical enabling infrastructure. "This time we cannot afford to have history repeat itself. An economic stimulus would give the region a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reverse economic malaise and give our young people hope for a better future, in this region."