

Press release

Minister Harris visits European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)

From [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science \(/en/organisation/departments-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/\)](#)

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Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris has today made an official visit to the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).

As part of the visit, the Minister has had the opportunity to meet with CERN officials to discuss the opportunities associate membership of CERN would bring for Ireland, including a meeting with the Director-General of CERN, Dr Fabiola Gianotti.

This visit follows from the Minister's announcement in Dáil Éireann last November that the department would prepare a submission for Government to consider joining CERN and from a formal invitation to visit from the Director-General.

Speaking today, Minister Harris said:

"This was a really important opportunity to witness the work underway at CERN.

"CERN has long been one of the world's leading scientific laboratories. I see huge value for Ireland in large international scientific collaborations and this visit has reaffirmed my view on the value this could have for Ireland's scientific community."

CERN is an intergovernmental organisation that operates the largest particle physics laboratory in the world. It is the leading global collaboration investigating the fundamental composition of matter.

The main focus of activity in CERN is the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). This is an underground ring which is 27km in circumference in which protons, one of the constituent particles of an atom, are accelerated to 99.9999991% of the speed of light and collided into one another.

Today CERN officials brought the Minister to see LCHb, one of the Large Hadron Collider's four core experiments located 100 metres underground. The LHCb collaboration includes over 1600 scientists, engineers and technicians from 22 countries.

While CERN centres on fundamental research into particle physics, associate membership of CERN can be expected to bring benefits to Ireland across research, industry, skills, science outreach, and international relations. It would open doors for Ireland's researchers to participate in CERN's scientific programmes and would make Irish citizens eligible for staff positions and fellowships at CERN.

With CERN associate membership, Irish citizens would gain access to CERN's formal training schemes. These include masters and PhD programmes, apprenticeships, a graduate engineering training scheme, internships for computer scientists and engineers, and technical training experience. These skills would be developed beyond what is possible in Ireland and are in industry-relevant areas such as electronics, photonics, materials, energy systems and software.

Associate membership would also allow Ireland's enterprises to compete in CERN procurement and knowledge transfer programmes. Much of CERN's instrumentation and equipment requires the development or exploitation of novel technologies, which spurs enterprise innovation. Many of these technologies have applications in other spheres such as medicine, space, energy and ICT.

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