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Ireland sets aside €15 million to support rural pubs in Budget 2027

Ministers said the scheme will help sustain businesses central to rural community life, with eligibility rules still to come.

Tuesday, October 6, 2026



Ireland’s government has set aside €15 million in Budget 2027 to support rural pubs, opening a new line of aid for businesses that officials said play a central role in community life and local employment.

The announcement came in a Budget 2027 statement by Minister Harris, published by the Department of Finance. In that statement, Harris said rural pubs are “at the heart of many local communities” and described them as gathering places for families, friends, and neighbors. He also said they are important small and medium-sized businesses that employ thousands of people across the country, including young workers.

The funding is intended to help keep rural pubs operating, but the government has not yet published the rules of the program. Harris said he and Enterprise Minister Peter Burke will develop the scheme over the coming weeks to assist publicans. That means key details, including eligibility, how money will be distributed, and whether support will be tied to location, turnover, staffing, or operating costs, have not yet been set out publicly.

The measure stands out in a budget package that also includes tax increases on tobacco and vaping products and spending commitments in drug, alcohol, and health services. Harris said excise duty on a pack of 20 cigarettes will rise by €1, with a related increase on other tobacco products. He also said duty on e-liquid products will increase by 20 cents per milliliter.

The contrast reflects the broad scope of the Irish budget. On one side, the government is using tax policy to discourage smoking and nicotine use, especially among younger people. On the other, it is offering direct financial support to a hospitality business type that ministers say remains important to the economic and social fabric of rural Ireland.

For the drinks business, the pub measure could matter beyond the immediate recipients. Rural pubs are a key sales channel for beer, cider, spirits, and wine, particularly in smaller towns and villages where hospitality options are limited. If the aid helps prevent closures or stabilizes trading conditions, it could support demand across suppliers, distributors, and local producers. It may also draw attention in other markets as an example of targeted public backing for on-trade venues under pressure.

The source material does not say how many pubs could benefit from the €15 million package, and it does not provide an estimate of the average payment per business. It also does not specify whether the scheme will be a grant program, a tax-linked support, or another form of relief. That leaves open the question of whether the money will be

enough to make a measurable difference in areas where pubs face rising labor, energy, insurance, and compliance costs.

In defending the measure, Harris linked rural pubs to a wider public interest, not only to business activity. He said supporting local pubs helps preserve an important part of rural life while also supporting jobs and the broader community. That language suggests the government sees the sector not simply as part of hospitality, but as part of local social infrastructure.

The budget documents linked to the statement show other spending plans that touch on public health and enforcement. The 2027 allocation for the Revenue Commissioners' administration and tax collection program is listed at €684.448 million. According to the expenditure report, that program covers the collection of taxes and duties that account for more than 90% of Exchequer revenue, as well as customs controls, legitimate trade facilitation, and the interdiction of drugs and other illegal substances.

The same budget material lists €36 million for 2027 under measures tied to social inclusion, the National Drugs Strategy, and community health and wellbeing. The funding is intended to expand community drug and alcohol services and prevention initiatives, along with related supports in areas including homelessness, sexual health, tobacco control, and other health prevention measures.

Another item in the budget papers points to changes in laboratory capacity. Under the State Laboratory vote, the government said a new forensic analytical and toxicology service will be in place in 2027 to analyze the most commonly seen drugs with a significantly shorter turnaround time than the existing service. The documents say clients will be able to choose between the current more comprehensive service and the new faster option.

Taken together, those measures show a budget approach that combines public health policy, tax changes, law enforcement capacity, and targeted business support. But among the announcements, the rural pub package is likely to attract particular attention in Ireland's hospitality trade because it offers direct help to a business type that has long argued it faces unique pressures outside major urban centers.

The government has not yet said when applications could open or when funds would begin to reach businesses. With the scheme still being designed, pub owners, industry groups, and drinks suppliers are likely to focus next on the eligibility criteria and the size of support available to individual premises. Until those details are published, the €15 million commitment sets the direction of policy, but not yet the practical terms under which rural pubs will be able to use it.