



Social Justice Ireland

Annual Report

2015





**Working to build a just and sustainable society where human rights are respected,
human dignity is upheld,
human development is promoted
and the environment is valued and protected.**

Annual Report 2015

Contents

Note from the Chairperson	2
Public Policy and Research	4
Empowerment and Spirituality	7
Communication	9
Proposals for the Future.....	10
Members of the Board	10
Social Justice Ireland Annual General Meeting 2014	12
Mission	14
Values	14
Core Programmes.....	14

Note from the Chairperson

Welcome to the Annual Report of *Social Justice Ireland*. This report covers the period from September 1, 2014 to August 31, 2015.

During the year the Board gave significant time and energy to the development of a new Strategic Plan for *Social Justice Ireland*. The process was facilitated by a subcommittee of the Board. This process began with a two-day seminar for the Board where invited speakers reviewed the international and national environment within which *Social Justice Ireland* carries out its mission. This was accompanied by expert advice on how to formulate and influence public policy. Following on this seminar all our members were surveyed on their priorities for the work programme and invited to make suggestions for the next five years.

The results of the survey were presented to the Board at a full day meeting in June. The priorities for the new Strategic Plan were agreed. The subcommittee drew up a draft plan which was circulated, amended and finally agreed by the Board at our meeting in September. I wish to pay special tribute to the subcommittee for their facilitation which was energising, effective and efficient. Thank you also to our members who responded to the survey and offered many constructive and challenging comments. We are happy to present the final plan to this meeting and look forward to beginning implementation of the new plan in January 2016.

The Board of *Social Justice Ireland* keeps a strong focus on macro-economic and social policy while ensuring our activities are shaped from the perspective of vulnerable people and communities and are in the service of the common good. A key aspect of our agenda is the development and maintenance of a vision that is energising and achievable. The challenge is to identify and respond to the connections between international, national and local policy frameworks in a manner that supports good practice and positive outcomes for all people and the environment.

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 which advises, supports and helps to evaluate our communications strategy.

An outline of our mission and activities are given in the following pages. You will see that while we have a broad agenda it springs from a focused vision. Evaluation is part of our ongoing processes

where great attention is given to outcomes. You will notice that *Social Justice Ireland* maintained a strong international involvement contributing to Caritas Europa's annual study on Europe 2020 and researched their third crisis monitoring report for seven EU countries. We continued our involvement with the Better Europe Alliance in Ireland and contributed to a number of debates and seminars in Europe.

We have also kept a significant focus on local and regional issues. This is particularly obvious in our encouragement and support of participation. We have deployed significant resources to support the emerging Public Participation Networks, holding workshops in 13 counties in Ireland.

Appropriate 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. We will complete the registration with the Charities Regulatory Authority in the next week.

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

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 during the past year.

Public Policy and Research

a) [Research](#)

- Prepared and published our National Social Monitor.
- Made a submission to the Dept. of Finance on *Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)* consultation.
- Published Fairness in Changing Income tax: **3** options compared.
- Published Fairness in Changing Income tax: **6** options compared.
- Made a submission to the Department of An Taoiseach on the Draft National Risk Assessment.
- Researched and published Budget 2015, Analysis and Critique.
- Researched and presented a paper to our Annual Social Policy Conference entitled *Vision & Values - Public Services and Infrastructure*.
- Researched our annual Socio-Economic Review for 2015 *Towards a Just Society*.
- Made a submission to the Consultation on a Universal Retirement Savings System (Dept. of Social Protection)
- Made a submission to the Low Pay Commission.
- Made a submission to the Department of Finance on the Knowledge Development Box consultation.
- Made a Submission to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on the *Local and Community Development Programme*.
- Researched and published a Policy Briefing on *Work, Jobs and Unemployment*.
- Researched and published a Response to the Spring Statement 2015.
- researched and published *Budget Choices*, our submission on Budget 2016
- Prepared and presented a paper on Basic Income at the Eastern Economics Association Conference in New York.
- Worked with the Living Wage Technical Group on updating the rate and progressing the issue.

Europe

- Completed the National Shadow Report 2014 for Ireland on the Europe 2020 Strategy and submitted it to Caritas Europa for inclusion in the European Shadow Report.
- Presented a paper to a Caritas Europa meeting on Social Analysis and the European Social Model

- Met with DG EMPL at the European Commission and discussed our various engagements with the EU including the EU 2020 Ireland Shadow Report and the Crisis Monitoring Report
- Reviewed Ireland's National Reform Programme – analysing Ireland's performance on the social inclusions aspects of the Europe 2020 Strategy
- Researched the Crisis Monitoring Report 2014 on seven EU countries commissioned by Caritas Europa.
- Continued our engagement with the EU Alliance which is focused on Ireland and the EU2020 Strategy. One conference was held and the Alliance met with the European Commission during their visit to Dublin to review Ireland's performance.
- Presented *Social Justice Ireland's* study on a Universal Pension to DG/Economy and Finance in the European Commission
- Invited by the European Commission to represent the Irish NGOs in a Brussels conference on the issues.
- Meetings with Mr. Graeme Belshaw, European Commission, DG Employment
- Did a critique of the Country Specific Recommendations for Ireland from the European Commission. Invited by the Dublin Office of the EU Commission to discuss this critique on the morning after their publication.
- Met with the Deputy President of the Commission.
- Invited by the Dublin Office of the EU Commission to be the civil society representative for Ireland at a two day taxation seminar organised by DG ECFIN.

b) [Social Policy Conference](#)

- Organised our annual social policy conference on the theme of *Planning and Delivering a Fairer Future*.
- We published the papers as a book entitled *Planning and Delivering a Fairer Future* on the day of the conference.
- The attendance was large and representative of the various interests including a number of students.
- There was good participation and feedback.
- With the help of Kairos Communications we videoed all the presentations and the Q & A sessions. These are available on our website

c) [Global Justice Conference](#)

- To mark the first World Day of Social Justice (February 20) we organised a seminar and conversation on *Climate Justice & Policy Coherence: A Challenge for Ireland*. The event was oversubscribed and much appreciated by participants.

This event was also our contribution to the European Year for Development.

d) [National Budget](#)

- Three documents were researched and published:
 - An alternative costed Budget published in June.
 - A study of options on Taxation published in September
 - An analysis and critique of Budget 2015 published on the day following the Budget.

We presented the analysis and proposals in the following arenas:

- The Pre-budget forum hosted by the Minister for Social Protection.
- A press conference hosted by *Social Justice Ireland*.
- The CV pillar meeting with Ministers Michael Noonan and Brendan Howlin.
- A post Budget Seminar hosted by *Social Justice Ireland*.
- A briefing in Leinster House for TDs, Senators and their advisors.
- A briefing at the NERI Seminar on Budget 2015

e) [NESC](#)

Seán Healy attended the monthly meetings. He was invited to speak at a NESC conference in October

f) [Meetings with Government Officials, Politicians & Advisers](#)

- Met Mr. Phil Hogan, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.
- Met An Tanaiste, Ms. Joan Burton TD.
- Met Mr. Alan Kelly, TD Minister for Environment, Community & Local Govt. and three of his senior officials.
- Met Mr. Leo Varadkar, TD Minister for Health and two of his senior officials.
- Had two meetings with Ms Ann Phelan, TD Junior Minister, Rural & Local Govt. and her adviser.
- Met Mr. Micheál Martin. TD, Leader of the opposition.
- Met Mr Brian Hayes, MEP.
- Met the Secretary General, Department of An Taoiseach, Mr. Martin Fraser.
- Met with the Secretary General, Dept. of Finance, Mr. Derek Moran.
- Met the Secretary General, Dept. of Jobs & Innovation, Mr. John Murphy.
- Met the Secretary General, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr John McCarthy.
- Participated in the Technical Advisory Group (Department of Social Protection)

g) [President Michael D. Higgins](#)

Invited to Lunch with President Michael D. Higgins and his wife, Sabina in Aras an Uachtarain.

h) [Meetings with CV Pillar of Social Partners](#)

- Participated in the regular meetings of the CV Pillar.
- Participated in the meeting with Ministers Noonan and Howlin on Budget 2015.
- Led the representation from the CV Pillar to the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government on Housing.
- Met with the Department of Social Protection.
- Participated in the delegation to Dept. of Environment, Community & Local Government on issues of concern to Community Groups.
- Participated in the delegation to the Dept. of Social Protection on a wide agenda.
- Participated in the National Women's Strategy Monitoring Committee meeting.
- Participated in the bilateral meeting with the Department of Education and Science.

- Participated in the bilateral meeting with the Department of Children & Youth Affairs.
- Took the lead role in drafting the position paper for the CV pillar in preparation for Budget 2016.
- Elected by the CV Pillar to represent it on the Monitoring Committee of the EU Commission's Operational Programme for the South & East Region of Ireland.

i) [Basic Income](#)

- Continued work with the Irish branch of BIEN (Basic Income Earth Network)

Empowerment and Spirituality

Facilitated and/or provided input into 32 workshops/conferences/seminars involving 1506 people on a variety of public policy and values issues. Among these events were the following:

a) [MA in Social Justice & Public Policy](#)

- Social Justice Ireland's Directors are Members of the Programme Board and taught a number of classes.
- Worked with the students in preparing their dissertations.
- As All Hallows College is closing we entered discussions with the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) re the continuation of the MA Programme. These negotiations are almost complete and it is planned to begin the programme in WIT in September 2016.

b) [Public Participation Networks \(PPNs\)](#)

- Seán nominated by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to the Monitoring Committee to oversee and support the roll-out of the PPNs.
- Provided input to the Government website which supports the process around the country.
- Provided a briefing to 112 Local Government Officials at a conference in Dublin.
- Seán Healy was appointed by Government to serve on the National Reference Group for the PPNs. This group oversaw the roll-out of PPNs nationwide. It produced a weekly Questions and Answers Update for Local Authorities addressing the issues that emerged during implementation. Seán gave input to the three Regional Meetings of the Public Servants charged with implementing the PPN structure. He



also jointly facilitated five County Seminars for Community & Voluntary groups interested in being involved in the PPN structures

- Developed a comprehensive development and support programme for county PPNs which was communicated to all PPNs in the country. Based on this we have carried out 10 sessions in 7 counties involving over 200 members of community and voluntary organisations.
- Organised five regional meetings to enable PPN members in different counties to network. The first took place in late September, with the remainder scheduled for later in the Autumn. Approximately 150 people from 27 PPNs are expected to attend.
- Offered telephone support to Local Authorities and PPN Secretariat members.

c) [Input to Seminars/Workshops \(other than PPN\)](#)

- NESC launch of Report on Social Housing at a Crossroads Possibilities for Investment
- Trocaire Summer School.
- Caritas Europa.
- Respond!
- Business & Ethics Conference in All Hallows College.
- A debate in the European Parliament to mark Social Europe Day, moderated by Seán Healy, which included the three major political groupings in the Parliament, the European Commission, the European Trade Union Congress and Civil Society.
- Seminar to the Adult Education Group in Glashule.

d) [Trocaire](#)

- Agreed a memorandum of understanding with Trocaire to provide analysis, training and support in advocacy.
- Provided a detailed briefing on ODA which Trocaire has used for Budget related initiatives.
- Facilitated four seminars for Trocaire staff.
- Worked with Trocaire to mark Global Justice Day
- Researching the revenue possibilities from a financial transaction tax

e) [Irish Heart Foundation](#)

- Worked with the staff of the Irish Heart Foundation to prepare a paper on obesity, future healthcare costs and health related taxation.

f) [Teagasc](#)

- Worked with Teagasc on poverty and family income for rural households.
- Worked with them on input to three conferences

g) [Claiming our Future](#)

- Continue to be involved in steering group, in the Financial Transactions Tax Working Group and in the Economic Inequality Working Group.

Communication

a) [Publications](#)

- Policy Briefing on *Poverty and Income Distribution*
- National Social Monitor
- *Fairness in Changing Income Tax: 3 options compared.*
- *Fairness in Changing Income Tax: 6 options compared.*
- *Planning and Delivering a Fairer Future* - the papers of the Social Policy Conference
- *Budget 2015 Critique and Analysis*
- Socio-Economic Review 2015 entitled: *Towards a Just Society* (published April, 2015).
- Policy Briefing on *Work, Unemployment and Job Creation* (published May 2015).
- *Poverty and Inequalities on the rise - Just Social Models Needed.* (Research by *Social Justice Ireland* for Caritas Europa, (published February 2015).
- Policy Briefing on *Budget Choices 2016* (Published June 2015)

b) [Website](#)

- Extensive work has been done on the website. A new web design has been put in place on a new platform.
- *Social Justice Ireland's* website had over 3.2 million hits in the last 12 months.

c) [Communications to Members](#)

- Sent regular updates to members and sought their views on the work being done.

d) [Electronic and Print coverage](#)

- 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:
 - 17 **TV** interviews broadcast on news and current affairs programmes.
 - 262 views of **videos** on *Social Justice Ireland* YouTube channel
 - 24 interviews on **National Radio** news and current affairs programmes.
 - 178 interviews broadcast on 1,100 **Local Radio** news and current affairs programmes, many of which were repeated several times.
 - 407 listeners to **podcast** on *Social Justice Ireland* YouTube.
 - Over 96 stories in the **National** press including four editorials and six op-ed pieces.
 - 113 on line newspaper articles.
 - Over 10 stories in **International** press.
 - We are aware of a wide coverage in the **Local press**.

e) [Social Media](#)

- Our combined social media footprint is now 11,135 – up from 9025 in September 2014 (+23% in a year). This includes our Facebook friends/followers, our followers on twitter and on LinkedIn.

f) Regional Outreach

- Through our work with the Public Participation Networks, we have held events in 13 counties, offering training and also disseminating information about other *Social Justice Ireland* activities.

Proposals for the Future

The work of *Social Justice Ireland* for the next five years will be in the service of the new strategic plan. A plan of work for each year will be agreed by the Board.

Members of the Board

Finbarr Tracey	(Chairperson)
Connor Barry	Sara Bourke (to March)
Colette Bennett	Micheál Collins,
Sheila Cronin,	Angela Durkin,
Joe Egan	Tony Fahey
Michael Howlett	Tom Jordan
Justin Killcullen	Sandra O'Hara
Seán Healy	Brid Ryan
Seán Ward	Brigid Reynolds

Retiring members of the Board

Sara Bourke
Micheál Collins
Sheila Cronin
Michael Howlett
Brid Ryan

The following have been nominated for election to the Board:

Margaret Hassett
Micheál Collins
Sheila Cronin
Michael Howlett
Brid Ryan

held in Croke Park, Dublin, on Tuesday November 18, 2014 @ 5.15pm

Minutes

Present: Finbarr Tracey, (Chairperson) Colette Bennett, Sara Bourke, Micheál Collins, Mary Connaughton, Sheila Curran, Tom Curran, Angela Durkin, Joe Egan, Anne Harnett, Maurice Henry, Tom Jordan, Michael Moriarty, Michelle Murphy, Sean Healy, Lorainne O'Brien, Maureen O'Connell, Sandra O'Hara, Brigid Reynolds, Joan Roddy, Brid Ryan.

1. Opening

The meeting was chaired by Finbarr Tracey, Chairperson of *Social Justice Ireland*. Finbarr welcomed the 21 members present to the Annual General Meeting of *Social Justice Ireland*.

2. Minutes of the 2013 AGM Meeting

Angela Durkin proposed the adoption of the minutes of the last meeting. This was seconded by Sara Bourke.

3. Adoption of Annual Report

Copies of the annual report were circulated. The Chairperson, Finbarr Tracey introduced the report. He outlined the significant developments of the past year.

Seán Healy presented an outline of the report. He highlighted the engagement with policy-makers and the involvement of *Social Justice Ireland* with civic engagement in local government reform. Micheál Collins proposed the adoption of the Report. It was seconded by Tom Jordan.

4. Adoption of the Financial Report

Brigid Reynolds presented the financial report which had been circulated to members. She noted the large volume of work that had been done pro bono by Board members and others. The Financial Report was adopted unanimously by the members.

5. Elections

Five members were nominated to fill the five vacancies on the Board. The following were returned unopposed; Connor Barry, Colette Bennett, Angela Durkin, Tony Fahey and Tom Jordan.

6. The Chairperson invited comments from members. The following points were noted

- The Staff were asked about the allocation of time to meetings with politicians and if the outcomes were worth the input. While it is difficult to measure outcomes, these meetings were seen as an opportunity to get our research and analysis into the policy making arena. Sometimes the initiative for these meetings is taken by the staff, at other times it is taken by the politicians.

- Members expressed “amazement at the quality and volume of work done” given the size of the staff. They put on record their appreciation and support of the stance taken by *Social Justice Ireland* on the various issues addressed in the report.
- The large volume of unpaid work done by members of the Board and Staff was applauded. Also the commitment of the Board and Staff to the mission of *SJI* was much appreciated.

7. Special Resolutions

There were no special resolutions proposed.

- 8.** In the absence of any other business the meeting was closed @ 5.45 pm.

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



Social Justice Ireland is an independent think-tank and justice advocacy organisation of individuals and groups throughout Ireland who are committed to working to build a just and sustainable society where human rights are respected, human dignity is upheld, human development is facilitated and the

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