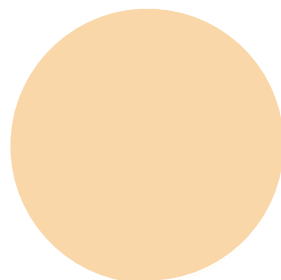
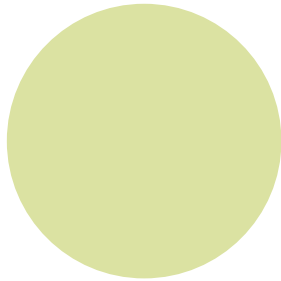
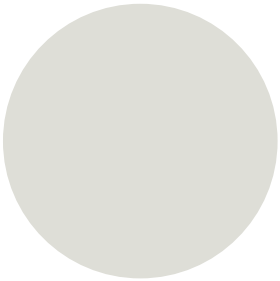
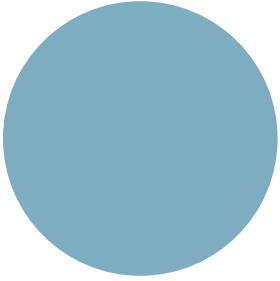


## Strategy Statement 2022-2024



# Our Vision:

Healthy, safe and  
productive lives and  
enterprises



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# 01

# Foreword



## Foreword by Damien English TD, Minister of State for Enterprise, Trade and Employment

The Health and Safety Authority has a wide and varied mandate including acting as the national body with responsibility for protecting workers from work-related incidents, injuries and ill health. It acts as the market surveillance authority for chemicals and industrial products, and protects all citizens from the risks arising from the use of chemicals. The Authority provides the national accreditation service through the Irish National Accreditation Body (INAB).

This strategy clearly sets out the Health and Safety Authority's priorities and goals across all of these important areas, whilst taking into account the different challenges that have faced Ireland over recent years and will be facing the Health and Safety Authority over the next three years. These include emerging from the COVID-19 public health pandemic, dealing with the continued fallout from the UK exiting the EU, addressing new ways of working together with remote working, responding to the climate crisis and also the increasing use of artificial intelligence in the workplace and the challenges this can present for the work of the Authority.

I am pleased that the National Strategy for Accreditation 2022-2026 is now finalised and will be implemented by INAB. Through implementation of this strategy, there will be widespread public recognition and awareness of accreditation and a clear path for how Ireland can avail of the many benefits of accreditation, including facilitating international trade and increasing productivity. Accreditation will be recognised centrally for providing trust and confidence in Irish enterprise, trade and public services enabling Irish goods and services to be "tested and certified once, accepted everywhere".

Under occupational safety and health, the Authority will continue to focus on high risk sectors and hazards which cause fatalities, incidents, injuries and ill health. Equally, it will emphasise the need to address occupational health hazards, in particular those associated with psychosocial and ergonomic risks, and exposure to chemical and biological agents. Through the increased funding provided by Government, I am pleased to note that the Health and Safety Authority is establishing a new occupational health division to give further emphasis on this important area. One of the key learnings from COVID-19 has been the importance of strong communication and dialogue between the employer and employee and it is good to see this emphasised in the strategy where the role of the Safety Representative is to be promoted.

As the EU implements its ambitious Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability Towards a Toxic-Free Environment, the Health and Safety Authority will be leading the Irish input through its national competent authority role as well as its membership of key EU Commission and European Chemicals Agency committees. The requirement for market surveillance of industrial products and chemicals coming into the Irish market is more important than ever now that the UK has left the EU and I am pleased to see that this role is highlighted in this strategy.

Over the course of the previous Strategy 2019-2021, the Health and Safety Authority, and its staff have significantly contributed to the national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK exit from the EU. The Government recognises the importance of the role of the Health and Safety Authority across all its mandates and I look forward to working with the Authority to support and enable it meet its vision of healthy, safe and productive lives and enterprises over the course of this strategy.

**Damien English TD**

Minister of State for Enterprise, Trade and Employment



# 02

## Introduction



**We are pleased to present the Health and Safety Authority’s Strategy Statement 2022-2024. This is the sixth statement of strategy prepared by the Authority under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.**

This strategy will be implemented in an Ireland that is in the process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and its unprecedented impact on society, workplaces and employment. There are also changes in work practices, technology and innovation both in the near and longer term in addition to the continued uncertainties arising from the UK’s exit from the European Union.

An analysis of the goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set for the 2019-2021 strategy shows strong evidence of achievement of overall goals under each of the main strategic priorities. However, existing challenges which were identified in the 2019-2021 strategy remain, including safety in agriculture and construction, and long-term occupational health risks such as work-related stress.

There are also new challenges, including the impacts of the pandemic in accelerating the move to remote/hybrid working, the continued growth of the ‘gig economy’, the particular needs of vulnerable workers and migrant groups, and the impact of psychosocial issues in the workplace.

In implementing this strategy, the Authority will strive to address all opportunities and challenges while achieving tangible outcomes in occupational safety and health (OSH), accreditation, chemicals, and market surveillance. The key to a successful and productive economy and workforce is a commitment to safer and healthier working lives for all.

As a regulator, the Authority monitors, inspects and enforces, and also promotes, advises, encourages, supports and educates.



## The development of strong alliances and networks with EU and international colleagues and stakeholders will be a key focus

We will continue to offer enterprises, employers and employees a range of tools and supports to enable them to meet their statutory obligations for the goods they manufacture and/or import, as well as ensuring they keep themselves and their workplaces safe. We will also continue to inspect those enterprises in sectors that are high risk and where there is evidence of non-compliance. Where necessary, the appropriate enforcement action will be taken. A robust system for reporting, data gathering and analysis will be put in place to identify and target those who are not complying.

Partnership has always been at the forefront of how we promote compliance, whether through the operation of advisory committees, agreed work programmes or the provision of guidance and advice. As a tripartite Board, with representatives from employee and employer stakeholders as members, we recognise the importance of constructive and co-operative engagement in meeting the goal of safe and healthy workplaces for all.

We believe engagement between employees and employers is also important to meet this goal in each workplace and we encourage the use of mechanisms such as the safety representative model to support this. We will continue to leverage this goodwill and engagement to empower relevant bodies or stakeholders to drive a culture of positive behaviour in line with occupational safety and health, chemicals and market surveillance regulatory requirements.

The development of strong alliances and networks with EU and international colleagues and stakeholders will be a key focus. In addition, we will adapt our longstanding working relationship with UK and Northern Ireland colleagues as we respond to the changes brought about by the UK exit from the EU.

Through the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB), we will implement the National Strategy for Accreditation 2022-2026 and deliver the vision for accreditation to be recognised as central in providing trust and confidence in Irish enterprise, trade and public services.

As a public body that operates and regulates across a broad and diverse mandate, the Authority plays a unique role in ensuring the safety of workers, services, consumers and products in the private and public sectors as well as the environment. A key element of our strategy implementation will be to ensure that this unique role is demonstrated and communicated to our government and enterprise partners in order to maximise the benefits to society and the economy from accreditation and regulatory compliance.

We look forward to working with individuals, partners and stakeholders to realise our vision of healthy, safe and productive lives and enterprises in Ireland.

**Tom Coughlan**, Chairperson

**Dr Sharon McGuinness**, Chief Executive Officer



**Tom Coughlan**



**Dr. Sharon McGuinness**

# 03

## Who We Are and What We Do

The Authority was established under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989, which has since been replaced by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

Additional functions have been conferred on the Authority since then under the Chemicals Acts 2008 and 2010, and other legislation. In 2014, the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) was included under the Authority's functions.

The Authority reports to the Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail under delegated authority from the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The Authority's main legislative role is outlined in the table below.



	Occupational safety and health	Chemicals	Market surveillance	Accreditation
Principal Legislation	Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005	Chemicals Acts 2008 and 2010	Relevant EU product safety directives and EU Market Surveillance Regulation 2019/1020	EU Regulation 765/2008  Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
Legislative Role	Protection of workers and those affected by a work activity from occupational injury and illness	Protection of human health and the environment  Enhancing competitiveness and innovation  Ensuring the free movement of chemicals on the internal market	Ensure compliance of products with harmonised EU requirements to protect workers and consumers from unsafe articles and products	To accredit organisations to international standards for technical competence in testing, calibration, inspection, verification and certification

# 04

## Strategy Context and Direction

**The Authority's strategy for the period 2022-2024 has been developed in the context of rapidly evolving external factors, which are being shaped in particular by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other key developments in Ireland and across the EU that are shaping the strategy in different ways are summarised below.**

The ongoing uncertainty around the ultimate consequences of the UK exit from the EU on Irish enterprises will present a challenge for the Authority in the coming years, particularly in relation to increased demand for accreditation and the increased requirement for market surveillance of products coming from Great Britain. Any divergence of the UK from EU standards will also have implications for the Authority's work in terms of market surveillance and chemicals regulation.

Expected changes in the structure of the economy at sectoral level, including in the construction and agriculture sectors, will impact on the appropriate targeted deployment of the Authority's resources. Another key external factor concerns the changing demographics of the Irish workforce, including an ageing workforce, as well as increasing numbers of vulnerable workers and migrant workers.

The likely continued prevalence of COVID-19 will remain a national issue with potential longer-term implications in relation to addressing public health considerations in the workplace, as well as wider infectious disease prevention and control. This will be particularly relevant for sectors such as healthcare where both public health and occupational safety and health measures will continue to be needed.

The broader impact of the pandemic in accelerating the trend towards remote/hybrid working arrangements will also be an important consideration for this strategy. It will also include the health impacts of sedentary working and the implications for how the Authority conducts inspections, which may involve employers and employees seeking clarification on roles under these new arrangements.

We have seen throughout the pandemic the importance of good communication between employees and employers. As we emerge from the pandemic, strong communication and use of mechanisms such as the safety representative model, will be important to meet the goal of safe and healthy workplaces for all.

The increased focus on occupational health including psychosocial and ergonomic hazards will require additional consideration particularly in light of the promotion of remote and flexible working arrangements across all sectors.

Advancements in technology and innovation continue to exert a range of influences. This will require the Authority to remain agile in responding to related developments over the course of this strategy. Examples of such advancements with implications for occupational safety and health include Artificial Intelligence (AI); the shift to the green economy in terms of new hazards from additional wind farms and solar panel farms; and the safety considerations arising from the use of new fuels such as hydrogen and biomethane.

The continued growth of the 'gig economy' is also a key factor in all sectors, but particularly in the logistics and retail sectors. Additional issues include the need to address implications arising from the new Code of Practice on Determining Employment Status, to identify employers and workplace duty holders, and to differentiate between self-employed and subcontracted workers.



**The continued growth of the ‘gig economy’ is also a key factor in all sectors, but particularly in the logistics and retail sectors**



In the course of this strategy, we will also need to meet a number of Government strategies and initiatives as set out below. We will meet our objectives for Safe Work-Related Road Use under the Government’s Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 establishes a positive duty on public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of staff and the people to whom services are provided. It also requires “an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues”. This assessment is required to be accessible to the public. This Public Sector Duty is consistent with the mandate and core values of the Authority.

The Authority will continue to emphasise and promote equality and human rights through our day to day work, whether in delivering key public services, developing policy and legislation in an inclusive human rights compliant manner, or in doing our work in an efficient, fair way with integrity and respect for human dignity. We will also through our core values ensure that these duties are emphasised for our staff. Furthermore, we will seek to exceed the target that at least 6% of the Authority’s staff should represent persons with disabilities, in line with the Government’s Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities.

The Authority also commits to alignment with broader public sector central policies. Building on ‘Our Public Service (OPS) 2020’, the Irish Government is currently embarking on OPS2030, which will be a new framework for development and innovation in Ireland’s public service. The main goal of OPS2030 will be to ensure that Ireland’s public service is fit-for-purpose to 2030 and beyond.



**The broader impact of the pandemic in accelerating the trend towards remote/hybrid working arrangements will also be an important consideration for this strategy**

# 05

## Vision, Mission, Mandate and Values

### Vision

**Healthy, safe and productive lives and enterprises.**

### Mission

**We regulate and promote work-related safety, health and welfare and the safe use of chemicals and products. We provide the national accreditation service.**

### Mandate

- **To regulate the safety, health and welfare of people at work and those affected by work activities.**
- **To promote improvement in the safety, health and welfare of people at work and those affected by work activities.**
- **To regulate and promote the safe manufacture, use, placing on the market, trade, supply, storage and transport of chemicals.**
- **To act as a surveillance authority in relation to relevant single European market legislation.**
- **To act as the national accreditation body for Ireland.**



**In the longer term we want to realise a safe and healthy working life for people in Ireland and to foster an environment where businesses can grow and prosper**

## Values

### Our **CORE** Values:

- **Collaboration**

We listen, consult and collaborate with employees, employers, stakeholders and partners.

- **Openness**

We embrace diverse perspectives while striving to be inclusive in all that we do. We encourage open and honest communication.

- **Responsiveness**

We adapt to changing circumstances and drive continuous improvement through innovation. We use data to inform what we do, and we evaluate and share learnings.

- **Ethics**

We uphold the highest professional, governance and ethical standards. We will earn trust by being accountable and delivering our services in a fair, independent and transparent manner.

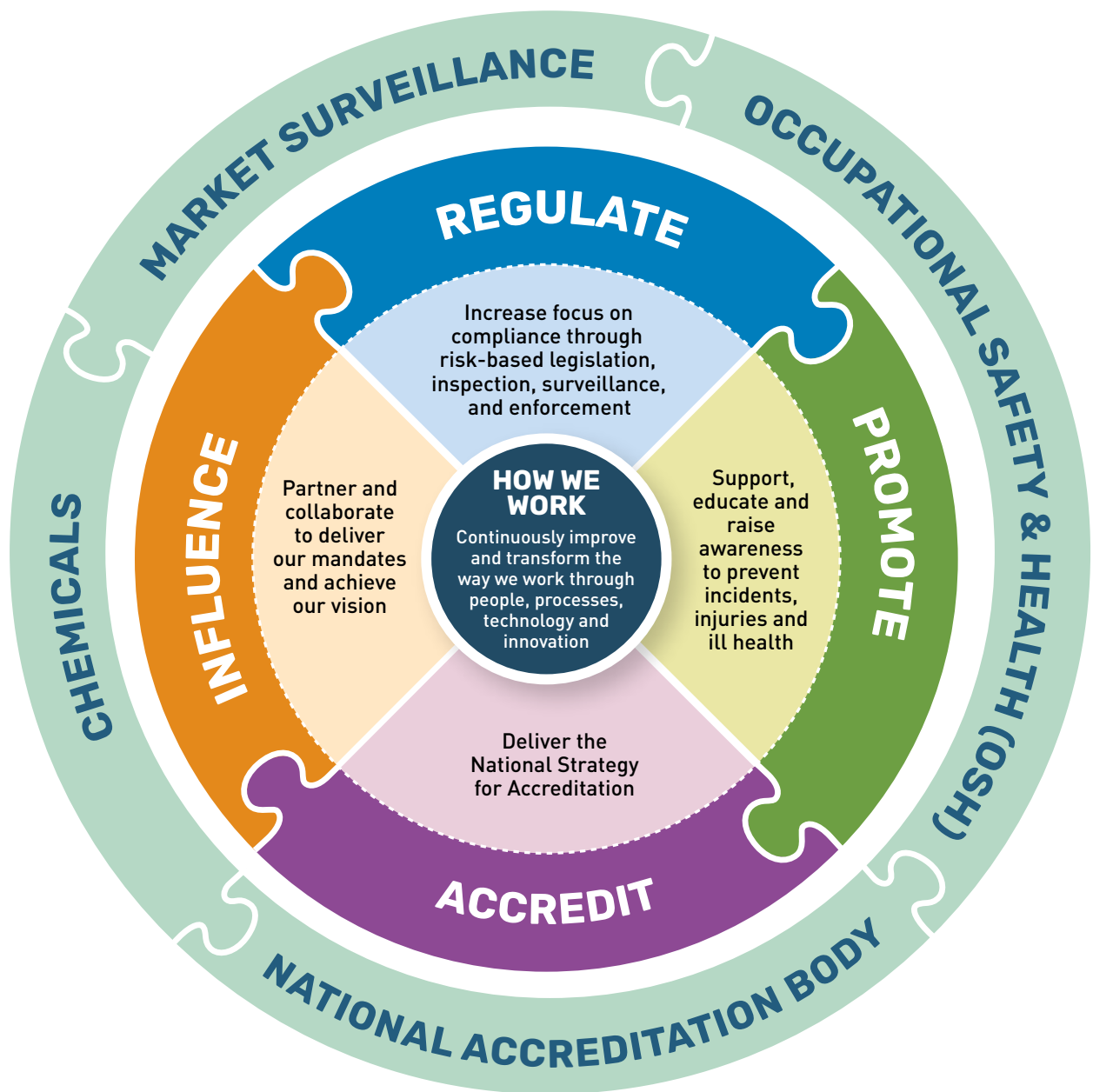
06

# Strategic Priorities, Goals and Expected Outcomes

## Strategic Priorities

<b>REGULATE:</b>	We will increase focus on compliance through risk-based legislation, inspection, surveillance, and enforcement.
<b>PROMOTE:</b>	We will support, educate and raise awareness to prevent incidents, injuries and ill health.
<b>INFLUENCE:</b>	We will partner and collaborate to deliver our mandates and achieve our vision.
<b>ACCREDIT:</b>	We will deliver the National Strategy for Accreditation.
<b>HOW WE WORK:</b>	We will continuously improve and transform the way we work through people, processes, technology and innovation.





The following pages set out the HSA's goals by strategic priority and also reflects specific goals across our mandate

# Regulate

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## We will:

- advise and, as necessary, make regulatory and policy proposals to the Minister,
- apply a risk-based approach to targeting of sectors, hazards and risks, and
- take proportionate enforcement action.

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## Within our occupational safety and health mandate we will:

- increase focus in regulations and inspections on compliance with psychosocial and occupational health hazards and risks,
- increase and broaden the inspection programme focusing on sectors with higher risks of incidents and fatalities,
- target activities in sectors in the gig economy, and where vulnerable workers and migrant workers are employed, and
- increase focus on the reporting of incidents, dangerous occurrences and fatalities.

---

## Within our chemicals mandate we will:

- undertake the lead national competent authority functions,
- ensure alignment with priorities of the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability Towards a Toxic-Free Environment,
- continue to respond to national and EU impacts of the UK exit from the EU, and
- ensure duty holders comply with international, European and national regulatory requirements.

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## Within our market surveillance mandate we will:

- ensure relevant industrial and chemical products comply with Union harmonised legislation,
- act as the lead national competent authority for relevant industrial products and chemicals,
- enforce market surveillance requirements of products sold on the Irish market, including those sold to consumers, and
- continue to respond to national and EU impacts of the UK exit from the EU.

# Promote

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## We will:

- continue to increase visibility and encourage uptake of the Authority's online tools, resources and services, and
- provide learning resources to the formal education system and for the workplace.

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## Within our occupational safety and health mandate we will:

- prioritise and promote all aspects of the role of Safety Representatives and increase the provision of necessary supports and advice,
- provide increased guidance and advice on psychosocial and occupational health hazards and risks,
- provide increased supports for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) including highlighting the business case for good health and safety practice,
- deepen levels of engagement with employees in the gig economy as well as migrant workers and vulnerable workers,
- provide guidance and tools to support employers and employees implement remote and flexible working practices, and
- undertake awareness raising campaigns and initiatives to promote a greater understanding of workplace risks, particularly emerging and long latency health risks.

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## Within our chemicals mandate we will:

- continue to deliver awareness raising campaigns and initiatives for workplaces and consumers to address the dangers of hazardous chemicals,
- engage with enterprises and representative organisations on the use of safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals, and
- provide advice, support and guidance to businesses to enable them meet new EU and international regulations.

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## Within our market surveillance mandate we will:

- inform those placing chemical and industrial products on the market of their duties and provide appropriate support and advice, and
- educate employers, employees and consumers on how to identify safe products for use in their workplace and at home.

# Influence

## We will:

- co-operate and partner with stakeholders and regulatory bodies to deliver our mandate and achieve our vision, and
- engage actively and constructively in EU and international groups to advance national and Authority policy.

## Within our occupational safety and health mandate we will:

- drive better reporting and recording of occupational illness and ill health, and further develop mechanisms to ensure data is shared,
- play a lead role in setting and delivering on the EU agenda on occupational safety and health,
- proactively engage with the self-employed and SMEs to increase standards of compliance, and
- engage with employers to advocate for vulnerable and migrant workers and ensure good health and safety practice.

## Within our chemicals mandate we will:

- support the new European chemicals policy development, including the European Green Deal and EU Chemicals Strategy,
- actively engage in the planned redefining of EU Chemical Regulations under the new EU Chemicals Strategy, and
- play a lead role in relevant EU Commission and European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) committees and working groups.

## Within our market surveillance mandate we will:

- engage with and influence European and national market surveillance bodies on legislative and other developments.



**Within our chemicals mandate we will actively engage in the planned redefining of EU Chemical Regulations under the new EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**



# Accredit

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## We will:

- inform and influence national policy to incorporate accreditation into decision making,
- promote awareness and engagement to enhance recognition and understanding of the benefits of accreditation,
- grow uptake and application of accreditation, and
- provide a robust structure, efficient processes and the necessary resources for INAB to underpin and effectively deliver the National Strategy.

# How We Work

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## We will:

- equip and support our staff with the necessary skills and tools to manage the increased areas of focus and deliver quality services,
- adapt our organisational model to address remote and flexible working,
- develop an evidence-based, data-driven organisation, and target our allocation of resources based on best practice approaches to research, analysis and evaluation, and
- introduce the necessary technology to improve efficiencies and increase delivery of quality services.

## Strategic Outcomes

To show that the Authority is meeting the overall strategic priorities, the following outcomes have been identified.

Strategic Priorities	Expected Outcomes
<b>Regulate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Effective holding to account of those who fail in their duties under legislation enforced by the Authority.</li> <li>● Continued downward trend in rates of work-related deaths, injuries and ill health.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employers actively engaged in managing occupational safety, health and welfare.</li> <li>● Workers actively engaged in protecting themselves and their colleagues at work.</li> <li>● Increased awareness of how to avoid and manage the risks to health arising from specific industrial products and chemicals.</li> <li>● People and organisations proactively engaged and satisfied with Authority programmes, tools and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Influence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National interests represented during proposals for and transposition of EU directives and regulations.</li> <li>● Active engagement by and collaboration with other organisations in supporting the work of the Authority, including through memoranda of understanding and service-level agreements.</li> </ul>
<b>Accredit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased awareness and use of INAB accreditation services to promote business excellence and sustainability, and to support regulation in essential areas.</li> </ul>
<b>How we Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Authority to be a high-performing organisation, evidenced by high levels of staff engagement and motivation, an ability to adapt to the changing environment, the optimal use of state resources and positive stakeholder relationships.</li> </ul>

# 07

## Delivering on this Strategy and Measuring Performance

### Programmes of Work

The Authority will deliver this strategy through the development and implementation of annual programmes of work, which will be submitted to the Minister for approval. These programmes will specify the actions and key performance indicators (KPIs) that will support the achievement of our strategic goals.

### Measuring Performance

Progress on the annual programmes of work that implement this strategy will be monitored using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures. In setting metrics, the Authority will focus not just on measurement of activities but also look to measure the expected strategic outcomes.

The Board of the Authority has a duty to monitor, measure and drive implementation of the strategy and organisational performance. The Board of the Authority and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will assess ongoing performance based on quarterly and annual reports. The Authority will also agree an oversight and performance delivery agreement with the Department, which will form the basis of periodic reports on progress to the Minister.



# 08

## Annex 1 – Public/ External Consultations

**During the strategy development process, the Authority engaged in an extensive programme of external stakeholder feedback and public consultation. The Authority would like to express thanks to all who responded to the public consultation on our draft strategy.**

The overall stakeholder engagement process involved interviews, surveys and invitation of submissions from a wide range of internal HSA and external stakeholder groups, including employer, employee and sectoral representative bodies, government departments and agencies, and the general public, in addition to Authority staff.

The consultation process suggested a positive overall assessment of the current strategy as well as the extent of inherent collaboration. The tripartite approach involving employers, employees and government was seen as a strength. A high priority should be given to maintaining and building on the strengths of the current strategy. Stakeholders outlined their belief that significant progress has been made in the priority areas, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the current strategy made progress in ensuring that workers were protected from occupational injury and illness. It was also agreed that the main priorities outlined in the current strategy remain relevant.

Stakeholders identified a range of activities delivered that were seen as important. In general, the Authority's focus on specific high-risk areas, such as construction, agriculture, transport and quarries through enforcement and awareness campaigns was seen as appropriate. HSA activities in the areas of chemicals, education and its accreditation service (INAB) were also viewed as being of value.

**The overall stakeholder engagement process involved interviews, surveys and invitation of submissions from a wide range of internal HSA and external stakeholder groups**





# The consultation process suggested a positive overall assessment of the current strategy as well as the extent of inherent collaboration.

## Other insights on the current strategy included the following:

- Development of targeted and specific new guidance and advice that kept pace with emerging risk topics helps employers, employees, the self-employed and others better understand and control common risks. External stakeholders believe that the HSA enables them to seek expert advice on complex occupational safety and health matters.
- Proactive targeted inspections and enforcement in key sectors were seen as valuable.
- Awareness raising through communications was important. This includes the use of communication platforms such as webinars, podcasts, videos and press releases, particularly in the area of chemicals regulation. The Authority website is viewed as an effective tool for imparting OSH guidance and information. External stakeholders view the HSA educational and awareness raising initiatives as beneficial to preventing incidents, injuries and ill health.
- The Workplace Contact Unit was viewed as a useful contact centre for employers, employees and members of the public, dealing with queries and complaints in relation to occupational safety and health as well as chemicals and market surveillance.
- The Authority's work as the Competent Authority for REACH and Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) was judged to have contributed to the protection of human health and the environment at an EU and national level. This was through compliance checking of chemical legislation to prevent unsafe products from being placed on the market, awareness measures directed at consumers, and information to understand the hazards of various chemicals.
- The work of INAB in providing an independent and impartial accreditation service as well as in providing expert advice on accreditation was identified as an important aspect for regulatory compliance and standards in businesses.
- Authority engagement with key working groups, industry bodies and individual companies through meetings, seminars, webinars, workshops, presentations at conferences and inspections was seen as beneficial.
- The Authority was seen by respondents as having a flexible and agile organisational culture that allowed it to respond effectively to the pandemic.
- Stakeholders saw the collection of data and publication of reports on fatal incidents as a valuable activity. Data on incidents are viewed as important in providing information on health and safety in sectors such as transportation, construction and agriculture.

# Annex 2 – Review of Strategy 2019-2021

**The Authority's Strategy Statement 2019-2021 was implemented during a period of initial strong economic growth in 2019, followed by major change during 2020-21, as Ireland's economy and society grappled with the unprecedented impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic.**

The anticipated outcomes from the 2019-2021 Strategy Statement were:

- Reduced rates of work-related deaths, injuries and ill health.
- Employers actively engaged in managing occupational safety, health and welfare.
- Workers actively engaged in protecting themselves and their colleagues at work.
- Increased public awareness of how to avoid and manage the risks to health arising from applicable products and chemicals.
- Increased awareness and use of INAB accreditation services to promote business excellence and sustainability and to support regulation in essential areas.
- People and organisations proactively engaged and satisfied with Authority programmes, tools and services.
- National interests represented during proposals for and transposition of EU directives and regulations.
- The Authority to be a high-performing organisation evidenced by high levels of staff engagement and motivation, an ability to adapt to the changing environment, optimal use of state resources, and positive stakeholder relationships.
- Active engagement by other organisations in supporting the work of the Authority through memoranda of understanding and service-level agreements.
- Effective holding to account of those who fail in their duties under legislation enforced by the Authority.

Details on the achievement of these outcomes during the period 2019-2021 are set out in the following pages.

## Achievement of Key Performance Indicators

An analysis of the KPIs set for the Programmes of Work in 2019 and 2020 shows strong evidence of achievement of overall goals under each of the main strategic priorities set in the Strategy Statement 2019-2021. Analysis for 2021 was not available at the time of completion of this strategy but metrics are also expected to be met. The Authority continued to meet its targets even though it was tasked with significant additional activities to support the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. A further analysis of the achievements under the strategic outcomes are set out below.

### Reducing death and injury

The Authority observed a continued reduction in work-related non-fatal incidents during 2019 and 2020 (data for 2021 was not yet available at the time of completion of this strategy). A total of 7,417 non-fatal workplace incidents were reported in 2020, down from 9,358 in 2019 and 9,199 in 2018. The 2020 figure can be compared to an average of almost 9,200 per year between 2017 and 2019.

While these reductions are encouraging, the numbers of injuries remain too high, and we are cognisant that behind these figures are real people who suffered a workplace injury or illness, with consequent personal and financial loss to themselves and/or their families, and an economic loss to their employers and the state.

It must also be noted that there can be considerable under-reporting of non-fatal incidents, with smaller enterprises and self-employed people, in particular, less likely to report incidents compared to larger enterprises, while newer enterprises may be unaware of the obligation to report non-fatal work-related incidents to the HSA.



**The Authority has continued to devote significant resources to working collaboratively with workers and employers, on an individual basis and via the organisations that represent them**

### **Occupational fatalities**

In recent years the number of occupational fatalities, which had steadily declined to the lowest level recorded since the Authority was established, increased from 39 in 2018 to 47 in 2019, and to 53 in 2020. Measured in relation to the number of workers, fatalities have increased from 1.5 per 100,000 workers in 2018 to 1.8 and 1.7 per 100,000 workers in 2019 and 2020, respectively. While this may in part reflect increased construction sector activity, we note that there are many individual reasons behind these tragic fatalities and annual results may not be reflective of wider trends. Fatalities remain unacceptably high in agriculture, with 19.5 and 17.5 fatalities per 100,000 workers in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

### **Occupational injuries and illness**

The most reliable data source concerning occupational non-fatal injuries and illness is the Central Statistics Office (CSO). However, the most recent data only covers the first year of the 2019-21 strategy. Reportable occupational injuries or illness declined from 21.5 per 1,000 workers in 2014 to 14.0 per 1,000 workers in 2019 – a 35% decline. The rate was even higher in the year immediately preceding the strategy (2018), at 26.3 per 1,000 workers (although there have been changes in the data on a year-to-year basis).

### **Engaging with employers, employees and users of Authority services**

The Authority has continued to devote significant resources to working collaboratively with workers and employers, on an individual basis and via the organisations that represent them.

Our high levels of interaction continued in key working groups such as the Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (CSPAC) and the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC), in addition to collaborations in other sectors such as healthcare and when addressing work-related vehicle safety and other specific hazards.

Major events, conferences and seminars were hosted including diverse topics such as work-related vehicle safety, chemical safety, ergonomics, safety representatives and quarry safety, as well as supporting government getting business Brexit ready.

In agriculture, for example, the Authority's Farm Safety Village at the National Ploughing Championships allowed us to directly reach farmers and agricultural contractors on activities relating to safety. Through Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTGs), the Authority continued to engage with employers and employees involved in agriculture, which enabled our inspectors to engage with farmers on site, providing them with the knowledge to manage health and safety on their farms.

Employers, employees and enterprises used the variety of advice and support available on our website, which received 2.8 million unique visits in 2019 and 3.2 million unique visits in 2020. There were also 660,000 and 1.2 million publication downloads from the Authority's website in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

The Authority's workplace contact centre responded to approximately 52,000 inbound contacts from January 2019 to the end of March 2021, dealing with queries and complaints from the public and service users.

15 Codes of Practice, Guidance and Information Sheets were published in 2019 and 13 in 2020, covering topics as diverse as quarrying, inland and offshore diving, and chemicals.

One of the strategy's desired outcomes was to encourage and support employers actively engaging in managing occupational health, safety and welfare, and our easy-to-use online tools have contributed to achieving this.

- The BeSMART.ie online risk assessment and safety management tool was further developed, enabling enterprises in managing and complying with their responsibilities in health and safety. By end of March 2021, BeSMART.ie had 80,600 registered users, up from 56,300 in 2018.
- The number of farmsafely.com users increased from 10,600 in 2018 to 13,700 at the end of March 2021.
- The number of learners who took courses through our E-learning platform (hslearning.ie) increased from 23,264 in 2018 to 52,644 in 2020.
- The Work Positive online stress audit tool was promoted, with 35 new users in 2019 and 12 in 2020. The tool allows users to meet Authority assessment requirements for psychosocial hazards, including those for work-related stress.

A range of high-profile awareness raising campaigns were developed and launched in a number of areas, including campaigns aimed at safety in the agricultural and construction sectors. Cross-sectoral campaigns on vehicles at work, Getting Brexit Ready and COVID-19 were also carried out. These used a range of media types, such as TV, radio and print, as well as digital webinars and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.



In addition to promoting a high level of engagement with and use of Authority advice and tools, compliance is also ensured through inspections and investigations. This is in line with one of the strategy's strategic outcomes, namely the "effective holding to account of those who fail in their duties under legislation enforced by the Authority". The achievement of this outcome is evidenced by the fact that the number of workplace inspections and investigations for 2019 and 2020 averaged 10,300 per annum and has remained broadly steady even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the Authority also undertook several targeted health and safety awareness inspection campaigns focusing on, for example, control of dust and chemicals; working at heights, work-related vehicle safety and traffic management in the construction sector; and tractors and machinery, working at heights and animal handling in the agriculture sector. Overall, inspections undertaken across sectors revealed that 82% of employers had safety statements in place in 2019, rising to 84% in 2020.

## Increasing awareness of risks arising from chemicals

Under the strategy, the Authority continued to focus on risks to the health of workers and consumers resulting from chemicals, supporting the EU aim of ensuring a high level of protection on chemical safety.

- A Chemical Usage survey was completed and published to determine the potential impact on Irish companies regarding responsibilities under the chemicals legislation as a result of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.
- Checks were carried out concerning the presence of restricted chemicals in textiles, spectacle frames and jewellery with a particular focus in 2020 on online sales. In 2019 and 2020, 1,290 chemical products on the Irish market were checked for regulatory compliance.
- Enforcement campaigns were conducted for the presence of hazardous (carcinogenic, mutagenic, toxic to reproduction and/or respiratory or skin sensitisers) chemicals in various chemical products to ensure EU regulatory compliance and to ensure consumers and workers are protected from the risks arising from these.
- Codes of Practice for Chemical Agents were updated, and guidance produced on significant modifications to COMAH (Control of Major Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) sites along with guidance for intermediate temporary storage of chemicals.
- The number of chemical related land use planning requests processed was 323 in 2019 and 312 in 2020, in excess of the expected number (250) in both years, while 335 and 283 asbestos notifications were processed in 2019 and 2020 respectively.
- Greater use of online communication platforms such as webinars, podcasts and videos and online communication channels including press releases were used to communicate information and advice on chemicals regulation during the pandemic.
- The Authority actively participated in EU activities concerning the identification of new Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC), particularly at Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemical (REACH) committee level, via discussions with other Member States on the most appropriate regulatory action required.
- Through our chemical helpdesk Irish chemical companies were supported in meeting their obligations under the REACH and Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) regulations. In 2019 and 2020, 246 and 176 REACH information requests were processed by the Authority. Similarly in 2019 and 2020, 80 and 106 CLP information requests were processed.
- The Authority continued to support European initiatives dealing with chemical health and environmental risks via our involvement in European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) committees as well as through our rapporteur duties in developing scientific opinions in the Risk Assessment Committee and the Member State Committee.
- As a Member State the Authority evaluated two chemical substances and progressed four proposals to classify hazardous chemical substances at EU level. In 2019 we reviewed six draft substance evaluation decisions undertaken by other Member States and 11 ECHA dossier evaluations with a further 16 and 37, respectively, undertaken in 2020.





- In 2019 two “groups of substances” for further regulatory action were screened by the Authority. In 2020, in line with the new EU approach to screening, we screened seven substances for further regulatory action.

### **Increasing awareness and use of INAB accreditation services**

INAB increased the number of accredited organisations to 236 by July 2021. In 2019, INAB awarded 29 new accreditations, with 10 awarded in 2020. The numbers of new applications for accreditation received by INAB were 19 and 15 in 2019 and 2020, respectively, with 10 of these in 2019 and five in 2020 being related to Brexit. There were 194 accreditation decisions by the INAB Manager in 2019 and 315 in 2020. 451 assessment events were completed in 2019 and 379 in 2020. In addition, INAB completed extensive programmes of stakeholder engagement, promotion of accreditation, extending international recognition, introducing new schemes as well as responding to COVID-19 and Brexit matters.

INAB continued to advance use of accreditation in assessing and appointing notified bodies to support Irish industry during the strategy, increasing the number of notified bodies from 15 to 18.

### **Representing national interests regarding EU regulations**

In 2019 and 2020, the Authority participated in 128 and 115 different EU and international committees and working groups across our occupational safety and health, chemicals and market surveillance mandates. The Authority contributed to these on technical and policy aspects both through direct engagement and indirectly by supporting the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in developing legislation at EU and at national level.

The Authority represented Ireland through its participation in the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health (ACSH) and its plenary meetings. The COVID-19 pandemic was a major focus of the ACSH during 2020 and the Authority chaired the ACSH Working Party on the pandemic and acted as rapporteur on the Working Parties on Display Screen Equipment and OSH Sign Guidance.

The Authority provided technical advice in developing and transposing EU regulations, for example, at the EU Technical Progress Committee on the updating of the EU Biological Agents Regulations, and the European Communities (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (SI No 277 of 2019).

Input was also provided into the development of the new EU Market Surveillance Regulations (2019/1020/EU) and alignment of current regulations with these and in the reviews and development of the new EU Machinery Directive.

The Authority made contributions to and participated in a series of advisory committees in market surveillance concerning, for example, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), lifts and transportable pressure equipment, and promoting national policy and interests in relevant product legislation.

In response to the pandemic, the Authority implemented the EU Commission Recommendation (2020/403/EU) on market surveillance of products, in particular on the proper certification and labelling of PPE. Codes of Practice were also produced or updated for agriculture, biological and chemical agents (including classifying COVID-19 as a Risk Group 3 biological agent under the 2020 EU Directive (2020/739/EU)), working in confined spaces, and safety in roof work.

In addition to representing Ireland at the Technical Progress Committee on the Biological Agents Directive, the Authority also represented Ireland at the EU Healthy Workplaces Summit on Welding Fumes and the Roadmap on Carcinogens Finnish Presidency conference in 2019. The Authority continued to collaborate with EU-OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health) and other Member States to develop best practice for online risk assessment tools such as BeSMART.ie.

On a national level, the Authority worked with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to develop and produce legislation to transpose the European Communities (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, the European Communities (Good Laboratory Practice) Regulations 2020 and to give full effect to the Rotterdam Chemical Regulations (2012/649/EU) via SI No 213 of 2019.

In 2021, the Chemicals Agents Code of Practice to transpose limit values from the 5th EU Indicative List Directive (2019/1831/EU) was published.

## The Authority as a high-performing organisation

Under the 2019-21 strategy, the Authority continued to invest in its staff, systems and technology. Over the strategy, an average of 3.3 days of technical and managerial training were provided to our staff per year, to ensure they were equipped with the necessary

competence and expertise in performing their duties. In line with the Authority's ICT strategy, investment in ICT systems continued with the aim of transforming business and IT services. Work commenced on the development and introduction of a shared internal IT platform to manage the delivery of our programmes on occupational safety and health, chemicals, and market surveillance. Investment was made into our website and social media applications, as well as our main online tools (BeSMART.ie, Work Positive and hsalearning.ie), to support and advise companies and stakeholders.

Over the duration of the strategy, the Authority's awareness raising and communications activities saw increased focus on social media, resulting in us being well established on a variety of platforms. On Facebook, the Authority had an audience of 44,100 in 2019 and 45,100 in 2020; and on Twitter the Authority had an audience of 14,700 in 2019 and 15,100 in 2020. The reach of social media activity can be a multiple of our direct audience contact due to the nature of these platforms. On some occasions, posts can reach an audience of hundreds of thousands, with social media enabling us to directly communicate with our audience and develop relationships with them. At the same time traditional media channels such as print, radio and TV, remain powerful tools of communication and we have continued to use them, including in a joint driving for work campaign with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and An Garda Síochána.

In 2020, the Authority had to adapt its programme of work, structure, operating model and resource allocation in supporting the national response to the public health COVID-19 pandemic. This included making arrangements for staff to work from home in line with public health measures, with all services continuing to be provided. In addition, practical guidance documents on working from home were developed to support employers and employees adapt to the Government requirement to work from home where possible. As a result of this work, the Authority participated in the development of the Government's Remote Working Strategy, which was launched in January 2021. The Authority established three discrete national response teams for sectors with a high risk of exposure to COVID-19.

In 2020, 5,394 checks of adherence were conducted of the COVID-19 Return to Work Safely Protocol of May 2020 and the Work Safely Protocol of November 2020, and there were over 400,000 downloads of COVID-19 compliance material and templates from our website. An additional government allocation of €4.2 million was received in 2021 to support our response to COVID-19 and Brexit, and for the future delivery of our broader mandate.

## Collaboration

The Authority's strategic goals have been achieved through effective and direct engagement and collaboration with business, sectoral and employee representative groups, other regulators and government agencies. The Authority places great emphasis on agreed working arrangements with other regulators and government agencies, demonstrated by almost 40 different operational agreements being in place by mid-2020, with 13 of these coming into being under the current strategy. Many of the new operational agreements arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Authority collaborated with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; the Health Services Executive (HSE); and the Department of Health and employer and employee groups to produce the Return to Work Safely Protocol (May 2020) in support of the return to work. To monitor adherence to this protocol, we agreed memoranda of understanding with the HSE; Workplace Relations Commission; Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM); Department of Education; Tusla; and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. The memorandum of understanding on the Rotterdam Regulation with the DAFM, Revenue Commissioners Customs Division, and the agreement with the Northern Ireland and UK Health and Safety Executives concerning recognition of medical fitness to dive certificates were both recently updated. Updated memoranda of understanding were also signed during the term of this strategy with the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities and the Commission for Railway Regulation.

Under the strategy, the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC) and Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (CSPAC) continued to operate, with the three-year plans developed in conjunction with them under the previous strategy operating until 2020. A new Farm Safety Action Plan has been developed and a new Construction Safety Action Plan is under development, with both launching in 2021. These will outline how we work collaboratively with other stakeholders in these high-risk sectors in meeting our strategic goals.

During the 2019-2021 strategy period, Brexit continued to be a pertinent issue for occupational safety and health, chemicals, market surveillance and accreditation. The Authority continued to work collaboratively with colleagues in the UK, including Northern Ireland, on these and on technical and enforcement issues. Close collaboration with our colleagues in Britain and Northern Ireland will continue whilst taking account of further developments that arise concerning the relationship between the UK and the EU.

To deliver our strategic objectives, the Authority continued to encourage and support enterprises in taking responsibility for their compliance, taking appropriate and proportionate enforcement action when enterprises failed to comply. The Authority assisted enterprises in meeting their accreditation needs to protect their consumers and expand their business and actively participated in forming EU and national occupational safety and health, chemicals, accreditation and market surveillance policies. While working independently, where appropriate the Authority also worked and collaborated with other organisations to accomplish our strategic outcomes and achieve our vision of healthy, safe, and productive lives and enterprises.









# Our Vision:

## Healthy, safe and productive lives and enterprises



An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta  
Health and Safety Authority

Health and Safety Authority

**Tel: 0818 289 389**

**[www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)**