

€5.7tn ‘silver economy’ SME boon

By Pádraig Hoare

A team at CIT is carrying out major research on “golden opportunities” for SMEs in the so-called silver economy, which is estimated to be worth €5.7 trillion in the next eight years.

The Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship at CIT said SMEs have a rapidly-growing “untapped market” of over 50s who tended to have greater access to resources both financial and time, and have different needs to younger customers.

The cohort of older people have different needs again which creates a segmented market, leading to a golden opportunity for SMEs and the economy, according to the Hincks Centre, which is researching the value of the silver economy in the region and across Europe.

Headed by Dr Helen McGuirk, the Hincks Centre is one of nine EU partners taking part in the European Interreg, co-funded Silver SME research.

A European Commission study estimated in 2015 that the European silver economy is worth €3.7 trillion, will potentially be worth €5.7 trillion in 2025, will contribute 32% of GDP in Europe and support 38% employment.

Hincks said that based on CSO and Commission figures respectively, the number of people over 50 in Ireland is estimated to increase from 31% in 2018 to 43% by 2050 and by 2060, one in three Europeans will be over 65.

The aim of the Silver SME project is to improve regional policies for SMEs competitiveness by taking better advantage of opportunities derived from the silver economy, Hincks said.

The project will conduct an analysis of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of each of the nine EU partner regions, and produce a composite report before drawing up recommendations for regional policy.

Silver economy CIT lead researcher, Dr Aisling Conway Lenihan, said the research would inform national and EU policy and will advance opportunities for the domestic and international SME sector.

A key part of the collaboration of the partners across Europe is to identify inter-regional examples of good practice measures. These measures will support the research and the development of policy.

