



SOCIAL
JUSTICE
IRELAND

working to build a just society

Annual Report 2013



Social Justice Ireland

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Note from the Chairperson

Welcome to the Annual Report of *Social Justice Ireland*. This report covers the period from July 1, 2012 to August 31, 2013.

The past year has been very busy for us. The challenging and long drawn out socio-economic crisis both nationally and internationally has made life difficult for most Irish people. The growth in poverty and inequality in the past year poses a large challenge to the common good and the work of social justice. This trend highlights the need to evaluate and reform public policy to make it more inclusive, people-centred and supportive of communities. The current situation calls for a vision that can give people reasons for living and hoping. In our various activities, *Social Justice Ireland* responded to this need for a vision that is energising and achievable.

We seek to influence the direction of society generally and on specific topics by:

- Providing detailed, rigorous social analysis of a wide range of issues
- Articulating a desirable vision of the future
- Identifying viable, desirable pathways that would lead towards such a future.

The stance taken by *Social Justice Ireland* is developed by the Board in line with our strategic plan and from the perspective of human dignity, human rights, the common good and sustainability.

During the past year the organisation benefitted from the work and support of:

- The Academic Advisory Council who ensure that standards are maintained in the areas of research, publications and policy stance.
- The Budget Team who research and help to prepare the documentation.
- The Finance and Organisational sub-committee who work on sustainability issues e.g, structure, membership, funding and staffing.
- The Communications Sub-Committee

Significant Board time was given to issues of governance. We are happy to confirm that *Social Justice Ireland* is compliant with the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable Sector in Ireland. It has also signed the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. The Board also gave a special focus to 'branding' with a view to better communication and recognition. In this process we amended our Mission statement. We hope you like the new logo!

An outline of our mission and activities are given in the following pages.

We are particularly grateful to Board members and the members of the groups listed above who give generously of their time and expertise to enhance the work of *Social Justice Ireland*. They have been a great support to our staff who have put quality time into the work of the organisation. The following pages attest to the large volume of work done by *Social Justice Ireland*. Much of this work is done on a pro bono basis by the Staff, Board, Committee members and volunteers.

We are grateful to you, members of *Social Justice Ireland*. Your support, both financial and moral is very encouraging and energising.

Finbarr Tracey SVD

Mission

***Social Justice Ireland* advances the lives of people and communities through providing independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies as a whole.**

- We advance the lives of people and communities by working to build a just society. In doing this we give special priority to national and international issues related to poverty, inequality, social exclusion, sustainability and the environment.
- As an independent think tank *Social Justice Ireland* is a significant research resource in the area of social justice and public policy. We provide accurate social analysis of the current situation on an ongoing basis and identify effective policy proposals to address challenges.
- We are one of the leading advocates for the changes needed for a future that is sustainable economically, environmentally and socially. We identify credible alternatives and effective pathways to resolving challenges faced across a wide range of public policy.
- *Social Justice Ireland* works to ensure that every member of society, and society as a whole, can flourish and thrive in a sustainable manner. We have a special concern for those who are vulnerable or on the margins of society. We believe that the dignity of all is enhanced when those on the margins of society are included. Consequently we promote the development of an inclusive society in which everyone's rights and responsibilities are recognised and honoured.
- We work both nationally and internationally. The inter-relatedness of the local and the global requires that issues be addressed at different levels to ensure appropriate solutions are identified and implemented. We bring this perspective to bear on all we do.

Values

Social Justice Ireland promotes the values of both human dignity and the centrality of the community. The person is seen as growing and developing in a context that includes other people and the environment. Justice is understood in terms of right relationships. A just society is one that is structured in such a way as to promote right relationships so that human rights are respected, human dignity is protected, human development is facilitated and the environment is respected and protected.

Social Justice Ireland speaks for those who have no voice in policy debates. We place a very high value on integrity in all we do and are confident enough to take an uncommon point of view or to propose an unpopular solution.

Core Programmes

To ensure both effectiveness and efficiency in our work and to achieve our strategic objectives, *Social Justice Ireland* has three programmes, each with a number of projects. These programmes address:

- 1) Public Policy & Research
- 2) Empowerment & Spirituality
- 3) Communications

Work Programme

Our Strategic Plan covers the period 2011-2015. A work programme is developed each year on the basis of this plan. The following pages outline the work done under each of the Core Programmes.

1. Public Policy and Research

In the past year we have:

- Placed an emphasis on doing robust, evidence-based research which was used to support and underpin all the work of *Social Justice Ireland*.
- Articulated an alternative narrative on Ireland today.
- Researched and published the annual Socio-Economic Review entitled *What Would Real Recovery Look Like?* and 3 Policy Briefings on *Poverty and Income Distribution, Ireland and the Global South and Budget Choices*.
- Organised a social policy conference on the theme *Does the European Social Model Have a Future?* Contributed a paper to this conference on the topic *The European Social Model and Ireland – Re-imagining for the twenty first century*. The conference attracted broad participation from across a wide range of sectors and significant media attention.
- Organised a policy Conference on Africa. Entitled *Beyond the MDGs: the future of Africa and Ireland's Role*, the conference was organised in partnership with the African Missions and Trinity College International Development Initiative (TIDI). It was oversubscribed and generated a lot of enthusiasm.
- Held regular Meetings with the 'troika' (IMF, ECB, EU) during their visits to Ireland.
 - Prepared a briefing document for each meeting
 - Focused on macro-economic issues with special reference to the impact on vulnerable, unemployed and poor people.
 - Participated in teleconference meetings with the technical staff of the Troika in Washington and Brussels.
 - Raised questions re plans post-exit from the 'bailout'
- Led a Budget project focused on the national budget which included
 - a Policy briefing, entitled *Budget Choices*
 - a fully costed alternative Budget
 - a seminar on budget policy
 - an analysis and critique of the Budget published on the morning after the Budget was announced.
 - Seminar and press conference on our analysis on the day after Budget.
- Presented a paper entitled *Pathways to a More Equal Future-Financing Basic Income in Ireland*, to the BIEN International Congress in Munich.
- Presented a paper on Basic Income and the Impact of the Current Crisis on Vulnerable EU Countries at the Eastern Economics Conference in New York.
- Wrote a paper on Basic Income for the Irish Journal of Sociology special edition on appropriate instruments for transformation in the 21st. century with particular reference to Ireland.
- Researched and published a study of pensions entitled *A Universal Pension for Ireland*.
- Developed and published a paper on *A Framework for Solidarity and Sustainable Recovery*.
- Made a submission to the Government's Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare on *Working Age Income Supports*.
- Made a Submission and oral presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection on pre-budget audits.
- Made a submission and oral presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance Public Expenditure and Reform on our budget proposals.
- Made a submission to the Inter-Departmental Working Group and Steering Group on Pensions.
- Made a submission to the Department of An Taoiseach on the National Reform Programme.
- Made a Submission to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on the *Mid Term Review of the Local and Community Development Programme*.

- Invited to be the ‘expert’ on an opinion being prepared by the EU’s Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on minimum income and poverty.
- Made a Submission to the Government’s Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare on Refundable Tax Credits.
- Made a Submission to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government’s consultation on the Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Ireland.
- Made a submission to the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and to Forfás on the Action Plan for Jobs 2014.
- **Europe**
 - Produced the ‘Ireland’ section of the Caritas Europa 2013 Shadow Reporting process on Europe 2020 Strategy.
 - Completed a study on Ireland and the EU 2020 Strategy which was publicised in mid-January.
 - **Impact of the European Crisis Report.** Produced the first ever study of the impact of the current crisis on the five EU countries in crisis, (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland). The European launch of this study which we undertook for Caritas Europa took place in the European parliament buildings in Dublin. It received wide media coverage in Ireland and many of the European Countries. It was circulated by the UN Director General as one of the special news items on the day.
 - Made two presentations at a seminar on this report in Brussels.
 - Invited to a Board meeting of Caritas Europa to speak on Basic Income.
 - *Social Justice Ireland* was invited to participate in the European Presidency Conference on the Social Investment Fund.
- Played an active part in the national social dialogue process as a member of the Community & Voluntary Pillar. This involves a number of meetings and the preparation of documentation.
- Requested and obtained meetings with members of Government & Senior Civil Servants:
 - Minister for Environment, Community, & Local Government, Mr. Phil Hogan, TD.
 - Minister for Social Protection, Ms Joan Burton, TD
 - Mr John Moran, Secretary General, Dept of Finance.
 - Mr Robert Watt, Secretary General, Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform.
 - Advisers to the Taoiseach and to a number of Ministers.
 - Senior civil servants from a number of Government Departments.
- Met with members of the opposition
- Did a briefing for the ‘Technical Group’ in Leinster House on our Budget Response.
- Provided a wide range of other briefings to members of the Dáil and Seanad
- As part of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of Social Partnership *Social Justice Ireland* has also participated in meetings during the past year with
 - Minister Michael Noonan TD, Minister for Finance
 - Minister Brendan Howlin, Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform.
 - Dept of the Environment on Social housing and homelessness (4meetings)
 - Dept of Health (4 meetings)
 - Dept of Education (3 meetings)
 - Dept of Finance (1 meeting)
 - Dept of Environment on Community issues (1 meeting)
 - Dept of Social Protection (4 meetings)
 - Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. (1meeting)

Social Justice Ireland chairs the Community & Voluntary Pillar participation in the meetings on housing and health and finance.

- *Social Justice Ireland* has a Member on the
 - National Economic & Social Council (NESC)
 - National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee
 - Technical Advisory Group on Social Indicators

2. Empowerment and Spirituality

The aim of this programme is to provide a resource and training in social policy so that people have a capacity to play an effective role in policy development in arenas ranging from local organisations to national and international contexts.

In the past year we have

- Facilitated and/or provided input into
 - 26 seminars/workshops involving about 1,400 people around the country focused on a variety of public policy and values issues.
- Taught three and a half modules on the MA in Social Justice and Public Policy programme in All Hallows College, Dublin City University. We are also members of the Board of Directors for the programme.
- Through our publications and presentations we articulated values and raised questions that promote a spirituality that supports and underpins the development of a just society.
- As part of our annual Socio-Economic Review we published a narrative that provides an alternative understanding of how Ireland got into its present series of crises and how it might move towards a more desirable future.
- Built strategic partnerships with some organisations and networked with many groups and organisations who share our values and strategic objectives.
- In particular we are a:
 - Member of *Act Now on 2015* Network (on Overseas Aid)
 - Member of the Basic Income Ireland (Irish branch of BIEN)
 - Member of *Claiming Our Future* core group
- Did some research and reflection on the reorganisation of our Networks.
- Facilitated meetings of the M.A. Alumni network.
- Met with volunteers.

3. Communications

An exciting new development in the past year has been the development of a strategic alliance with Kairos Communications. Still in its infancy this alliance has enhanced our capacity and broadened our horizons on communications.

The aim of the communications programme is to influence Government, 'Troika', Opposition Parties, Social Partners, policy makers, the media, Churches, the EU, the Community & Voluntary sector, and the general public to achieve changes in policies, programmes and behaviours which impact on poverty, inequality, social exclusion, sustainability and related issues and help to build a just society.

In the past year we

- Researched and produced the following books.
 - *Does the European Social Model have a Future?*
 - *What Would Real Recovery Look Like?*
- Contributed a paper on Basic Income for the Irish Journal of Sociology special edition on appropriate instruments for transformation in the 21st. century with particular reference to Ireland.
- Researched and produced
 - *Policy Briefings* on
 - Poverty and Income Distribution

- Ireland and the Global South
 - Budget Choices
 - a fully costed alternative Budget
 - an analysis and critique of the Budget published on the morning after the Budget was announced
- **Website.** Redesigned the *Social Justice Ireland* **website**. Updated the content with relevant up-to-date material on a wide range of social justice topics. The website had over **2.5** million hits during the year.
- Engaged with the media, print and electronic, so as to promote the outcomes we sought in the various issues raised. In the past year we are aware of the following coverage in the media:
 - 18 **TV** interviews broadcast on news and current affairs programmes
 - 54 interviews on **National Radio** news and current affairs programmes
 - 94 interviews broadcast on 230 **Local Radio** news and current affairs programmes, many of which were repeated several times
 - Over 180 stories in the **National** press including four editorials and five op-ed pieces.
 - Over 30 stories in **International** press.
 - We are aware of a wide coverage in the **Local press**.
- **Social Media**
We maintain an extensive and regular contact with our **6,362** followers on facebook and twitter.
- **Communication to Social Justice Ireland Members.** *Social Justice Ireland* values its members' support and input. We strive to keep members informed about the activities of the organisation and opportunities for involvement. In the past year we circulated Newsletters on the work as well as the publications and briefing documents mentioned above.

Members of the Board

Finbarr Tracey (Chairperson)	Micheál Collins
Connor Barry	PJ Drudy
Sheila Cronin	Joe Egan
Angela Durkin	Tom Jordan
Michael Howlett	Yvonne Murphy
Ann Leahy	Bridget O'Keeffe
Sandra O'Hara	Brid Ryan
Seán Ward	

Staff

Seán Healy - Director
Brigid Reynolds - Director
Michelle Murphy - Research and Policy Analyst

Proposals for the Future

It is proposed to continue the work to which we are committed under the three programmes outlined above and which was evaluated at our recent Board meeting. We will also give a greater focus to developing and implementing a sustainability plan for *Social Justice Ireland*. We welcome comments and suggestion from our members on these proposals.



Social Justice Ireland

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