



Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly

2021 Annual Report





Contents

Message from An Cathaoirleach	4
Message from the Director	5
Introduction	7
Functions of Regional Assemblies.....	7
2021 the year in highlights.....	8
Assembly Meetings & Membership	10
Drive the Regional Agenda	14
Assembly Oversight and Functions	15
Inform Policy Making	15
Participation in the preparation of future EU programmes	16
Influencing European Policy	17
Deliver concrete Impact on the ground	22
RSES Implementation.....	23
Participate in projects.....	24
Leadership in EU funds delivery	25
Be a resource hub for the Region.....	26
Grow as a Region	32
Communicating and showcasing EMRA's assets.....	33
Corporate, HR and Finance.....	34
Regional Assembly energy usage.....	35
Annexes	36

Message from An Cathaoirleach

I am pleased to present the seventh Annual Report for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

In 2021, the Assembly continued to deliver on its functions and responsibilities despite the continuation of the public health emergency and related challenges. Members of the Assembly maintained a high level of involvement and commitment, which was evident throughout our Assembly meetings and SPA Committee meetings held online. I wish to thank all the members for their contribution in ensuring that EMRA's statutory functions and corporate goals have been achieved.

With the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in place since 2019, this was the second year of the implementation phase. Members have made a number of submissions to Local County and City Development Plans and other local and national strategies to ensure that the regional voice is heard and reflected in policies.

2021 was a very successful year in terms of EMRA's engagement with the EU. The appointment of the Assembly as managing authority for the EU Just Transition fund that will deliver €84.5 million to the wider Midlands region is a huge milestone for the Assembly. Members' engagement at European level, be it through our participation in the Committee of the Regions or the European Week of Regions and Cities, had a very positive impact on the image of our region and is much appreciated.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank my Leas Cathaoirleach Councillor Rob Power for his support and work throughout the year and would also like to thank my predecessor Councillor Pádraig McEvoy for his work during the first half of the year as Cathaoirleach of the Assembly, and his support to me in my role as Cathaoirleach.

The significant progress achieved over the course of 2021 has put EMRA in a strong position as an organisation striving for excellence in delivery of our key functions and statutory obligations as well as expanding our role and taking on new responsibilities. As a regional government institution, we remain committed to supporting development and growth in our region and expanding our remit in the context of European funding, which provides EMRA with new tools to deliver on this.

All of the above would not be possible without the work, support and professionalism of the staff, and I wish to thank the Director Jim Conway and his team for their efforts.

Deirdre Heney

Cllr. Deirdre Heney,
Cathaoirleach



Message from the Director

The 2021 Annual Report presents the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly's accomplishments through the second year of the new Corporate Plan 2019-2024 in the challenging conditions of the ongoing public health emergency.

The Annual Report 2021 sets out EMRA's actions, initiatives, and engagements undertaken to deliver on the vision and goals outlined in the current Corporate Plan for the organisation.

2021 saw the continuation of most of the public health restrictions, including remote working for most of the year. Despite the difficulties associated with this continued emergency, the Assembly yet again proved its resilience and conducted its business by adopting a flexible and innovative approach to delivery of services. Monthly Assembly meetings were held online with a large participation and support from our members. A new Cathaoirleach, Cllr Deirdre Heney was elected at the AGM in July. I wish to thank Councillor Heney and all the members of the Assembly for their work and support throughout the entire year.

The year marked an important 2-year milestone in the rollout of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy across our region. As a statutory obligation our planning department has submitted the Monitoring Report to the National Oversight and Audit Commission outlining the progress of the implementation of the Strategy.

Our involvement with EU projects continued and expanded with taking on an additional role in the National Practice Transfer Initiative as part of our URBACT National Contact Point role. Other projects, namely Next2Met and Progress continued and entered their most important phases with pilot actions and development of the key output - the Action Plans. It was certainly a busy year for our Brussels office and the Irish Delegation to Committee of the Regions. The Irish Regions European Office held a series of very successful events for local authorities as part of Communicating Europe Initiative, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs, further increasing our profile, and disseminating information on the available EU funding streams. The IREO supported members of the Irish delegation with a number of briefings and opinions prepared and adopted by COR. We also had very productive engagements as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities.

The most significant development of the year was the official appointment of EMRA as the managing authority for a new EU fund - the Just Transition Fund - in December 2021. This was a result of many engagements we had with government departments and EU Institutions since our establishment in 2015. It is also a testament and recognition of EMRA's contribution to the management of the European Regional Development Fund as part of our joint efforts with the Southern and Northern & Western Regional Assemblies.

It was another challenging year, however due to the professionalism and commitment of staff we achieved our strategic goals and made the most of the opportunities. I wish to personally thank them for achievement of all of our works plan objectives for 2021.



Jim Conway
Director





Introduction

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) is one of the three Regional Assemblies created in Ireland following on from the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

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 Region incorporates 12 city and county councils and is comprised of elected members (councillors) who are elected by their peers in the 12 councils to represent them regionally or members of the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

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 has approximately 270 km of coastline from Carlingford Lough in Louth to Kilmichael Point at the Wicklow-Wexford border. The main settlement is the capital city of Dublin which is home to 1.2 million people and is supported by a network of regional and county towns and an extensive rural hinterland.

Functions of Regional Assemblies

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly aims at 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.



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

2021 the year in highlights

AGM and Cathaoirleach election

At the AGM on Friday, 9th July 2021, Cllr Deirdre Heney, Dublin City Council, was elected as EMRA Cathaoirleach and Cllr Rob Power, Kildare County Council, was elected the Leas-Cathaoirelach.



Caption: Cathaoirleach Deirdre Heney and Director Jim Conway

NOAC report (RSES implementation report)

As part of its statutory obligations, EMRA submitted the Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC).

RSES Monitoring Report issued to NOAC on 18th August 2021



NPTI

EMRA as Urbact contact point successfully applied to coordinate a new type of project: a National Practice Transfer Initiative (NPTI) involving six participating Irish towns and cities.



Caption: NPTI Whole Network Meeting in Cork, September 2021

ENCORE conference

Our biggest event of the year was the 2021 ENCORE conference held on the 24th September. Guest speakers included the EU Commissioner, Mairead McGuinness and Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity.



Caption: EU Commissioner, Mairead McGuinness addressing the ENCORE Conference.

Appointment as MA

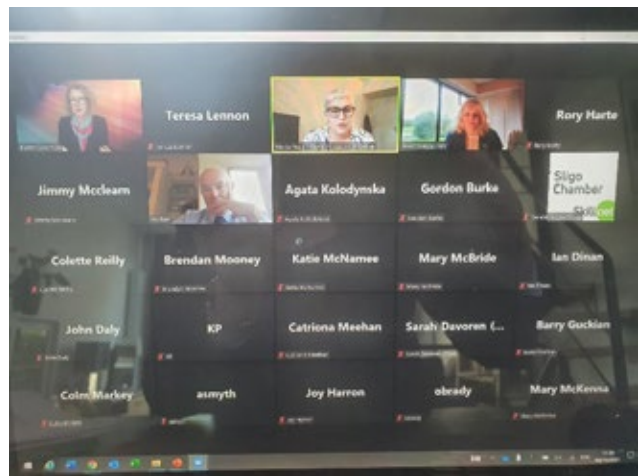
On 3rd December 2021 EMRA was appointed as Managing Authority for the new EU Just Transition Fund by the Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications. The Fund will provide €84,5 million to the Wider Midland Region to mitigate the impacts of the transition to a carbon-neutral economy.



Caption: The Just Transition Fund is part of the European Green Deal

IREO - Communicating Europe

The IREO held several events under the Communicating Europe initiative, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The events were organised to share knowledge of EU funding opportunities and EU institutions among the local government stakeholders.



Caption: One of the Communicating Europe events held online in 2021.



**Assembly
Meetings &
Membership**

Assembly Meetings & Membership

Assembly Members are nominated by the constituent Local Authorities in the region in proportion to the size of the Local Authority's population. Councillors nominated to the Committee of the Regions become de facto Members of the Regional Assembly.

In 2021 the Assembly Membership was as follows:

Councillor	Local Authority	Date Appointed/ Resigned
Daryl Barron	Dublin City Council	
Emma Blain	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co	
Aoife Breslin	Kildare County Council	
Fintan Brett	Kildare County Council	
John Browne	Longford County Council	
Emma Coffey	Louth County Council	
Avril Cronin	Wicklow County Council	
Laura Donaghy	South Dublin County Council	
Eamon Dooley	Offaly County Council	
Caroline Dwane Stanley	Laois County Council	
Kate Feeney	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co	
Brian Fitzgerald	Meath County Council	
Catherine Fitzgerald	Laois County Council	
Eddie Fitzpatrick	Offaly County Council	
Tom Fortune	Wicklow County Council	
Mary Freehill	Dublin City Council	
Jim Gildea	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co	
Alison Gilliland	Dublin City Council	
Mary Hanafin	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co	
David Healy	Fingal County Council	
Deirdre Heney	Dublin City Council	
Paddy Hill	Westmeath County Council	
Janet Horner	Dublin City Council	
Vincent Jackson	Dublin City Council	
Pamela Kearns	South Dublin County Council	

Councillor	Local Authority	Date Appointed/ Resigned
Conor Keelan	Louth County Council	
Dermot Lacey	Dublin City Council	
Brigid Manton	Fingal County Council	
Tony McCormack	Offaly County Council	
Suzanne McEneaney	South Dublin County Council	Appointed 20.05.2021
Padraig McEvoy	Kildare County Council	
Paddy Meade	Meath County Council	
Aisling Moran	Laois County Council	
Colm Murray	Longford County Council	
Robert O'Donoghue	Fingal County Council	
Peter O'Brien	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co	
Damien O'Reilly	Meath County Council	
Aengus O'Rourke	Westmeath County Council	
Larry O'Toole	Dublin City Council	
Clare O'Byrne	South Dublin County Council	Resigned 08.03.2021
Robert Power	Kildare County Council	
Una Power	Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Co	
Gerry Walsh	Wicklow County Council	

Number per council as of 31/12/2021

Dublin City Council	8	Louth County Council	2
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	6	Meath County Council	3
Fingal County Council	3	Offaly County Council	3
Kildare County Council	4	South Dublin County Council	3
Laois County Council	3	Westmeath County Council	2
Longford County Council	2	Wicklow County Council	3

By Party as of 31/12/2021

Party	Number of Members
Fianna Fáil	16
Fine Gael	8
Labour	7
Green Party	5
Independent (Non Party)	4
Sinn Féin	2

Schedule of Meetings 2021

Month	Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
January	15/01/2021
February	12/02/2021
March	12/03/2021
April	16/04/2021
May	14/05/2021
June	11/06/2021
July	09/07/2021
August	No Meeting
September	10/09/2021
October	08/10/2021
November	12/11/2021
December	10/12/2021

Meetings of the Assembly

The ongoing public health crisis in 2021 led to a similar situation as 2020 with regards to attendance at EMRA meetings with the majority being held remotely (in line with SI no 446). Overall, 11 statutory meetings were held in 2021. The average attendance rate over the year for meetings was 77.7%. (77.66).

Election of An Cathaoirleach

The Annual General Meeting was held online in 2021 and saw the election of Cllr. Deirdre Heney as Cathaoirleach and Cllr. Robert Power as Leas Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Padraig McEvoy	Cathaoirleach	July 2020 - July 2021
Cllr. Deirdre Heney	Leas Cathaoirleach	July 2020 - July 2021
Cllr. Deirdre Heney	Cathaoirleach	July 2021 to present
Cllr. Robert Power	Leas Cathaoirleach	July 2021 to present

Conferences and Training Attended in 2021

Because of the health crisis, no conference or training were attended by EMRA members on behalf of the Assembly in 2021.

Meetings and Membership of Sub-Committees

EU Sub-Committee	Dublin SPA	Eastern SPA	Midland SPA	MASP
Date of meetings				
9 meetings took place in February, March, April, May, June, July, September, October and December.	No meetings were held in 2021	February 2021	February 2021	February and June 2021
Members				
Fintan Brett	Daryl Barron	Aoife Breslin	John Browne	Daryl Barron
Eamon Dooley	Emma Blain	Fintan Brett	Eamon Dooley	Laura Donaghy
Kate Feeney	Laura Donaghy	Emma Coffey	Caroline Dwane Stanley	Kate Feeney
Alison Gilliland	Kate Feeney	Avril Cronin	Catherine Fitzgerald	Tom Fortune
David Healy	Mary Freehill	Brian Fitzgerald	Eddie Fitzpatrick	Mary Freehill
Deirdre Heney	Jim Gildea	Tom Fortune	Paddy Hill	Jim Gildea
Conor Keelan	Alisson Gilliland	Conor Keelan	Tony McCormack	Alison Gilliland
Padraig McEvoy	Mary Hanafin	Padraig McEvoy	Aisling Moran	David Healy
Aisling Moran	David Healy	Paddy Meade	Colm Murray	Deirdre Heney
	Deirdre Heney	Damien O'Reilly	Aengus O'Rourke	Pamela Kearns
	Janet Horner	Robert Power		Brigid Manton
	Vincent Jackson	Gerry Walsh		Padraig McEvoy
	Pamela Kearns			Paddy Meade
	Dermot Lacey			Damien O'Reilly
	Brigid Manton			Robert Power
	Suzanne McEneaney			Una Power
	Clare O'Byrne			Gerry Walsh
	Robert O'Donoghue			
	Peter O'Brien			
	Larry O'Toole			
	Una Power			



**Drive
the Regional
Agenda**

Drive the Regional Agenda

Assembly Oversight and Functions

During 2021 a key function of the Assembly was to ensure oversight and alignment of national, regional and local policy in the Region. This included ensuring consistency with the RSES across Local Authority plans and the strategies, plans and programmes of public bodies, including government departments, and key stakeholders.

During 2021, 24 submissions were issued, with 10 of these submissions issued as a statutory function under Section 27 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. An additional 2 submissions were issued as a result of the Assembly's statutory function related to ensuring consistency with the National Transport Authority's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. The Assembly approved 18 of these submissions whilst the Cathaoirleach approved 4.

Total Submissions; 24

Type of Submission	Level of Submission	Approval
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City/County Development Plan= 13, ▪ LAP=1, ▪ Other= 9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional=16, ▪ Local=2, ▪ National=6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assembly=18, ▪ Cathaoirleach=4 ▪ Director= 2

Thirteen submissions were issued relating to Local Authority County Development Plans. Within the Region, observations were made relating to the issues papers of Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council. In addition, submissions were issued regarding the Longford, Laois, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Wicklow and South Dublin Draft County Development Plans, and variations to the Dublin City Development Plan. The Assembly also made 4 submissions to local authorities adjacent to the Region namely, Kilkenny, Roscommon, Cavan and Carlow with respect to their County Development Plan review processes. A submission was also made to the Draft Naas Local Area Plan.

In influencing national policy, submissions were made to the National Development Plan Review, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Housing For All, the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland, Eirgrid's Shaping Our Electricity Future, and the Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment public consultation process.

At a regional level, submissions included the Issues Paper and Preliminary Draft of the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area, the DART+ South West scheme, and the Emerging Preferred Scenario for the City Edge Project within South Dublin and Dublin City Local Authorities.



Inform Policy Making

In 2021, in order to inform policy making, the Assembly focused on ongoing bilateral and multilateral engagements with key policy and implementation stakeholders.

To this end the Assembly worked with the following stakeholders through dedicated forums, throughout 2021, to inform policy and implementation in line with the RSES.

Forum	Date	Attendees
Dublin Regional Action Plan for Jobs	Various	Jim Conway
Midlands Regional Action Plan for Jobs	Various	Jim Conway
Mid – East Regional Action Plan for Jobs	Various	Malachy Bradley/ Nicci Nolan
National Climate Change Adaptation Forum	Various	Jim Conway / Nicci Nolan
Eastern and Midland CARO Steering Group	Various	Jim Conway
Dublin CARO Steering Group	Various	Malachy Bradley/ Nicci Nolan
National SEA Forum	Various	Nicci Nolan/ Owen Douglas
National AA Forum	Various	Nicci Nolan
NTA GDA Strategy Advisory Board	Various	Jim Conway
Irish Planning Institute Senior Planners Forum	Various	Malachy Bradley/ Clare Bannon
Irish Planning Institute Public Sector Committee	Various	Clare Bannon
Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT)	Various	Jim Conway
OPR Plan Evaluation Forum	Various	Malachy Bradley/ Clare Bannon

Throughout 2021, the Assembly met with numerous government departments and agencies to inform policy in line with the RSES. This included, for instance, the Department of Transport and Department of Environment, Climate and Communications relating to policy formation associated with the Annex of Actions of the Climate Action Plan 2021.

The Dublin MASP Implementation Group met twice during 2021. As part of these meetings, the group agreed monitoring and reporting to inform the MASP Committee and consulted on relevant infrastructure proposals including the DART+ Programme, the NTA's Transport Strategy for the GDA and Irish Water's Draft National Resources Plan.

The Committees of the Eastern and Midland SPA met once during 2021. These meetings focused on the implementation progress of the RSES. The MASP Committee met twice during 2021 and focused on MASP Implementation and transport orientated development.



Participation in the preparation of future EU programmes

When it comes to influencing policy-making EMRA is also looking at the European level.

Shaping the future of EU funding programmes

Throughout the year, EMRA has been engaged in different groups and fora tasked with the preparation of the next round of European funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Ireland. EMRA sits on the Partnership Process Steering Group (PPSG) which governs over the preparation of the several European Structural and Investment Funds programmes in Ireland, among which the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the EU Just Transition Fund (EU JTF). All through the year, EMRA took part in meetings of the Partnership agreement working group, the ERDF oversight group and the ERDF working group to ensure EMRA's views were represented in the preparation and drafting of the Partnership Agreement and of the Southern, Eastern and Midland ERDF programme. EMRA also contributed to the organisation and participated to a synergies workshop to identify the possible links to be made between the various EU funded programmes in Ireland.

In 2021, EMRA was invited to join the steering committee of the Irish Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) Support project. This project, funded by the European Commission, aimed at providing support to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in the preparation of the Irish TJTP, a requirement under EU legislation for the country to receive fund as part of the newly created EU Just Transition Fund. As such, EMRA was consulted on the governance to be put in place for the Plan and the Fund and provided information to the consultants tasked with the project in relation to the RSES and its link with the Just Transition agenda in Ireland. EMRA also provided comments on the various reports produced, representing the views of the Assembly and ensuring alignment with the RSES.

EMRA kept participating in the preparation of European Territorial Cooperation programmes after having been appointed to sit on several task forces in 2020. EMRA took part in 12 meetings of the Atlantic Area (AA) task force 2021-2027 and eight meetings of the North West Europe (NWE) task force. Both are tasked with designing the future AA and NWE programmes and EMRA, as part of the Irish delegation, ensured that the future programme priorities are aligned with Irish stakeholders' priorities so as to maximise Irish participation in the programmes. EMRA also took part in the preparation and design of the future Urbact programme which focuses on sustainable urban development and of the PEACE+ programme as part of the preparatory group but also through a submission to the public consultation organised on the future programme.



Influencing European Policy

EMRA, with the support of the IREO, has pursued its engagement at EU level to shape policy-making at European level.

During 2021, the IREO continued to monitor and report on important EU policy developments. Given the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, EU policy developments continued to focus on recovery and resilience. The IREO, in conjunction with the three Regional Assemblies produced a response to the public consultation, launched by the Irish Government in February 2021, on the National Recovery and Resilience Plan for Ireland. Ireland will avail of €853 million in grants for 2021 and 2022 with possibly further funding in 2023, depending on the economic situation.

The EU continued to deal with the UK exit from the EU and the future relationship through the Trade and Cooperation Agreement has been central. The IREO worked closely with Irish Members of the Committee of the Regions to ensure that the issues for Ireland in relation to the future relationship, trade, peace and stability, as well as the role of local and regional authorities, were highlighted across the EU institutions and other Member States.

The IREO also monitored EU policy developments in relation to wide range of policy areas including climate action, sustainability, just transition, smart mobility, equality and the Conference on the Future of Europe. IREO regularly communicate Irish interests, including the Irish MEPs, European Commission officials and Irish Government officials in the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU.

Building capacity, networks and partnerships

The IREO presented an update on its work and EU policy developments to the EMRA meeting in March 2021 and has provided regular briefings on the work of the Irish Delegation to the CoR, as well as updates on the Communicating Europe initiative to EMRA meetings and working groups.

In addition, the IREO has met with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Association of European Regions (AER), the Welsh Government Office, the Local Government Association (UK) and the Northern Ireland Executive office to discuss ongoing relationships and opportunities for collaboration.

The IREO is advising local authorities on a regular basis on the types and forms of networks that can assist with understanding EU policy and funding programmes, as well as assist with building partnerships.



Committee of the Regions



The IREO is the secretariat to the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions and co-ordinates the work of the members of the national delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

The European Union's assembly of local and regional representatives, the CoR has 329 members from across the 27 EU Member States, all of whom are democratically elected and/or hold a political mandate in their home country. The CoR's role is to inform the development of EU legislation and future European policies through the input of those most closely representing communities, with a focus on those EU policy areas and proposals that most greatly affect regions and cities.

The CoR mainly presents its views through written opinions or resolutions, which are developed in one of six thematic commissions covering the following policy areas:

- Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX);
- Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER);
- Economic Policy (ECON);
- Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE);
- Natural Resources (NAT);
- Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC).

Each Commission generally meets on five occasions during the year to prepare the opinions for adoption at the 5-6 plenary annual sessions. Commissioners, Presidency Ministers and MEPs regularly attend CoR meetings, and there is an ongoing exchange between the institutions on policy issues.

The Irish Delegation - Eastern and Midland Region Representatives

Below is a list of CoR representatives for the Eastern and Midland Region for 2020 - 2025.

Full Members	Council
Cllr Kate Feeney	Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown Council
Cllr Eamon Dooley	Offaly County Council
Cllr Aoife Breslin	Kildare County Council
Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley	Laois County Council
Cllr Una Power	Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown Council

Alternate Members	Council
Emma Blain	Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown Council
Alison Gilliland	Dublin City Council
Padraig McEvoy	Kildare County Council

Further information on the Irish Delegation can be found at www.emra.ie/committee-of-the-regions





Legislative Works

Irish Members continued to present opinions and make an impact in the Committee of the Regions.

In May 2021, Cllr Gillian Coughlan's opinion on the Digital Education Action Plan 2021 – 2027 was adopted and during the October 2021 Plenary, Cllr Kate Feeney's opinion on the EU's first ever LGBTIQ Equality Strategy was adopted. In October 2021, Cllr Michael Murphy as appointed rapporteur on an opinion on EU-UK Relations at the sub-national level and remedying the territorial impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. In addition, Cllr Kieran McCarthy was appointed rapporteur on an opinion on the New European Bauhaus.

The Delegation continued to act as the key link between the Committee and the Irish Representation. The Delegation also held meetings with Irish MEPs as well as with the Irish Commission representatives to voice the needs of the Irish local government on the EU stage. The Delegation, assisted by the IREO, continued observing all relevant policy dossiers and made interventions, via amendments as well as commission and plenary interventions.

Main discussions and opinions held and adopted in 2021

The ongoing pandemic saw plenary sessions being held online or in hybrid format during 2021 and the work of the Committee of the Regions largely focused on the impact of the pandemic – on local and regional authorities, the impact on health systems across Europe and on recovery and resilience. A major topic of 2021 was the Conference on the Future of Europe and the role of local and regional authorities in promoting citizen engagement in the future of Europe.

The most important debates held during the year included:

- **May:** Union of Equality – in debate with Commissioner Helena Dalli
- **July:** Debate on Promoting the European Values through Culture and Education with Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission for Promoting our European Way of Life
- **July:** Debate on the European Democracy Action Plan with Vra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency
- **December:** Debate on Strengthening European democracy in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe

A significant highlight of the year for the CoR was the online presence at the December plenary of the French President, Emmanuel Macron, who discussed European values and the renewal of democracy.

Members of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions participate in many of the working groups of the CoR including the EU – UK Contact Group, the Brexit Inter-regional group and the Broadband platform.

ENCORE

Another way for the Assembly to influence policymaking at EU level is to participate in networks and other collaborative initiatives to collectively represent the voice and interest of our Region. For several years, EMRA has been a key member of ENCORE.

ENCORE (or the Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe) is a political platform or forum where environmental ministers and other political leaders from across Europe can meet and discuss environmental and sustainable development issues in their regions. ENCORE enables the exchange of positions towards EU policies and legislation as well as experiences and good practices as a starting point for regional cooperation.

The EMRA held the co-presidency of ENCORE from 2018 – 2021. ENCORE's driving force is its biennial Conference which was held September. In the build up to the conference the EMRA organised a series of events. A virtual political engagement meeting was organised in February, two online thematic workshops were organised in May, each of these workshops featured speakers from the European Commission, high-level academics, and representatives from ENCORE partner regions. In addition, ENCORE Steering Group meetings were held in May and June 2021 and three YouthCORE events were held in March, May, September.

The 14th Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe, ENCORE 2021 took place online on September 24th, 2021. The Conference took stock of the progress made between conferences, shared the regions' experiences in environmental policy, and approved the political strategy of ENCORE. The conference culminated in the signing of the 'Tullamore Declaration' by member regions – a statement of common intent which will guide regions to effectively exert their collective influence on the formulation of environmental policy within the European Union.

Moderated by Dr Tara Shine, ENCORE 2021 opened with an address by Cllr Deirdre Heney, Cathaoirleach of the EMRA and co-president of the ENCORE network. This was followed by keynote addresses from EU Commissioner, Mairead McGuinness and Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity. In addition, YouthCORE delegates addressed the conference, youth representatives from across the ENCORE regions, who met previously to create a YouthCORE statement described their vision for the future that they want. This YouthCORE statement accompanied the Tullamore Declaration to ensure that the voice of youth was heard. Elected representatives and senior government officials from across Europe then addressed the conference to endorse the Tullamore Declaration and proclaim their 'Seeds of Change' - environmentally positive actions and commitments that their region will be implementing in line with the Tullamore Declaration.

ENCORE 2021 closed with the handover of the presidency of ENCORE from the EMRA to the Province of Gelderland in the Netherlands. EMRA provided assistance to Gelderland in organising two ENCORE-related side events at the European Week of Regions (EWRC) and the COP26 Climate Conference.



A photograph of a canal lock system. On the right bank, a large black crane stands on a concrete foundation. The canal is filled with water and has a wooden lock gate across it. In the background, there are several buildings, including a multi-story apartment building with orange and white facades. The sky is blue with some clouds.

**Deliver
concrete impact
on the ground**

Deliver concrete impact on the ground

RSES Implementation

Monitoring Report 2021

In 2021, the Regional Assembly finalised the statutory Monitoring Report 2021. The Monitoring Report, prepared in accordance with Section 25A. of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, monitors progress made in implementing the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region (EMR) over the previous two years. The purpose of the Report is to specify the progress made in securing the overall objectives of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region, including progress made by relevant public bodies and each local authority in the Regional Assembly area. The report is a statutory report and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly are required to submit this Monitoring Report to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC). NOAC shall consider the Monitoring Report of the Regional Assembly and may make recommendations to the Minister in relation to relevant measures to further support the implementation of the RSES. The Report was submitted to NOAC in August 2021.

During 2021, The Regional Assemblies, led by EMRA, significantly advanced work on the Regional Development Monitor. The All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University, were appointed to enable the Regional Assemblies undertake and deliver the project.

The RDM will collate and visualise a range of relevant socio-economic indicators to aid in monitoring the performance of each of the three regions in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in their respective Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES). The RDM will focus on a wide variety of indicators that have been agreed and developed by each of the three Regional Assemblies and key stakeholders.

The RDM will be an invaluable and innovative data hub that will assist Government Departments, Regional Assemblies and Local Authorities, Planners, Policy Makers, Researchers and members of the public in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better decision making.



Regional Development Monitor (RDM)



Participate in projects

EMRA is 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 enable us to deliver concrete results for our Region. In 2021, EMRA took an active role in the following projects.

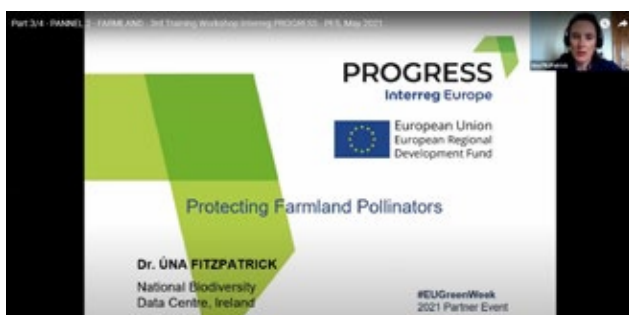
PROGRESS

PROGRESS is an INTERREG Europe funded project with the objective of promoting improved governance for regional ecosystem services.

The project brings together six regional partner organisations from Ireland, Italy, Spain, Latvia, Romania and Hungary who share this common challenge and are working together to identify and implement policy solutions.

Through local stakeholder network activity and the development of a dedicated Action Plan, the objective of the PROGRESS partnership for EMRA is to improve the implementation of RSES and MASP objectives for ecosystem services and green infrastructure.

Over the course of 2021, EMRA participated in all project activities including Good Practice identification through local stakeholder engagement, communication & networking activities and online participation at project seminars, training workshops and other relevant events.



Highlights from 2021 include:

1. Commencing work with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and the Centre for Research on Ecology and Forestry Applications, Barcelona to implement a project Pilot Action for which additional funding was competitively secured from Interreg Europe. This involved testing a Green Infrastructure Decision Support Mapping Approach for Ecosystem Services in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown based on a good practice model identified in Catalonia.
2. The publication of six Irish Good Practices on the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Framework; the NPWS National Ecosystem and Ecosystem Service Mapping Pilot for a Suite of Prioritised Services; the Dublin Mountains Makeover; Protecting Farmland Pollinators; the 'Natural Capital Ireland' framework, and; the Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool.
3. Securing the inclusion of a specific Action for Regional Assemblies in the new All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 (Action 31) and development and publication of an associated Good Practice video.
4. The inclusion of virtual exhibition stands showcasing PROGRESS and selected Good Practices at the Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE).
5. Publication of a feature article titled 'Protect the bees! The Irish way' on the main Interreg Europe webpage. This article was based on two EMRA identified Good Practices (All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and Protecting Farmland Pollinators).

Next2Met

Next2Met is an innovative interregional exchange project which aims to increase the attractiveness of the Midlands Region as a place to live, work and visit, focusing on soft digitalisation measures. The project explores ways of attracting and retaining qualified people and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in areas that are located in the shadows of metropolitan areas.

EMRA is a partner in this Interreg Europe project. The project brings together six regional and local actors and one advisory partner – from Finland, Austria, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Spain and France – sharing this common challenge and working together to implement policy solutions.

Over the course of 2021, EMRA has participated and contributed in all the Next2Met-organised events. These included a number of partner meetings (throughout the year), project webinars (January, February, March, October), bilateral exchanges with local stakeholders and project partners to discuss and exchange good practices in line with the project aims, as well as two interregional Policy Learning Events organized by project partners (May and December). EMRA hosted the project's 4th Policy Learning Even (May) which showcased digitalisation good practices from the Midlands Region in fostering regional attraction. Additionally, the Next2Met project partners held a webinar during the European Week of Regions and Cities in October entitled "Is your region worth your love? Soft digitalisation, regional attraction, and engagement", which was well attended by participants from across Europe.

Stakeholder engagement remained strong through the identification of Good Practices, information sharing and the potential for pilot action activity across the Midlands Region. Highlights of communication activities during the year include promotion pieces in the Laois People newspaper and the Shannonside FM news website and radio, as well as inclusion of a virtual exhibition stand showcasing Next2Met at the ENCORE Conference in September.

The latter half of the year centered on the development of the Action Plan – a document that lays a roadmap to making policy change in line with the learnings from exchanges with partner regions. The action detailed in the Action Plan will focus on developing a new regional digitalisation strategy for the Midlands Region to improve the management of the RSES based on interregional exchange of experience.

QGasSP

QGasSP is an ESPON Targeted Analysis Project for which EMRA is lead stakeholder. The aim of this research project is the development and delivery of a robust, simple and proportionate method for quantifying and forecasting the relative GHG impacts of alternative spatial planning policies, with pan-European applicability. The output will be a flexible, user-friendly web application to use in modelling GHG emissions from differing spatial planning policy options and to inform decision-making processes, including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The end tool has been named the GGIA (Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment) Tool. A practical user guide will also be developed to ensure maximum value and usability including how the model can be integrated into the SEA process. To date there have been two demonstrations of the user interface made by the project team to the stakeholders and the project is now nearing completion. The duration of the project was initially 12 months which has now been extended by over 6 months and the final steering committee meeting and proposed revised end date is 10th May 2022.

CARE Peat

Care-Peat is an INTERREG funded project with the objective of reduce carbon emissions and restore the carbon storage capacity of different types of peatlands in North-West Europe. Several different peatland restoration techniques are taking place in each of the nine partner countries (Irish site: Cloncrow bog, Westmeath). In 2021 EMRA assisted in the drafting of a White Paper on Peatland ECO Credits. We liaised extensively with Care-Peat partners to acquire information on peatlands in County Meath. This information was passed on to our partners in QgasSP (above) who required it as an input to their modelling work. EMRA also provided feedback on the Care Peat 'Output from Multi Stakeholder Workshop (WP. T2 D3.3)' which informed the recommendations based on the workshop results. In quarter 4, the project published a white paper on Carbon Credits and Ecosystem Services.

Leadership in EU funds delivery

In 2020, the Southern and Northern & Western Regional Assemblies were appointed as managing authorities for the ERDF programmes and EMRA was given an “enhanced role” in the preparation and delivery of the Southern, Eastern and Midland programme.

This means that throughout 2021, EMRA has worked hand-in-hand with its regional assemblies’ counterparts to design the future ERDF programmes. This included sustained engagements with various Government Departments to identify and design schemes aligned with EU and regional priorities to be included in the programmes, and regular meetings with the European Commission. This resulted in the drafting of a provisional structure for the ERDF programme to be finalised in 2022. Still in relation to the ERDF programmes, EMRA was invited to join the steering groups overseeing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes for both programmes in Ireland. To build its capacity, EMRA has also joined several working groups and forum in relation to European Structural and Investment Funds.

A key event for EMRA in 2021 was the start of the collaboration between the Assembly and DECC in the preparation of the EU JTF. With its clear focus on the wider Midlands region, this new EU fund is of particular relevance and interest for the Region and EMRA was asked by DECC to work hand-in-hand on the development of the first draft of the Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) and on the organisation of a public consultation on this draft Plan which was launched shortly before Christmas. The aim of this consultation was to gather the views of stakeholders on the draft Plan and what they think the future EU JTF should support in the relevant territory. EMRA jointly elaborated the consultation questionnaire and background documentation with DECC and was tasked with the planning of the engagement with local authorities to be organised in early 2022.

This collaboration culminated in early December when EMRA was officially appointed as Managing Authority for the EU JTF programme by DECC. This means EMRA will be responsible for the delivery and management of the EU JTF programme for the whole programming period 2021-2027. This represents a key achievement for the Regional Assembly which has been advocating for a strong role for EMRA in the implementation of this new fund which has a specific relevance for our territory.

EU subcommittee

The Assembly set up a new EU subcommittee at the end of 2020 to enable members to follow more closely the progress on the preparation of the future EU funding programme and to keep abreast of EU policy and funding developments of relevance to the Assembly and local authorities in Ireland. Throughout 2021, the EU subcommittee met nine times and members were informed on the preparation of the future ERDF programme for the Southern, Eastern and Midland region and the future EU JTF programme and were given information on other EU programmes and initiatives such as the Interreg programmes, the Urbact programme and the specific National practice Transfer Initiative, the ENCORE conference, the Recovery and Resilience Fund, the Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Week of Regions and Cities and the Communicating Europe initiative.



2014-2020 programmes

While most of the focus has shifted towards the preparation for the new programming period 2021-2027, EU funding programmes 2014-2020 are still in their implementation phase and EMRA retained its role as member on several programme monitoring committees tasked with ensuring that programmes are delivering the intended results.

The EMRA sits on the following Programme Monitoring and Steering Committees:

National Partnership Agreement (NPA)

This is the contract between Ireland (as a Member State) and the European Commission for all the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). These include European Rural Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

- Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme
- Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme
- Interreg North West Europe
- Interreg Atlantic Area
- Interreg Ireland-Wales
- PEACE
- URBACT

European Social Fund (ESF)

- Programme for Employability, Inclusion & Learning (PEIL)

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

- European Maritime and Fisheries Operational Programme

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

- Rural Development Programme (LEADER)

Each of the Operational Programmes contained in the National Partnership Agreement have a Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) that is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the programme and ensure the effectiveness and the quality of the implementation of all expenditure under the Programme. The Monitoring Committee considers the progress and impact of the co-financed expenditure and makes recommendations in this regard to the Managing Authority.



EMRA Elected Members representation on Programme Monitoring Committees

Programme	Representative	Meeting Dates
Southern & Eastern Regional Operational PMC	Cllr. Mary Hanafin (Full) Cllr. Gerry Walsh (Full) Cllr. Dermot Lacey (Alt) Cllr. Aisling Moran (Alt)	21 st April 2021
Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational PMC	Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald (Full) Cllr. Tony Mc Cormack (Alt)	20 th April 2021
Ireland Wales Operational PMC	Cllr. Brigid Manton (Full) Cllr. Avril Cronin (Alt)	28 th October 2021
Peace PMC	Cllr. Conor Keelan (Full) Cllr. Mary Freehill (Alt)	20 th May 2021
National Partnership Agreement	Cathaoirleach Cllr Deirdre Heney	30 th November 2021
European Social Fund (ESF)	No position on PMC	
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)	No position on PMC	
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	No position on PMC	

EMRA officials participating on Programme Monitoring Committees

Programme	Participant	Meeting Attended
National Partnership Agreement	Mr Jim Conway, Director	30 th November 2021
Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (European Social Fund - ESF)	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	27 th May
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)	Mr Jim Conway, Director	
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	Mr Jim Conway, Director	
Border Midland West Regional Operational Programme	Mr Jim Conway, Director	20 th April
Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme	Mr Jim Conway, Director	21 st April
Regional Operational Programme Quarterly Meeting	Mr Jim Conway, Director Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	23 rd February, 7 th September
Interreg Ireland-Wales (PMC)	No position on PMC	
Interreg Ireland-Wales (Steering Committee)	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	No meeting
PEACE	No position on PMC	
Interreg Atlantic Area	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	22 nd March, 13 th July
Interreg North-West Europe	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	24 th March
Interreg Europe	No position on PMC	
Northern Periphery and Arctic	No position on PMC	
URBACT	Ms Pauline Riordan, Senior Executive Planner	March, September

European Territorial Cooperation programmes (ERDF)

The EMRA team follows the implementation and evaluates project proposals for three INTERREG programmes in which Ireland is involved: Ireland Wales, Atlantic Area and North West Europe and for the URBACT programme for which EMRA is also the National Contact Point.

INTERREG Ireland Wales

The EMRA staff sit on the Programme Steering Group and undertook four projects' evaluations over the course of the year.

INTERREG Atlantic Area

The EMRA provide ongoing support provision to the Joint Secretariat. No calls were launched in 2020. The EMRA participated in Programme Monitoring Committee meetings in March and July 2021. A third call for proposals (restricted to approved projects) was launched in October 2021.

INTERREG North West Europe (NWE)

The EMRA provide ongoing support provision to the Joint Secretariat. The EMRA participated in one Programme Monitoring Committee meeting in March which saw the approval of 25 capitalisation projects. The EMRA team assessed 35 project proposals for this second capitalisation call.

URBACT

URBACT promotes integrated sustainable urban development.

The EMRA attended the URBACT Monitoring Committee meeting in March which saw the approval of a number of new city networks were approved, including:

- Trim, Co Meath approved to join a transfer network for 'Localisation of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'
- Approval of new national network of 5-7 Irish towns/ cities to transfer lessons from the 'Playful Cities' led by Cork City

EMRA also took part in a second PMC held in September.



Be a resource hub for the Region

A key ambition of the Regional Assembly is to become a resource hub for the Region and to provide guidance and support for all stakeholders wishing to access EU funding.

To achieve this goal, the Irish Regions European Office (IREO) is a key player. The IREO provides a shared service for the three Regional Assemblies and 31 local authorities of Ireland (LRAs) and focuses on bringing the EU closer to the wider local government sector and vice versa.

In 2021, the IREO continued to deliver on its strategy which aims to ensure that the office delivers timely, strategic advice and information on EU policy developments to the three Regional Assemblies and local authorities in Ireland.



This strategy is delivered by:

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

Raising Awareness and Communication



In early 2021, the IREO successfully secured funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs 'Communicating Europe Initiative'. This facilitated the IREO, together with the Regional Assemblies to organise a series of online seminars in October and November 2021 entitled 'A Duologue for Strength and Resilience - bringing local communities to the EU and the EU to local communities'.

The topics of the events were aligned to the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy priorities. The series of seminars highlighted on the one hand, how EU Cohesion Policy funding (European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes) can benefit local communities, and on the other hand, how local communities can participate in a duologue with the EU.

Each of the three regional events had a panel of speakers made up of MEPs, members from the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR), representatives from local county councils, European Movement Ireland and The Wheel. The panel gave presentations and lively discussions on the event themes - how the EU delivers for local communities, how local communities can engage with the EU, and how citizen engagement informs and influences EU policymaking - providing examples of how communities across the country have already benefited from EU policies and programmes. The events also featured experts on citizen engagement from across Europe who discussed ways to best ensure that local communities can participate in the EU process.

Building on the relationships developed with local authorities through the roadshows organised in 2020, EMRA and the IREO continued to guide and accompany local authorities in their EU-related activities. EMRA and the IREO provided advice to Dublin city council in the preparation of their first EU programme participation strategy and took part in the launch event of the strategy.

URBACT contact point

Another way for the Assembly to play the role of resource hub for Irish stakeholders is through our role as National Contact Point for the Urbact programme which promotes integrated sustainable urban development.

This role involves communicating about the programme and disseminating its results, advising, and assisting Irish stakeholders willing to participate in URBACT activities and accompanying Irish participants in URBACT projects in the implementation of their activities.

Throughout the year, the EMRA engaged with Irish towns and cities engaged in URBACT networks. An URBACT Transfer Networks Lesson Sharing Event was organised in April to provide an overview of URBACT, its mission, methods, networks and showcase the success of URBACT in Ireland.

This was a successful year for EMRA as, in addition to the NUP regular activities, Irish towns were included in three URBACT pilot projects; the Transfer Networks 2nd Wave, the Sustainable Development Localisation (SDG) Network and National Practice Transfer Initiative (NPTI). For Transfer Networks 2nd Wave, Carlow became part of the RU:RBAN network and Trim (Meath) became a partner on the SDG Localisation Network (renamed Global Cities for Change). Launched in June, the NPTI involves Cork City transferring their good practices from the Urbact “Playful paradigm” project to the five Irish towns of Donegal town, Rush, Rathdrum, Sligo town and Portlaoise.





**Grow as a
Region**

Grow as a Region

In 2020 the Corporate Section continued to provide the administrative and organisation support services for the Assembly and the ongoing management of same. Functions such as Finance, Corporate Services and Human resources are delivered in line with organisational objectives.

Communicating and showcasing EMRA's assets

Website and social media

In 2021 we have continued to expand our online presence on various social media channels. We currently have accounts with three platforms:



Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly



@EMRAAssembly &
@IrishRegions_EU



Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly

Twitter is the most important dissemination platform for EMRA as most of our stakeholders and partners have a presence there. Our Twitter audience has grown by 13% between January and December 2021 and we have reached 705 followers by the end of the year. The growth was fully organic (non-paid for). Our Facebook page had 204 followers and our LinkedIn profile had 180 followers on 31st Dec 2021.

Throughout 2021 we have continued to maintain our website www.emra.ie and update it with relevant information particularly during the Covid-19 crisis. We used the website to disseminate information about our involvement in the EU Interreg projects and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Raising the profile of the strengths of local and regional Government

A highlight of 2021 was the participation in online events for the European Week of Regions and Cities in October. Cllr Eamon Dooley, on behalf of EMRA, participated in an event entitled 'Smart Citizens for Decarbonisation'. This event saw EMRA partner with EURADA, University of Coruña, the Just Transition Institute of Greece, ARRSA, and the Developmental Agency of the Lyon Region of France and explored the vision and role of local and regional authorities to facilitate citizens' participation in decarbonisation planning processes.

The biggest single event of the year was the ENCORE conference held on the 24th September 2021. The conference was promoted by EMRA as well as other member regions of the ENCORE network as well as EU Commissioner, Mairead McGuinness and Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity, who spoke at the event. A press release was produced and circulated to relevant media outlets in the region.

EMRA contributed to The Irish Times supplement *Future of our Cities* with an article titled *Taking the local view*, published on 20th May 2021. The publication was used to enhance the profile of the Assembly and explain the role it plays in the context of the Irish planning landscape and the region's development and growth opportunities.

IREO Communication

The IREO published 4 editions of the newsletter during 2021. This bi-monthly newsletter keeps Irish Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies up to speed with the latest developments on the work of the IREO, the EU policy arena as well as the EU funding landscape. The newsletter highlights the important work of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and showcases EU projects and initiatives involving Irish local authorities.

As of 31st December, the IREO Twitter account had 1469 followers and 145 email addresses signed up to the newsletter.

Corporate, HR and Finance

In 2021 the Corporate Section continued to provide the administrative and organisation support services for the Assembly and the ongoing management of same. Functions such as Finance, Corporate Services and Human resources are delivered in line with organisational objectives.

The Corporate Plan 2019-2024 presents the functions of the Assembly and sets out EMRA's vision, objectives, and values. In line with the Corporate Plan, over the course of 2021 the Regional Assembly pursued three main strategic goals:

1. Drive the regional agenda by ensuring ongoing and meaningful engagement with stakeholders to ensure coherence of regional development and shape policy-making
2. Deliver concrete impact on the ground by delivering projects and be a resource and support for the region
3. Grow as a region by raising our regional profile and strengthening the organisation



Those goals are translated annually into a Programme of Works. The 2021 Programme of Works was adopted by the Assembly in January 2021 and circulated to the constituent Local Authorities.

Reports on the progress towards the achievement of these goals are reported to Members quarterly through updates on the Programme of Works and every year through in the Annual report. The 2020 annual report was drafted by the executive team and adopted by the elected members at the June meeting.



Due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and related public health restrictions, all Assembly meetings were held online. This was facilitated by migration of EMRA IT network to Office365. Necessary arrangements were made to facilitate online meetings and provide technical assistance to Members and staff.

Human Resources

EMRA continued to support the Elected Members and staff throughout the year and addressed challenges arising of the extended impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Remote working arrangement continued for all staff for the whole year.

The Human Resources Section continued to implement the adopted Workforce Plan for EMRA and worked with management across the organisation to deliver on their resourcing requirements in the context of the objectives of the Corporate Plan 2019-2024. 2021 saw the introduction in the Assembly of a Teams Planning Process aimed at better structuring and planning the work of the overall Assembly and of each individual staff member and at supporting the career development of all staff.

Following a successful recruitment campaign held in 2021, a Clerical Officer was appointed in February 2021 to support the Corporate Section. A Project Officer was also appointed for the Next2Met project in June 2021. Additional recruitment campaigns were launched to be finalised in 2022.

Human Resources engaged with the Local Government Management Agency's HR Network which facilitates knowledge exchange in relation to HR policies.

Migration to CORE HR Version 28 has been successfully completed.

Staff members undertook necessary training throughout the year in areas of Financial Management System, Health and Safety and application of internal policies.

Staff Support Services

In 2021, EMRA maintained its provision of staff support services as part of an overall employee assistance programme. Usage Reports were produced on a quarterly basis as part of the ongoing commitment to staff well-being during the pandemic.

GDPR

The Data Protection Officer provided training for staff to gain an understanding of GDPR and how best meet their specific obligations. The DPO continued to provide advice in relation to GDPR throughout 2021.

Freedom of Information

During 2021, the FOI officer co-ordinated management of requests received under the Freedom of Information legislation.

In total, the Assembly received five FOI requests in 2021.

Finance

The main functions of the Finance section in 2021 included:

- Preparation of the Annual Financial Statement 2020 (Adopted by the Members in April 2021)
- Financial Management, procurement and control
- Payment, recoupment and reconciliation of accounts
- Financial administration of the IREO in Brussels
- Administration of EMRA payroll and superannuation through the local government payroll and superannuation shared services centre (MyPay)
- Preparation of the annual Budget for 2022 which was adopted by Members in November 2021.

The Corporate team facilitated the annual audit performed by the government auditor which took place in November and December 2021.

Regional Assembly energy usage

There are no individual meters installed in Ballymun Civic Centre offices, hence we report only on the usage throughout the entire building.

There was a slight increase in electricity and water usage, and a slight decrease in the gas usage in the building.

Utility	2020	2021	%
Electricity (Mw)	1167	1198	2.60%
Water (M3)	604	658	8.90%
Gas (M3)	190482	186115	-2.30%

Action undertaken by facilities management in 2021 included:

- Replacing fluorescent lamps with LED lamps where possible
- Lowering the outside stat controlling the Gas boilers to switch off the heating for the building in the springtime.
- 2 passenger lifts were replaced and now have more energy efficient motors.



Annexes

List of staff

Jim Conway

Director

Malachy Bradley,

Assistant Director and Senior Planner
(Resigned 05/09/2021)

Laure Antoniotti,

EU and Corporate Affairs Manager

Teresa Lennon,

Head of the IREO

Juan Martinez (career break),

Economist for the three Assemblies

John Daly,

Economist for the three Assemblies
(Resigned 27/06/2021)

Pauline Riordan,

Senior Executive Planner (Resigned 01/11/2021)

Clare Bannon,

Senior Executive Planner

Nicci Nolan,

Senior Executive Planner

Michael Brennan,

EU affairs officer

Travis O'Doherty (Secondment),

Research and Policy Officer

Brid Greenan,

EU Project Officer (Resigned 07/05/2021)

Owen Douglas,

EU Project Officer

Simon Musial,

Senior Staff Officer

Agata Kolodynska,

EU Support Officer (Resigned 30/11/2021)

Helena Stromberg,

EU Support Officer

Alan Lambe,

Assistant Staff Officer

Ross Higgins,

Clerical Officer

Geraldine Kenny,

Clerical Officer

Sarah Campbell,

Clerical Officer

Annual Financial Statement 2020

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 December 2020

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly		
Expenditure	EMRA2020	EMRA2019
Salaries	802,055	819,013
Office Equipment & Supplies	6,211	7,492
Information Technology	42,852	10,828
Communications & Postage	12,895	6,102
Members Annual Allowances	35,016	32,751
Travel & Subsistence Allowances:		
I - Members Travel & Subsistence	203	3,389
II - Members conferences	400	3,488
III - Staff Travel and Subsistence	11,336	56,304
Rent	69,279	75,413
Insurance	0	8,884
Training	6,698	5,755
Consultancy & professional Fees	26,425	5,391
Facilities, Energy & Rates charges	71,140	49,816
Advertising	2,389	8,630
Audit Fee	6,349	6,269
Miscellaneous	4,791	8,486
EU Affairs & !RO (COR)	176,898	142,803
EU Operational Programme	0	7,248
I.E. Network	0	34,289
URBACT	23,921	46,671
Urbanarea	0	2
Next2Met Interreg Programme	72,791	10,161
Progress Interreg project	68,757	7,519
RSES	28,899	103,780
SP!	0	297
Expenditure total	1,469,304	1,460,780
Income		
Local Authorities Contributions	1,238,027	1,188,451
Other Income	89,005	41,980
Superannuation	21,653	23,356
Committee of the Regions	177,604	144,797
COR Misc	857	791
Resilens	28,874	9,905
IE Network	0	95,618
EU Operational Programme	0	7,458
URBACT	23,921	48,004
Next2Met Interreg Programme	62,554	7,670
Progress Interreg project	58,596	5,724
RSES	24,937	17,964
Receipts total	1,726,027	1,591,719
Difference between Income + Expenditure	256,723	130,938
Opening balance at 01/01/2020	833,763	702,825
Closing Balance at end of year Surplus	1,090,486	833,763

Deirdre Heney

Councillor Deirdre Heney,
Cathaoirleach

Mr. Jim Conway

Mr. Jim Conway,
Director

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2020

	2020	2019
Fixed Assets		
IT Equip	€5,000	€5,000
Furniture & Fixtures	€0	€0
Heritage Assets	€10,000	€10,000
	€15,000	€15,000
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	€870,290	€522,129
Debtors	€383,000	€472,238
Petty Cash	€183	€376
Prepayments	€0	€0
	€1,253,473	€994,742
Current Liabilities		
Creditors & Accruals	€162,986	€160,979
Deferred income	€0	€0
Bank	€0	€0
	€162,986	€160,979
Net Current Assets	€1,090,486	€833,763
Net Assets	€1,105,486	€848,763
Financed by		
Balance@ 01/01/20	€833,763	€702,825
General Reserve	€0	€0
Inherited Fixed Assets from old DRA	€15,000	€15,000
	€1,105,486	€848,763

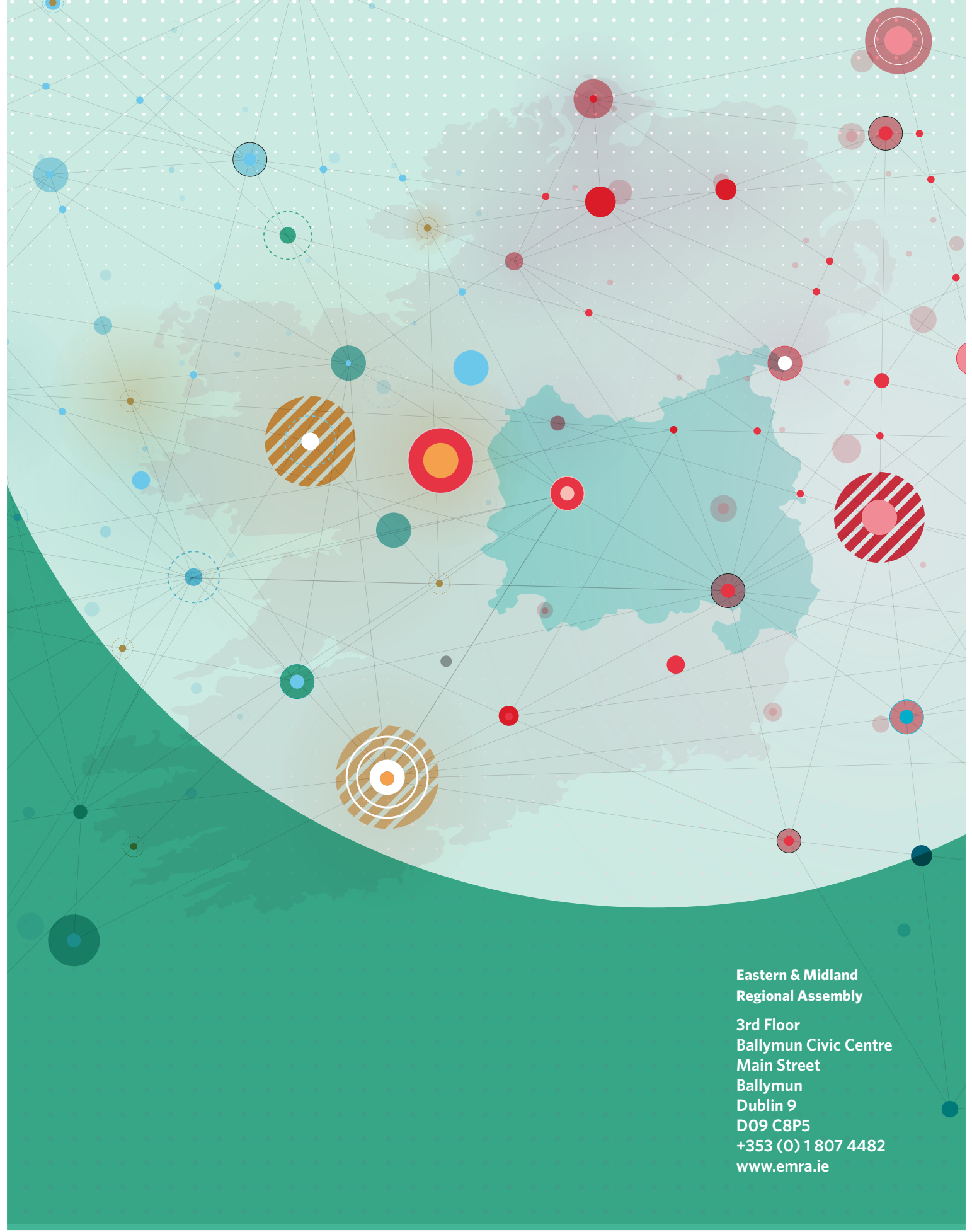
Members Allowances & Expenses 2021

Members (Cllr.)	Name	Surname	Fixed Allowance	Training	Committee of Regions	Conferences/ Training
Daryl Barron (Dublin)	Daryl	Barron	€ 362.53	€ -	€ -	€ -
Emma Blain (Dublin)	Emma	Blain	€ 362.53	€ -	€ -	€ -
Aoife Breslin (Kildare)(CoR)	Aoife	Breslin	€ 1,169.18	€ -	€ -	€ -
Fintan Brett (Kildare)	Fintan	Brett	€ 694.53	€ -	€ -	€ -
John Browne (Longford)	John	Browne	€ 2,014.50	€ -	€ -	€ -
Emma Coffey (Louth)	Emma	Coffey	€ 877.64	€ -	€ -	€ -
Avril Cronin (Wicklow)	Avril	Cronin	€ 980.31	€ -	€ -	€ -
Eamon Dooley (Offaly)	Eamon	Dooley	€ 2,345.27	€ -	€ -	€ -
Laura Donaghy (Dublin)	Laura	Donaghy	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Caroline Dwane (Laois)(CoR)	Caroline	Dwane	€ 1,536.71	€ -	€ 96.75	€ -
Kate Feeney (Dublin)	Kate	Feeney	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Brian Fitzgerald (Meath)	Brian	Fitzgerald	€ 694.54	€ -	€ -	€ -
Deirdre Forde (Cork)(CoR)	Deirdre	Forde	€ -	€ -	€ 269.87	€ -
Tom Fortune (Wicklow)	Tom	Fortune	€ 625.57	€ -	€ -	€ -
Catherine Fitzgerald (Laois)	Catherine	Fitzgerald	€ 1,608.76	€ -	€ -	€ -
Eddie Fitzpatrick (Offaly)	Eddie	Fitzpatrick	€ 1,408.08	€ -	€ -	€ -
Mary Freehill (Dublin)	Mary	Freehill	€ 566.44	€ -	€ -	€ -
James (Jim) Gildea (Dublin)	James (Jim)	Gildea	€ 576.31	€ -	€ -	€ -
Alison Gilliland (Dublin)	Alison	Gilliland	€ 566.43	€ -	€ -	€ -
Mary Hanafin (Dublin)	Mary	Hanafin	€ 617.75	€ -	€ -	€ -
David Healy (Dublin)	David	Healy	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Deirdre Heney (Dublin)	Deirdre	Heney	€ 566.44	€ -	€ -	€ -
Deirdre Heney (Cathaoirleachs Allowance)	Deirdre	Heney	€ 5,850.00	€ -	€ -	€ -
Janet Horner (Dublin)	Janet	Horner	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Vincent Jackson (Dublin)	Vincent	Jackson	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Pamela Kearns (Dublin)	Pamela	Kearns	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Conor Keelan (Louth)	Conor	Keelan	€ 570.83	€ -	€ -	€ -
Dermot Lacey (Dublin)	Dermot	Lacey	€ 566.45	€ -	€ -	€ -
Brigid Manton (Dublin)	Brigid	Manton	€ 628.50	€ -	€ -	€ -
Tony McCormack (Offaly)	Tony	McCormack	€ 1,683.72	€ -	€ -	€ -
Padraig McEvoy (Kildare)	Padraig	McEvoy	€ 763.53	€ -	€ -	€ -
Declan McDonnell (Galway)(CoR)	Declan	McDonnell	€ -	€ -	€ 341.52	€ -
Paddy Meade (Meath)	Paddy	Meade	€ 1,095.66	€ -	€ -	€ -
Aisling Moran (Laois)	Aisling	Moran	€ 1,481.58	€ -	€ -	€ -
Micheal Murphy (Tipperary)(CoR)	Micheal	Murphy	€ -	€ -	€ 881.39	€ -
Suzanne McEaney (Dublin)	Suzanne	Mc Eaney	€ 309.93	€ -	€ -	€ -
Colm Murray (Longford)	Colm	Murray	€ 1,977.75	€ -	€ -	€ -
Peter O'Brien (Dublin)	Peter	O'Brien	€ 566.44	€ -	€ -	€ -
Robert O'Donoghue	Robert	O'Donoghue	€ 177.91	€ -	€ -	€ -
Damien O'Reilly (Meath)	Damien	O'Reilly	€ 586.14	€ -	€ -	€ -
Aengus O'Rourke (WestMeath)	Aengus	O'Rourke	€ 2,161.51	€ -	€ -	€ -
Robert Power (Kildare)	Robert	Power	€ 812.79	€ -	€ -	€ -
Gerry Walsh (Dublin)	Gerry	Walsh	€ 800.48	€ -	€ -	€ -









**Eastern & Midland
Regional Assembly**

3rd Floor
Ballymun Civic Centre
Main Street
Ballymun
Dublin 9
D09 C8P5
+353 (0) 1 807 4482
www.emra.ie



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