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**A quartet of talent, location, tax and track record makes Ireland a sure-fire investment destination for companies expanding internationally.**

**Terry Clune, CEO, TAXBACK Group and Chairman, ConnectIreland**

While the eurozone crisis continues to rumble on, Ireland's position as an attractive destination for multi-nationals seeking to expand their business has not faltered.

A recent report from Foreign Direct Intelligence, a subsidiary of the Financial Times Group, revealed that Ireland attracted 186 overseas investment projects in 2011 – an impressive 22% jump on 2010 levels.

Ireland's potent blend of talent, location, tax and track record has made it a top destination for overseas countries expanding internationally over the past four decades.

Today we boast some of the biggest names in industry; some companies have been here for over 30 years and others that have put down roots in the last few months, but all paving the way for those many more set to arrive.

Recent foreign direct investment project wins have included PayPal, Eli Lilly, MasterCard and HP. Multi-nationals with a presence in Ireland reads like a who's who of the business world, stretching from the likes of LinkedIn and Google to EMC and beyond.

This exciting mix of multinationals means we have been able to build up strategic industry clusters within ICT, engineering, digital media, life sciences and consumer brands. We are now proud to be home to ten of the top "Born on the Internet" companies, nine of the top ten pharma/ bio companies, three of the top five games companies and more than 50% of the world's financial services companies.

But our drive to push Ireland's economic recovery is not only seen in those companies we attract to our shores but in our level of export. Figures published by the Irish Exporters Association showed an €8 billion increase in exports to €171 billion in 2011.

To further boost this growth, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny has implemented a raft of measures including creating a number of different grant programmes for start-up businesses and those looking to export, which in turn will help fuel the growth of Ireland's domestic economy.

Other measures include an initiative to stimulate job creation through foreign direct investment. One such programme, Succeed in Ireland, will provide direct financial incentives to people who can harness their connections and make introductions to overseas companies looking to expand.

The initiative, which aims to create a minimum of 5,000 jobs over the next five years, was introduced by Government agency IDA Ireland, responsible for attracting foreign direct investment, and is part of the government's Jobs Action Plan 2012.

This unique initiative marks Ireland out as the first country in the world to offer an incentivised referral programme in a bid to boost efforts in attracting overseas investment.

Importantly, the Finance Bill 2012 also saw tax exemptions provided for foreign executives who come to work in Ireland, a move which is expected to increase Ireland's competitiveness while attracting exceptionally talented employees to locate to Ireland.

There is little doubt that the talent Ireland fosters is highly regarded and recognised as a key factor in attracting overseas companies. Documented global shortages of skills in cloud computing technology, life sciences and digital media are being addressed by Ireland's universities to ensure that Ireland stays ahead of the game.

I believe the upcoming Fiscal Compact Treaty, if passed, will send a positive message out to the international community and will display Ireland's ambitious plan to stabilise finance and protect against future crises.

It is certain that Ireland still has some way to go in rebuilding its economy, however its drive, spate of new programmes and tax measures show that it still remains a country hungry for opportunity and much-needed job creation.