

From the Office of the Minister



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**INV78/15**

Mr Patsy McGlone, MLA  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
BT4 3XX

29 April 2015

Dear Patsy

During the Question and Answer session which followed my Assembly Statement made on 23 March 2015, in relation to Trade and Business Development, you enquired as to whether figures were available for the percentage of public sector contracts in Northern Ireland that go on to micro-businesses, i.e. which have fewer than 10 employees.

You also enquired as to whether any details were available, relating to the net benefits to micro-businesses from the allocation of such contracts.

Having followed up on this issue I can now state that in Northern Ireland, the Central Procurement Directorate, an agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel, provides an annual procurement summary of the majority of public sector tenders awarded by Centres of Procurement Expertise. In the year 2012/13 Micro Enterprises were awarded 560 (18.9%) of contracts awarded in Northern Ireland. In value terms this represented slightly over £107million (6.3%) of the total value of contract awards. While this figure is slightly down on the previous year, it would suggest that micro enterprises have successfully participated in the Northern Ireland public tendering market over the past period.

Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) publishes annual Procurement Activity Reports'. These Reports include data relating to micro businesses and cover the following headlines:-

- Total procurement expenditure made by the public sector;
- Top categories of expenditure;
- Total number and value of contracts awarded;
- Size of business for contracts awarded;
- Location of suppliers for contracts awarded; and
- Information about the economic, social and environmental aspects of the contracts awarded.

If you would like further information please see the attached link to CPD's website [http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/procurement-2/cpd/cpd-customers/procurement\\_activity\\_reports.htm](http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/procurement-2/cpd/cpd-customers/procurement_activity_reports.htm)

InterTradelreland operates an extensive outreach programme where all of its services are promoted to small businesses in Northern Ireland. In relation to Public Tendering ITI's interventions seek to assist SMEs, including micro-enterprises, to improve their capability, increase visibility of opportunities and address accessibility issues.

InterTradelreland's programme of activities for 2015 includes:-

- Fifteen standard Go-2-Tender workshops & three advanced workshops which provide a structured programme of support including class based and on site mentoring;
- Two Meet the Buyer events in Belfast and Dublin respectively. The Belfast event (scheduled for 17 June, 2015) will have a significant number of Northern Ireland public buyers present, allowing SMEs to learn about procurement pipelines, tendering opportunities, EU legislation and the introduction of the new eTendering system in Northern Ireland;
- A Consortia facilitation service will deliver a number of seminars on how to build successful consortia as well as providing direct mentoring support to SMEs to undertake the process.

Additionally, InterTradelreland deliver a dedicated Micro Enterprise Programme (ELEVATE) which helps small businesses to take advantage of export opportunities in the public and private markets in the Republic of Ireland.

Whilst InterTradelreland has evaluated its Go-2-Tender Programme, including the net benefits to SMEs, this assessment has not specifically identified micro-enterprises.

I trust this answers the questions you raised. I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be sent to the Speaker's Office and a copy will be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely



**ARLENE FOSTER MLA**  
**Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment**