

PRESS RELEASE

Ireland has Capacity to Develop A World Class Digital Content Industry – Forfás

Report Highlights Opportunities in Key Areas such as e-Learning, Games, Wireless Services, Digital Libraries, and Non-Media Applications

There is a real opportunity for Ireland to develop a significant strength in the digital content industries of the future and to develop strong digital content clusters of high-growth, high-value digital businesses, according to a major new report published by Forfás today (5 November 2002). The report identifies five key target areas: e-Learning, Games, Business and Consumer Wireless Services, Digital Libraries, and Non-Media Digital Applications.

The Forfás report entitled '*A Strategy for the Digital Content Industry in Ireland*' was prepared at the request of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and involved Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland in the formulation of a co-ordinated development strategy for the industry.

According to the Forfás report, digital content is emerging as a significant business opportunity through the convergence of a number of industry areas such as traditional content, media and entertainment, software and multi-media, and hardware and telecommunications areas.

The report highlights that, despite growing strongly, the Digital Content industry is still some distance from maturity. It identifies that many developments driving digital content are now only beginning, such as the mass market roll-out of broadband networks and

take-up of interactive on-line services, and anticipates that the industry will not reach a high-growth phase globally until 2005/2006. This gives Ireland a critical “window of opportunity” during which it can carve out a place for itself in new digital content areas. The report advocates that, by building on existing strengths and expertise, Ireland can establish a significant presence in a number of high-growth digital content sectors.

The report identifies five market sectors where Ireland has the potential to develop internationally recognised competitive advantage and that will be jointly targeted by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland for promotion. These are:

- **e-Learning** - there is an opportunity for Ireland to position itself as a leader in enabling technologies, content creation and web content management for e-Learning through further developing indigenous companies in this sector and improving Ireland’s attractiveness for international e-Learning companies;
- **Games** - Ireland has the potential to build on its small but growing indigenous games enterprise and research base to exploit opportunities in technology development, games design and marketing/distribution;
- **Wireless Services** – the development of content, applications and associated enabling technologies for mobile devices for consumer and business markets is a very significant new and fast growing market where Ireland can build on its existing strengths in technology and applications development and research;
- **Digital Libraries** - the conversion of public and private libraries, archives and files nationally and at EU level presents new market opportunities for indigenous companies in the development of research, skills and expertise in digital content;
- **Non-Media Applications** – the growing use of digital technologies and applications in the research, design and development of new products and services in sectors such as medical training, industrial design and construction presents opportunities for Ireland to build its existing strengths in these areas.

The report identifies a number of issues that are fundamental to Ireland achieving success in this industry and sets out recommended actions, including:

- Sustaining a proactive and targeted approach to the development of the Digital Content industries by Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Government;

- Ensuring that the required creative, technical and business skills are available;
- Driving a significant increase in research and development activity both by companies in the industry and by the third level sector;
- Accelerating the development of the facilities for the international exchange of Internet traffic and digital content;
- Ensuring that businesses have the required access to finance and funding for digital content enterprise development;
- Strengthening the protection provided for Intellectual Property in Ireland;
- Promoting a critical mass of activity in the Digital Hub as a showcase for the digital content industry in Ireland.

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Harney, TD, today welcomed the report. The Tánaiste is leading a joint Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland Digital Media Trade Mission to Los Angeles later this week (6-8 November), together with representatives of Irish companies. The objective of the Mission is to raise Ireland's profile as a world-class supplier of creativity and digital technology products and services.

Commenting on the report, the Chief Executive of Forfás, Martin Cronin, said, *"Ireland has the potential to position itself as a global leader in the Digital Content industries of the future by building on its existing enterprise, research and skills bases in the content, software, multimedia and entertainment areas. The Government has already shown a strong commitment to the development of the industry through the attraction of Media Lab Europe to Ireland and the establishment of the Digital Hub. The key challenge is to take significant steps to develop these opportunities in the short to medium-term for innovation, enterprise promotion and wealth creation. The recommendations in this report are focused on realising Ireland's vision of becoming a competitive player in the emerging digital content industry."*

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A copy of the report is available on the Forfás website at www.forfas.ie/

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