

## **Submission to the LSRA in relation to the potential unification of the solicitors' and barristers' professions**

Enterprise Ireland does not have a strong view on the potential unification of the solicitors' and barristers' professions.

Its principal concern is that quality legal advice be available to its client companies regardless of their size and location.

Some high-level issues and thoughts that might be pertinent to the considerations are as follows:

Enterprise Ireland considers that there could be benefits and risks associated with a unification of the solicitors' and barristers' professions.

Benefits could include an increase in efficiencies in certain areas such as litigation, a concentration of expertise in certain areas of the law, such as European and Commercial law, and an enhanced sharing of overheads and know-how where solicitors and barristers work together in partnerships.

Risks could include a concentration of expertise in larger law firms, a possible increased presence of large law firms in the larger urban centres particularly in Dublin, and the potential undermining of the independence and distinct characteristics of the advocacy side of the barristers' profession.

From an Enterprise Ireland perspective, the availability of specialist legal expertise when needed by Irish companies of all sizes in all parts of the country is important.

In this regard, small solicitors' practices currently rely on counsels' opinions to supplement their knowledge of areas of the law. This might particularly be the case in complex areas of commercial law.

Were a unification of the professions to result in reduced availability of such expertise to small firms, such a development could have an adverse impact on small and medium sized enterprises.

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