



**Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly**

# **2022 Annual Report**





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# Message from An Cathaoirleach

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

2022 was another busy and successful year for the Assembly which continued to deliver on its strategic goals and statutory functions. Members of the Assembly displayed a high level of engagement and commitment as evidenced by their participation to our Assembly meetings, which are now hybrid, and SPA meetings. I would like to personally thank all of the Members for their contribution to the fulfilment of EMRA's responsibilities and objectives. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank my Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr Kate Feeney for her support and my predecessor Cllr Deirdre Heney for her work during the first half of the year and her support.

During this third year of the implementation phase of the RSES, Members made a number of submissions to local county and city development Plans and other national and regional strategies, making sure the voice of the Region is heard. Members also encouraged and supported the development and successful launch of the Regional Development Monitor.

Members closely followed the development of the EU Just Transition Fund Programme that will be managed by the Assembly and welcomed its official adoption by the European Commission. Assembly Members' engagement with the European level intensified in 2022 as Members had the opportunity to take part in two study visits to Brussels to meet with representatives from the European institutions. Members' engagement also continued through the work of the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Region. These relationships are crucial to reinforce the links between our Assembly and the EU and to raise the profile of our Region.

The Assembly hit significant milestones in 2022 that put EMRA in a unique and privileged position for the delivery of our corporate objectives and statutory functions. The Assembly is now equipped better than ever to support the development and growth of our Region and deliver concrete results on the ground. For this, I wish to commend the work, support and dedication of the staff led by the Director Jim Conway and to thank them for their continued contribution to the work of the Assembly.

**Cllr. Rob Power,**

Cathaoirleach



# Message from the Director

**This Annual Report 2022 sets out EMRA's actions, initiatives, and engagements undertaken to deliver on the vision and goals outlined in the Corporate Plan 2019-2024 for the organisation.**

Some normality resumed for the Assembly in 2022 with Assembly meetings turning to a hybrid model, enabling members to attend in person or online, and staff returning to the workplace on a phased basis as per official public health advice. At the Annual General Meeting held in July, Cllr Rob Power was elected Cathaoirleach of the Assembly for a year. I would like to thank Councillor Power and all the Assembly members for their continued engagement and support throughout the year.

The year saw the launch of the Regional Development Monitor (RDM) in the presence of Minister Peter Burke TD. The RDM is a mapping and visualisation tool that will be key in helping to monitor the implementation of the RSES and will be a valuable tool to policy makers. The RDM is a fantastic example of collaborative work as it is the result of a cooperation between the three Regional Assemblies, led by EMRA, working with the All-Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University and Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI).

2022 saw EMRA's involvement in the delivery of EU funding reach a new level. As the appointed Managing Authority for the EU Just Transition Fund, EMRA successfully developed an ambitious Programme which was officially adopted by the European Commission and the Irish Government at the end of the year. This marked the achievement of a year of intense work and collaboration with various Government Departments, national agencies and the European Commission. Our cooperation with the Southern Regional Assembly culminated in the adoption of the Southern, Eastern and Midlands ERDF Programme by the European Commission.

EMRA continued its involvement with European projects with Next2Met and Progress reaching the end of their first phase and moving towards the implementation of their action plan and QgasSP drawing to a close. As URBACT national contact point, EMRA successfully delivered the National Practice Transfer Initiative which concluded at the end of the year and started preparations for the launch of the new URBACT programme. EMRA's good results were rewarded by our reappointment as Contact point for the URBACT Programme by the Department of Housing, Local government and Heritage.

The Irish Regions European Office kept supporting the members of the Irish Delegation to Committee of the Regions and coordinated the visit to Ireland of the CoR President. The IREO also organised two very successful study visits to Brussels for EMRA members who had a chance to meet with MEPs, representatives from the European Commission and the Irish Permanent Representation among others, thus reinforcing the role of the IREO and EMRA as a bridge between the regional and European level.

2022 was a year rich in activities and key achievements for the Assembly, contributing to the attainment of our strategic goals and I would like to thank our Members and the team for their contribution of this year's successes.



**Jim Conway**  
Director





## Introduction

**The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) is one of the three Regional Assemblies established in Ireland in 2015 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 as 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 2.5 million people. The region has approximately 270 km of coastline from Carlingford in Louth to Kilmichael Point at the Wicklow-Wexford border. The main settlement is the capital city of Dublin which is home to 1.45 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 to play a key role in the development of the Region for the benefit of its citizens. This role revolves around three axis: 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 - 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

## The Irish Regions European Office

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 local government sector and vice versa. The IREO strategy 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.

# 2022 - the year in highlights

## AGM and Cathaoirleach election

At the AGM on Friday, 8th July 2022, Cllr Rob Power, Kildare County Council, was elected as EMRA Cathaoirleach and Cllr Kate Feeney, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council was elected the Leas-Cathaoirleach.



Outgoing Cathaoirleach Cllr Deirdre Heney with newly elected Cathaoirleach Cllr Rob Power

## Launch of the Regional Development Monitor



Cathaoirleach Rob Power, Minister Peter Burke and Director Jim Conway at the Launch of the RDM at the National Gallery of Ireland, November 2022

## Adoption of the EU Just Transition Fund Programme 2021-2027



Following a year of intense preparation, the EU Just Transition Fund Programme was adopted on December 15th. EMRA, as Managing Authority, is now responsible for its implementation.

Cover of the EU Just Transition Fund 2021-2027

## NPTI closing event

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.



NPTI closing event in Sligo

## Members study visits To Brussels

Assembly members had the opportunity to take part in two study visits in Brussels to meet with representatives of the European institutions.



MRA members and IREO staff at the European Parliament

## Visit of Committee of the Regions President Apostolos Tzitzikostas

A two-day visit of the CoR President to Ireland showcased the Irish local government sector and the work of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions



CoR President A Tzitzikostas and the Irish delegation to the CoR



# 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.

## Assembly Membership 2022

### DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL



Daryl Barron



Mary Freehill



Alison Gilliland



Deirdre Heney



Janet Horner



Vincent Jackson



Dermot Lacey



Larry O'Toole

### DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN CO CO



Emma Blain



Kate Feeney



Jim Gildea



Mary Hanafin



Peter O'Brien



Una Power

### FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL



David Healy



Brigid Manton



Robert O'Donoghue

### KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL



Aoife Breslin



Fintan Brett



Pdraig McEvoy



Robert Power

### LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL



Caroline Dwane Stanley



Catherine Fitzgerald



Aisling Moran

### LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL



John Browne



Colm Murray

### LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL



Emma Coffey



Conor Keelan

### MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL



Brian Fitzgerald



Paddy Meade



Damien O'Reilly

### OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL



Eamon Dooley



Eddie Fitzpatrick



Danny Owens



Tony McCormack

7 Oct 2022

Appointed

7 Oct 2022

Resigned

### SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL



Laura Donaghy



Pamela Kearns



Lyn Hagin Meade



Suzanne McEneaney

9 May 2022

Appointed

9 May 2022

Resigned

### WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL



Paddy Hill



Aengus O'Rourke

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

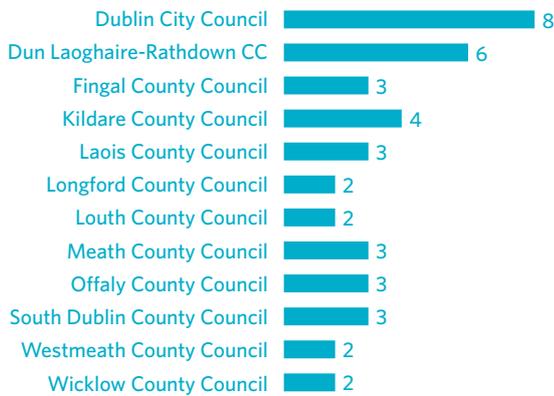


Avril Cronin

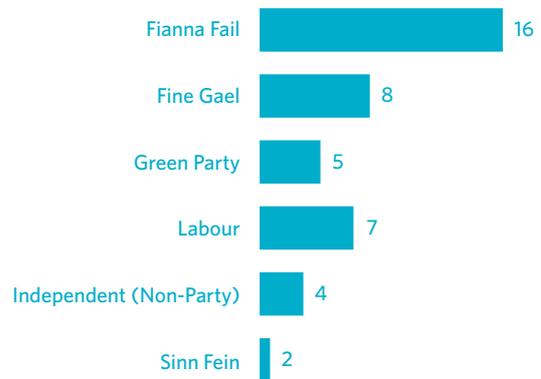


Tom Fortune

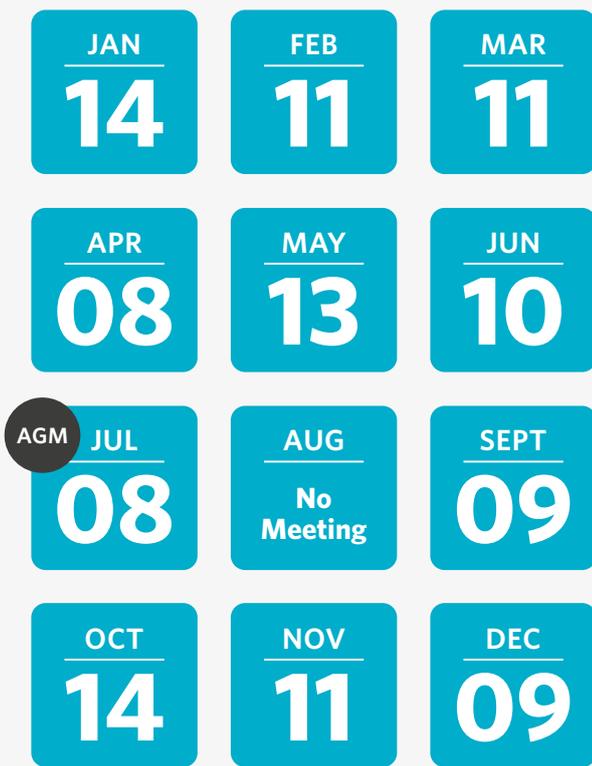
### Members per council as of 31/12/2022



### Members per party as of 31/12/2022



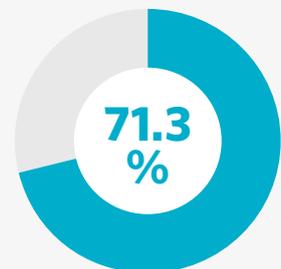
### Schedule of Meetings 2022



### Meetings of the Assembly

The easing of the restrictions related to the public health crisis enabled EMRA meetings to resume in a hybrid format, allowing members to join in person or online (in line with SI no 446).

Overall, 11 statutory meetings were held in 2022. The average attendance rate over the year for meetings was 71.3%. (77.33).



### Election of An Cathaoirleach

The Annual General Meeting was held as a hybrid meeting in 2022 and saw the election of Cllr. Robert Power as Cathaoirleach and Cllr. Kate Feeney as Leas Cathaoirleach.



**Cllr. Deirdre Heney**  
Cathaoirleach  
July 2021 to July 2022



**Cllr. Robert Power**  
Cathaoirleach  
July 2022 to present



**Cllr. Robert Power**  
Leas Cathaoirleach  
July 2021 to July 2022



**Cllr. Kate Feeney**  
Leas Cathaoirleach  
July 2022 to present

### Conferences & Training Attended in 2022



**McGill Conference**  
Glenties, Co. Donegal  
Representatives: 1

## Meetings & Membership of Sub Committees

### EU Sub-Committee Meetings 2022

The EU sub-committee was created to keep Members informed of the preparation of the EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 and discuss EU matters.

**MEETINGS**

Meetings took place in January, March, May and September

**MEMBERS**

  
 Fintan Brett

  
 Eamon Dooley

  
 Kate Feeney

  
 Alison Gilliland

  
 David Healy

  
 Deirdre Heney  
*until July*

  
 Conor Keelan

  
 Padraig McEvoy

  
 Aisling Moran

  
 Robert Power  
*from July onwards*

### Strategic Planning Area Committees

Strategic Planning Area Committees provide a forum for the members of each respective Strategic Planning Area (SPA) to discuss issues relevant to that SPA. SPAs are defined at a NUTS 3 Level.

**DUBLIN SPA**

**MEETINGS**

No meetings were held in 2022

**MEMBERS**

  
 Daryl Barron

  
 Emma Blain

  
 Laura Donaghy

  
 Kate Feeney

  
 Mary Freehill

  
 Jim Gildea

  
 Alison Gilliland

  
 Lyn Hagin Meade

  
 Mary Hanafin

  
 David Healy

  
 Deirdre Heney

  
 Janet Horner

  
 Vincent Jackson

  
 Pamela Kearns

  
 Dermot Lacey

  
 Brigid Manton

  
 Suzanne  
McEneaney

  
 Peter O'Brien

  
 Robert  
O'Donoghue

  
 Larry O'Toole

  
 Una Power

### EASTERN SPA

MEETINGS

MARCH  
15

MEMBERS



Aoife Breslin



Fintan Brett



Emma Coffey



Avril Cronin



Brian Fitzgerald



Tom Fortune



Conor Keelan



Padraig McEvoy



Paddy Meade



Damien O'Reilly



Robert Power



Gerry Walsh

### MIDLAND SPA

MEETINGS

MARCH  
16

MEMBERS



John Browne



Eamon Dooley



Caroline  
Dwane Stanley



Catherine  
Fitzgerald



Eddie Fitzpatrick



Paddy Hill



Tony McCormack



Aisling Moran



Colm Murray



Aengus O'Rourke



Danny Owens

### MASP

MEETINGS

MARCH  
08

MEMBERS



Daryl Barron



Laura Donaghy



Kate Feeney



Tom Fortune



Mary Freehill



Jim Gildea



Alison Gilliland



David Healy



Deirdre Heney



Pamela Kearns



Brigid Manton



Padraig McEvoy



Paddy Meade



Damien O'Reilly



Robert Power



Una Power



Gerry Walsh



# Drive the Regional Agenda

# Drive the Regional Agenda

## Assembly Oversight and Functions

During 2022 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 2022, five submissions were issued, with four of these submissions issued as a statutory function under Section 27 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. An additional submission was 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. These submissions were approved by the Assembly.

### Total Submissions; 5

Type of Submission	Level of Submission	Approval
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City/County Development Plan= 4,</li> <li>Other= 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional=1,</li> <li>Local=4,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assembly=5,</li> </ul>

Four submissions were issued relating to Local Authority County and City Development Plans within the Region. In this regard, submissions were issued regarding the Fingal and Kildare County Development Plans, Dublin City Development Plan, and a variation to the Louth County Development Plan.

At a regional level, a submission was made on the Draft of the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.



## Inform Policy Making

In 2022, 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 2022, to inform policy and implementation in line with the RSES.**

Forum	Date	Attendees
Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan	Various	Jim Conway/ Anne-Marie Wood Wolfe
Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan	Various	Jim Conway
Mid - East Regional Enterprise Plan	Various	Jim Conway
National Climate Change Adaptation Forum	Various	Jim Conway / Nicci Nolan
Eastern and Midland CARO Steering Group	Various	Jim Conway
Dublin CARO Steering Group	Various	Jim Conway/ Anne-Marie Wood Wolfe
National SEA Forum	Various	Nicci Nolan/ Owen Douglas
National AA Forum	Various	Nicci Nolan/ Clare Bannon
NTA GDA Strategy Advisory Board	Various	Jim Conway
Irish Planning Institute Senior Planners Forum	Various	Clare Bannon
Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT)	Various	Jim Conway
OPR Plan Evaluation Forum	Various	Clare Bannon
Spatial Planning Steering Group- Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies	Various	Clare Bannon
Sustainable Mobility Policy Leadership Group and Delivery Team	Various	Jim Conway

Throughout 2022, 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 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on regional level monitoring of the implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategy 2022-2027; and the Climate Engagement Division of the Department of Transport in relation to the development and the delivery of the Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 (SMP).

EMRA attended the launch of the Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 Pathfinder Programme in October 2022, and the three Regional Assemblies are responsible for The Smart and Sustainable Mobility Training Workshops (Pathfinder Project 30), which are a capacity-building and education initiative for local authorities, councillors and public participation networks in each region of Ireland. They will be project managed and coordinated by the Regional Assemblies, with the support of the CCMA, and co-designed with SMP Delivery Team partners. A Request for Tender for the Training Workshops was submitted to eTenders in December 2022.

The Dublin MASP Implementation Group met once during 2022. As part of the meeting, the group agreed monitoring and reporting to inform the MASP Committee and the Implementation Group was updated with an overview of the Regional Development Monitor and the draft NTA Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

The Committees of the Eastern and Midland SPA Committees met once during 2022. These meetings focused on the implementation progress of the RSES, an update on the development of the Regional Development Monitor, and an update on the Just Transition Fund and process (to the Midland SPA Committee only). The MASP Committee met once during 2022 and focused on MASP Implementation and updates on the policies of Housing for All, Town Centre First and the Climate Action Plan 2021.

EMRA also met with various stakeholders to advance RSES implementation. These include Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Kildare County Council, Louth County Council, and the National Transport Authority. Furthermore, EMRA met with Dublin City Council to discuss the preparation of their Local Economic and Community Plan, in accordance with EMRA's statutory functions under Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001 (inserted by section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014).

## 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 to finalise the Programmes and associated documents related to the implementation of the 2021-2027 EU funds. As a member of the Partnership Process Steering Group (PPSG) which governs over the preparation of the several European Structural and Investment Funds programmes in Ireland, EMRA had a say in the preparation of all these programmes. In 2022, EMRA took part in the finalisation of the Partnership Agreement document which was adopted on 20<sup>th</sup> September and launched in Dublin in the presence of Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for urban and regional policy.



EMRA stayed closely involved in the preparation of the future ERDF Programmes, especially the Southern, Eastern and Midland one to be managed by the Southern Regional Assembly. EMRA took part in meetings of the ERDF oversight working group and worked closely with colleagues in the SRA to bring the Programme to its official submission to the European Commission and Cabinet. The Programme was formally adopted on November 18<sup>th</sup>.



EMRA was represented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Forum which was held in Brussels in March 2022.

EMRA kept participating in the preparation of European Territorial Cooperation programmes as a member of the task forces set up for this purpose. EMRA took part in two meetings of the Atlantic Area (AA) task force 2021-2027 and four meetings and a workshop of the North West Europe (NWE) task force. Both were 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. The North West Europe Programme and the Atlantic area programme were adopted by the European Commission respectively on 24<sup>th</sup> August and 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

EMRA also took part in the preparation and design of the future URBACT programme which focuses on sustainable urban development and was adopted in June 2022, and in the preparation of the PEACE+ programme as part of the preparatory group.

## Influencing European Policy

### The IREO continued to monitor and report on EU policy developments and EU funding programmes.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine dominated the EU agenda during 2022. Coupled with the subsequent cost of living crisis, the EU came together strongly as a bloc in response to the invasion. Many EU policy proposals aimed to support Ukraine, such as the temporary protection directive which gives those fleeing war in Ukraine the right to temporary protection in EU Member States. The European Commission also launched the REPowerEU proposal, with the aim to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030, in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The EU continued to deal with the UK's 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.

Representatives from EMRA joined IREO in Brussels in March 2022 to attend the 8th Cohesion Forum. This is the European Commission's flagship event, held every 5 years and provides the opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on the important role that cohesion policy plays in improving the well-being of all people living in Europe.

The IREO also monitored EU policy developments in relation to a wide range of policy areas including the New European Bauhaus, climate action, urban issues, sustainability, just transition, updated TEN-T regulations, smart mobility, health data, equality and the follow up to the Conference on the Future of Europe. IREO regularly communicate Irish interests to 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 of its work and EU policy developments to the EMRA meeting on 11th March 2022 and has provided regular briefings on the work of the Irish Delegation to the CoR to EMRA. The IREO continued to meet with a range of organisations in Brussels to promote the work of the Irish regions. This included a meeting in November 2022 with the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) which followed with a feature in the EPRS newsletter.

The IREO has been involved, with the three Regional Assemblies, in discussions and meetings about a possible Atlantic Area Macro Regional Strategy and has been involved in meetings with the Basque country, French, Spanish and Portuguese regions.

The IREO held meetings and is working closely with the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) as well as the Vanguard Initiative and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

In October 2022, the IREO and elected members met with European Commission officials to discuss Irish participation in the 'European Network of Locally Elected Politicians' which aims to communicate the European Union through an unprecedented alliance between the European and local government structures.

During 2022, the IREO worked with the Committee of the Regions to promote the Young Elected Politicians (YEP) programme across Ireland. This programme is a network of politicians who are no older than 40 and hold a mandate at regional or local level in the EU. A call for applications to join the programme is published each year and YEPs have the opportunity to get in contact with other young politicians through the YEP Community, to attend trainings on EU topics, and to participate in activities organised by the CoR, including meetings with rapporteurs, events and seminars organised by the CoR, and communication activities. Ireland had 11 applications to the 2022 call and 6 were successful in joining the network.



### Committee of the Regions

IRES 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](http://www.emra.ie/committee-of-the-regions)



## Legislative Works

Members of the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) were actively involved in drawing up some key opinions.

Cllr Alison Gilliland was Rapporteur on 'Towards a structural inclusion of Cities and Regions in UNFCCC COP27' which was adopted in October 2022. This opinion outlined the unique position of the CoR as a driver for the implementation of climate actions at the local level and noted that local and regional authorities are responsible for providing their communities with essential services and immediate responses and relief to the consequences of climate change. Then in November 2002, Cllr Alison Gilliland attended CoP27 on Climate Change as part of the CoR Delegation, ensuring that the voice of regions and cities was heard in the talks.

Cllr Michael Murphy was Rapporteur on 'Strengthening the EU-UK relationship at subnational level and remedying the territorial impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU'. This opinion addressed the lack of territorial depth to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the UK and called for a stronger role for local and regional authorities in the TCA. It also explored new avenues for cooperation between local and regional authorities in the EU with counterparts in the UK. The opinion was adopted in Plenary in April 2022.

During 2022 Cllr Kieran McCarthy was Rapporteur on two opinions. 'New European Bauhaus - Beautiful, Sustainable, Together' was also adopted at the April Plenary. The New European Bauhaus is an initiative of the European Commission President, Ursula Von der Leyen and is highly ambitious in its aims. In essence, the Communication expresses the EU's ambition of creating beautiful, sustainable and inclusive places, products and ways of living. A number of initiatives were proposed including the development of a NEB lab, a NEB labelling strategy and the appointment of a NEB Contact Point in each Member State.

Cllr McCarthy's other opinion was adopted at Plenary in December 2022. 'Small Urban Areas as Key Actors to Manage a Just Transition' highlights that small urban areas struggle with a lack of financial resources and relatively low institutional capacities in comparison with other places and they need financial and administrative support to build their capacity to deal with the digital and green transitions.

In March 2022, the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions and the IREO attended the bi-annual European Summit of Regions and Cities, which was held in Marseille, France. This event examined the challenges facing Europe's regions and cities and was dominated by the immediate impact of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. It also discussed the need for an inclusive recovery plan to revive the economy and empower local communities to cope with systemic changes, such as the green and digital transition, in light of the aftermath of the pandemic.

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 2022

The COVID pandemic resulted in meetings up until July 2022 held in hybrid format and unsurprisingly the year was dominated by actions to support Ukraine, given Russia's war, impacting all of Europe.

The June meeting marked the halfway point in the current mandate for the CoR and saw the election of Portugal's Vasco Alves Cordeiro as President following the end of President Apostolos Tzitzikostas' two and half year term in office.

The mandate also saw Irish delegation members being elected to new roles with Cllr. Kate Feeney being elected as Third Vice President of Renew Europe's CoR delegation and Cllr. Kieran McCarthy as Vice President of European Alliance group.

### The most important debates held during the year included:

- **January: High Level Debate on Cohesion Implementation with Elisa FERREIRA, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms**
- **April: Testimonials from Ukraine: Vitali Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv and Chairman of the Association of Ukrainian Cities, Vadym Boychenko, Mayor of Mariupol, Andriy Sadovyi, Mayor of Lviv, Ivan Fedorov, Mayor of Melitopol, Tetiana Yehorova-Lutsenko, Chairwoman of the Kharkiv Regional Council**
- **June: Presentation of the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union by Ivan Bartoš, Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation and Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic**
- **October: Debate on 27th UN Conference on Climate Change**
- **December: Closing debate on the European Year of Youth and endorsement of the Charter for Youth and Democracy with Margaritis SCHINÁS, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life.**

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 the Digital Futures working 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 steering group members at Lough Boora

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.

Having led the co-presidency of ENCORE from 2018-2021 and having hosted the 14th Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe virtually from Tullamore, the lead presidency of ENCORE was handed over by EMRA to the Province of Gelderland in the Netherlands. EMRA continued to co-preside in 2022 and participated in a number of steering group meetings, jointly chaired by the EMRA Director. EMRA secured TAIEX<sup>1</sup> funding for an ENCORE Steering Group Meeting and TAIEX multi-country workshop on Circular Economy to take place in Tullamore in Q4 2022. This workshop brought together local and regional environment experts with expertise in circular economy, including experts from ENCORE regions. The central question addressed in the workshop was 'How to make the transition to circular economy models?'

### The three themes for the workshop were

- **Integration of the just transition and circular economy,**
- **The circular economy and textiles and**
- **Financing the circular economy. The outputs from this workshop will help to inform the next ENCORE biennial conference in Gelderland in 2023.**

1 Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission



**Deliver  
concrete impact  
on the ground**



# Deliver concrete impact on the ground

## RSES Implementation

### Regional Development Monitor (RDM)

The Regional Development Monitor (RDM) was officially launched on 29th November 2022 by the Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke TD, at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. The RDM was developed by the Regional Assemblies, led by EMRA, in collaboration with the All-Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University and Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) via the GeoHive platform.

The RDM is a national mapping and visualisation tool with a range of analytics dashboards, designed to enhance our understanding of key societal trends in Ireland to aid better decision making. The RDM will aid in monitoring the performance of each of the three regions in terms of achieving objectives outlined in their respective Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. The RDM will also assist government departments, regional assemblies, local authorities, planners, policy makers, researchers, elected members and members of the public in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better decision making.



Cathaoirleach Rob Power, Minister Peter Burke and Director Jim Conway at the Launch of the RDM at the National Gallery of Ireland, November 2022

## 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 2022, 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 2022, 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.



PROGRESS partners' visit to Fernhill Park and Gardens in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

### Highlights from 2022 include:

1. Approval by Interreg Europe and ongoing implementation of the project Action Plan for EMRA. This included:
  - a. Completion of the project Pilot Action in Q1 which tested a Green Infrastructure Decision Support Mapping Approach for Ecosystem Services in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown based on the SITxell good practice model identified in Catalonia. This included technical development with project partners and workshops with DLR staff, the Network of Biodiversity & Heritage Officers, CAROs and other LA Officers to demonstrate and test the mapping approach and assess potential for regional transfer.
  - b. Meeting with 25 invited stakeholders including Planners, Biodiversity Officers, Heritage Officers and other experts from across our 12 Local Authorities, representatives from relevant Government Departments, State Agencies, the Office of the Planning Regulator and Academia. Based on project developments throughout the year, this Q4 workshop focused on the co-ordination of green infrastructure (GI) mapping across the EMRA region.
2. Participation at the final interregional training workshop of the project in Florence, Italy in Q1 with good practice presentations delivered remotely by the Southern Regional Assembly and the UCD School of Geography and online participation by project stakeholders.
3. Organising and hosting the final Phase 1 partner meeting in co-operation with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in Q2. This 2-day meeting was attended by all project partners and included the launch of the Technical Report of the project Pilot Action and study visits to Fernhill Park and Gardens and Ticknock Forest led by the DLR Biodiversity Officer and Senior Parks Superintendent, the Coillte Nature Team and Dublin Mountains Partnership.
4. Invited presentation on behalf of the 3 Regional Assemblies at 'How Local Authorities can address the Biodiversity Emergency - A National Conference' hosted by Limerick City & County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Q3. The presentation title was "Opportunities for Biodiversity Management through the Regional Assemblies."
5. Various news items on project activities were published throughout the year including articles in the Coillte Summer Newsletter and the Autumn editions of the *Local Authority Times* and *Local Authority Journal*.

## 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.

In the first half of 2022, the Next2Met project activities deepened engagements with partners with the view of developing respective action plans. With the improvements in the health crisis situation in the spring of 2022, partners were able to engage face-to-face through study visits in each other's regions. This allowed all to get a fuller understanding of the policy contexts and the good practice inspirations. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly organised a study visit and hosted our European partner regions in the Midlands – exploring innovative digitalisation initiatives in Mullingar and Edgeworthstown within the RSES themes of Economic Opportunity, Climate Action and Healthy Placemaking. EMRA also participated in study visits in Greifswald in Germany, Krems an der Donau and St. Pölten in Austria, and attended virtually the study visit in Barcelona, Spain. Moreover, the Assembly finalised and received approvals from the Joint Secretariat and the Assembly Members of EMRA's Action Plan – a document that lays out a roadmap for creating a new digitalisation strategy for the Midlands, drawing inspiration from the exchanges with project partners and good practices presented by the Lower Austrian partner.



Next2Met partners' study visit to Lower Austria

In the latter half of the year, the project entered its second phase which is dedicated to applying the lessons learned from partner exchanges during the first portion of the project through the implementation of the action plan. EMRA successfully completed the financial and technical reporting to close out phase 1, including First Level Control and certification, and began producing the necessary outputs for phase 2. This included producing a communications campaign on EMRA's action plan finalisation, internal and partner meetings on action planning, preparatory work for a stakeholder meeting held in early 2023, and conducting a survey on increased professional capacity of staff and stakeholders.

Additionally, the learnings from the Next2Met project have been incorporated into the EU Just Transition Fund programme including key ambitions around digitalisation for the Midlands region.

## 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 intended output is a flexible, user-friendly web application to use in modelling GHG emissions for differing spatial planning policy options and to inform decision-making processes, including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The first full working version of the GGIA (Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment) Tool was demonstrated to stakeholders on March 10th and April 12th, with further refinement of the GGIA tool and of the user guide continuing in Q2 based on the feedback provided by all stakeholders and collated by EMRA. The final project steering group meeting took place on June 13th and EMRA collated the final feedback from all stakeholders and delivered this to ESPON in August 2022.

The final main report and the first five Annexes to the tool were uploaded to the publicly accessible ESPON QGasSP webpage on 30th November. These included the final methodology document and case study pilots, including the Ireland Case Study Pilot which focused on Co. Meath. As of the end of Q4, the user manual (Annex 6) was still under revision and the GGIA tool was being migrated from the developer's server to the ESPON server. In Q4, ESPON indicated its intention to launch a call for interest for stakeholder regions, cities and municipalities to be involved in a follow-up of this project to test the GGIA tool in practice and to further improve and develop the tool once the tool has been made publicly available in early 2023. An update on the QGasSP project was presented to the Members of the Regional Assembly in December 2022 and support for involvement with the proposed follow-up project was expressed.

## Leadership in EU funds delivery

### EU Just Transition Fund

Following the appointment of EMRA as Managing Authority for the EU Just Transition Fund (EU JTF) Programme on 3rd December 2021, a main focus for 2022 was to develop and draft the Programme so that it could be submitted and approved by the European Commission by the end of the year. The EU Just Transition Fund (JTF) is a brand-new fund created under the 2021-2027 programming period. Its single specific objective is to support the regions and communities in Europe that are most negatively affected by the transition to climate neutrality, ensuring that no one is left behind. In Ireland, the territory supported by the Fund will focus on the regions where there have been direct impacts from the move away from peat production and electricity generation from peat.

The year started off with the organisation of the public consultation on the EU JTF that was led by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, to which EMRA was closely associated. The team contributed to drafting the questionnaire and to the organisation of five online workshops, including two targeting respectively local elected representatives and local authority executives and one for young people.

Based on the results of the public consultation and the draft Territorial Just Transition Plan, EMRA and DECC entered an intensive engagement process with several key Government Departments to identify actions that could be included in the EU JTF Programme. All through this phase, EMRA also had regular meetings with the European Commission to ensure the Programme design was aligned with EU regulations. A first draft of the Programme and the Territorial Just Transition Plan (written by DECC) were approved by the Irish Government at Cabinet level on 27th July and transmitted to the European Commission for informal consultation. On the basis of the observations received from the European Commission services, the Programme and the Plan were finalised before being approved by the Cabinet on November 29th. The Programme and the Plan were formally adopted on 15th December by the European Commission.

#### The EU JTF Programme in Ireland is built around three priorities:

- Generating employment opportunities through the diversification of the local economy
- Restoration of degraded peatlands and regeneration of industrial heritage assets
- Smart and sustainable local mobility

In parallel, EMRA contracted with environmental consultants to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a "Do no significant harm" principle assessment for the Programme. This process concluded with a public consultation on the Natura Impact Statement and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Programme which closed at the end of November. The whole process concluded in time for the submission to the Commission and the final SEA documents were also sent to the European Commission.

One of the key tasks of the Managing authority is to effectively communicate on the Programme and its achievements. To this end, EMRA contributed to the EU funds supplement of the Sunday Independent published for Europe Day in May to present the EU Just Transition Fund to a wide audience. EMRA also took part in the Ploughing Championship in September alongside other EU funds under the European Commission.



Commissioner Mairead McGuinness and Irish EU funds team at the Ploughing Championship



## **European Regional Development Fund**

As outlined earlier in this report, EMRA continued to work closely with the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) throughout 2022 to finalise the Southern, Eastern and Midland ERDF Programme which will be managed by the SRA and for which EMRA was given an “enhanced role” in the preparation and implementation. EMRA participated in meetings with relevant Government Departments and agencies involved in the delivery of the Programme and was also associated with the SEA process for the Programme. The Programme was officially adopted on November 18th.

### **European Territorial Cooperation programmes 2021-2027**

Following the adoption by the European Commission of the new European Territorial Cooperation programmes for 2021-2027, new PMCs were set up. EMRA members sit on the PEACE+ Monitoring Committee. The executive of EMRA sits on the following: North West Europe, Atlantic area and Urbact.

In 2022, first PMC meetings for the new programming period were held by the three programmes and saw the adoption of their respective rules of procedure. First calls were launched for the North West Europe and Atlantic area programmes. EMRA also took part in the assessment of the first call for proposals of the North West Europe programme and evaluated 74 project applications. The URBACT IV PMC held in November saw the adoption of the terms of reference for the first call to be launched in January 2023.

EMRA was also invited to join other Funds PMCs, namely the ESF+ and the CAP strategic plan monitoring committees.

### **2014-2020 programmes**

EU funding programmes for the 2014-2020 programming period were coming to a close in 2022. EMRA retained its role as members on several programme monitoring committees tasked with ensuring that programmes are delivering the intended results and that all closure procedures are done correctly.

## 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)	6 <sup>th</sup> April
Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational PMC	Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald (Full) Cllr. Tony Mc Cormack (Alt)	7 <sup>th</sup> April
Ireland Wales Operational PMC	Cllr. Brigid Manton (Full) Cllr. Avril Cronin (Alt)	30 <sup>th</sup> November
Peace PMC	Cllr. Conor Keelan (Full) Cllr. Mary Freehill (Alt)	10 <sup>th</sup> May
National Partnership Agreement	Cathaoirleach Cllr Rob Power	No meeting in 2022
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	No meeting in 2022
Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (European Social Fund - ESF)	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	27th 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	7th April
Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme	Mr Jim Conway, Director	6th April
Regional Operational Programme Quarterly Meeting	Mr Jim Conway, Director Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	17th January, 26th April
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	22nd March, 13th July
Interreg North-West Europe	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	24th March
Interreg Europe	No position on PMC	
Northern Periphery and Arctic	No position on PMC	
URBACT	Ms Laure Antoniotti, EU and Corporate Affairs Manager	10th May, 19th May

### 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 2022, the EU subcommittee met four times to update members on the preparation of the 2021-2027 EU programmes and the members of the subcommittee had the opportunity to go to Brussels on a study visit to meet with representatives of the different European institutions.



## 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.**



### Raising Awareness and Communication

In June 2022, the IREO organised a visit to Brussels for all three Regional Assemblies. The purpose of this visit was to build awareness of the work of the EU institutions for elected members across Ireland. A total of 23 members and officers attended, including 5 members from EMRA and the Director.

The first part of the two-day visit, saw the Assemblies attend the European Commission's Berlaymont building for a series of meetings on topics with a range of European Commission officials covering topics such as Technologies for Smart Communities, EU Energy Policy and the EU's Cohesion Policy. All these talks included lively Q&A sessions with the Councillors.

The Assemblies delegation also met with Commissioner Mairead McGuinness, who provided an overview of the issues affecting Europe, including overcoming the challenges of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the impact on the global economy. She also highlighted the important role which she foresees for local authorities in addressing these issues.

The delegation visited the European Parliament and met with MEPs from their respective European Constituencies. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly met. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly met with MEPs Colm Markey, Barry Andrews, Ciaran Cuffe and Frances Fitzgerald.

In October 2022, the IREO organised a study visit for representatives of EMRA and 8 members attended. Follow up meetings were held with MEPs and the group met with representatives of the Association of European Regions (AER), the European Commission, officials from the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU, IBEC and Enterprise Ireland.

Both visits provided members with a greater understanding of EU policy making, the role of local and regional authorities as well as the EU funding environment.

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.

A delegation of senior officials from Dublin City Council visited the IREO offices on 7th December 2022, as part of a visit to Belgium. The team, led by the new Head of the European Support Office (EPSO) Ciara O hAodha heard from the IREO about the work of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions and were briefed on EU policy issues that will impact on the Council in the coming months and years. Teresa Lennon, Head of the IREO office also provided the group with an update on EU funding opportunities, particularly relevant to cities and urban areas. The delegation also met with European Commission officials, Dublin MEPs and representatives of Flanders Smart Hub.

### URBACT National Contact Point (NCP)

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 entails several functions, including the following: communication of URBACT events, network results, funding calls; supporting the URBACT secretariat in the running of training and upskilling events; advising Irish cities in their engagements with URBACT; and meeting with Irish cities participating in URBACT projects and disseminating the results of those projects.

The NCP attended a number of URBACT Secretariat coordination meetings alongside other NCPs, both online and in person. The NCP attended two in-person events in Paris (March) and Czechia (November) and three online coordination meetings in February, April, and September.

In February, the NCP helped in delivering the URBACT e-University, including organising a national session for Irish stakeholders to learn about the benefits of participation in URBACT networks. This session included speakers from past participants Limerick City and County Council and Longford County Council, with both Councils outlining how they used their URBACT participation to build capacity and structures that subsequently allowed them to secure other national and EU funds.



The NCP represented EMRA at the URBACT Joint Capacity Building Meeting in Paris in March and participated in delivering the URBACT City Festival in June. Again, the event featured strong Irish representation and an Irish National Country Session was organised and chaired by the NCP as part of this event.

November saw the NCP travel to Brno in Czechia to participate in a meeting of the NCPs to discuss and review the new URBACT IV programme to be launched in January 2023 as well as the first call for Action Planning Networks due to open on January the 9th.

In advance of the above call, and following on from networking at the Sligo event, the NCP held numerous online meetings with potentially interested applicants in eight different local authorities, especially encouraging those yet to participate in URBACT. This was in addition to the NCP presenting URBACT twice to Donegal County Council (April and November) and to Dublin City Council in May.

The NCP role involves taking part in meetings and events organised by Irish partners. In this regard, the NCP attended Rush Town's (Fingal) URBACT Local Group (ULG) meeting in October and further engaged with the RU:RBAN network in Carlow by attending a meeting in May and again at the launch of its October final event launch titled "A Guide for Design & Implementation of Community Gardens & Allotments for County Carlow".

Regular URBACT in Ireland newsletters were circulated via Mailchimp throughout the year. Six newsletters were circulated in 2022.

Three news articles were published on the URBACT Ireland webpage in June, August and November. The NCP worked to continue to grow the Urbact\_Ireland Twitter account reach throughout the year (now stands at 1,006 followers). The platform provided regular updates on existing networks and the upcoming call for Action Planning Networks (which then opened in January 2023). In addition, the NCP presented URBACT at a webinar 'Europe in my back yard' produced by Near FM in July.

EMRA, as NCP, successfully engaged with the Department of Housing, Local government and Heritage to ensure EMRA's re-appointment as URBACT NCP for 2021-2027 with the possibility for EMRA to also become the Contact Point for the European Urban Initiative (EUI).

## National Practice Transfer Initiative

EMRA co-ordinated the National Practice Transfer Initiative (NPTI), lasting between June 2021 and December 2022. While URBACT is ordinarily a transnational endeavour focusing on the exchange of best practice, knowledge and learning, this national-focused practice transfer was piloted in Ireland along with four other such networks in Europe. The Irish NPTI saw Cork City lead the network with Donegal Town, Sligo Town, and three EMRA partners Portlaoise, Rush and Rathdrum engaging with Cork and between one another in the formation and subsequent implementation of transfer plans, detailing how they will adapt the good urban practices developed by Cork City to their towns, namely the Playful Paradigm.

EMRA organised a mid-term project meeting in Portlaoise in March with representatives from all five Irish NPTI towns. This meeting allowed the partners to present their transfer plans to each other and identify areas of cooperation going forward.

In quarter 2, EMRA organised and participated in study visits to each of the five NPTI towns, which saw the towns demonstrating how they were progressing in adapting the good urban practices imparted by Cork City onto their own town. An application was submitted for the NPTI to be showcased at a Placemaking Europe Conference in September 2022.

In quarter 3, after being accepted for participation at the above Conference, EMRA and NPTI partners from Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Laois, Sligo and Wicklow attended the event. As part of this endeavour, the NPTI partners co-facilitated a workshop and separately, engaged in a demonstration of their play practice.

The NPTI began to wind down in the final quarter of 2022 with its final event held in Sligo on November 15th. Attended by over 65 people, both international and national speakers contributed to the morning's policy considerations with keynotes and a panel discussion, before the afternoon saw participants take to the streets of Sligo for each of the towns to demonstrate their learnings.



The NPTI was subject to an independent review across the five participating member states, proving to be a real success, supported by the output and impact indicators generated in each town. Despite the network formally coming to an end, there is still good engagement between the Irish towns as they share their learnings with one another. The NPTI was presented by the NCP to the three Irish Regional Assemblies during 2022.



# Grow as a Region



# Grow as a Region

## Communicating and showcasing EMRA's assets

### Website and social media

In 2022 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



@EMRASsembly &  
@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 17% between January and December 2022 and we have reached 820 followers by the end of the year. The growth was fully organic (non-paid for). Our Facebook page had 208 followers and our LinkedIn profile had 242 followers on 31st Dec 2022.

Throughout the year we have continued to maintain our website [www.emra.ie](http://www.emra.ie) and update it with relevant information. We used the website to disseminate information about our involvement in the EU Interreg projects and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and to fulfil EMRA's new communication obligations in relation to the EU Just Transition Fund Programme. We have also commenced redevelopment of the website with a view to modernise it and improve its design.

### Raising the profile of the strengths of local and regional Government

One of the highlights of the year was the IREO organised visit by the CoR President of the Committee of the Regions to Ireland in June 2022. This two-day visit showcased the local government sector in Ireland and the work of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

Hosted by the Irish CoR delegation, the visit included a presentation by Cllr Michael Murphy and Cllr Kate Feeney to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Union Affairs, a visit to the Mansion House, a high-level meeting with IBEC and a debate on Youth and Democracy in Europe in conjunction with European Movement Ireland.

Both Cllr. Murphy and Cllr. Feeney informed the Committee of the importance of integrating local and regional government officials into decision-making to ensure that national policies are properly implemented at a local level. As well as this, they highlighted the impact which European Officers can have on the council's ability to secure European project funding.

President Tzitzikostas and the CoR Delegation also met with Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghail. During this meeting, the President pledged to seek to deepen ties between Ireland and his native Greece following the conclusion of his time as President of the Committee of the Regions via his role as Governor of Greece's Central Macedonia Region.

During his Mansion House reception address, President Tzitzikostas reflected on how integral the incorporation of local and regional voices was in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and how important they will come to be in reacting to Russia's unjustified attack on Ukraine. He also noted how local and regional authorities are responsible for housing and incorporating Ukrainians into Europe.

The work of local government was highlighted through the weekly work of the Committee of the Regions in Commissions (Committees) and in the plenary sessions. Examples of best practice were presented through opinions and speaking points and mostly notably from the EMRA, Cllr Una Power, Cllr Alison Gilliland and Cllr Kate Feeney highlighted best practice on climate action, equality and economic and social cohesion.

### IREO Communication

The IREO published 5 editions of the newsletter during 2022. 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.

## Corporate, HR and Finance

In 2022, 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 2022 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 2022 Programme of Works was adopted by the Assembly in February 2022 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 2021 annual report was drafted by the executive team and adopted by the elected members at the June meeting.

### Human Resources

EMRA continued to support the Elected Members and staff throughout the year. Following official advice, EMRA staff returned to the office based on a hybrid model. EMRA followed the development of a sectoral blended working framework and policies and started the preparations to introduce this policy in the organisation.

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.

2022 saw a lot of changes in the EMRA team. Early in 2022, EMRA was able to appoint a new Senior Planner/Assistant Director. Following the appointment of EMRA as Managing Authority of the EU Just Transition Fund, EMRA was able to recruit three new permanent staff members in 2022 to reinforce the team. EMRA appointed an Administrative officer, a communications officer and an Assistant Director. The year also saw the appointment of a new EU affairs officer and a new Research and Policy officer. Finally, following a competition run by the Public Appointment Service, two Senior Executive Planners joined the team.

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

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

### Staff Support Services

In 2022, EMRA maintained its provision of staff support services as part of an overall employee assistance programme.

### Freedom of Information

During 2022, the FOI officer co-ordinated management of requests received under the Freedom of Information legislation.

In total, the Assembly received two FOI requests in 2022.

## Finance

### The main functions of the Finance section in 2022 included:

- Preparation of the Annual Financial Statement 2021 (Adopted by the Members in April 2022)
- 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 2023 which was adopted by Members in November 2022.

The Corporate team facilitated the annual audit performed by the government auditor which took place in quarter 4 of 2022.



## 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 increase in the gas usage in the building.

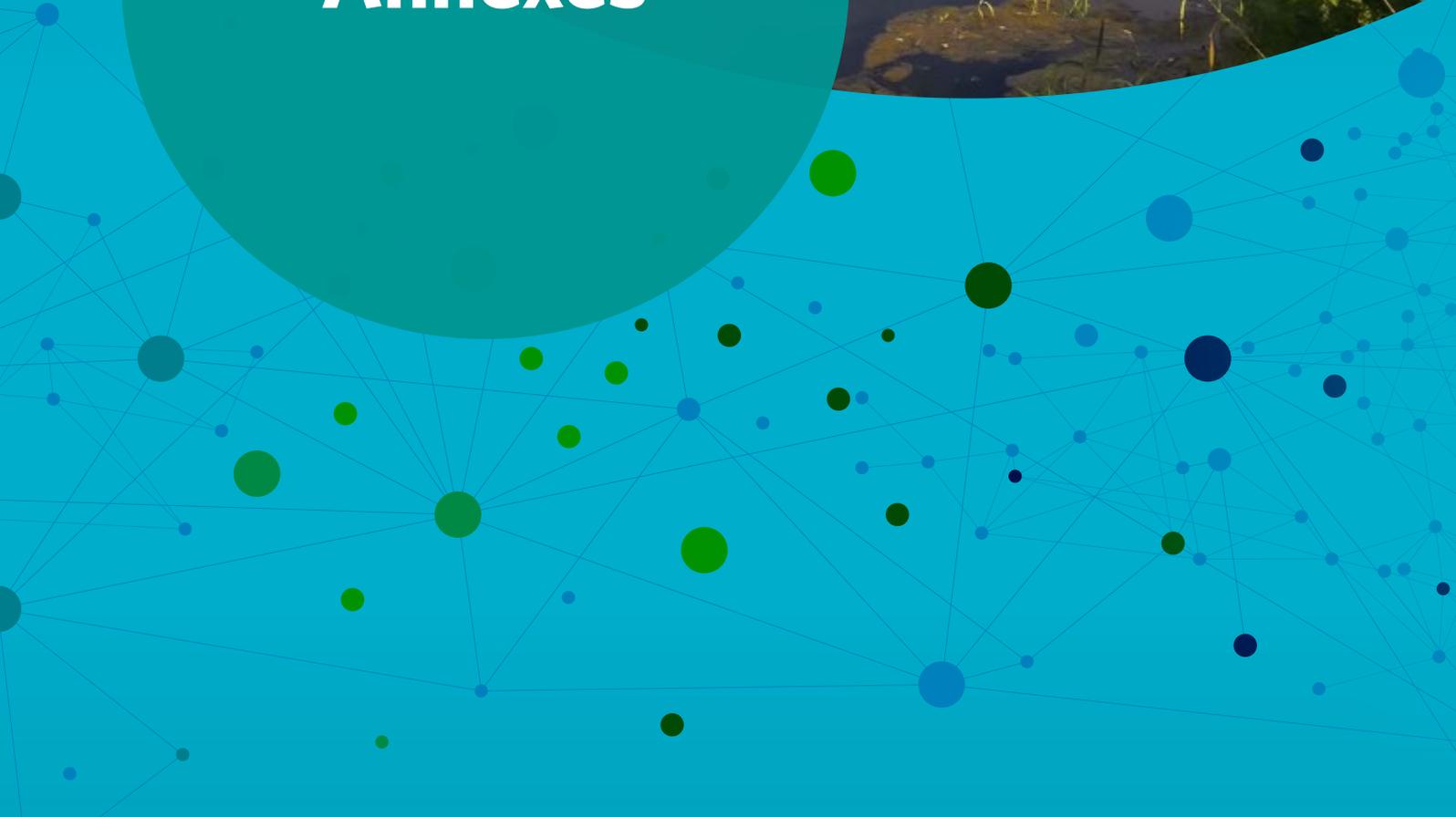
Utility	2021	2022	%
Electricity (Mw)	1198	1212	+1.2%
Water (M3)	658	5867	+791.5%
Gas (M3)	186115	189200	+1.65 %

### 2022 upgrades include:

- Replace current light fittings where possible with LED fittings
- Reviewing operation of heating and air conditioning systems to optimise energy usage.
- Replacing heating valves and sensors as necessary.



# Annexes



## List of Staff 2022



**Jim Conway**  
Director



**Nicci Nolan**  
Senior Executive Planner (resigned April 2022)



**Helena Stromberg**  
EU Project Officer then Communications officer



**Clare Bannon**  
Assistant Director and Senior Planner



**Anne Marie Wood Wolfe**  
Senior Executive Planner



**Simon Musial**  
Senior Staff Officer



**Bernadette Roe**  
Assistant Director



**Padraig O'Shea**  
Senior Executive Planner



**Tadhg Browne**  
EU Support Officer



**Laure Antoniotti**  
EU and Corporate Affairs Manager



**Michael Brennan**  
EU affairs officer (resigned April 2022)



**Alan Lambe**  
Assistant Staff Officer



**Teresa Lennon**  
Head of the IREO



**Karl Murphy**  
EU affairs officer



**Ross Higgins**  
Clerical Officer



**Terence Connolly**  
Administrative officer



**Travis O'Doherty**  
Research and Policy Officer  
(resigned September 2022)



**Geraldine Kenny**  
Clerical Officer



**Juan Martinez (career break)**  
Economist for the three Assemblies  
(resigned September 2022)



**Owen Douglas**  
EU Project Officer then Research  
and Policy Officer



**Sarah Campbell**  
Clerical Officer

## Annual Financial Statement 2021

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	
Expenditure	EMRA 2021
Salaries	802,013
Office Equipment & Supplies	6,687
Information Technology	30,875
Communications & Postage	14,117
Members Annual Allowances	41,005
Travel & Subsistence Allowances:	
I - Members Travel & Subsistence	142
II - Members conferences	0
III - Staff Travel and Subsistence	5,164
Rent	68,519
Insurance	5,572
Training	21,471
Consultancy & professional Fees	113,885
Facilities, Energy & Rates charges	61,819
Advertising	7,100
Audit Fee	12,588
Miscellaneous	5,138
EU Affairs & IRO (COR)	173,849
Communicating Europe	6,574
Encore Network Conference 2021	35,200
URBACT	25,176
National Practice Transfer Initiative (Urbact)	23,324
Next2Met Interreg Programme	58,311
Progress Interreg project	70,588
Expenditure total	1,589,118
Income	
Local Authorities Contributions	1,301,322
Other Income	156,193
Superannuation	21,827
Committee of the Regions	173,834
COR Misc	14
Communicating Europe	5,000
National Practice Transfer Initiative (Urbact)	23,324
URBACT	25,176
Next2Met Interreg Programme	49,526
Progress Interreg project	59,924
Receipts total	1,816,142
Difference between Income + Expenditure	227,024
Opening balance at 01/01/2021	1,090,486
Closing Balance at end of year Surplus	1,317,510

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	
Expenditure	EMRA 2020
Salaries	802,055
Office Equipment & Supplies	6,211
Information Technology	42,852
Communications & Postage	12,895
Members Annual Allowances	35,016
Travel & Subsistence Allowances:	
I - Members Travel & Subsistence	203
II - Members conferences	400
III - Staff Travel and Subsistence	11,336
Rent	69,279
Insurance	0
Training	6,698
Consultancy & professional Fees	26,425
Facilities, Energy & Rates charges	71,140
Advertising	2,389
Audit Fee	6,349
Miscellaneous	4,791
EU Affairs & IRO (COR)	176,898
EU Operational Programme	0
Resilens	0
I.E. Network	0
Urb-ADAPT	0
URBACT	23,921
Urbanarea	0
Next2Met Interreg Programme	72,791
Progress Interreg project	68,757
RSES	28,899
SPI	0
Expenditure total	1,469,304
Income	
Local Authorities Contributions	1,238,027
Other Income	89,005
Superannuation	21,653
Committee of the Regions	177,604
COR Misc	857
Resilens	28,874
IE Network	0
Urb-ADAPT	0
EU Operational Programme	0
URBACT	23,921
Next2Met Interreg Programme	62,554
Progress Interreg project	58,596
RSES	24,937
SPI	0
Receipts total	1,726,027
Difference between Income + Expenditure	256,723
Opening balance at 01/01/2020	833,763
Closing Balance at end of year Surplus	1,090,486

## Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2021

	2021	2020
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
IT Equip	€5,000	€5,000
Furniture & Fixtures	€0	€0
Heritage Assets	€10,000	€10,000
	<b>€15,000</b>	<b>€15,000</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash at Bank	€1,066,640	€870,290
Debtors	€383,171	€383,000
Petty Cash	€130	€183
Prepayments	€1,473	€0
	<b>€1,451,412</b>	<b>€1,253,473</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Creditors & Accruals	€133,902	€162,986
Deferred income	€0	€0
Bank	€0	€0
	<b>€133,902</b>	<b>€162,986</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>€1,317,510</b>	<b>€1,090,486</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>€1,332,510</b>	<b>€1,105,486</b>
<b>Financed by</b>		
Balance@ 01/01/20	€1,090,486	€833,763
General Reserve	€0	€0
Inherited Fixed Assets from old DRA	€15,000	€15,000
(Deficit)\Excess of Income over Expenditure	€227,024	€256,723
	<b>€1,332,510</b>	<b>€1,105,486</b>

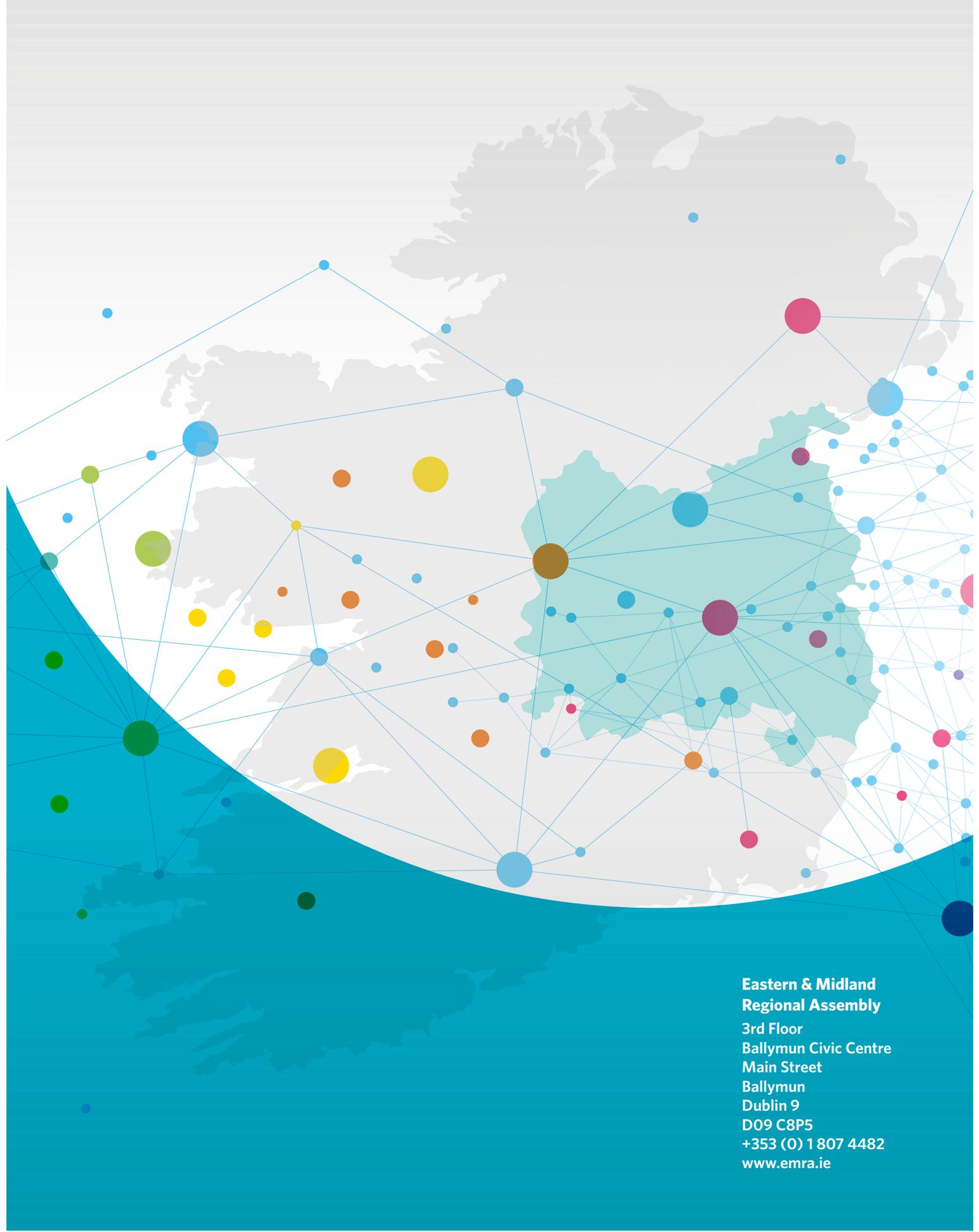
## Members Allowances &amp; Expenses 2022

Members (Clr.)	Fixed Allowance	Training	Committee of Regions	Conferences
Daryl Barron (Dublin)	€ 375.82	€ -	€ -	€ -
Emma Blain (Dublin)	€ 447.40	€ -	€ -	€ -
Aoife Breslin (Kildare)(CoR)	€ 1,231.40	€ -	€ -	€ -
Fintan Brett (Kildare)	€ 731.95	€ -	€ -	€ -
John Browne (Longford)	€ 2,103.19	€ -	€ -	€ -
Emma Coffey (Louth)	€ 187.19	€ -	€ -	€ -
Avril Cronin (Wicklow)	€ 1,034.02	€ -	€ -	€ -
Eamon Dooley (Offaly)	€ 2,444.18	€ -	€ -	€ -
Laura Donaghy (Dublin)	€ 596.55	€ -	€ -	€ -
Caroline Dwane (Laois)(CoR)	€ 1,610.49	€ -	€ 630.21	€ -
Kate Feeney (Dublin)	€ 596.55	€ -	€ -	€ -
Brian Fitzgerald (Meath)	€ 731.95	€ -	€ -	€ -
Tom Fortune (Wicklow)	€ 415.21	€ -	€ -	€ -
Catherine Fitzgerald (Laois)	€ 1,681.31	€ -	€ -	€ -
Eddie Fitzpatrick (Offaly)	€ 1,593.94	€ 275.50	€ -	€ -
Mary Freehill (Dublin)	€ 786.11	€ 177.61	€ -	€ -
James (Jim) Gildea (Dublin)	€ 606.97	€ -	€ -	€ -
Alison Gilliland (Dublin)	€ 596.53	€ 241.50	€ -	€ -
Lyn Hagin Meade (Dublin)	€ 382.90	€ -	€ -	€ -
Mary Hanafin (Dublin)	€ 578.46	€ -	€ -	€ -
David Healy (Dublin)	€ 596.55	€ -	€ -	€ -
Deirdre Heney (Dublin)	€ 596.55	€ -	€ -	€ -
Deirdre Heney (Cathaoirleachs Allowance)	€ 5,850.00	€ -	€ -	€ -
Janet Horner (Dublin)	€ 596.55	€ -	€ -	€ -
Vincent Jackson (Dublin)	€ 524.96	€ -	€ -	€ -
Pamela Kearns (Dublin)	€ 447.41	€ -	€ -	€ -
Conor Keelan (Louth)	€ 403.31	€ -	€ -	€ -
Dermot Lacey (Dublin)	€ 596.55	€ 683.64	€ -	€ 419.07
Brigid Manton (Dublin)	€ 663.67	€ -	€ -	€ -
Tony McCormack (Offaly)	€ 647.79	€ -	€ -	€ -
Jimmy McClearn (CoR)	€ -	€ -	€ 774.40	€ -
Padraig McEvoy (Kildare)	€ 804.87	€ -	€ -	€ -
Declan McDonnell (Galway)(CoR)	€ -	€ -	€ 273.85	€ -
Paddy Meade (Meath)	€ 1,016.91	€ -	€ -	€ -
Aisling Moran (Laois)	€ 1,553.62	€ -	€ -	€ -
Micheal Murphy (Tipperary)(CoR)	€ -	€ -	€ 2,831.81	€ -
Colm Murray (Longford)	€ 2,065.31	€ -	€ -	€ -
Danny Owen (Offaly)	€ 344.21	€ -	€ -	€ -
Peter O'Brien (Dublin)	€ 447.41	€ -	€ -	€ -
Robert O'Donoghue (Dublin)	€ 254.39	€ -	€ -	€ -
Damien O'Reilly (Meath)	€ 629.80	€ 305.40	€ -	€ -
Aengus O'Rourke (WestMeath)	€ 1,684.86	€ -	€ -	€ -
Robert Power (Kildare)	€ 856.95	€ -	€ -	€ -
Robert Power (Cathaoirleachs Allowance)	€ 2,925.00	€ -	€ -	€ -
Una Power (Dublin)	€ 447.40	€ -	€ -	€ -
Gerry Walsh (Dublin)	€ 842.25	€ 258.50	€ -	€ -









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