Foreword 2023

GS1 standards: 50 years of transforming tomorrow

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Welcome to this year's Annual Review, where we celebrate a significant milestone—the 50th anniversary of the barcode. This simple yet transformative technology has revolutionised how we trade, communicate, and interact with the world.

The barcode's journey began as a solution to speed up supermarket checkouts, but it has since evolved into a universal business language. Today, it is used by millions of companies worldwide to identify, capture, and share information, symbolising the power of innovation and standardisation, and our commitment to simplifying business.

Over the past five decades, GS1 has worked tirelessly to promote the adoption of barcodes and Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs), enhancing efficiency, accuracy, patient safety, and transparency across the supply chain.

As we mark this 50-year milestone, we also look to the future. The rise of digital technology opens new avenues for innovation. From 2D barcodes to digital twins, we are exploring new ways to leverage data for greater value to businesses and consumers alike.

Reflecting on the past year, GS1 Ireland is proud of the progress we've made with our members, and we are excited to share our key achievements in the **Retail Grocery & CPG, Healthcare, and Construction** sectors.

Delivering for our Members across Keys sectors:
This year marked the second year of GS1 Ireland's 2022-2024 strategic plan, "Empowering Consumers, Saving Lives," which aims to benefit our members in Ireland and globally by harnessing GS1's standards and services to transform the way people work and live. This strategy is driven by member needs, industry trends, and evolving consumer expectations. We are pleased to report continuing progress across all four strategic pillars: building trusted relationships through Member Engagement; focusing on Key Sectors—Retail/CPG, Healthcare, and Construction; driving value through innovative Standards, Services, and Solutions; and ensuring growth in Organisational Capability.

Taking each sector in turn, the wider **Retail** sector is facing unprecedented supply chain challenges, as well as opportunities through the "connected" consumer. However, GS1 barcodes remain the trusted data foundation for retailers and brands, enabling trusted, complete, and accurate product identification and data sharing. A notable example is Ireland's Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), which launched in February 2024 for plastic bottles and steel & aluminium cans. GS1 Ireland supported the Beverage sector with training on the rules for the application of GTINs (barcode numbers) and how best to manage deposit charges within EANCOM EDI invoice messages.

The **Healthcare** team had another busy year, focusing being a trusted standards partner for digital transformation in Irish healthcare, the preferred traceability standard for digital solutions, and ensuring patient-centred design in traceability standards.

Initiatives such as **Scan4Safety** are enhancing traceability of medical products, with hospitals like Tallaght University Hospital and Blackrock Health Hermitage Clinic leading the way in implementing barcode scanning at the point of care, improving patient safety and efficiency.

The **Healthcare** team also saw a growing need for standards-based traceability solutions. The team continued to enhance the functionality of the TrackVax solution, a digital track and trace solution to manage and track the vaccines for the HSE National Immunisation Office. The scope of TrackVax has expanded to track all vaccines in the immunisation programme. Work is ongoing, and will continue in 2024 to support the schools Immunisation programme.

GS1 Ireland has been actively engaged In the **Construction** sector since 2018, participating in various stakeholder forums to demonstrate how our standards can address sector challenges. In 2023, we completed a BIM model of our offices using Autodesk Revit, showcasing how GS1 standards can be applied in a realistic environment. This work was presented at the GS1 in Europe Forum in Athens and is available for viewing on our website.

Membership Report

At the end of 2023, our core membership showed steady growth, with the number of active members and license holders increasing to 3,800. New members in 2023 totalled 300, and annual licenses issued rose to 7,500. The Food & Beverage (47 per cent), Consumer Non-Food (24 per cent), and Business Products & Services (9 per cent) sectors continue to dominate our membership base, with Healthcare (10 per cent) also showing steady growth.

Working with Industry and the Public Sector to Make a Difference

In summary, 2023 was a year of challenge, change, acceleration, and opportunity for GS1 Ireland and our members. We continued to innovate in the adoption of standards-based traceability solutions. Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, the rise of digital technologies like generative AI presents new opportunities for further innovation. From the global shift to 2D barcodes in Retail to digital twins across all sectors, we are exploring new ways to harness the power of standards to deliver even greater value to businesses and consumers. The Board and Executive look forward to working with our members in the coming years, supporting their businesses with a wide range of GS1 standards-based services and solutions.