



Eastern & Midland
Regional Assembly

Corporate Plan 2019-2024





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Message from An Cathaoirleach & Director

Welcome to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly's Corporate plan 2019-2024.

The Corporate Plan is a statement of our vision, objectives and values for the region.

EMRA is now firmly established as the leader for the delivery of the regional agenda. Our vision is that of a sustainable and competitive region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all. This is achieved through clear roles across strategic planning and sustainable development, EU affairs and effectiveness in local government.

Underpinning these are our values. Sustainability, People Focused, Openness, Evidence Based, Accountability.

As an Assembly of elected members supported by a dedicated and focused executive, our plan is citizen focused. It is designed to be sensitive to and capable of adapting to new opportunities and changes to our operating environment. Over its five years, it will guide our activities and will be monitored and measured through an annual programme of works to ensure delivery. It will also frame our budgets and provide the context for our corporate governance and oversight roles as an organisation both internally and externally.

The significant contribution of Regions in Ireland to solutions across climate, social and economic challenges continues to grow. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly's Corporate Plan provides the basis on which, along with citizens and other stakeholders, the assembly can continue to make a difference.



Introduction

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly was created in 2015 and has entered its second mandate in 2019.



During the first five years of its existence, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and its members have successfully established the Assembly as an organisation and reached a series of key achievements:

- Preparation and adoption of the first Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the Eastern and Midland Region
- Review and oversight of city and county development plans
- Participation to Regional Operational Programmes and INTERREG programmes monitoring committees ensuring EU funding is directed towards projects offering European and territorial added-value
- Implementation of externally-funded projects linked to regional priorities and informing our policy-making

After laying these solid foundations, the EMRA is now ready to consolidate its role and to take on new challenges and wishes to propose a renewed vision for the Region. This will be based on a holistic approach, joining EMRA's skills and expertise in planning, sustainable territorial development, economic analysis and EU policies and funding.

The objective of this Corporate Plan is two-fold: it aims at presenting the Assembly, the Region and the context in which the organisation operates. It also sets out the strategic objectives the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and its members will pursue over the next five years to provide citizens with a region where they want to live and work. This document has been designed to be flexible enough to enable the Members and the organisation to adapt to a rapidly evolving environment and take on any new challenge and priority that could arise in the coming years.

This corporate plan sets out the framework in which the Assembly will operate and will be EMRA's guiding thread throughout this mandate.



Who we are?

Our Role & Functions

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), works with key stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local level to enable sustainable regional development.

Assembly & Regional Profile

Who we are

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is one of the three Regional Assemblies in Ireland. It was created alongside the Southern and Northern & Western Regional Assemblies by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and officially established in January 2015.

Part of the local government structure, the EMRA operates independently to provide a range of functions for the Region which include policy making, monitoring and oversight and promoting enhanced co-ordination in our Region.

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), works with key stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local level to enable sustainable regional development.

The Members

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is composed of 42 elected members. 35 of them have been nominated by their local authority a further seven are members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) who became de facto Assembly members after their nomination to the CoR. The current Assembly mandate will run for five years, until 2024. The Assembly meets every month in City Hall, Dublin.

The Team

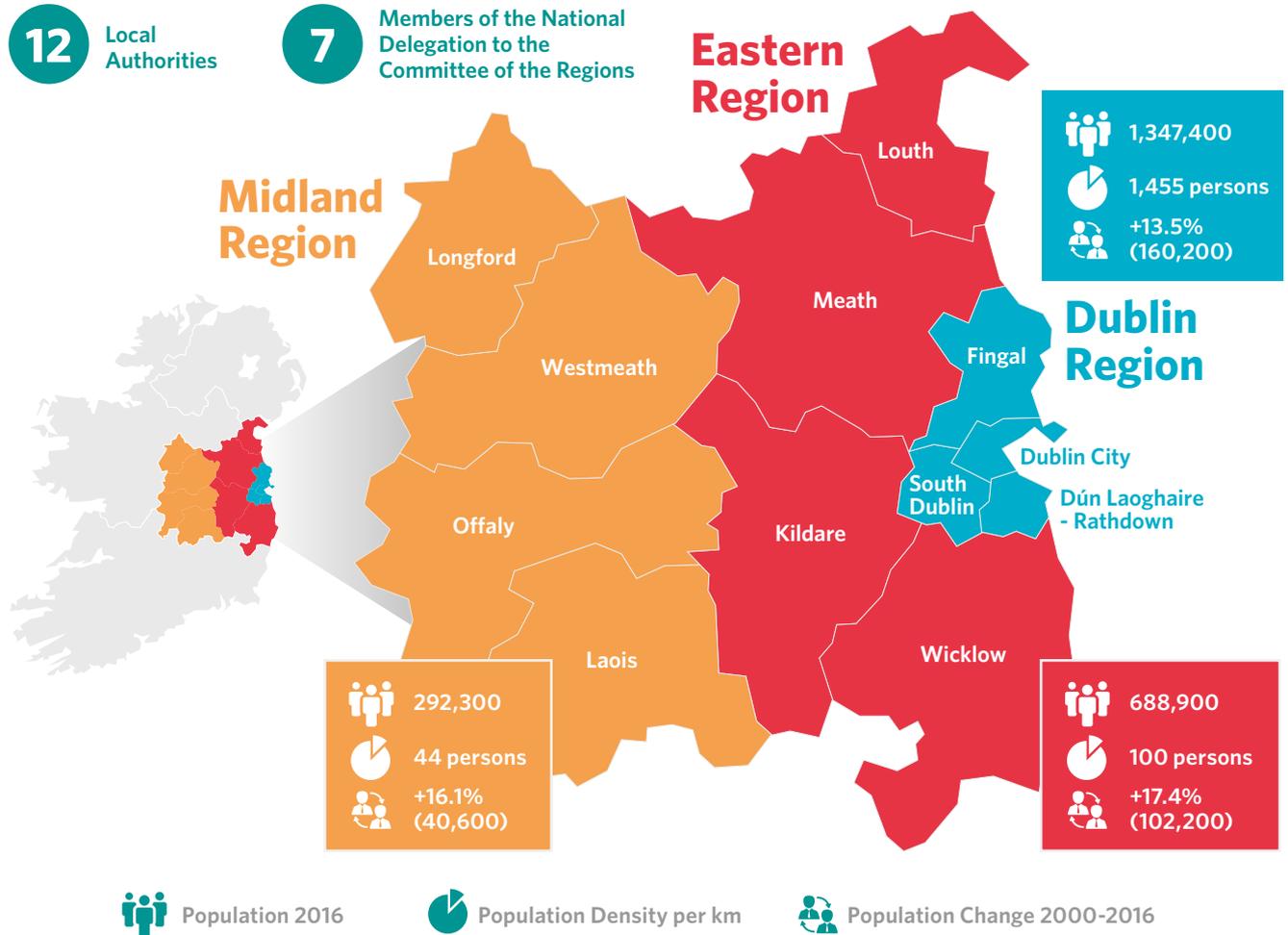
EMRA is supported by a core team of 16 staff members who bring a vast range of experience of local government, planning, local, national and European funding programmes, as well as thematic areas of expertise across environment, economic, social and health policies. The team can be described across three sections: the planning section, the EU affairs section and the Corporate section. EMRA's staff include the Irish Regions European Office team, based in Brussels, and an economist post shared with the two other Regional Assemblies.



Regional Profile

The Region is the smallest in land area of the three Irish Regions but the largest in population size, with over 2.3 million people. The Region is administratively based on three Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) which provide for a sub-regional planning remit. The Region acts as an international gateway to the island with major airports and ports on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor and strategic national road and rail links. The main settlement is the capital city of Dublin, which is supported by a network of regional and county towns and an extensive rural hinterland.

- 3** Strategic Planning Areas
- 35** Elected members of the Regional Assembly
- 12** Local Authorities
- 7** Members of the National Delegation to the Committee of the Regions



Statistics

- Largest in population with over 2.3 million people
- Smallest in land area covering c.14,500 sq km
- Fastest growing region with 300,000 more people (+15%) between 2006 and 2016
- Capital city region with 1.4 million people in the Dublin Metropolitan area
- Dublin-Belfast Corridor is the largest economic agglomeration on the island of Ireland and part of the trans-European transport network
- National economic engine providing more than 1 million jobs and half the national GDP*

Young, diverse and growing Region

The Region is home to the capital city, with nearly half the country's population and some of the youngest, most diverse and fastest growing communities in the country, which increases demand for housing, infrastructure and services in those areas. A key priority is to create healthy and attractive places, where future development is planned in such a way that people can live closer to where they work, with sustainable travel options and improved quality of life.



An economic engine

The Eastern and Midland Region is the economic engine of the state, providing more than 1 million jobs with a diverse enterprise base and strong clusters of universities and research centres to drive innovation. This has helped attract international investment and multi-nationals, while SMEs provide vital employment across the Region. A key priority is to strengthen and diversify local and rural economies to create quality jobs and ensure economic opportunity for all.



Our assets and resources

Our natural and cultural assets form part of our unique identity and support a varied tourism and leisure offer as well as the economy and agriculture. Climate change poses a real threat to both man and nature. We need to protect our high biodiversity habitats and make the best use of our natural resources to provide natural solutions to climate change such as carbon sinks and flood protection and to grow new clean energy and green economy opportunities.



Functions

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly intends on playing a key role in the development of the Region for the benefit of its citizens. This role revolves around three axes: strategic planning and sustainable development, European affairs and effectiveness in local government. These three areas constitute the core of EMRA's functions and the spheres in which the Assembly will develop its strategy and activities.

Strategic Planning & Sustainable Development

- **Make policy** - new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Region
- **Provide oversight** - statutory observations on local authority development plans and variations

EU Affairs

- **Manage funds** - Regional Operational Programmes and INTERREG Monitoring Committees
- **Provide supports** - Committee of the Regions and Irish Regions European Office in Brussels

Effectiveness in Local Government

- **Promote co-ordination** - between EU/ National/ Regional and local governance
- **Develop knowledge** - Research and evidence base for implementation and monitoring

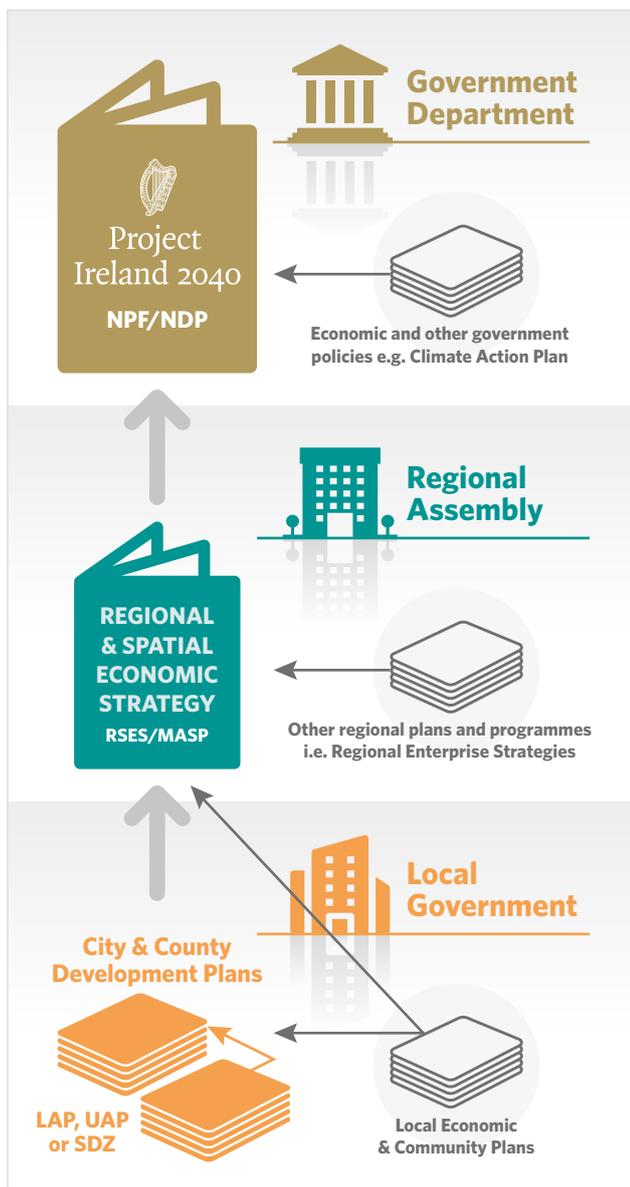


Our Operating Environment & Functions

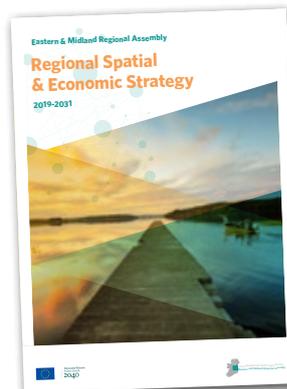
Strategic Planning & Sustainable Development

EMRA's statutory functions include the formulation, adoption and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), coordination and oversight of Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans, management of EU Operational Programs, EU project participation, and monitoring functions also working with the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

A key function is the delivery of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 for the Eastern and Midland Region, which was made on the 28th June 2019.



What is a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)?



The primary statutory objective of the Strategy is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 - which links regional planning and investment through the National Planning Framework (NPF) and ten-year National Development Plan (NDP) - and the economic and climate policies of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and investment framework for the Region.

The RSES provides a:

- **Spatial Strategy** - to manage future growth and ensure the creation of healthy and attractive places to live and work
- **Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)** - to ensure continued competitiveness of Dublin and a supply of strategic development for sustainable growth
- **Economic Strategy** - that builds on our strengths to create a strong economy and jobs, that ensures a good living standard and economic opportunity for all
- **Climate Action Strategy** - to accelerate action and ensure a clean and healthy environment, sustainable transport and green infrastructure.
- **Investment Framework** - to prioritise the delivery of infrastructure and enabling services by government and state agencies

The RSES will be implemented in policy by way of review by local authorities of all development plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), to ensure their consistency with national and regional policy. Key state agencies and sectoral bodies will also have to consider their strategies and investment plans in light of the adoption of the RSES.

European Affairs

The EMRA has been entrusted with a series of functions in relation to EU funding programmes and policies.

Through its strong involvement in EU affairs, the Assembly ensures that the region has a say in EU policies and programmes that will impact our territory and benefit from EU funding and good practices to inform our policies and implement projects to the benefits of the region.

EMRA is involved in both the implementation and management of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), as a member of the current Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) monitoring committees and a member of the Committee on the preparation of the future architecture of the delivery of these funds in Ireland. EMRA is also a member of the Programme Development Steering Committee for the development of the PEACE Plus funding programme between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

EMRA is one of the representatives for Ireland on the implementation and management of several ETC programmes: Ireland-Wales, North West Europe, Atlantic Area, and URBACT. EMRA is a member of these programmes' monitoring committees and carries out assessments of project proposals on behalf of Ireland. In addition, EMRA acts as the National Contact Point for the URBACT programme in Ireland, ensuring that urban areas are provided with appropriate advice and guidance on submitting application to the programme.

In addition, EMRA manages the Irish Regions European Office (IREO) and provides the Secretariat to the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in Brussels, on behalf of the three Regional Assemblies.

EMRA also provides ongoing advice and guidance to local authorities in the region on EU funding, with the support and expertise of the Irish Regions European Office.

The IREO

The Irish Regions European Office is based in Brussels and represents a shared service between the three Regional Assemblies and 31 local authorities of Ireland (LRAs).



Operating as part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and with the support of the Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government, our focus is on bringing the EU closer to the wider local government sector and vice versa.

The three Regional Assemblies play a vital role in the management and delivery of EU Regional Policy funding programmes in Ireland. All three Regional Assemblies also act as National Contact Points for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and participate on those programmes' monitoring committees.

The Irish Regions European Office delivers timely, strategic advice and information on EU policy developments, to the three Regional Assemblies and local authorities in Ireland and it coordinates and supports the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

The IREO works closely with nominated contacts in EMRA, SRA and the NWRA who act as the liaison between the IREO their respective local authorities in their Assembly areas.

The five objectives of the IREO are:

1. Raising awareness and communicating the opportunities for participation in EU funding programmes
2. Seeking opportunities for influencing EU policy developments
3. Building capacity and partnerships with other regions
4. Signpost to the National Contact Points based in Regional Assemblies, highlighting their role in providing pre and post project development support
5. Raising the profile of the strengths of local and regional Government in Ireland to European partners and to the EU institutions.



The secretariat to the CoR delegation

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is an EU advisory body composed of locally and regionally elected representatives coming from all 27 Member States. Through the CoR they are able to share their opinion on EU legislation that directly impacts regions and cities. The CoR gives regions and cities a formal say in EU law-making ensuring that the position and needs of regional and local authorities are respected.

Each country nominates members of its choice who are appointed for renewable five-year terms by the Council of the EU. The number of members per country depends on the size of that country's population.

Ireland has 9 Members and 9 Alternates on the CoR who have been nominated by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The IREO provides the secretariat to the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions and to work to enhance the strategic linkages between their activities and the priorities of Irish local and regional government.

European context

This Corporate Plan will run alongside the new programming period of the European Union that will cover the 2021 to 2027 period with a new cycle of funding programmes.

Among those future policies, the Cohesion policy and its European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will focus on five main priorities:

- **a Smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses
- **a Greener, carbon free Europe**, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change
- **a more Connected Europe**, with strategic transport and digital networks
- **a more Social Europe**, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare
- **a Europe closer to citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

New European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) and thematic programmes financing projects in the fields of research and innovation, environment and climate, sustainable territorial development, support to SMEs etc. will also be adopted and will constitute funding opportunities for projects developed by local authorities and other regional stakeholders.

Effectiveness in Local Government

The role of the Regional Assembly is to promote better coordination and effectiveness between the different tiers of government.

In its different capacities, EMRA promotes multi-level governance by acting as a bridge between the local, regional, national and European levels. To this end, EMRA takes part in a number of forums to represent the regional interest and local government as a whole, acting as an umbrella organisation. For example, in the field of climate action and environment - one of the objectives identified in the RSES – EMRA sits on the following structures: the Climate Change Adaption Strategies Steering Committee, the Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Forum, the Eastern & Midland and Dublin Climate Action Regional Offices steering groups, the National SEA Forum. Being involved in those forums enables EMRA to keep abreast of the activities developed by other stakeholders in this field and to represent the regional perspective, making sure the RSES is taken into account in other players' actions and projects. Similarly, by reporting to the Project Ireland 2040 board, EMRA has the opportunity to fully participate in its implementation by ensuring the Eastern and Midland RSES is delivered. The Regional Assembly is thus setting the parameters for others to deliver its strategic vision in their own activities.

EMRA can also rely on another asset when it comes to its coordinating role: the Irish Regions European Office and the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions. EMRA has a direct access to the European level and European stakeholders to make sure that the European dimension is incorporated into regional and local decisions. But it is also a two-way street as EMRA can directly report on the context and environment local and regional authorities have to operate on the ground and make sure this is taken into account when developing European policies and instruments.

This coordinating role enables a greater degree of coherence between all the initiatives and strategies developed at various levels, for the overall benefit of the Region.

EMRA's role is also to produce and develop knowledge as a way to support policy-making in the region and to inform its implementing and monitoring role.

To ensure the best possible decisions are taken at regional and local levels, EMRA provides research and analysis services and to ensure policies are evidence-based and informed by solid data. This has been illustrated in the first mandate of the Assembly by the baseline data gathering and the Regional Profiles produced to inform the development of the RSES.

These reports and analyses carried out by the Assembly not only inform decisions but also give the possibility to take stock of a given situation and assess progress. This is part of EMRA's monitoring function. EMRA develops indicators and monitors progress on the ground to make sure the Assembly's strategic vision is delivered and has concrete impacts in the Region. This is evidenced by the work EMRA has delivered in the past five years in relation to the monitoring of local development plans and other regionally relevant plans or regarding the participation of local authorities in EU-funded projects.

Through monitoring and reporting, we can measure the impact of our policies, programmes and projects. EMRA will measure how we are achieving our organisational goals and strategic outcomes in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which seek to improve people's quality of life in our Region.

Finally, ensuring the effectiveness of local government implies ensuring the effectiveness of the Regional Assembly itself. EMRA's activities include ensuring the smooth running and functioning of the organisation. This involves the organisation of the monthly Assembly meetings and other statutory meetings for our Members, fulfilling EMRA's legal and financial requirements and providing staff and members with all the necessary and appropriate opportunities and support.





Our Vision for the Region



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to plan and coordinate activities and stakeholders at regional level to drive and deliver the sustainable development of our Region

OUR VALUES



OUR VISION

A sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all

EMRA'S VISION

HEALTHY
PLACEMAKING



CLIMATE
ACTION



ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY



- Drive the regional agenda
- Implement and deliver
 - Grow as a Region

- PLANNING
- EU AFFAIRS

CORPORATE FUNCTIONS





Our Goals

**What we will
achieve?**

Our Goals

Keeping in mind our three-fold ambition for the Region and its citizens - healthy placemaking, economic opportunities and climate action - EMRA will work towards three main strategic goals.



Drive the regional agenda by ensuring ongoing and meaningful engagement with stakeholders to ensure coherence of regional development and shape policy-making

- Carry out our function of oversight of city and county development plans
- Participate and engage in relevant structures and instances at national and regional level
- Participate in governance structures of EU programmes
- Strengthen EMRA's presence and influence on EU policy-making and seek opportunities to influence regional development and policy making at EU level
- Provide information, data and analysis for evidence-based policy-making
- Promote multi-level governance by fostering cooperation between local, regional, national and European levels



Deliver concrete impact on the ground by delivering projects and be a resource and support for the region

- Carry out implementation of the RSES through MASP and SPA implementation groups
- Participate in externally funded projects to share best practices from the region and learn from partners across Ireland and Europe on topics relevant to regional priorities
- Seek opportunities for EMRA to become involved in new externally funded projects aligned with regional priorities
- Provide leadership on the implementation of EU structural funds and deliver as requested by Government on these programmes
- Be a regional resource hub on funding and project opportunities to increase the participation of LAs and regional stakeholders in European projects and networks by providing information and support



Grow as a region by raising our regional profile and strengthening the organisation

- Build members' capacity by providing them with appropriate tools to make informed decisions
- Develop a new communication strategy to better present the activities and achievements of the Assembly and its members
- Seek relevant opportunities to showcase the assets of EMRA and the region, at EU, national and regional level.
- Ensure the workforce plan is fit for purpose and develop staff capacity and expertise
- Ensure the smooth running of the Assembly and compliance with legal requirements

Achieving our Goals



Drive the regional agenda, by ensuring ongoing and meaningful engagement with stakeholders to ensure coherence of regional development and shape policy-making

The EMRA wants to be at the heart of the regional ecosystem to shape policy-making and ensure the coherence of regional development in our territory.

Shaping and influencing policy-making will be achieved through cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders in various fora to ensure that EMRA's voice is heard. EMRA will continue and reinforce its engagements with local authorities and partners such as Government Departments, State agencies, Universities, Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)... (see map of our stakeholders and partners in Annex X)

Over the years, EMRA has developed several key relationships with a broad range of stakeholders in relation to its priority objectives:

- Climate and environment: Eastern & Midland and Dublin CAROs steering groups, national SEA forum, Climate Change Adaption Strategies Steering Committee...
- Economic opportunities: Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan; Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan; Mid – East Regional Enterprise Plan; Dublin Economic Monitor
- Healthy placemaking: Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin City University; Cross Border Development Plan Group

EMRA will also shape a number of European funding programmes and seek to become a key player in the management, implementation and delivery of EU cohesion policy for the region. EMRA will retain its position in the Irish partnership agreement programming interventions from the Structural and Investment Funds in the country and will continue to participate in the management committees of several European programmes. EMRA will also ensure it is involved and represented in any future European initiatives of interest to the Region. EMRA is a member of several task forces and development groups working on the preparation and design of the next round of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes also known as INTERREG. This gives EMRA a unique chance to influence and shape those programmes so that they can reflect priorities and objectives in line with those of the Region.

EMRA will reinforce its influence on EU policy-making with the support of the IREO which represents the interests of the Assembly in Brussels and supports the Irish delegation to the CoR. This support takes the form of briefings and meetings with the Members both in Ireland and in Brussels to ensure that the issues of concern to Irish local and regional authorities' shape EU policy formation and decision-making. IREO will work actively with the Irish Delegation to seek opportunities for Irish Members to draft opinions and thus representing Irish local and regional authorities' voice in the debates. In addition, the IREO will organise meetings and briefings for Members to meet with EU officials and relevant stakeholders, during each Plenary session in Brussels.

EMRA and the IREO will maintain close relationships with the EU institutions, networks and EU bodies and seize opportunities to respond to public consultations on shaping EU policy and EU programmes. EMRA seeks opportunities to work with the IREO and the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions to ensure a positive impact in the region.

EMRA and the IREO will seek to ensure ongoing representation at events in Brussels and across the EU to raise the profile of the region. This will include taking part in events such as the European Week of Regions and Cities. EMRA seeks to be an active member of relevant networks, to advance and promote the regional agenda, raise the profile of the region and learn from others, thus inform our own policy-making.

EMRA will maintain close relationships with the EU institutions and bodies and seize opportunities to respond to consultations and take part in events such as the European Week of Regions and Cities. Other ways for EMRA to advance and promote its agenda includes actively participating in networks which give us the opportunity to both raise our profile but also to learn from others and thus inform our own policy-making for the region.

Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE)

ENCORE is a political platform and forum for environment ministers and other relevant political leaders of the regions of Europe. The three themes of ENCORE are; circular economy, climate adaptation, and ecosystem services.



ENCORE's main tool is its biennial conference for regional environment ministers and other political leaders. For 2019-2021 the EMRA holds the presidency of the network and is organising the next ENCORE conference which is scheduled for September 2021 in Tullamore, County Offaly. Regions and political leaders from all over Europe will be present, sharing knowledge, experience and good practices and building partnerships.

On top of the learnings from our network and projects partners, EMRA will keep providing solid and objective information and data to promote **evidence-based policies** for the region. For this, the Assembly can rely on a range of skills and expertise in the field of research & policy and economy. EMRA will continue to invest time and resources in the production of reports related to key activities of the Assembly (climate and environment, economic opportunities, European funding...) to provide decision-makers with solid data and evidence to help them adopt the necessary policy responses.

The **coherence of local development** is directly linked to **EMRA's oversight function**. The Regional Assembly will continue to provide statutory observations on local authority development plans and variations under Section 27 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (As Amended) and ensure that those plans are aligned with the RSES. In addition to these statutory referrals, the Regional Assembly is a prescribed body under section 169 of the Act can also indirectly make observations to Strategic Development Zones (SDZs) and to Local Area Plans that are considered to be of a strategic nature and of regional or national significance. Draft submissions will be brought to the Members of the Regional Assembly for their consideration and approval.

The Assembly will also retain its statutory oversight role in the preparation of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) under the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

By **promoting multi-level governance** and acting as a link between the local, regional, national and European level, EMRA will have the capacity to encourage a higher degree of coordination and therefore coherence between various initiatives for the benefit of our Region. EMRA will rely here on the expertise of the IREO and its numerous contacts with an extensive range of stakeholders in Ireland and Europe.

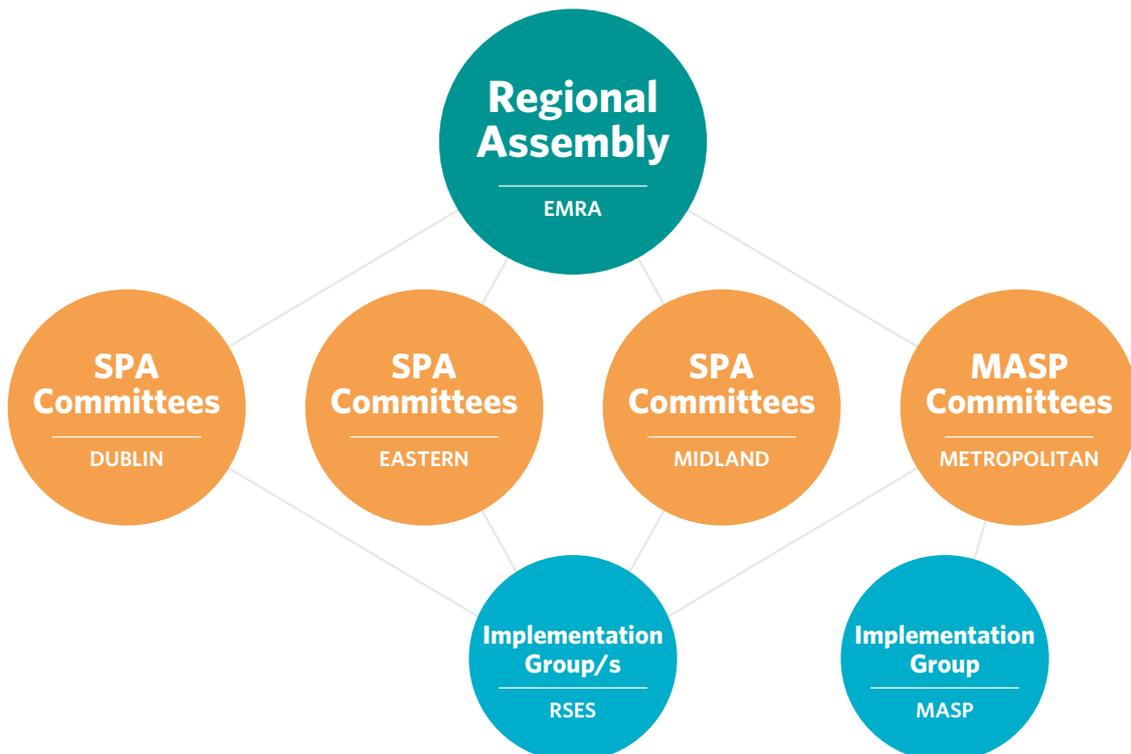
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Deliver concrete impact on the ground by delivering projects and be a resource and support for the region

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is committed to deliver concrete changes on the ground by implementing key strategies and projects in the Region that are aligned with our regional priorities: healthy placemaking, economic opportunities and climate action.

A key component of EMRA’s work for the coming years will be the implementation of its RSES. This will be done through the establishment of a number of structures that will drive implementation, including:

- **SPA and MASP Committees** - consisting of the relevant members of the Assembly, will be established to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the RSES and the MASP throughout the region.
- **RSES and MASP Implementation Groups** - EMRA will establish implementation groups with key stakeholders, to monitor and review implementation of the RSES and the MASP. The evidence base will be updated to support development of indicators to monitor delivery (see figure below).
- **Review of city and county development plans**, along with Local Area Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) to ensure alignment of relevant land use plans from national to local. Key state agencies and sectoral bodies will also have to consider their strategies and investment plans in light of the NPF and RSES.
- **Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board** to oversee delivery of NPF/NDP by key departments and to co-ordinate cross sectoral funding and regional investment decisions.
- **Project Ireland and other funds** - the RSES is a key policy framework for accessing funds including the four Project Ireland funds - Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development, Disruptive Technology and Climate Action - as well as the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, Enterprise Funding Schemes, EU funds and the European Investment Bank.
- **EU programmes** - the Regional Assembly aims to have an increased role in the management and funding of European programmes post 2020, in line with the other Regional Assemblies.





Now recognised at EU level as a NUTS2 region, EMRA will continue to play its role in the implementation and delivery of EU funds in Ireland by ensuring that the next generation of ERDF in Ireland is used to respond to the challenges and opportunities identified in the RSES and deliver added-value for the Region. EMRA, together with the other Regional Assemblies, the IREO and the relevant Government Departments will seek to ensure that there is a strong role for the regions in the development, management and implementation of these programmes. European Territorial Cooperation programmes also offer opportunities to see key projects being implemented in our territory with the help of European partners. By participating in the governance of those programmes, in partnership with relevant Government Departments, EMRA and its members will ensure the projects approved for funding deliver European and regional added-value.

Since its inception, EMRA has been involved in several externally-funded projects with a wide range of Irish and European partners. These projects enable us to showcase our successful initiatives and to learn from our partners' best practices which in turn inform our own policy-making. We will therefore continue to participate in projects currently ongoing to ensure they deliver the expected results for our Region. We will also actively seek new opportunities for EMRA to join Irish and European partnerships to carry out projects of relevance for the Eastern and Midlands region.



Next2Met

Next2Met aims at increasing the attractiveness of regions located next to metropolitan areas by means of soft digitalisation measures. An interregional cooperation project for improving innovation delivery policies, exchange results/ learning will inform the RSES which seeks to balance regional development within EMRA, and enable the Midlands to become more attractive as a place to live, work and visit.



PROGRESS

PROGRESS is an Interreg Europe project which brings together 6 regional partner organisations from across the EU to exchange experience for the design and enhancement of natural ecosystems and the environmental, social and economic services they provide to society (Ecosystem Services). The aim of the project is to improve the implementation of regional strategies through policy learning and capacity building activities. By means of stakeholder network activity and a dedicated Action Plan, PROGRESS facilitates the enhancement of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the governance of Ecosystem Services across the Eastern and Midland Region.





Care-Peat

Care-Peat's aim is to reduce carbon emissions using the natural capacity of peatlands to store carbon. Co-funded by the Interreg North West Europe programme, Care-Peat will set up and demonstrate innovative tools and techniques to restore bogs and measure the carbon they capture, and involve local and regional stakeholders. The project will create management and decision tools that allow landowners to find the best options for peatland restoration to carbon storage. The project is restoring 5 pilot sites, including the Cloncrow Bog (Westmeath), with additional monitoring work being carried out in Cavemount bog (Offaly).



Quantitative Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment Method for Spatial Planning Policy (QGasSP)

EMRA is the lead partner in QGasSP which is developing robust methods to quantify the influence of spatial planning policies on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, funded by the ESPON Programme. Methods developed will be applicable across Europe and will link to the achievement of national/EU level emissions targets. Ultimately it will assist national, regional and local policy decision-makers in meeting their GHG emission reduction targets.

Alongside our own involvement in projects and initiatives, EMRA will strive to ensure that more local authorities and regional stakeholders have access to these opportunities, at European level. EMRA's ambition is to be a resource hub for the Region and to provide guidance and support for all stakeholders wishing to access EU funding. Our role will be to firstly make sure the right information is reaching the relevant people and to help them navigate this information. Thanks to our experience and expertise in EU funding programmes, EMRA will be able to guide and support local authorities and regional stakeholders willing to access EU funding to finance their project. The IREO will be a key partner as they will provide first-hand access to information and to a broad range of potential partners from all over Europe.

URBACT National Contact Point

URBACT is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). URBACT is about integrated sustainable urban development, ultimately it provides training and tools to develop better urban policies. In December 2017, EMRA was appointed the URBACT National Contact Point (NCP) for Ireland. The role of NCP involves: communicating on the URBACT programme, disseminating results, enhancing the dialogue between local, regional and national authorities, and supporting the URBACT Secretariat based in Paris. EMRA encourages Irish towns and cities to come together to develop solutions, learn, network and build capacity.



3

Grow as a region by raising our regional profile and strengthening the organisation

EMRA is committed to the development of its members and people and to ensure it runs its operations effectively.

One of our priorities is to **support our Members** in their policy-making role. We will continue to organise monthly Assembly meetings and will ensure that the Members are equipped with the right tools to make informed decisions for the benefit of our Region. To this end, EMRA will organise regular training sessions for its members focusing on their functions as Regional Assembly members. We will make sure that Members have the opportunities to meet with experts in areas related to EMRA's activities and are provided with the adequate background information prior to each Assembly meetings.

The same level of support will be provided to the Members of the Irish delegation to the CoR. EMRA and the IREO will work hand in hand to provide expertise and support for Irish Delegation meetings in Ireland, ahead of each Plenary session and to provide briefings and support to Members in advance of all Plenary sessions, all Commission (Committee) meetings and other events and conferences they will take part in.

A key part of our work is to **communicate** on our actions and results obtained. In order to raise our profile both in the Region but also to a wider audience, EMRA will strengthen its communication channels to improve how we inform our stakeholders, partners and the whole EMRA population about our activities including our Assembly meetings, the RSES implementation, our projects results, policy and research. EMRA will also seek relevant opportunities to showcase the assets of EMRA and the region at EU, national and regional level. We will continue to promote the Eastern and Midland Region as an attractive place to live, work, invest and discover in all our engagement with stakeholders and overseas partners. We remain committed to communicating with and supporting our Elected Members as well as Members of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of Regions in realising their functions.



Effective communication is a crucial component for achieving the goals of every organisation.

The Regional Assembly will keep using and developing its different communication channels in order to communicate effectively, namely:

- The EMRA website www.emra.ie
- The Irish Regions European Office website www.ireo.eu
- Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Direct engagement with local, regional and national media outlets.
- Official publications including the RSES and various reports
- Creative media creation, including videos and infographic
- Organisation of various workshops, consultation and stakeholder engagement events

Our communication activities support a range of goals including:

- Maintaining good relationships forged since the establishment of EMRA in 2015 with various stakeholders including government departments, other regional assemblies, local authorities, state and local agencies and a range of other public bodies
- Developing new relationships with organisations which play a key role in fulfilling our core functions
- Raising the awareness of the Regional Assembly among our stakeholders and the wider general public in Ireland
- Raising the profile of the region among our European project partners and EU institutions and its representatives

As an organisation, the Assembly will develop its capacity and capability to take on upcoming challenges and opportunities and make sure it fulfils its obligations. A special attention will be given to our workforce to build a team that is fit for the future and will be able to respond to the ever-evolving needs of the organisation. EMRA will ensure its people are given opportunities to grow and develop in their role and the appropriate training to do so. Protecting and promoting the health, safety and wellbeing amongst our staff will remain paramount.

Finally, EMRA will maintain the highest standards in the management of the organisation and fulfil all its legal and financial obligations. The organisation will ensure high levels of adherence with national and EU rules for both local government and EU audits. This includes the preparation of its Annual Financial Statement and annual audit and the implementation of the recommendations from the Government's auditor and the regular review and update of our policies and procedures.



**How we will
measure
this?**

Implementation & Monitoring

Implementation requires collaboration and coordination, across boundaries, sectors and organisations, in the allocation of funds, and at national, regional and local level. Through monitoring and reporting, we can measure the impact of our policies, programmes and projects. EMRA will measure how we are achieving our organisational goals and strategic outcomes in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which seek to improve people's quality of life in our Region.



To ensure we meet our organisational goals:

- We will provide continuous staff training and upskilling and set individual and team targets through a **Performance Management Development System (PMDS)**
- We will build organisational capacity and provide regular updates on work programmes to our elected members through an annual **Programme of Works (POW)** and an **Annual Report**
- We will comply with financial and audit requirements with the preparation of an **Annual Financial Statement (AFS)**
- We will continue to work with the other two Regional Assemblies and with the Irish Regions Office (IREO) in Brussels to **build knowledge and skills** and promote Irish Regions

EMRA will develop monitoring and reporting capabilities through the following (which includes obligations under the Planning and Development Act 2000);

- We will develop a **regional monitoring system** to measure progress in implementing the Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) of the RSES
- A statutory requirement to produce a **two-yearly report** to evaluating the wider impacts of the RSES and working with NOAC to deliver better public services
- Making **statutory observations** on local authority development plans, participation in the consultation processes of other strategic plans and policies, and statutory **monitoring and oversight** for the next round of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs)
- A continued role on the monitoring and programming committees of the **EU Regional Operational Programme and European Territorial Cooperation Programmes 2021-2027**



Evidence Based Policy Making & Evaluation

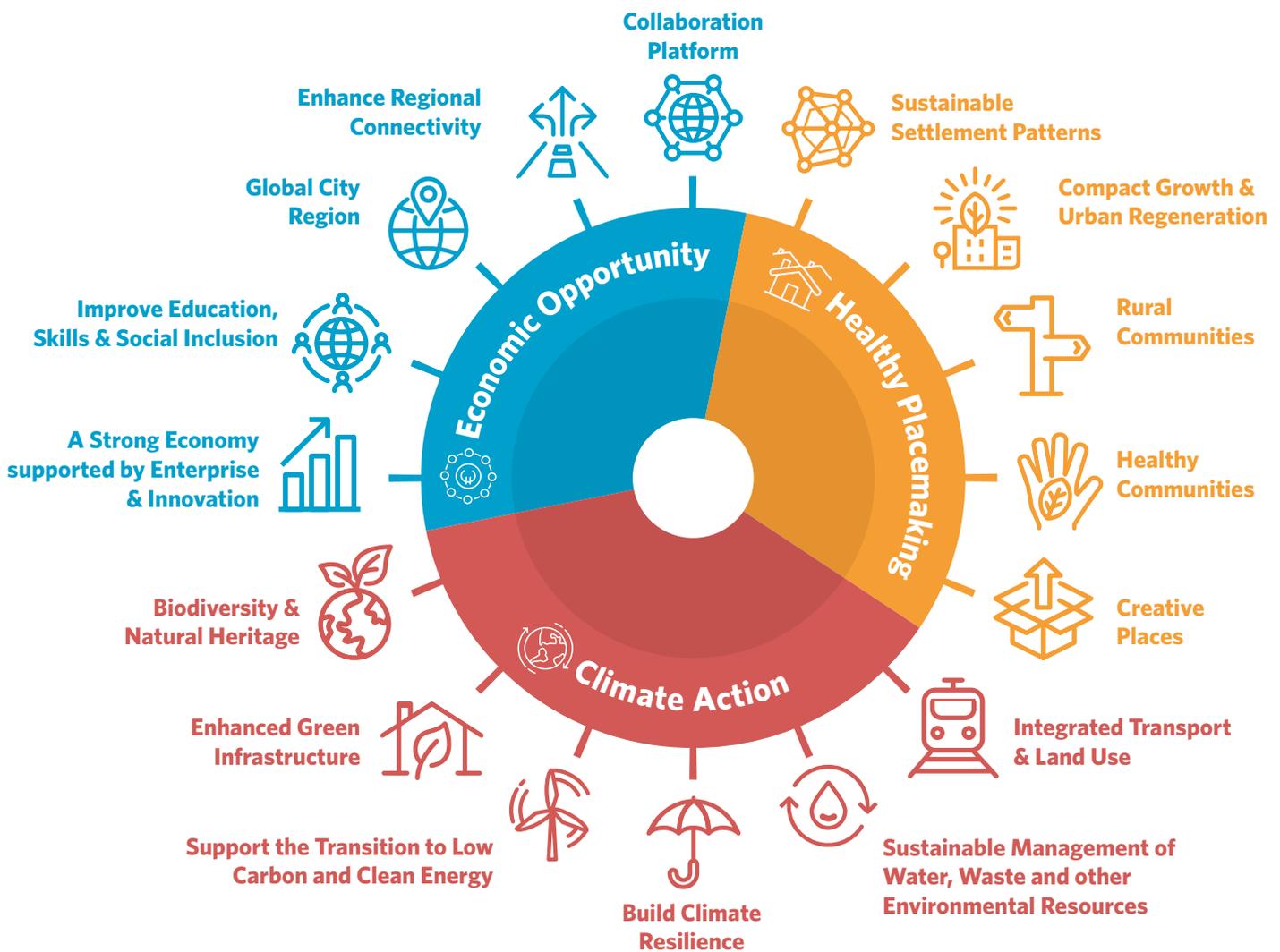
The EMRA is committed to evidence-based policy making and evaluation and this is demonstrated in the baseline data gathering and the Regional Profiles¹, which informed the development of the RSES. EMRA will update this evidence base and develop indicators to monitor delivery, also taking into account the Regional Assemblies role in co-ordinating across local authorities to inform the preparation and implementation of development plans, local area plans, and LECPs in our Region.

¹ These are available on a web viewer www.emra.ie/maps

Outcomes based regional monitoring

EMRA will work with local authorities, other regional assemblies and central government to develop indicators that can be used not only to measure the various inputs and activities of the Regional Assembly, but also to measure broader outcomes improving quality of life for citizens in our Region.

The 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) in the RSES, which are aligned with the UN Strategic Development Goals and 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) of Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework, will form the basis for the development of a Regional Monitoring System. EMRA will work with key stakeholders to develop relevant, robust and timely indicators, which will be made publicly available and to ensure alignment with SEA and national monitoring requirements.



KEY PRINCIPLES

Healthy Placemaking

To promote people’s quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.

Climate Action

The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

Economic Opportunity

To create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.



**Who we will
work with?**

Working with our Stakeholders

The Regional Assembly recognises the need for collaboration and coordination, across boundaries, sectors and organisations, if we are to deliver on our corporate objectives. A key priority is to ensure that funding follows policy - the RSES provides a platform for collaboration in the allocation of funds and to support local and regional bodies in leveraging funding and partnership opportunities.

Who we work with

EMRA provides a link between the EU, local and national government. The Assembly works with a range of public bodies, institutes and cross border networks and makes connections between key stakeholders to drive and enable sustainable regional development. Cross boundary coordination will become even more important with the onset of Brexit which will affect movement of people and goods, and will have direct economic impact upon the Region.

How we work - through forums & established structures

- Corporate Administration – oversight of audit, team meetings, RSES Network
- EU – participation in networks, secretariat / support for CoR meetings
- Assembly meetings – full Plenary and SPAs
- Training events and workshops – AILG, Technical working groups
- Implementation Groups – MASP and RSES
- Steering groups – Dublin and Eastern Midland Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs), National adaptation Forum, National SEA Forum
- Advisory Groups – IRC, Departmental Guidelines, Smart Dublin



Building on our Networks

The Corporate Plan offers an opportunity to develop our operational programmes and establish continuity and resource plans to ensure we can meet our objectives over the next five years. This includes better co-ordination of regional collaboration and network opportunities at all levels;

At EU level;

- Irish Permanent Representation
- EU institutions (European Commission, EU Council, European Parliament)
- Committee of the Regions (CoR)
- Encore
- EU Programmes Programme Monitoring Committees (PMCs), secretariats and Managing Authorities
- National Urbact contact point (NUP),

Cross Border Networks;

- INTERREG and PEACE networks
- Development Plan Cross Border Group
- Intertrade Ireland

National Government

- Work closely with DHPLG, DBEI, DPER, DCCAIE
- Consultation and collaboration with other government departments

Public Bodies and Agencies

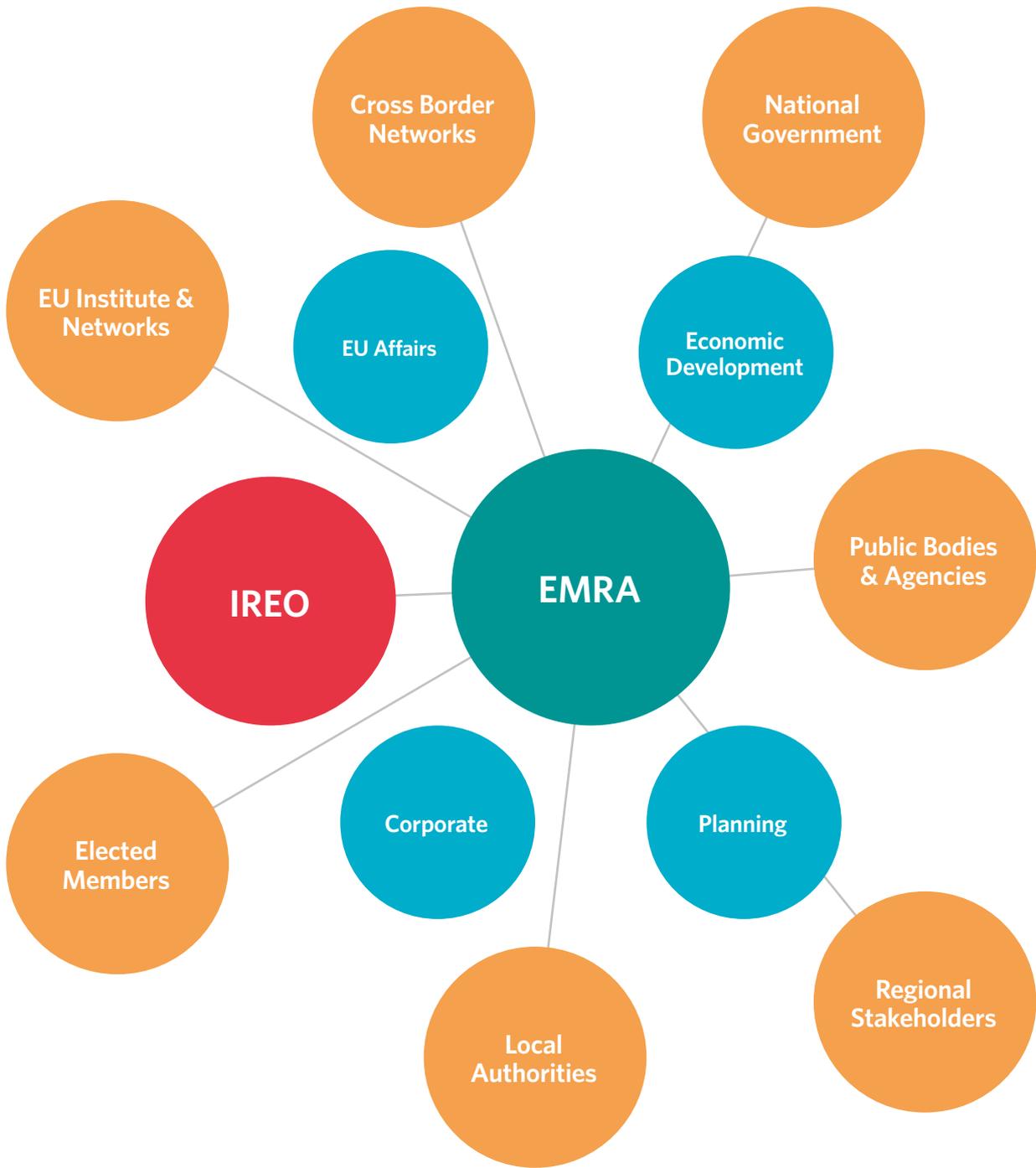
- Transport agencies – TII, NTA
- Environment and Infrastructure – Irish Water, Eirgrid, Housing Agency, EPA, SEAI,
- Build relationships with Office of the Planning Regulator, Land Development Agency
- Research and monitoring – NOAC, CSO and OECD

Regional Bodies and Stakeholders

- Northern & Western and Southern Regional Assemblies
- Third level institutes and research centres – AIRO, Maynooth University, UCD, DCU, Trinity College, TUI (DIT, Athlone, Dundalk ITs) Rediscovery Centre
- Regional bodies – Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs, Regional Waste Offices (RWO)
- Regional Enterprise (formerly Regional Action Plans), Regional Skills Fora
- Professional Institutes – IPI, RTPI, Engineers Ireland, Chambers of Commerce

Local Authorities

- LGMA, CCMA and designated Chief Executive
- 12 local authorities



EMRA Members

LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

- John Browne (FG)
- Colm Murray

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

- Paddy Hill (FF)
- Aengus O'Rourke (FF)

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

- Eamon Dooley (FF)
- Eddie Fitzpatrick (FF)
- Tony McCormack (FF)

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

- Caroline Dwane Stanley (SF)
- Catherine Fitzgerald (FF)
- Aisling Moran (FG)

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

- Emma Coffey (FF)
- Conor Keelan (FF)

MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

- Brian Fitzgerald (Ind)
- Paddy Meade (FG)
- Damien O'Reilly (FF)

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

- Aoife Breslin (Lab)
- Fintan Brett (FG)
- Pdraig McEvoy (Ind)
- Robert Power (FF)

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

- Avril Cronin (FG)
- Gerry Walsh (FF)
- Tom Fortune (Ind)

FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

- David Healy (Green)
- Brigid Manton (FF)
- Robert O'Donoghue (Lab)

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL

- Daryl Barron (FF)
- Mary Freehill (Lab)
- Alison Gilliland (Lab)
- Deirdre Heney (FF)
- Janet Horner (Green)
- Vincent Jackson (Ind)
- Dermot Lacey (Lab)
- Larry O'Toole (SF)

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

- Kate Feeney (FF)
- Pamela Kearns (Lab)
- Clare O'Byrne (Green)

DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN CO CO

- Emma Blain (FG)
- Laura Donaghy (Green)
- Jim Gildea (FG)
- Mary Hanafin (FF)
- Peter O'Brien (Lab)
- Una Power (Green)



CoR Members

FULL MEMBERS

CORK CITY COUNCIL

- Deirdre Forde (FG)
- Kieran McCarthy (Ind)

TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL

- Michael Murphy (FG)

DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN CO CO

- Kate Feeney (FF)

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

- Eamon Dooley (FF)

GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

- Declan McDonnell (Ind)

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

- Caroline Dwane Stanley (SF)

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

- Aoife Breslin (Lab)

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

- Jimmy McClearn (FG)

DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN CO CO

- Emma Blain (FG)
- Una Power (Green)

CORK COUNTY COUNCIL

- Gillian Coughlan (FF)

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL

- Alison Gilliland (Lab)

WATERFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

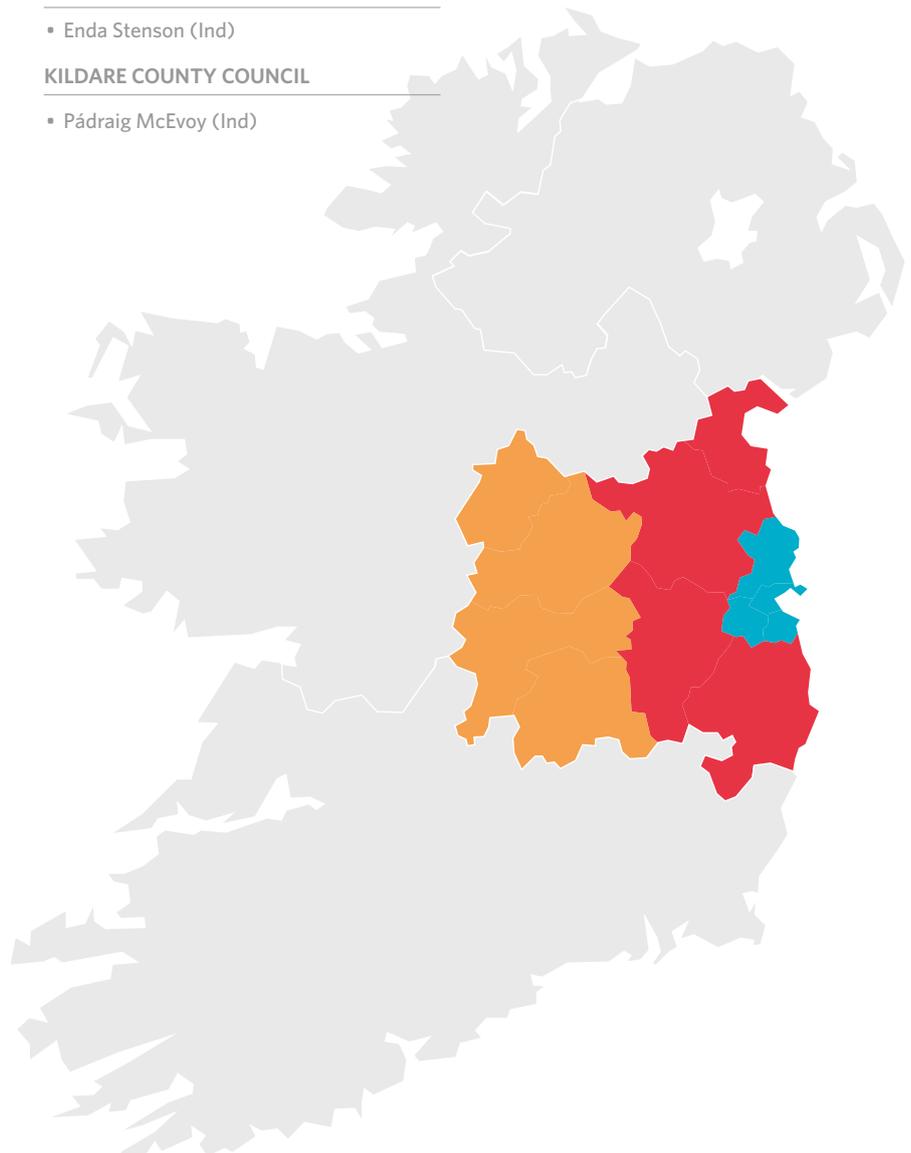
- Conor McGuinness (SF)

LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL

- Enda Stenson (Ind)

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

- Pádraig McEvoy (Ind)



Organisation Structure





www.emra.ie

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Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly