
Ireland vs EU28: Monitoring Ireland's Performance towards Achieving the SDGs

This Report was
undertaken for Social
Justice Ireland

This report is written by:

Prof. Charles M.A. Clark
St. John's University, New
York

Dr. Catherine Kavanagh
University College Cork

Ms. Niamh Lenihan
Cork Institute of Technology



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Social Justice Ireland

Arena House

Arena Road

Sandyford

Dublin 18

www.socialjustice.ie

Tel: 01-2130724

Email: secretary@socialjustice.ie

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. The SDGs: Trends and Patterns in Ireland and the EU	8
SDG 1 ‘No poverty’	8
SDG 2 ‘Zero hunger’	11
SDG 3 ‘Good health and well-being’	14
SDG 4 ‘Quality education’	17
SDG 5 ‘Gender equality’	18
SDG 6 ‘Clean water and sanitation’	20
SDG 7 ‘Affordable and clean energy’	21
SDG 8 ‘Decent work and economic growth’	24
SDG 9 ‘Industry, innovation and infrastructure’	26
SDG 10 ‘Reduced inequalities’	27
SDG 11 ‘Sustainable cities and communities’	29
SDG 12 ‘Responsible consumption and production’	31
SDG 13 ‘Climate action’	32
SDG 14 ‘Life below water’	35
SDG 15 ‘Life on land’	37
SDG 16 ‘Peace, justice and strong institutions’	38
SDG 17 ‘Partnership for the goals’	41
3. Summary of Ireland’s Performance	43
4. References.....	49

List of Figures

Figure 1: EU Progress towards the 17 SDGs.....	8
Figure 2: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by country, 2008 and 2015.....	10
Figure 3: Ireland and EU housing cost burden	10
Figure 4: Obesity rate by body mass index (BMI), by country, 2008 and 2014	12
Figure 5: Ireland and EU support to agricultural R and D.....	13
Figure 6: Ireland and EU agricultural factor income	14
Figure 7: Ireland and EU suicide rates, 2000-2014	16
Figure 8: Ireland and EU workplace fatalities, 2008-2015.....	16
Figure 9: Ireland and EU employment rate of recent graduates	18
Figure 10: Ireland and EU gender employment gap	20
Figure 11: Ireland and EU Final Energy Consumption	23
Figure 12: Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption, by country 2004 and 2015.....	23
Figure 13: Energy dependence, by country, 2000 and 2015.....	24
Figure 14: Real GDP per capita growth rate, by country, 2001-2016 and 2011-2016 (annual average growth rate in %)	25
Figure 15: Purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita, by country, 2016	28
Figure 16: Ireland and EU road fatalities, 2001 - 2015	30
Figure 17: Average carbon dioxide emissions per km from new passenger cars, by country, 2011 and 2016.....	32
Figure 18: Ireland and EU greenhouse gas emissions, 2000 and 2015	34
Figure 19: Greenhouse gas emissions, by country, 2000 and 2015	34
Figure 20: Ireland and EU catches in major fishing areas	36
Figure 21: Catches from major fishing areas, by country, 2001 and 2016.....	36
Figure 22: Artificial land cover per capita, by country, 2009 and 2015	38
Figure 23: Ireland's general government total spend on law courts	40
Figure 24: Population with confidence in EU institutions by institution, by country, 2016 ..	40
Figure 25: Official development assistance as share of gross national income, by country, 2005 and 2016.....	42
Figure 26: General government gross debt, by country, 2011 and 2016.....	42

List of Tables

Table 1: List of Indicators Used (by theme) in EU Report and Classification of Progress.....	6
Table 2: Classification of Ireland's Progress on the SDGs over Time	46

1. Introduction

In 1987, the UN Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It continues to be the guiding principle for long-term global development, underpinned by the three key pillars of economic development, social development and protection of the environment. In 2015, the UN issued documentation that proposed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) based on 169 indicators from a global indicator framework. In January 2016, the SDGs came into force. Recently, the European Union (EU) undertook the first statistical overview of trends relating to the SDGs in the EU, culminating in the Eurostat publication ‘*Sustainable development in the European Union – 2017 monitoring report of the progress towards the SDGs in an EU context*’ (November 2017). This is a key development in terms of SDG reporting and analysis with focus placed solely on the EU. Each of the 28 Member States within the EU are responsible for implementing this framework and working towards the objective of each SDG.

To track trends in SDGs, the EU report employs 100 indicators, with 41 multi – purpose indicators used in more than one theme. The indicator trends are described on the basis of a set of specific quantitative rules. All indicators are analysed according to the direction and speed of change. Arrows are used to present the direction of the indicator on whether it has moved in the desired direction or away from the sustainable development objective, as well as the speed of the movement.

Two time frames are considered: the short-term, which assesses progress over the past five years, and the long-term (depending on data availability) which examines trends over the past fifteen years. Overall, the report concludes that the EU has made progress towards the 17 SDGs over the past five years. The improvement of goals has occurred at different paces for different goals, ranging from moderate to significant progress. Table 1 below shows the different subthemes that are considered under each SDG along with the report’s conclusions regarding progress towards achievement of each goal over the last 5 years. The table identifies those goals which have made significant progress towards achievement: there are 5 in total. The report concludes that the EU has made moderate progress on the 8 SDGs, and progress on 4 SDGs was unable to be determined due to incomplete data (see Figure 1). Further, the report highlights that progress towards achievement of a specific goal is not necessarily satisfactory for the EU. Specifically, progress alone on an SDG does not imply success!

Table 1: List of Indicators Used (by theme) in EU Report and Classification of Progress

GOAL	SDG	Progress
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Significant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decoupling environmental impacts from economic growth, - Energy consumption, - Waste generation and management 	
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Significant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energy consumption - Energy Supply - Access to affordable energy 	
15	Life on Land	Significant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecosystem status - Land degradation - Biodiversity 	
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Significant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of life in cities and communities - Sustainable transport - Adverse environmental impacts 	
3	Good Health and Wellbeing	Significant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health lives - Health determinants - Causes of death - Access to healthcare 	
17	Partnership for the Goals	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Partnership - Financial governance within the EU 	
4	Quality Education	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic education - Tertiary education - Adult education 	
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - R&D and innovation - Sustainable transport 	
5	Gender Equality	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender- based violence - Education - Employment - Leadership positions 	
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable economic growth - Employment - Decent work 	
1	No Poverty	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multidimensional poverty - Basic needs 	

2	Zero Hunger	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Malnutrition - Sustainable agricultural production - Adverse impacts 	
10	Reduced Inequalities	Moderate Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inequalities by countries - Inequalities within countries - Migration and social inclusion 	
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Trend cannot be calculated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sanitation - Water quality - Water use efficiency 	
13	Climate Action	Trend cannot be calculated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate Mitigation - Climate Impacts - Climate initiatives 	
14	Life below Water	Trend cannot be calculated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marine Conservation - Sustainable fishery - Ocean health 	
16	Peace, Justice and strong institutions	Trend cannot be calculated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peace and personal security - Access to justice - Trust in institutions 	

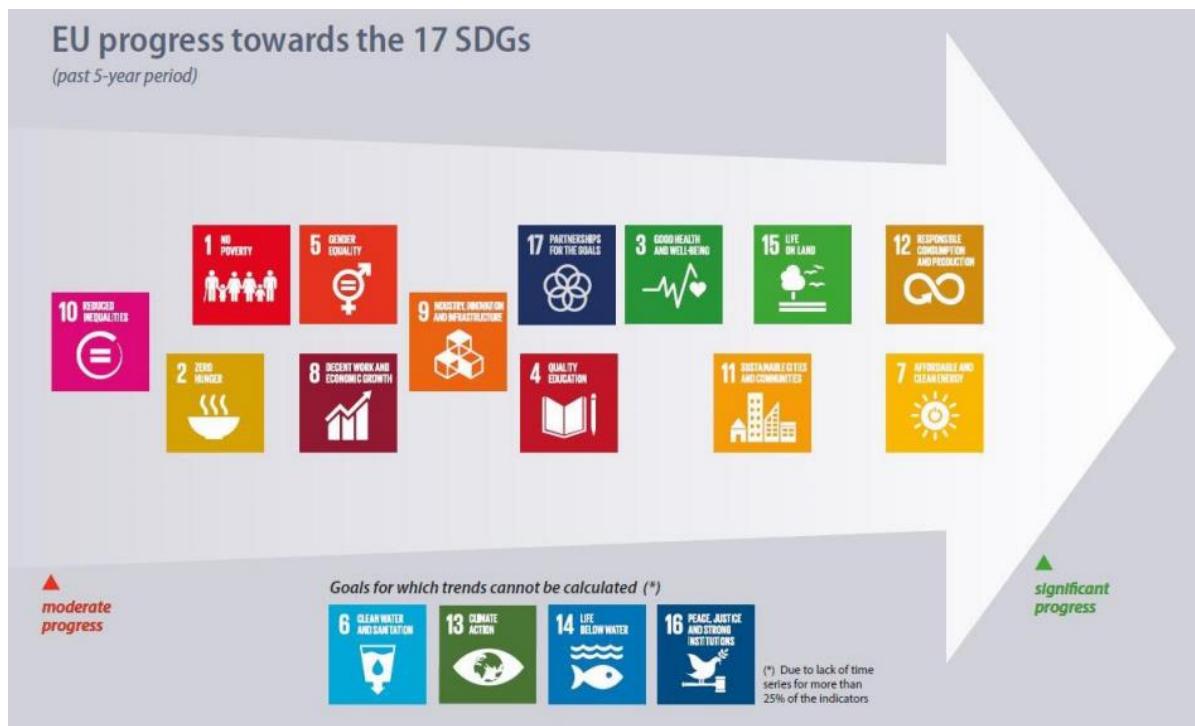
Source: Eurostat (2017)

The purpose of our report is to assess Ireland's performance on the same indicators used by Eurostat, for each SDG, relative to EU28. We monitor trends in each indicator and arrive at an assessment of how Ireland is doing compared to other EU countries in the short-term¹. The report builds on our previous report (Clark, Kavanagh and Lenihan, 2018) which explored Ireland's performance on the SDGs relative to the EU15 countries². There are some important differences to our earlier report. First, this report compares Ireland to the EU28 (as opposed to the EU15). Second, our analysis here draws on the EU indicator set. Eurostat argues that their choice of indicators for monitoring the SDGs better reflects EU policy and initiatives, while still reflecting the principles of the official UN indicators incorporated in the SDGs.

¹ We do not calculate long-term trends in the SDGs in this report.

² Our earlier report also presents the Sustainable Progress Index for Ireland, which compares country performance on the SDGs by the three important sustainable dimensions: economy, society and environment. Such an index is useful for comparing relative performance among countries from a similar regional or income group. The analysis draws on 55 indicators (aligned as far as possible with the UN indicator set) to arrive at the composite sustainable progress index (SPI) which provides a simple and clear picture of how Ireland is currently performing on the SDGs relative to countries with similar economic development experiences.

Figure 1: EU Progress towards the 17 SDGs



Source: Eurostat (2017)

2. The SDGs: Trends and Patterns in Ireland and the EU

In this section, we track trends in the indicators used to reflect each of the 17 SDGs. In doing so, the aim is to establish how Ireland is faring in achieving the objectives of the SDGs compared to the other EU28 countries.

SDG 1 'No poverty'

The first sustainable goal pleads for an end to poverty in all its manifestations. There are two sub themes used in the EU report: multidimensional poverty and basic needs, incorporating 10 indicators.

This goal strives for equal rights and access to economic and natural resources including technology, property and basic and financial services. The EU concentrates on alleviating multinational poverty and trying to ensure that basic needs of EU citizens are adhered to.

Indicators in SDG 1
Multidimensional poverty
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion
People at risk of income poverty after social transfers
Severely materially deprived people
People living in households with very low work intensity
Basic needs
Housing cost overburden rate
Self-reported unmet need for medical care (SDG 3)
Population unable to keep home adequately warm (SDG 7)
Share of total population living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation or rot in window frames or floor
Population having neither a bath, nor a shower, nor indoor flushing toilet in their household (SDG 6)
Overcrowding rate (SDG 11)

Source: Eurostat (2017)

Significant progress towards sustainable development in the last 5 years has been made by the EU with material deprivation (-14.6% since 2011), lack of sanitary facilities, poor dwelling conditions and overcrowding rate. However, risk of poverty or social exclusion, income poverty and housing cost burden have made significant movement away from sustainable development objectives. The Europe 2020 strategy promotes social inclusion with an aim of increasing the number of people out of risk of poverty and social inclusion by 20 million compared with 2008 levels. “In 2015, 119.0 million people, or 23.8 % of the EU population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, meaning almost a quarter of the EU population” (Eurostat, 2017:32). There has been an increase in numbers due to the economic crisis in 2008 which diverted the EU from its path of reaching Europe’s’ 2020 poverty target. Significant improvements can however be observed from 2012 onwards, when the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion started decreasing again. Despite this improvement, trends in the number of people at risk of income poverty and people living in households with very low work intensity point to a movement away from the sustainable development objectives over the last five years.

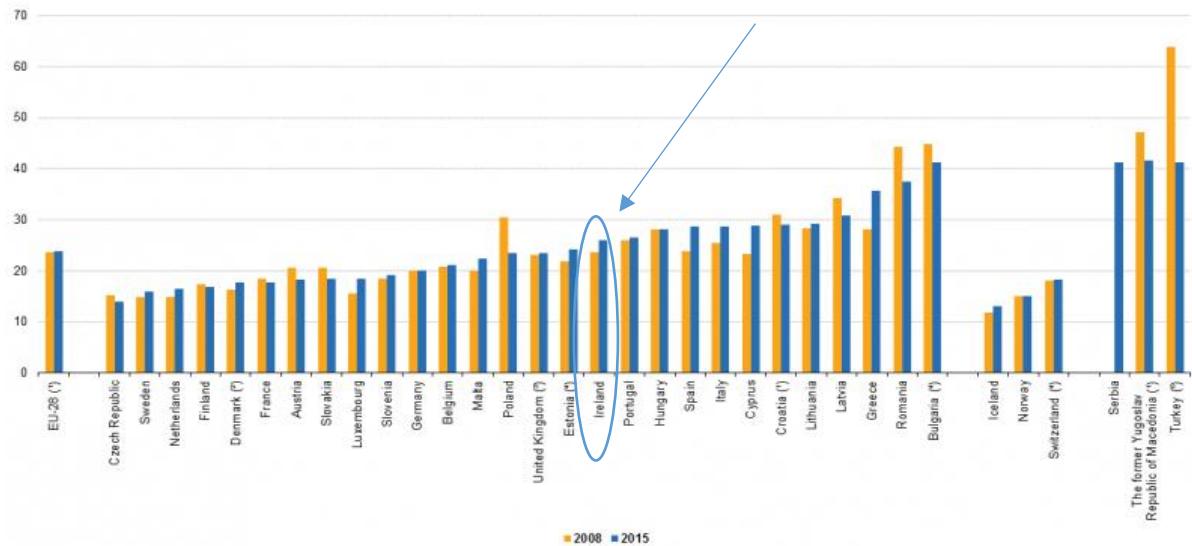
Trends in Ireland

Ireland’s experience is similar to the EU. An increase in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015 (24.2%) is observed, compared to 2008 levels (23.7%). As seen in Figure 2, the risk of poverty or social exclusion was 2.2% greater than the EU 28 in 2015. The economic crisis in 2008 clearly impacted on the rise in numbers reaching 30.3% of the population in 2012, diverting Ireland from its sustainable objective path on this SDG. A slight improvement is seen since then with 24.2% of the population at risk in 2016.

The risk of poverty can impact on the ability to meet one’s basic needs such as affording adequate housing, keeping houses warm or receiving medical treatment if required. In terms of

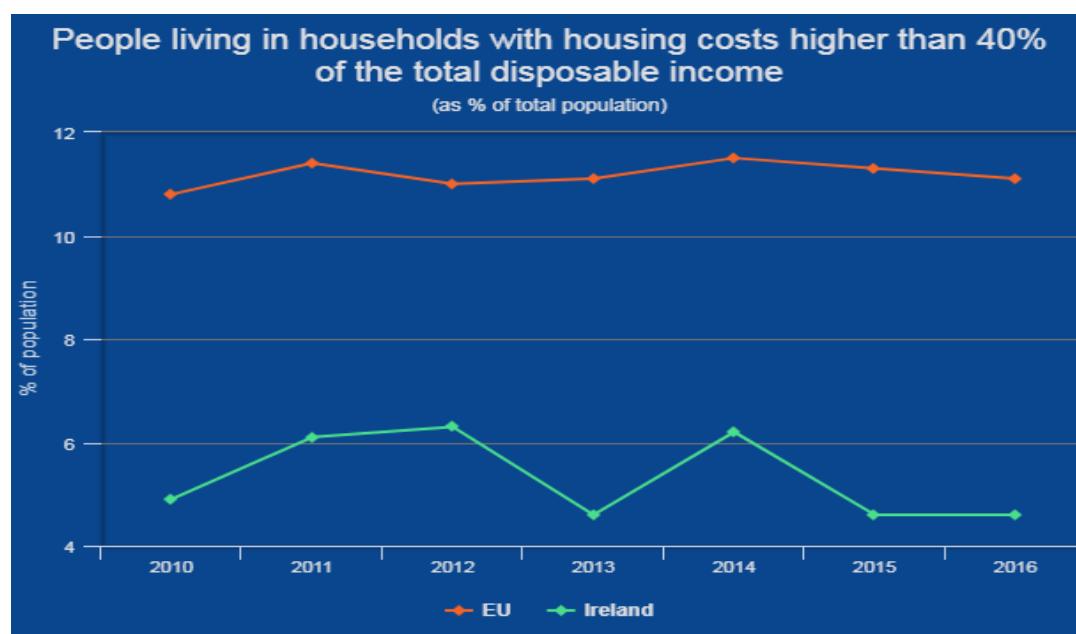
housing cost overburden in Ireland, this has fallen from 6.3% of the Irish population being ‘overburdened’ by housing costs in 2012 to 4.6% in 2016, as seen in Figure 3. We argue that the most recent developments in the housing market are not however reflected in this data. In 2015, only 2.8% of the Irish population reported unmet needs for medical care. This was a 0.9 percentage point decrease on the 2014 level.

Figure 2: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by country, 2008 and 2015



Source: Eurostat (2017: 33)

Figure 3: Ireland and EU housing cost burden



Source: Eurostat (2017)

Ireland has a higher-than-average proportion of households with very low work intensity (18.2%) in 2016, compared to the EU average of 10.5%. Also, in 2016, 16.6% of the population are at risk of income poverty after social transfers, up from 15.2% in 2010, although it is still slightly lower than the EU average of 17.3% in 2016. On a positive note, lack of sanitary facilities, overcrowding, and poor living conditions are well below the EU average indicating that basic living conditions and needs are met for Irish citizens.

SDG 2 ‘Zero hunger’

Food security and the eradication of hunger are the main concerns of SDG 2. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 9 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 2
Malnutrition
Obesity rate
Sustainable agricultural production
Agricultural factor income per annual work unit (AWU)
Government support to agricultural research and development
Area under organic farming
Gross nitrogen balance on agricultural land
Adverse impacts of agricultural production
Ammonia emissions from agriculture
Nitrate in groundwater (SDG 6)
Farmland bird index (SDG 15)
Estimated soil erosion by water (SDG 15)

Source: Eurostat (2017)

While food security, in terms of sufficiency and supply, may not be a major concern for Europe, malnutrition problems are considered. Obesity is on the rise across Europe as consumption patterns and lifestyles have changed. “Obesity affected 15.9 % of Europeans over the age of 18 in 2014 and is on the rise in many Member States” (Eurostat, 2017:51). Obesity is linked to chronic diseases that decrease peoples’ quality of life, straining the health care system and reducing economic productivity.

Sustainable and resilient food production systems are important to achieving this goal. Therefore, Europe’s agricultural production must address the long-term productivity and sustainability of agriculture in the EU and condense the negative impacts of the sector on the environment.

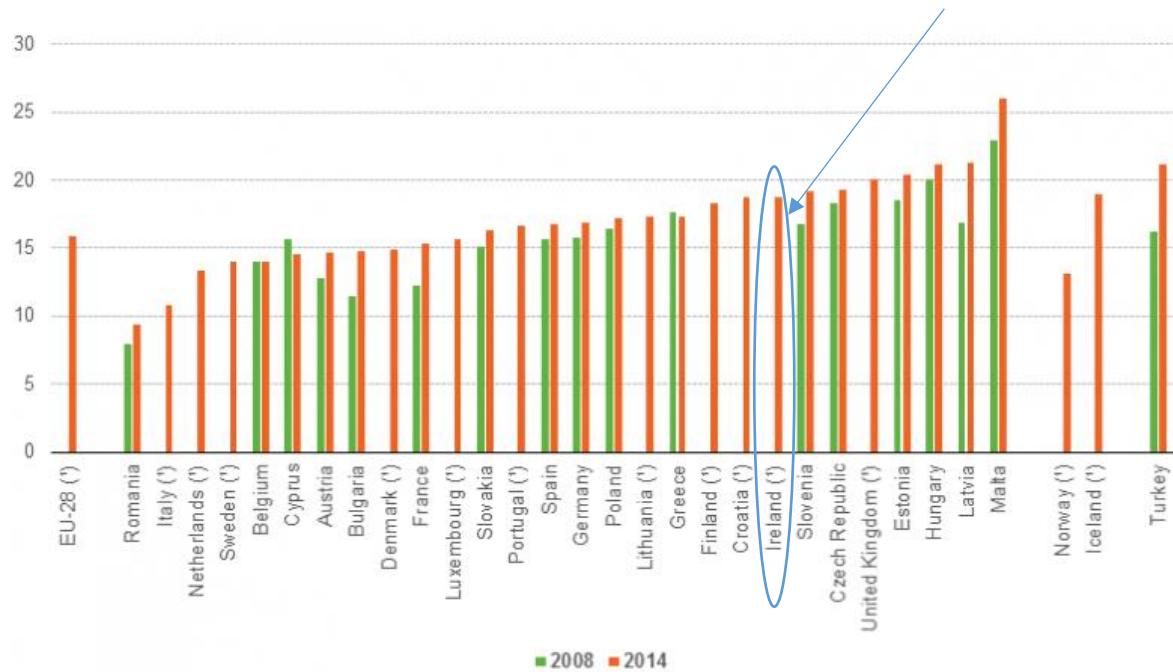
The EU has steadily increased the land under organic agriculture and the nitrogen balance on agricultural land has slightly improved. However, there has been an increase in ammonia emissions from agriculture and a decline in farmland bird species (-4.8 index points since 2009 in the short term). Agricultural factor income per work unit and government support to

agricultural R&D have also moved away from the respective objectives. “Despite a robust policy framework for funding at European level, government support to agricultural R&D in Member States has stagnated around EUR 3 billion annually, with a gradual decline since 2011” (Eurostat: 2017:48).

Trends in Ireland

For Ireland, data was available on Ireland’s obesity rate by body mass index only in 2014. As seen in Figure 4, Ireland has a higher than EU average proportion of the population over 18 years old with obesity. In 2014, 55.7% of Ireland’s population were considered obese in comparison to 51.6% of the EU28 population.

Figure 4: Obesity rate by body mass index (BMI), by country, 2008 and 2014



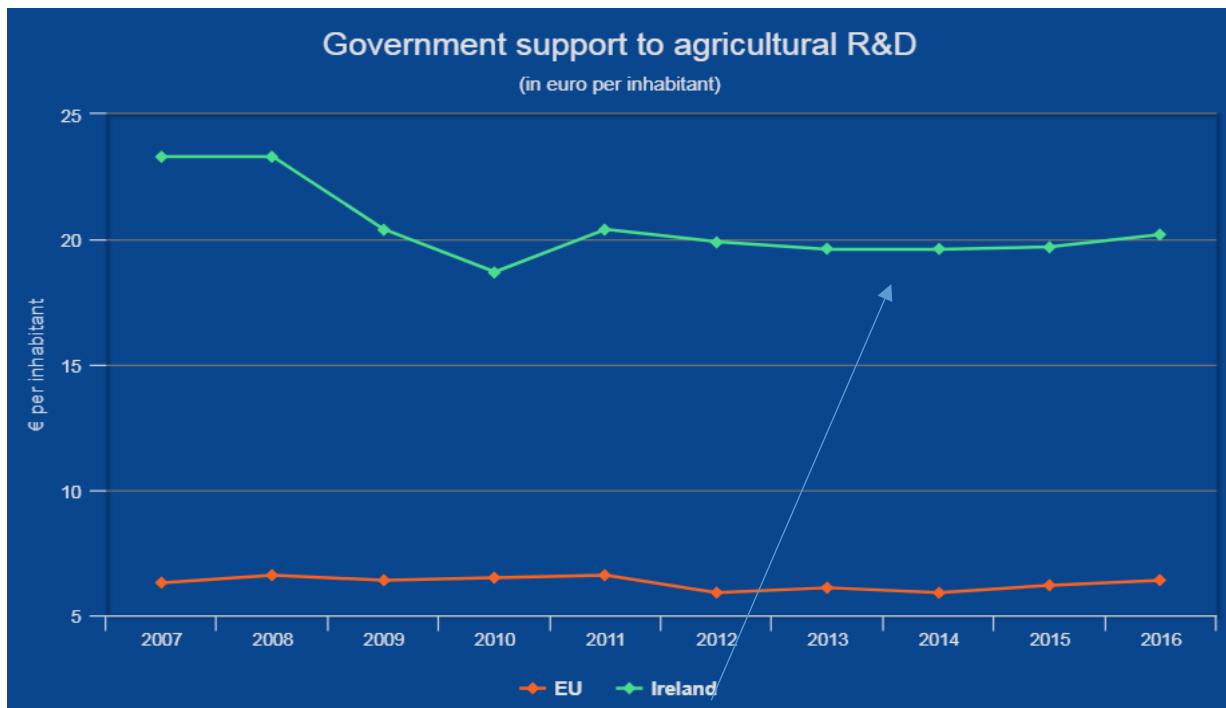
(¹) No data for 2008.

Source: Eurostat (2017: 52)

Ireland has fallen well below the EU average in terms of organic farming which can have a negative impact on agricultural sustainability. In 2016, Ireland’s organic farming consisted of 1.7% of the total utilised agricultural area (UAA) occupied by organic farming in comparison to EU’s 6.7%. Organic farming avoids or reduces the use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones in agricultural and livestock production, therefore enhancing soil health and biodiversity (Eurostat, 2017). Ireland’s nitrogen balance declined from 2004 to 2008 but since 2011 to 2013, this increased from 23 kilograms per hectare (kg/ha) to 44kg/ha. By 2014, it had fallen again to 40kg/ha. Ireland’s ammonia emissions are on an upward trajectory increasing from 22.2 kg/ha in 2011 to 24.1 kg/ha in 2015.

In terms of EU policy, Ireland has received well above the EU average in government support to agriculture R&D. R&D can aid with increasing productivity and producing foods at a more economically, environmentally friendly and sustainable level. As shown in Figure 5, in 2016, Ireland received 20% of the €per inhabitant in contrast to 6.4% in the EU.

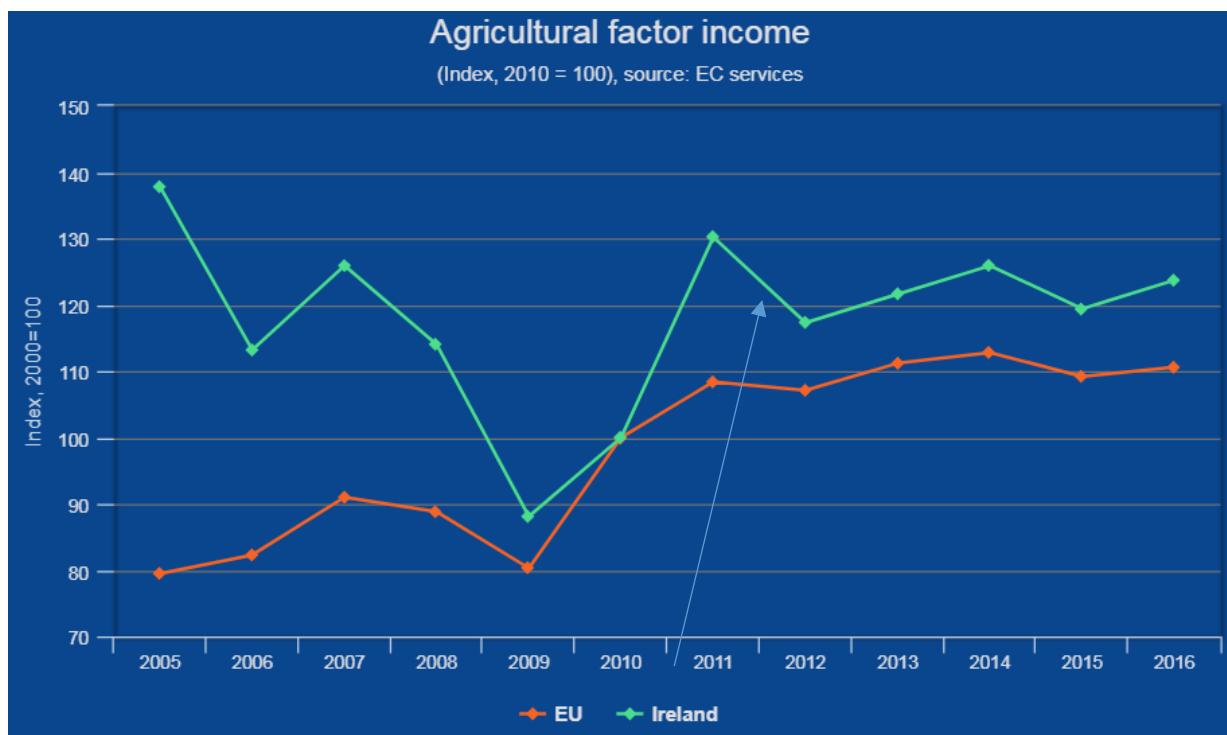
Figure 5: Ireland and EU support to agricultural R and D



Source: Eurostat (2017)

Finally, the economic viability of farms is a necessary part for food production and sustainability. The agricultural factor income per work unit has increased in Ireland since 2009 and while it might have increased over the past decade in the EU, it has flattened off in the past five years. As per Figure 6, Ireland continues to remain above the EU average over the last ten years on this indicator.

Figure 6: Ireland and EU agricultural factor income



Source: Eurostat (2017)

SDG 3 ‘Good health and well-being’

SDG 3 focuses on improving healthy lives and promoting wellbeing of all ages by improving reproductive, maternal and child health. This goal considers 4 sub themes and 11 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 3	
Healthy lives	
Life expectancy at birth	
Self-perceived health	
Health determinants	
Obesity rate (SDG 2)	
Smoking prevalence	
Exposure to air pollution by particulate matter (SDG 11)	
Population living in households considering that they suffer from noise (SDG 11)	
Causes of death	
Death rate due to chronic diseases	
Suicide rate	
People killed in accidents at work (SDG 8)	
People killed in road accidents (SDG 11)	
Access to healthcare	
Self-reported unmet need for medical care	

Source: Eurostat (2017)

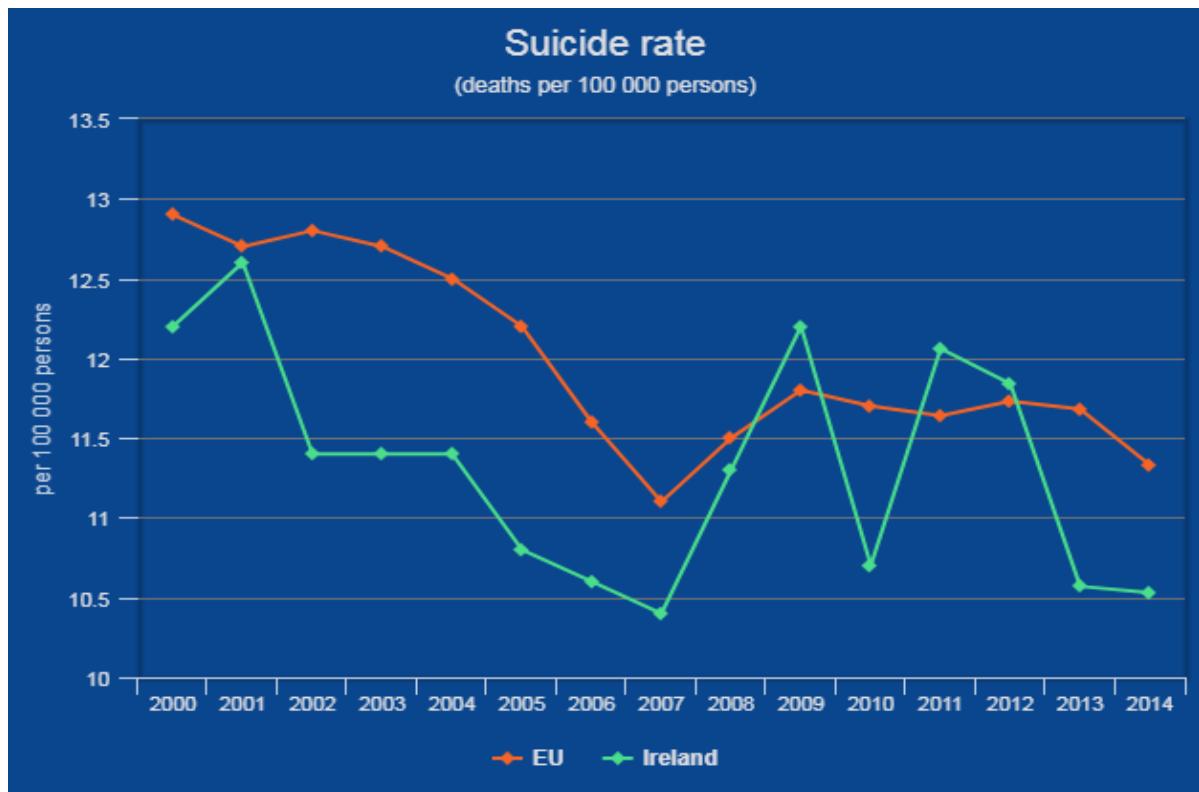
This goal includes the objective of ending communicable major diseases and reducing non-communicable and mental diseases. “The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (Eurostat, 2017: 67). Good health is not only valuable to the individual in terms of improving their quality of life but it is also essential for social and economic growth. Therefore, universal health coverage is an objective of the EU in supporting member states to strengthen the effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of their health system to meet this objective.

The EU has made progress concerning life expectancy at birth, death rates due to chronic diseases, suicides, and accidents at work, as well as regarding health determinants such as exposure to air pollution by particulate matter and noise pollution. However, developments related to self-perceived health and self-reported unmet needs for medical care have moved away from the objectives. The EU is not yet on track towards the target of halving the number of people killed in road accidents by 2020 compared to 2001. The 52% reduction in the number of fatalities due to road accidents in the EU between 2001 and 2015 indicates that EU roads have become safer. Nevertheless, the stagnation in road casualties in the last three years has put the EU slightly off-track from reaching its target.

Trends in Ireland

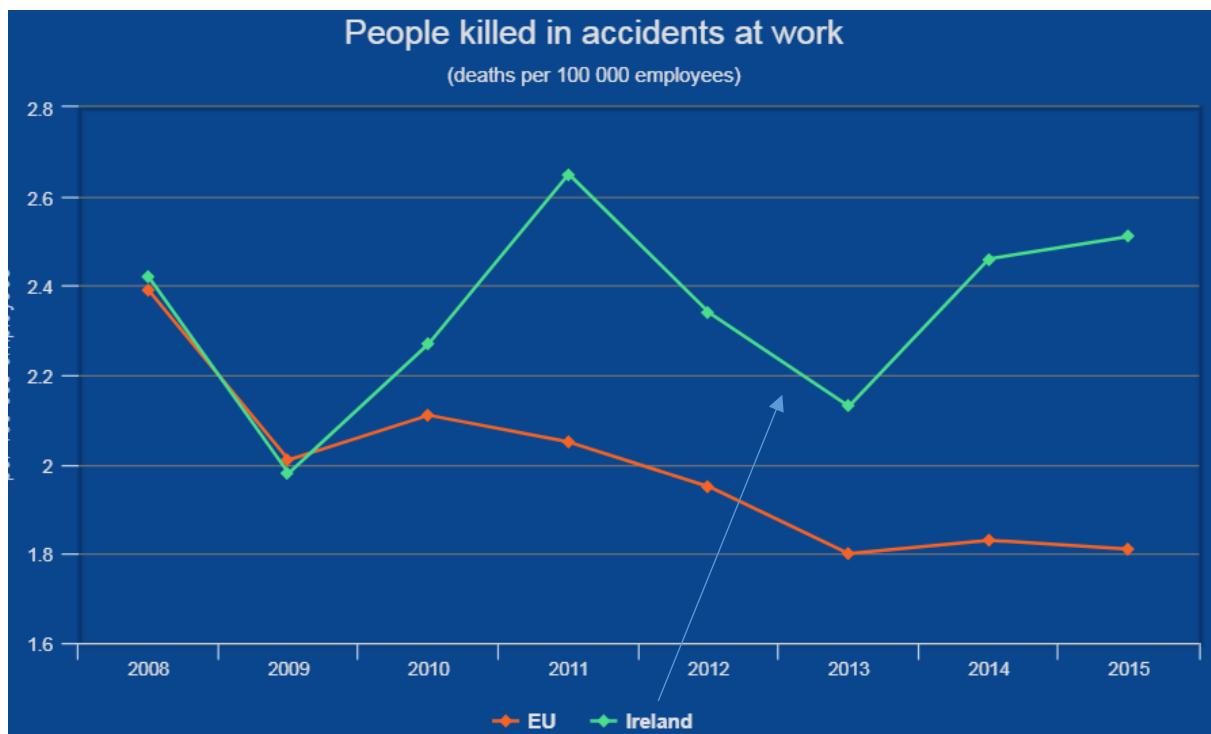
Ireland has also made progress concerning life expectancy at birth which has increased to 79 years for males and 83 years for female and it remains higher than the EU average for both sexes. 82% of Irish people perceived they had good health, which remains above the EU average by 15.4% in 2015. Ireland’s progress improved on indicators of death rates due to chronic diseases, suicide rates (as seen in Figure 7) and road facilities, all of which are on a downward trajectory. However, in terms of the number of people killed in the workplace, Ireland has moved away from meeting it objective averaging at 2.5% per 100,000 employees in 2015, above the EU average, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 7: Ireland and EU suicide rates, 2000-2014



Source: Eurostat (2017)

Figure 8: Ireland and EU workplace fatalities, 2008-2015



Source: Eurostat (2017)

SDG 4 ‘Quality education’

SDG 4 seeks to ensure access to equitable and quality education through all stages of life. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 7 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 4
Basic education
Early leavers from education and training
Early childhood education
Underachievement in reading, maths and science
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (SDG 8)
Tertiary education
Tertiary educational attainment
Employment rate of recent graduates
Adult education
Adult participation in learning

Source: Eurostat (2017)

Aside from formal qualifications, this SDG aims at increasing youth and adult employability and eliminating gender or income disparities in access to education. Education is key in meeting other SDGs, for example, it aims at reducing poverty, inequality, gender inequality and contributes to growth, employment, productivity, innovation, competitiveness and healthier lifestyles. (Eurostat, 2017:89) To achieve these objectives, it appeals for developing and upgrading educational facilities, and increasing the supply of qualified teachers.

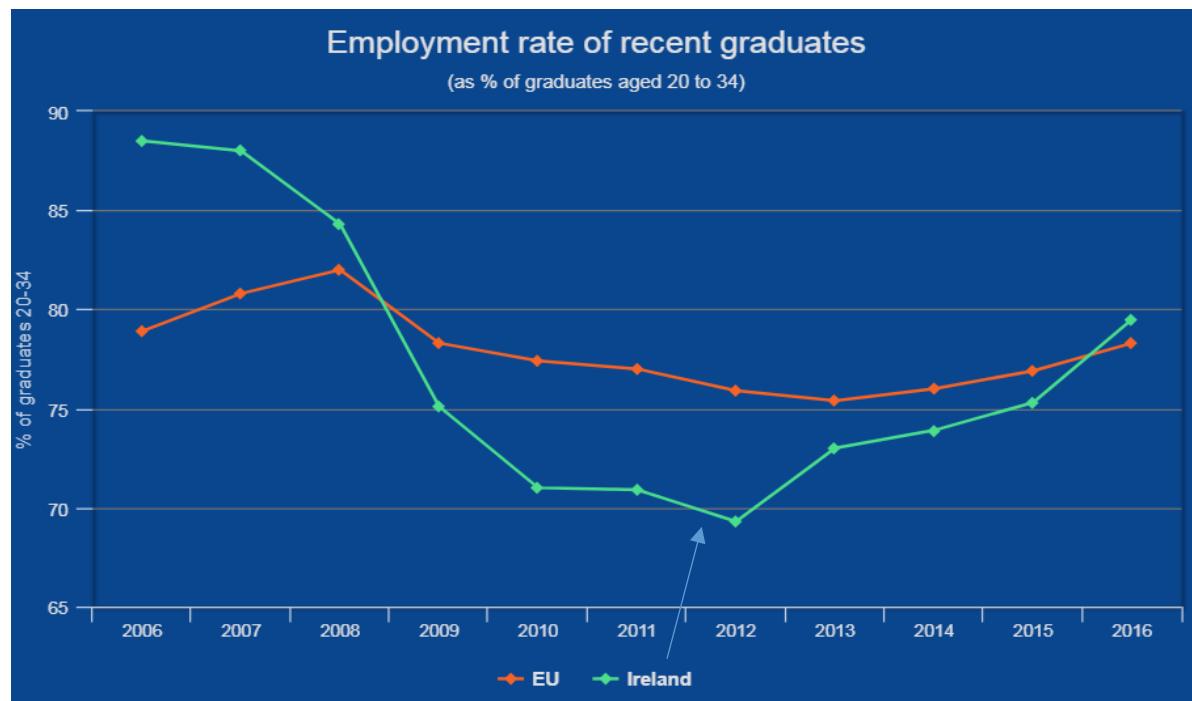
In the EU, more children are participating in early childhood education and care, fewer pupils are leaving school early and more people are attaining tertiary education. In contrast to these positive developments, however, underachievement in reading, maths and science has increased, failing to reach its target of less than 20% by 2020. The EU does not seem to be on track to meet its 2020 benchmarks for the employment rate of recent graduates and adult participation in learning. “It set a benchmark that at least 82 % of recent graduates’ (20 to 34 year olds) should have found employment no more than three years after leaving education and training. The employment rate for recent EU graduates has not yet regained the pre-economic crisis peak of 82 % in 2008 and it is not on track to meeting the 2020 target of 82 %” (Eurostat, 2017: 90).

Trends in Ireland

Similar trends are seen in Ireland with participation in early childhood education and care on the rise, less early school leavers in recent years and greater numbers achieving third level qualifications. The not in employment, education and training rate (NEET) rate rose during the economic crisis but since 2011, it has fallen to 15.2% (of the population between 15-29 years) in 2016 but this is above the EU average. While Ireland is off target in meeting the EU objective of 82% for the employment rate of recent graduates, it has increased since 2012, reaching 79.5% of graduates in employment in 2016, which is above the EU average as seen in Figure

9. Adult literacy is a concern for Ireland as the percentage of population between 25–64 years old participating in learning has fallen since 2013 and was below the EU average in 2016. No comparative data is available on Ireland's underachievement in reading, maths and science.

Figure 9: Ireland and EU employment rate of recent graduates



Source: Eurostat (2017)

SDG 5 ‘Gender equality’

SDG 5 aims at gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence and any harmful practices against women and girls. This goal considers 4 sub themes and 9 indicators.

This goal calls for equal rights, recognition and equal opportunities of leadership at all levels of political and economic decision making. Legislation and sound policies are required to eliminate gender discrimination and foster women's empowerment in all societal spheres.

Indicators in SDG 5	
Gender-based violence	
Physical and sexual violence to women experienced within 12 months prior to the interview	
Education	
Gender gap for early leavers from education and training (SDG 4)	
Gender gap for tertiary educational attainment (SDG 4)	
Gender gap for employment rate of recent graduates (SDG 4)	
Employment	
Gender employment gap	
Gender pay gap in unadjusted form	
Inactive population due to caring responsibilities	
Leadership positions	
Seats held by women in national parliaments and governments	
Positions held by women in senior management	

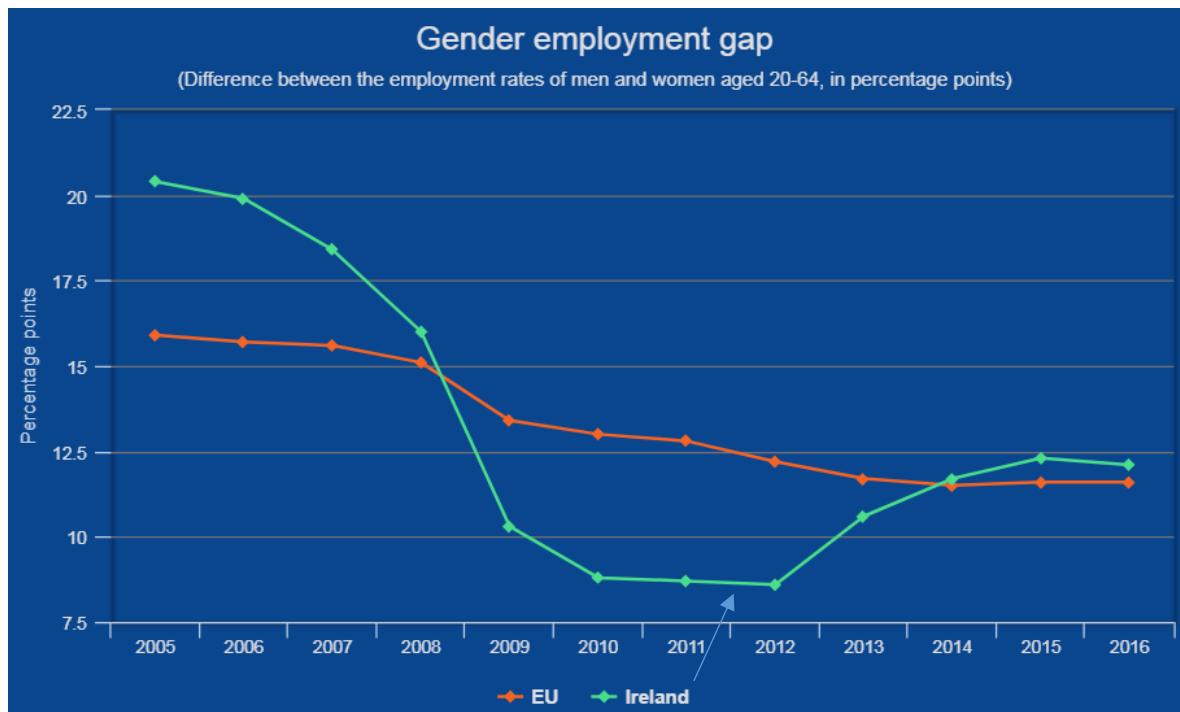
Source: Eurostat (2017)

In the EU, the gender gaps for early leavers from education and training and employment have narrowed, and the proportion of women in both national parliaments and in senior management positions of the largest listed companies has increased. In contrast, significant differences in the non-participation of women and men in the labour market remain. The gender gap observed for inactivity due to caring responsibilities has increased considerably, as has the gap in tertiary educational attainment and in the employment rate of recent graduates, while the gender pay gap has remained almost unchanged since 2010.

Trends in Ireland

In Ireland, the gender gap for early leavers from education and training and employment has narrowed and there has been progress in leadership roles with an increase of 10.6% from 2003-2017 in female representation in senior management positions and an increase of 10.8% in national parliament seats. However, these are still well below the EU average. The gender pay gap in unadjusted form has returned to the same level in 2010 resulting in 13.9% difference between the average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees, as a percentage of the average gross hourly earnings of men. In 2014, women's gross hourly earnings in the EU were on average 13.9 % below those of men; however this remained less than the EU average of 16.6%. The gender employment gap narrowed between 2009 and 2012 but has since increased with the proportion of men of working age in employment still exceeding that of women by 12.1 percentage points in 2016, as shown in Figure 10. In 2016, Ireland's gender employment gap exceeded the EU average. There is also a gender gap with regards to inactive rates. Caring responsibilities for children or incapacitated adults and other family or personal responsibilities could be reasons to consider why 56.5 % of women aged 20 to 64 who were not part of the labour force were economically inactive in 2016. In comparison, only 8.7 % of men outside the labour force were inactive due to caring responsibilities.

Figure 10: Ireland and EU gender employment gap



Source: Eurostat (2017)

SDG 6 ‘Clean water and sanitation’

SDG 6 seeks universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, and ending open defecation. It aims at improving water quality, water use efficiency and sustainable supply. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 7 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 6	
Sanitation	
Population having neither a bath, nor a shower, nor indoor flushing toilet in their household	
Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment	
Water quality	
Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers	
Nitrate in groundwater	
Phosphate in rivers	
Bathing sites with excellent water quality (SDG 14)	
Water use efficiency	
Water exploitation index	

Source: Eurostat (2017)

The 5-year trend suggests that the EU has made significant progress towards sustainable development objectives in terms of sanitation, water quality and water use efficiency. The share of people without improved sanitation facilities in their households has been steadily decreasing in the EU. Despite low averages, some economies are more affected than others. For example, 30.5% of Romania's population are lacking access to such basic facilities (Eurostat, 2017). Freshwater quality has also improved in the EU, as indicated by the decrease in biochemical oxygen demand and phosphate concentrations in European rivers. In 2016, 82% of inland water bathing sites had access to excellent water quality. This has increased by 11.6 percentage points since 2011.

Trends in Ireland

In 2015, 0% of people in Irish households were without basic sanitary requirements such as baths, showers, and indoor flushing toilets. However, there has been a very slight increase in this figure to 0.2% of the population in 2016. Ireland is below average for both biochemical oxygen demand (1% below the EU average) and phosphate concentrations (0.06% below the EU average) in Irish rivers in 2012 – latest year when data is available. Nitrate concentrations in European and Irish (7% below EU average) groundwater bodies are within EU drinking-water standards (50 mg/L) (Eurostat, 2017:14). In 2015, Ireland has above EU average on freshwater bathing sites with excellent water quality. 88.9% of bathing sites have excellent water in Ireland, in comparison to 82% bathing sites in the EU.

No comparative data is available on Ireland's population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment systems or on Ireland's water exploitation index.

SDG 7 'Affordable and clean energy'

SDG 7 focuses on improving energy efficiency, access to modern energy services and increasing the share of renewable energy. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 7 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 7
Energy consumption
Energy consumption
Final energy consumption in households per capita
Energy productivity
Greenhouse gas emissions intensity of energy consumption (SDG 13)
Energy supply
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption
Energy dependence
Access to affordable energy
Population unable to keep home adequately warm

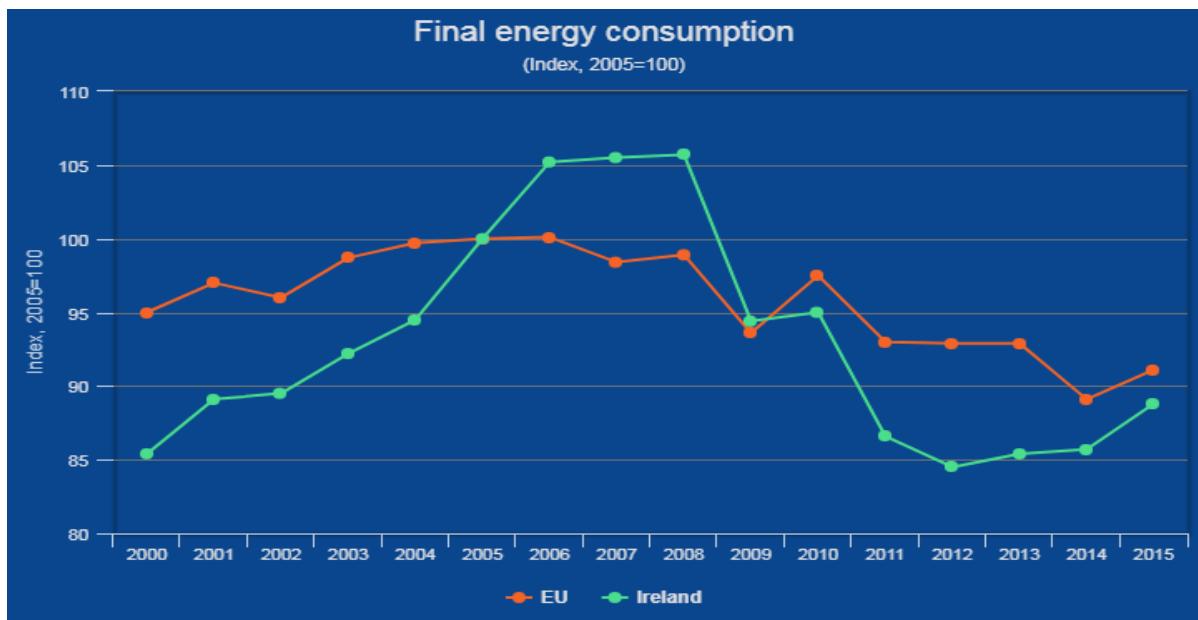
Source: Eurostat (2017)

The EU is concerned with reducing energy consumption, in securing sustainable energy supply and improving access to affordable energy. Short term trends indicate that the EU has made significant progress in reducing energy consumption of both primary energy and final energy, and improved its energy productivity while increasing the share of renewable energies. “The EU is close to meeting its target to increase energy efficiency by 20% by 2020 in its Europe 2020 strategy. In absolute terms this means that by 2020, EU energy consumption should not exceed 1,483 million tonnes of oil equivalents (Mtoe) of primary energy or 1,086 Mtoe of final energy” (Eurostat, 2017:150). European citizens have reduced their energy consumption at home which depends on temperatures, building efficiency, the level of comfort and fewer people were unable to keep their home adequately warm (Eurostat, 2017).

Trends in Ireland

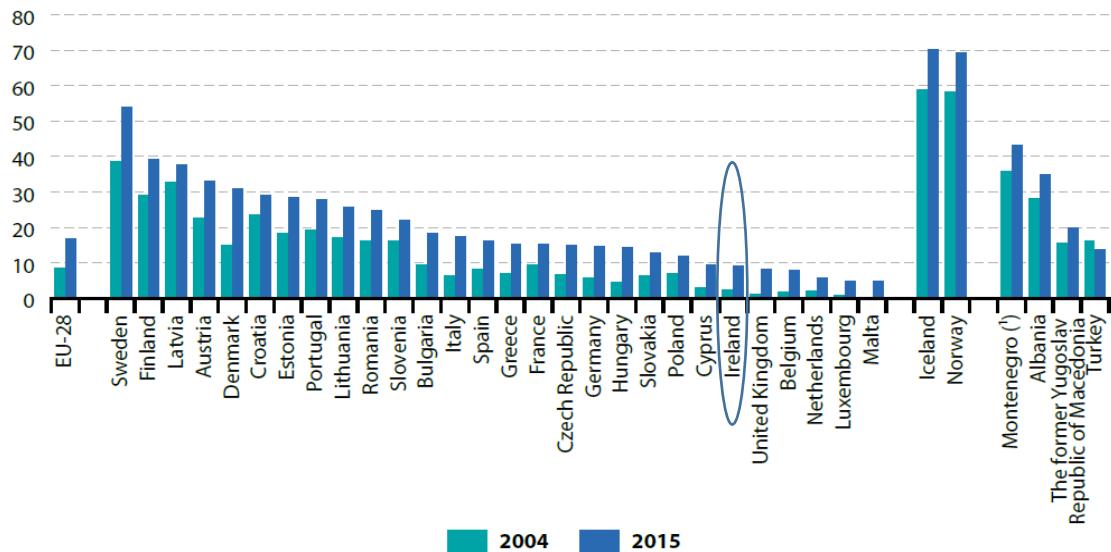
Similarly, since 2001 Ireland has reduced both its primary and final energy consumption and the percentage of the Irish population unable to keep their houses adequately warm has fallen well below EU average, to 5.8% in 2016. Primary energy consumption has dropped by 12.1% from 2007 to 2015 but in 2015 this remained above the EU average by 5.5%. Final energy consumption has decreased by 16.9% from 2008 to 2015 and is currently below the EU average, as seen in Figure 11. According to Eurostat (2017: 147), “households account for about a quarter of final energy consumption”. Ireland’s final energy consumption in household per capita has fallen since 2000 but in 2015 this remains above EU average. Its greenhouse gas emission intensity of energy consumption is on a downward trajectory and remains below the EU average since 2009. The share of renewable energy has increased from 2.4% in 2004 to 9.2% of gross final energy consumption in 2015; yet this remains well below the EU28 share of 16.7%, as shown in Figure 12. “Ireland has the highest level of energy productivity among its EU member mainly due to its low industrial energy intensity” (Eurostat, 2017: 155) However, Ireland’s energy dependence as a net importer has increased from 84.8% in 2000 to 88.7% 2015, as shown in Figure 13. An over dependence on imports of energy carriers exposes the economy to volatile world market prices and the risk of supply shortages, for example, due to geopolitical conflicts. We argue that this aspect of SDG7 poses a serious challenge for Ireland.

Figure 11: Ireland and EU Final Energy Consumption



Source: Eurostat (2017)

Figure 12: Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption, by country 2004 and 2015

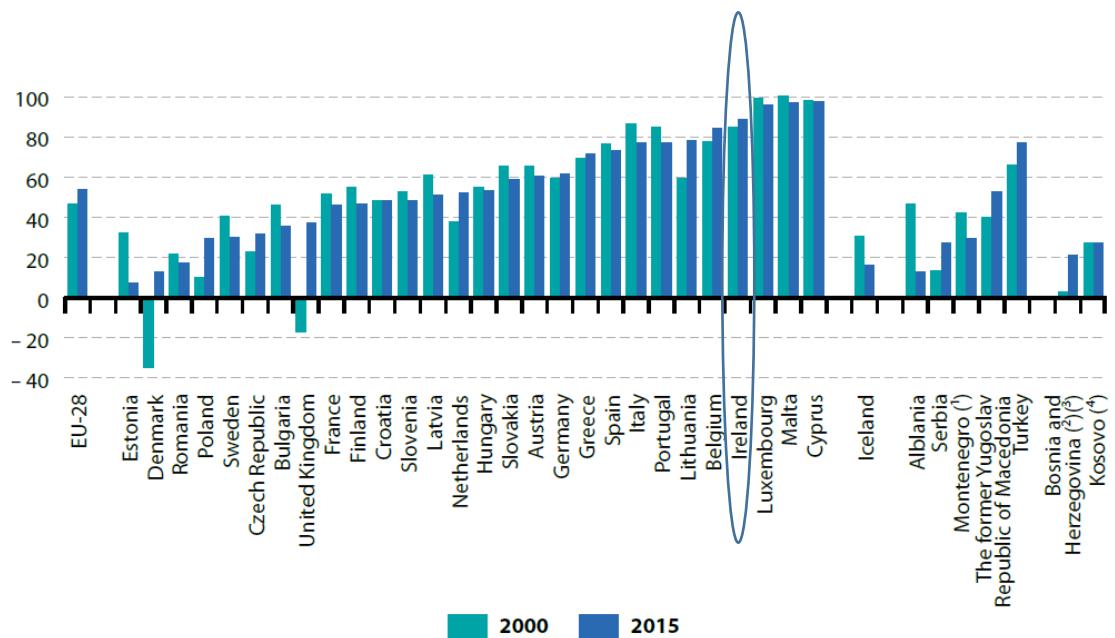


(¹) 2005 data (instead of 2004)

Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_07_40](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017: 158)

Figure 13: Energy dependence, by country, 2000 and 2015



Note: Norway is not displayed in this graph as it is a large net exporter of energy (2000: – 733.1 % and 2015: – 585.9 %)
 (1) 2005 data (instead of 2000).
 (2) 2014 data (instead of 2015).

(3) Provisional data.
 (4) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_07_50](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017: 160)

SDG 8 'Decent work and economic growth'

SDG 8 identifies the importance of sustained economic growth, economic productivity and global prosperity. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 8 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 8
Sustainable economic growth
Real GDP per capita
Resource productivity and domestic material consumption (DMC) (SDG 12)
Employment
Total employment rate
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training
Long-term unemployment rate
Inactive population due to caring responsibilities (SDG 5)
Decent work
Involuntary temporary employment
People killed in accidents at work

Source: Eurostat (2017)

This goal appeals for providing opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work for all while reducing child labour, and human trafficking by promoting labour rights and secure working conditions.

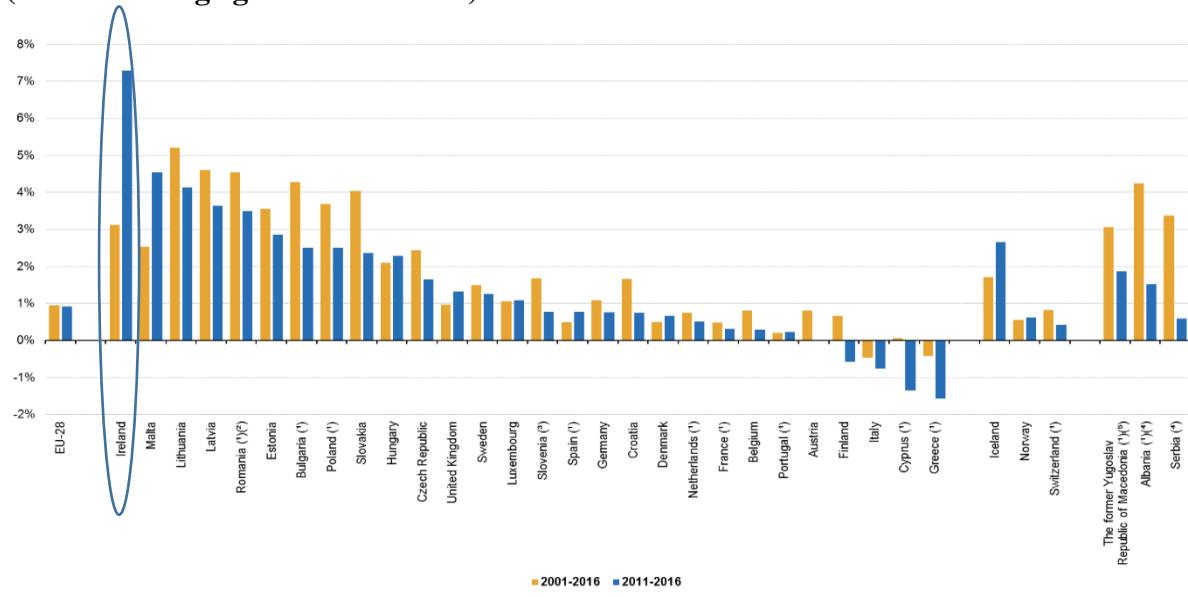
In the EU, real GDP per capita increased, and resource productivity significantly improved. Also, the European labour market began to improve again, with long-term unemployment and the number of young people not in education, employment or training declining, while visible progress was made in creating safer working environments. The EU's employment rate has risen since 2013. If the rate continues to increase at this pace, the Europe 2020 target of an employment rate of 75 % is still within reach.

Trends in Ireland

Ireland has a higher real GDP per capita than the EU, which has increased from €32,400 in 2000 to €53,600 in 2016; this is an anomaly as it is €26,600 above the EU average in 2016. As shown in Figure 14, growth in per capita output has not been uniform among Member States and over the short term (2011 to 2016), it has ranged from 7.3 % per year in Ireland to -1.6 % per year in Greece. Ireland's resource productivity has increased and rose above the EU average in 2016 which reflects, as mentioned above, the increase in GDP growth and decrease in domestic material consumption.

Ireland's employment rate is making progress in reaching Europe's 2020 target rate of 75%, as employment increased from 64.4% in 2012 to 71.4% in 2016. While temporary contracts rose during the economic downturn to 5.1% in 2013, this has since fallen to 4.2% of employees in 2016. As mentioned previously, the NEET rate (15-29 age group) has fallen to 15.2%; this is however above the EU average by 1%. Long term unemployment has fallen from 9.2% in 2012 to 4.3% in 2016 but again this remains above the EU average in 2016.

Figure 14: Real GDP per capita growth rate, by country, 2001-2016 and 2011-2016 (annual average growth rate in %)



(*) Provisional or estimated data.

(?) Break in time series in 2012.

(?) Break in time series in 2008.

(*) Change until 2015.

Source: Eurostat, 2017: 169

SDG 9 'Industry, innovation and infrastructure'

SDG 9 calls for implementing sustainable infrastructure to support sustainable development and human wellbeing. This goal considers 2 sub themes and 7 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 9	
R&D and innovation	
Gross domestic expenditure on R&D	
Employment in high- and medium-high technology manufacturing sectors and knowledge intensive service sectors	
R&D personnel	
Patent applications to the European Patent Office (EPO)	
Sustainable transport	
Average CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars (SDG 12)	
Share of collective transport modes in total passenger land transport	
Share of rail and inland waterways activity in total freight transport	

Source: Eurostat (2017)

This goal seeks to enhance innovation, technological progress and entrepreneurship. In doing so, it promotes increased access to financial services and information and communication technologies.

In the EU, the share of R&D personnel has increased, as has the share of people working in high- and medium-high technology and service sectors. Moreover, transport patterns for both freight and passengers have become more environmentally friendly over the past five years. However, the EU is not on track to meet its target of raising its gross domestic expenditure on R&D to 3% by 2020, and the number of patent applications has stalled since the onset of the economic crisis.

Trends in Ireland

Ireland's share of expenditure on R&D has decreased from 1.61% of GDP in 2009 to 1.2% in 2015, moving further away from Europe 2020 target of spending 3 % of GDP on R&D by 2020. The share of people working in high- and medium-high technology has also fallen from 50.3% of employment in 2012 to 48.8% in 2016; however this remains above the EU average of 45.8% in 2016. In addition, the share of R&D personnel in the active population has slightly risen since 2013 from 1.1% of the active population to 1.7% in 2015. Ireland's patent applications to the European Patent Office has increased by 31.53% over the 2000-2014 period.

In terms of innovation in transport, the average CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars fell by 5.1% from 2014 to 2016, making progress to reach the 2021 target value of 95 grams of CO2 per km. The share of collective transport modes (bus and train) in total passenger land transport in Ireland increased in 2014 by 3.4% but a slight drop of 0.5% was evident in 2015.

SDG 10 'Reduced inequalities'

SDG 10 focuses on reducing income disparities across the population with increasing income of the bottom 40%. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 9 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 10
Inequalities between countries
Disparities in GDP per capita in PPS
Disparities in adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita in PPS
EU financing to developing countries (SDG 17)
EU Imports from developing countries (SDG 17)
Inequalities within countries
People at risk of income poverty after social transfers (SDG 1)
Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap
Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income
Income growth of the bottom 40 % of the population
Migration and social inclusion
Asylum applications

Source: Eurostat (2017)

This goal aims at reducing disparities in terms of sex, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, and religion. It addresses these disparities with encouraging development assistance and foreign direct investment. It seeks to promote social inclusion globally through providing safe, orderly and regular migration and the reduction of transaction costs of migrant remittances.

Most indicators measuring inequalities between countries have improved over the past five years. EU countries' disparities in disposable household income have been converging, making significant improvement towards its sustainable objective. EU financing to developing countries has increased by 39.8% since 2010 and EU imports from developing countries have been on the rise with an increase of 2.3% since 2011. These positive developments have, however, occurred against a trend of increasing disparities in GDP per capita and increasing inequalities within countries. Relative poverty and the depth of poverty have both intensified, while the Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable household income and the income share of the bottom 40 % of the population have both deteriorated.

Trends in Ireland

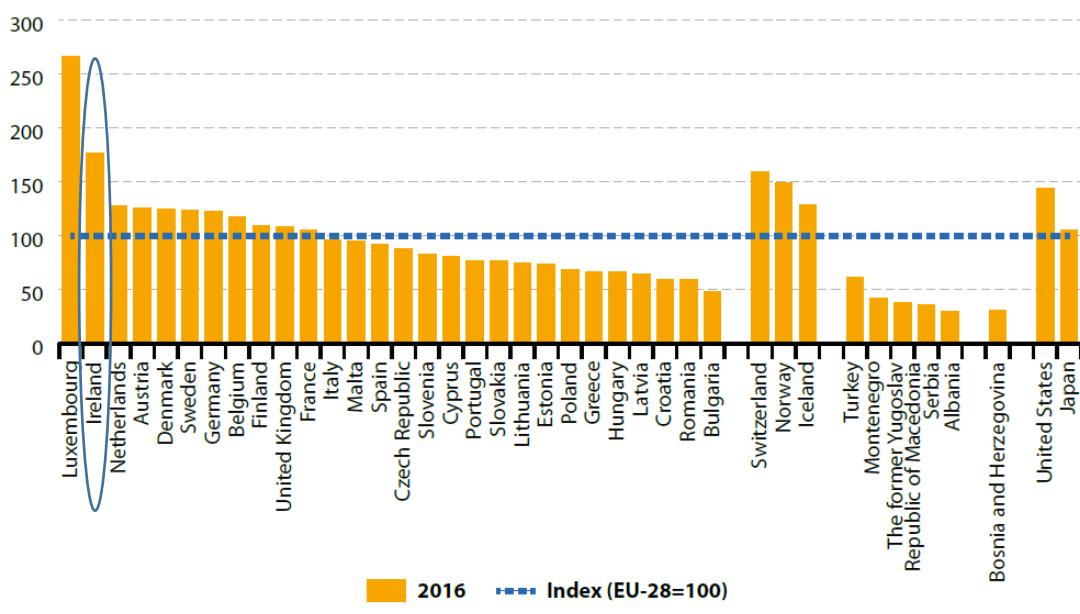
As seen in Figure 15, a clear divide is evident when analysing the geographical distribution of GDP per capita in the EU in 2015. As mentioned in SDG8, Ireland displayed GDP per capita levels above the EU average showing an improvement in its economic performance. If expressed in purchasing power standards (pps), this rose to €53,300 in 2016 in comparison to €29,100 in the EU, causing a significant difference in average earnings.

Ireland ranked second behind Luxembourg in terms of GDP per capita in the EU, despite having gross household disposable income levels below the EU average by €1,925pps, reaching € 20,001pps in 2016. This disparity is partly explained by the significant contribution of foreign investment in Ireland, which results in increases in GDP but is not reflected in gross household disposable income (Eurostat, 2017).

Ireland's action towards reducing global inequalities has been minimal due to the lack financing offered to developing countries and imports from a developing country. Ireland lies well below the EU average on both of these indicators, as mentioned in SDG 17.

The distribution of income within Ireland as measured by the Gini coefficient has fallen slightly from 31.1 in 2014 to 29.5 in 2016, below the EU average of 30. Ireland's income share received by the bottom 40% of the income distribution recorded a 0.8% point increase in the short term, from 20.9% of income in 2014 to 21.7% in 2016. There has been an increase in the percentage of the Irish population who are at risk of income poverty after social transfers. This increased from 15.2% in 2010 to 16.6% in 2016; although this does lie slightly below the EU average.

Figure 15: Purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita, by country, 2016



Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_10_10](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017: 203)

SDG 11 'Sustainable cities and communities'

SDG11 sub themes consider the quality of life in cities and communities, sustainable transport and adverse environmental impacts. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 12 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 11	
Quality of life in cities and communities	
Population living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation or rot in window frames or floor (SDG 1)	
Overcrowding rate	
Population living in households considering that they suffer from noise	
Population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area (SDG 16)	
Sustainable transport	
Difficulty in accessing public transport	
Share of collective transport modes in total passenger transport (SDG 9)	
People killed in road accidents	
Adverse environmental impacts	
Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment (SDG 6)	
Exposure to air pollution by particulate matter	
Recycling rate of municipal waste	
Artificial land cover per capita (SDG 15)	
Change in artificial land cover (SDG 15)	

Source: Eurostat (2017)

The goal aims to renew and plan cities and settlements in a coherent manner. It envisions cities to drive sustainable development, stimulate innovation and foster community cohesion and personal safety.

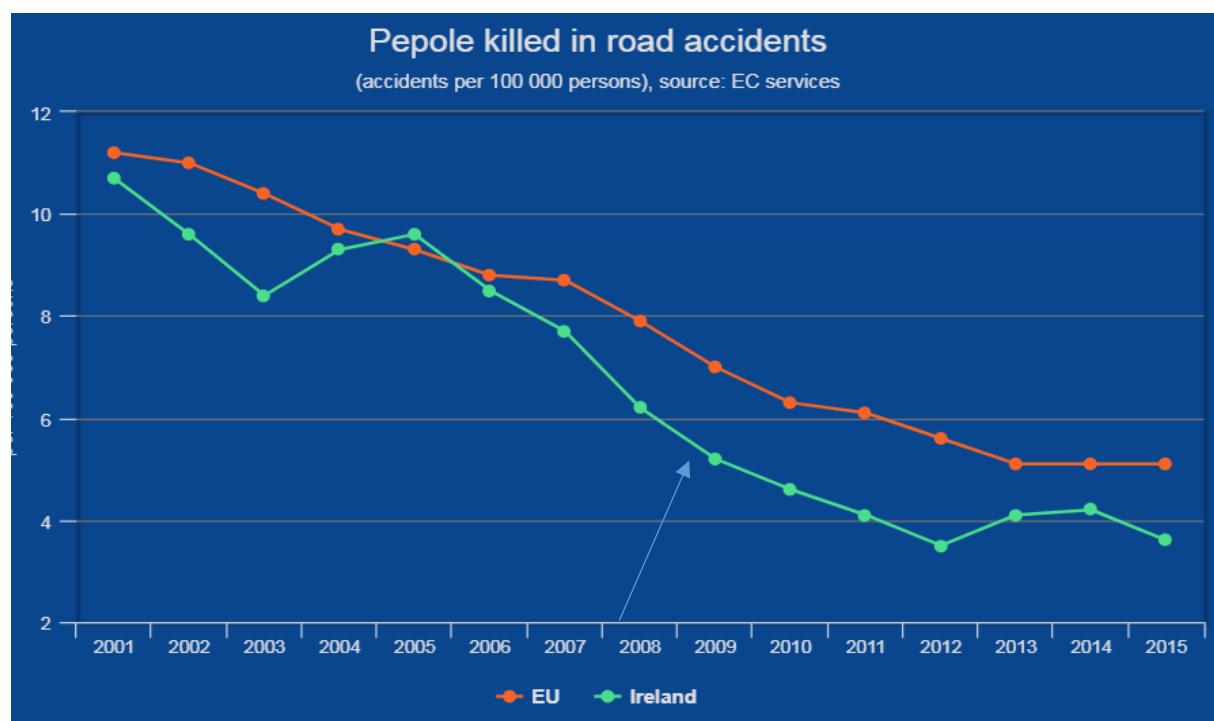
Indicators for this SDG mostly show progress towards sustainable development objectives, particularly in the area of quality of life. Fewer Europeans live in deprived or overcrowded housing conditions, suffer from noise or are victims of crime, violence and vandalism. The EU has also made strides in reducing its environmental impact with regard to municipal waste management as 45% of total waste generated in 2015 was recycled and the urban population's exposure to air pollution has fallen. Progress in the area of sustainable transport has however been less pronounced, with the share of public transport (bus and train) in total inland passenger transport increasing only slightly in the past few years. Moreover, the number of fatal road accidents has decreased but this is not yet on path to meeting the EU target of halving the number of people killed between 2001 and 2020.

Trends in Ireland

Similarly, in Ireland, some progress is evident in this SDG as the quality of life in cities and communities has improved. Fewer Irish live in deprived or overcrowded housing conditions (3.2% of the population in 2016), suffer from noise or are victims of crime, violence and vandalism. In terms of these indicators, Ireland lies below the EU average. Ireland has also reduced its environmental impact with regard to municipal waste management as 36.6% of total waste generated in 2012 was recycled (latest data available up to 2012).

Ireland has made progress on the road accident indicator as the number of deaths due to road accidents remains below EU average (except in 2005) and is on a downward trajectory falling from 10.7% per 100,000 persons in 2001 to 3.5% per 100,000 persons in 2015, as shown in Figure 16. No comparative data is provided on Ireland's difficulty in accessing public transport.

Figure 16: Ireland and EU road fatalities, 2001 - 2015



Source: Eurostat (2017)

SDG 12 ‘Responsible consumption and production’

SDG 12 calls for action in terms of: adoption of sustainable practices and procedures for business and an increase in environmentally friendly activity by consumers. This activity would be supported through the development of new technologies, production and consumption methods. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 11 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 12
Decoupling environmental impacts from economic growth
Resource productivity and domestic material consumption (DMC)
Energy productivity (SDG 7)
Consumption of toxic chemicals
Volume of freight transport relative to gross domestic product (GDP)
Average CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars
Energy consumption
Energy consumption (SDG 7)
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (SDG 7)
Waste generation and management
Generation of waste excluding major mineral wastes
Recycling and landfill rate of waste excluding major mineral waste
Decoupling environmental impacts from economic growth
Resource productivity and domestic material consumption (DMC)

Source: Eurostat (2017)

Overall, this goal focuses on progress made in reducing the negative externalities in terms of environmental factors, energy consumption and waste disposal associated with the production and consumption of goods and services.

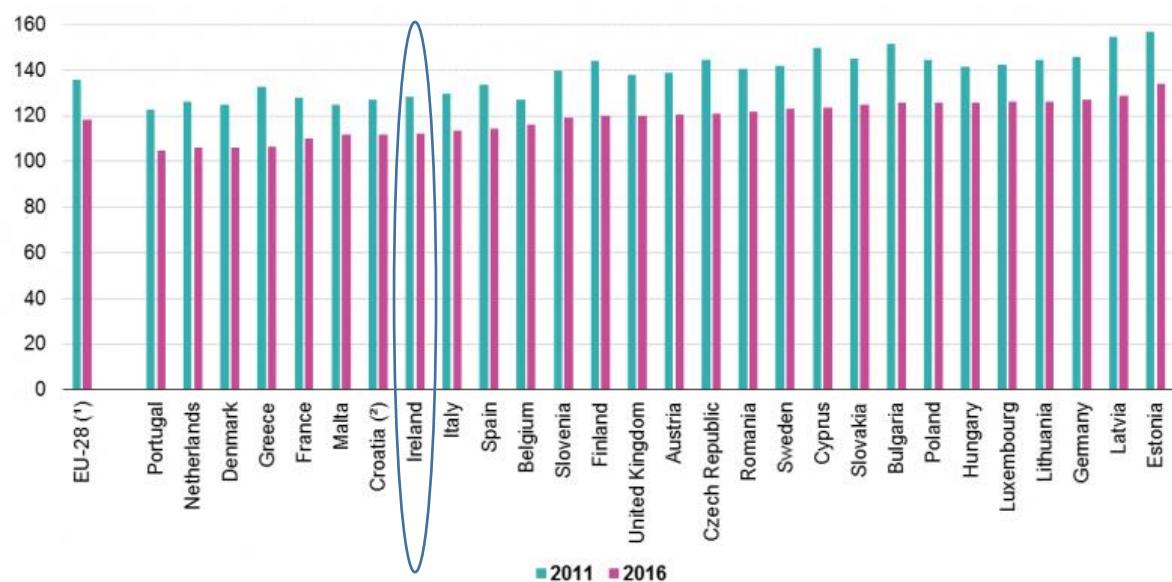
The EU has achieved gains in resource and energy productivity and is on track to meet its targets for primary and final energy consumption, as well as for the share of renewable energy. Progress was less significant but still visible with regard to waste generation and treatment, consumption of toxic chemicals, volume of freight transport relative to GDP, and CO2 emissions from new passenger cars which decreased by 13% since 2011.

Trends in Ireland

Ireland has shown progress in this area, with increased resource productivity since the economic crisis, and increased energy productivity. The latter increased by 5.8 EUR per kg from 2008 so that by 2015, the data suggest Ireland's energy productivity was double the EU average of 8.3 EUR per kg oil equivalent. Progress is being made with regards to waste generation and treatment, consumption of toxic chemicals, volume of freight transport relative to GDP, and CO2 emissions from new passenger cars. Indeed, Irelands' CO2 emissions from new passenger cars has fallen below the EU average by 6 gram of CO2 per km. This reduction

may be due to incentives offered such as scrappage schemes, incentives for low-emission vehicles or extra motor tax charges on high emission vehicles. Figure 17 compares Ireland's CO2 emissions from new passenger cars from 2011-2016. No comparative data is available on Ireland's consumption of toxic chemicals.

Figure 17: Average carbon dioxide emissions per km from new passenger cars, by country, 2011 and 2016



(¹) 2011 data refer to EU-27.

(²) 2013 data (instead of 2011).

Source: Eurostat (2017: 250)

SDG 13 ‘Climate action’

SDG 13 seeks to implement the commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and operationalise the Green Climate Fund. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 10 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 13
Climate mitigation
Greenhouse gas emissions
Greenhouse gas emissions intensity of energy consumption
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (SDG 7)
Energy consumption (SDG 7)
Average CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars (SDG 12)
Climate impacts
Mean near surface temperature deviation
Climate-related economic losses
Mean ocean acidity (SDG 14)
Climate initiatives
Contribution to the international 100bn USD commitment on climate-related expending
Population covered by the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy signatories

Source: Eurostat (2017)

This goal aims to increase countries' strength against climate-related hazards by introducing climate change measures into national strategies, policies and planning. The EU reviews the climate impacts to assess how and to what extent climate change is affecting Europe to establish climate initiatives.

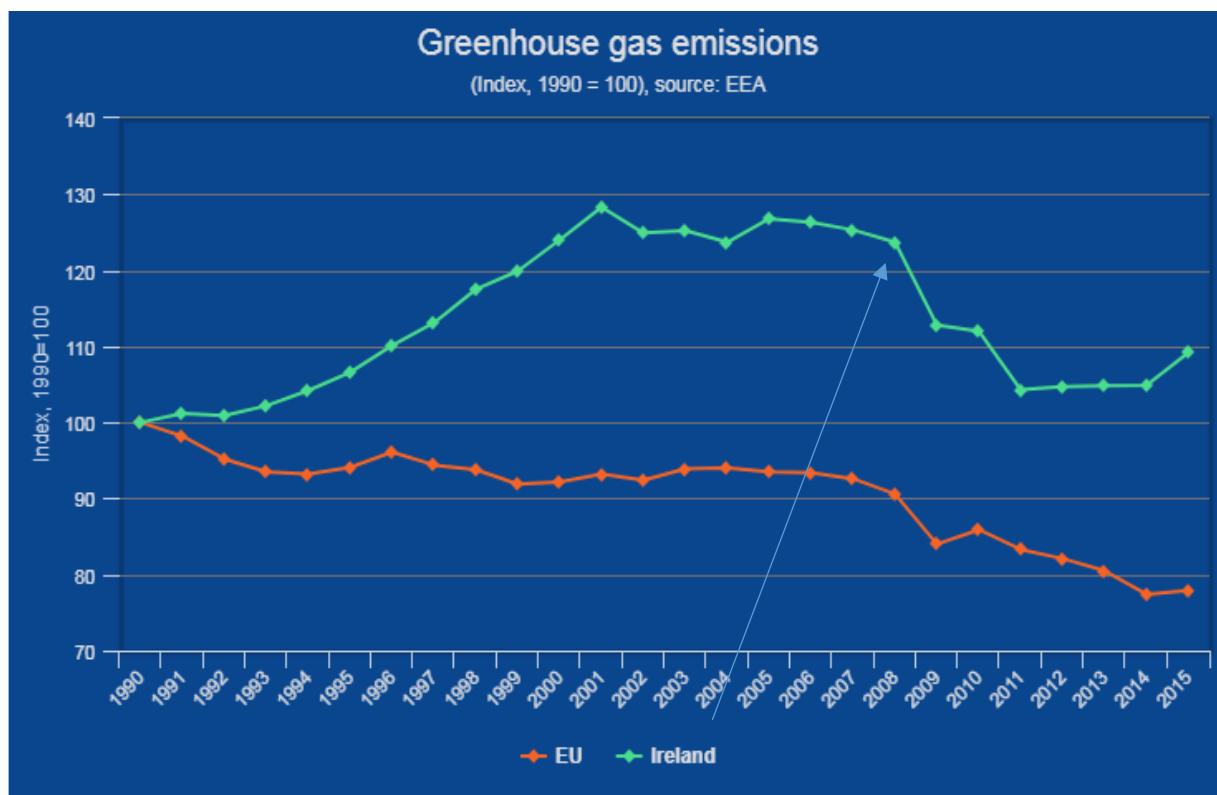
In the EU, trends in the short and long term cannot be identified for both indicators on climate impact and climate initiative due to insufficient data availability. Indicators in the sub-theme 'climate mitigation' predominantly show progress, with the EU being on track to reach its targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, renewable energies, and energy consumption. From 1990 – 2015, there has been a reduction of 22% in the overall GHG emissions in the EU, exceeding its 2020 GHG emission target.

Trends in Ireland

In contrast, Ireland witnessed an increase in its GHG emission from 100 in 1990 to 128.3 index points in 2001, as shown in Figure 18. These emissions have since fallen to 109.2 index points; however, in 2015 Ireland's GHG still remains well above EU average (see Figure 19). Ireland's GHG emission intensity of energy consumption has fallen below the EU average in 2015, perhaps due to a shift towards less carbon intensive energy sources (Eurostat, 2017). Although the share of renewable energy is on the rise, as mentioned under SDG7, it is still well below the EU28 average.

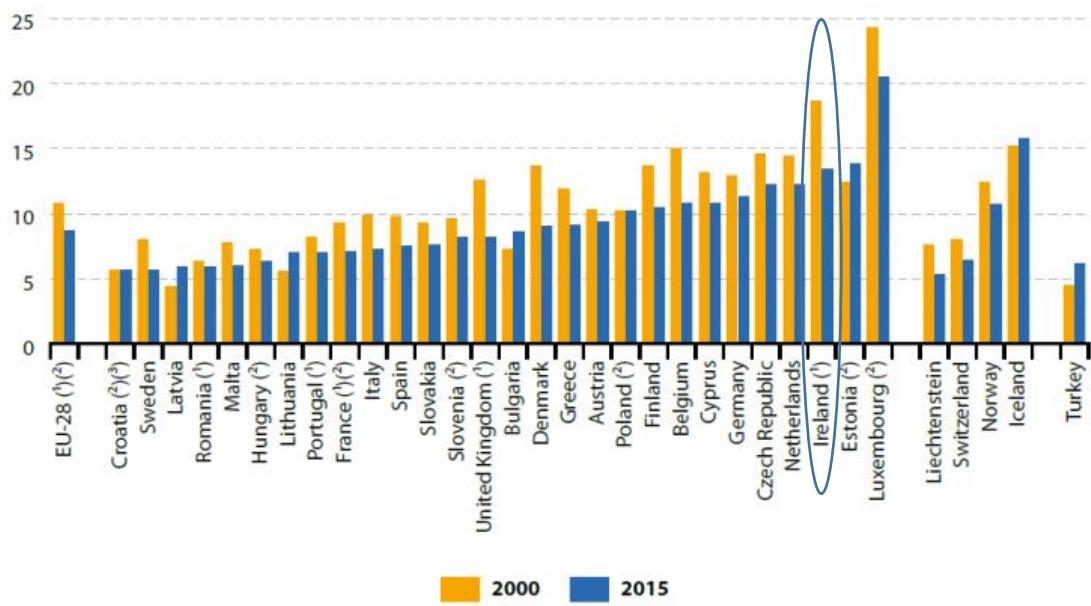
In terms of climate impact, no comparative data is provided on the following indicators; mean near surface temperature deviation, climate-related economic losses, mean ocean acidity, and the population covered by the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy signatories.

Figure 18: Ireland and EU greenhouse gas emissions, 2000 and 2015



Source: Eurostat, 2017

Figure 19: Greenhouse gas emissions, by country, 2000 and 2015



Note: Total emissions, including international aviation and indirect CO₂, but excluding emissions from land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF).

(1) 2015 data are provisional and/or estimates.

(2) Breaks in time series between 2000 and 2015.

(3) 2000 data are estimates.

Source: European Environment Agency, Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_13_10](#))

Source: Eurostat, 2017:264

SDG 14 ‘Life below water’

SDG 14 aims to conserve oceans by safeguarding and ensuring their sustainable use. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 5 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 14
Marine conservation
Sufficiency of marine sites designated under the EU Habitats Directive
Sustainable fishery
Catches in major fishing areas
Assessed fish stocks exceeding fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (FMSY)
Ocean health
Bathing sites with excellent water quality
Mean ocean acidity

Source: Eurostat (2017)

This goal focuses on safeguarding marine and coastal ecosystems, conserving coastal and marine areas and reducing marine pollution and the impacts of ocean acidification. This will aid in fostering sustainable fishery and in ensuring healthy oceans.

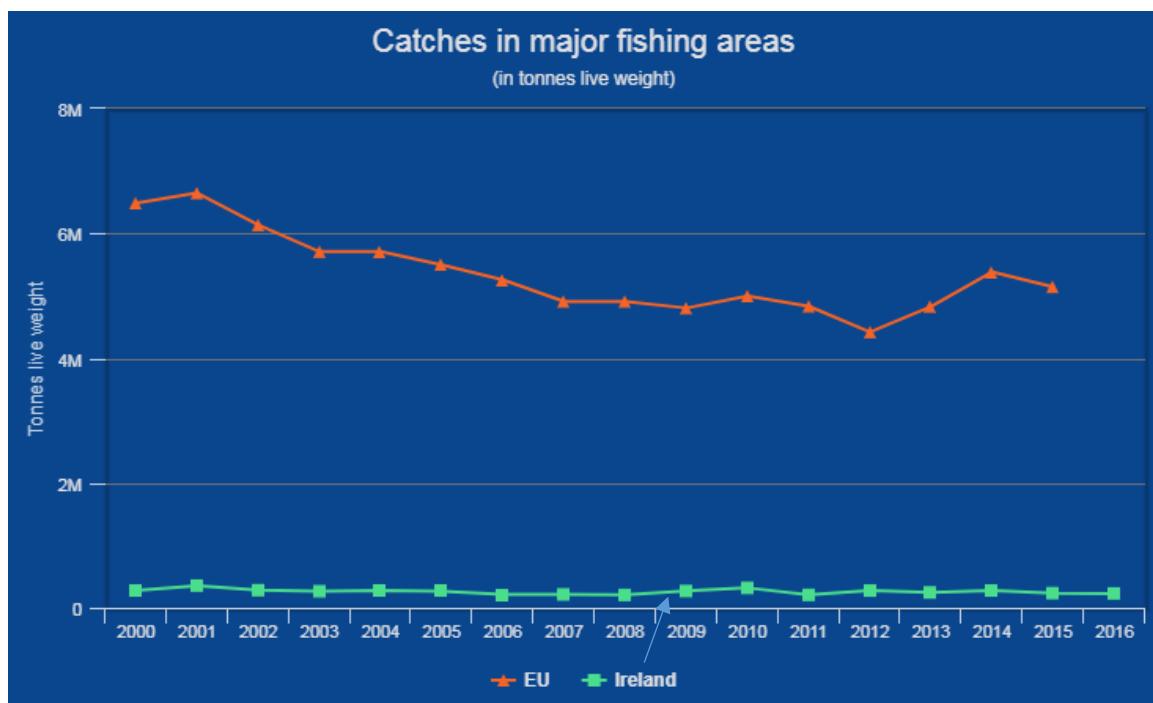
In the EU, sufficient data is only available for identifying trends in indicators relating to overexploitation of fish stocks and bathing water quality, while trends cannot be calculated for other aspects such as ‘marine conservation’ and ‘ocean acidity’. For these two indicators with sufficient data, significant progress is visible: the proportion of overexploited fish stocks in the north-east Atlantic has declined considerably over the past five years, and the share of coastal bathing sites with excellent water quality has risen by 5.7% points since 2011. Fish stocks are recovering due to policy reforms that are focusing on increasing the sustainability of fish management. This is evident under the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy whose objective is to “achieve environmentally, economically and socially sustainable fisheries and ensure the availability of food supplies through high long-term fishing yields for all stocks” (Eurostat, 2017:279).

Trends in Ireland

In Ireland, marine protected areas increased to 10,259km but the corresponding sufficiency index score for protected marine areas falls well below the EU average. As seen in Figure 20, in 2016, there was a drop in Ireland’s fish count since 2001 by 35% but with bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Ireland would be considered one economy contributing to EU’s total catch. There is no comparative data available on Ireland’s fish exploitation.

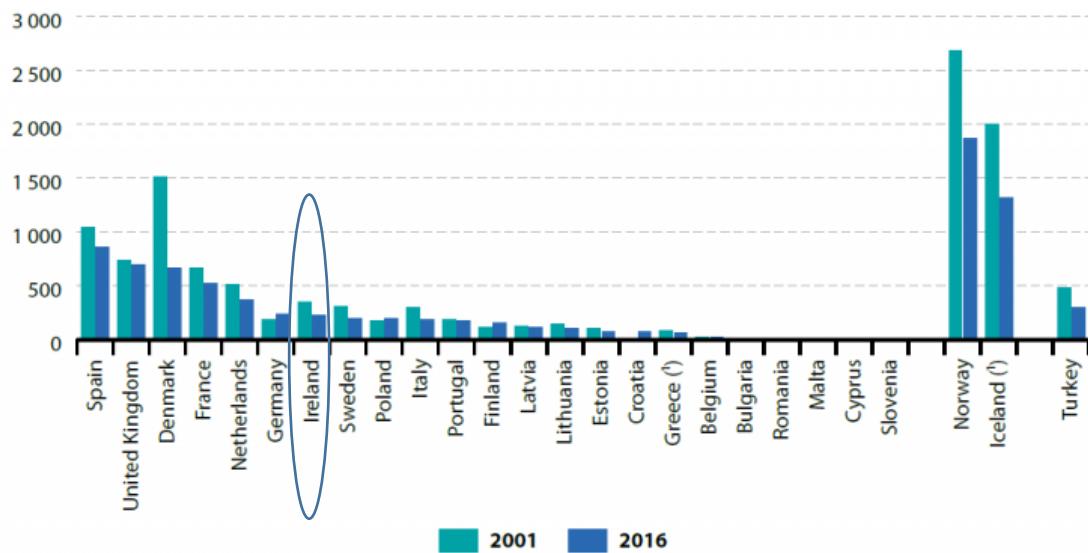
In terms of its ocean health, the percentage of bathing sites in Ireland is above the EU average in 2015 but no account can be given on the mean ocean acidity due to data insufficiencies.

Figure 20: Ireland and EU catches in major fishing areas



Source: Eurostat, 2017

Figure 21: Catches from major fishing areas, by country, 2001 and 2016



(l) 2015 data (instead of 2016).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_14_20](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017: 286)

SDG 15 ‘Life on land’

SDG 15 seeks to protect, restore and promote the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial, inland water and mountain ecosystems. This goal considers 3 sub themes and 9 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 15	
Ecosystem status	
Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers (SDG 6)	
Nitrate in groundwater (SDG 6)	
Phosphate in rivers (SDG 6)	
Share of forest area	
Land degradation	
Artificial land cover per capita	
Change in artificial land cover	
Estimated soil erosion by water	
Biodiversity	
Common bird index	
Sufficiency of terrestrial sites designated under the EU Habitats Directive	

Source: Eurostat (2017)

The goal is concerned with protecting, managing and restoring the ecosystem in terms of the land and its use and the protection of species that are endangered. The EU focuses on improving the status of ecosystems, in decelerating land degradation and in preserving biodiversity.

In the EU, over the 5 year trend period, the subtheme ‘ecosystem status’ is making progress towards meeting its sustainable objective. There has been an improvement in the sufficiency of terrestrial sites designated under the EU Habitats Directive and, to some extent, in halting the decline in the number of common bird species. In contrast to these positive developments, artificial land cover per capita has increased and the rate of land take and soil sealing has accelerated.

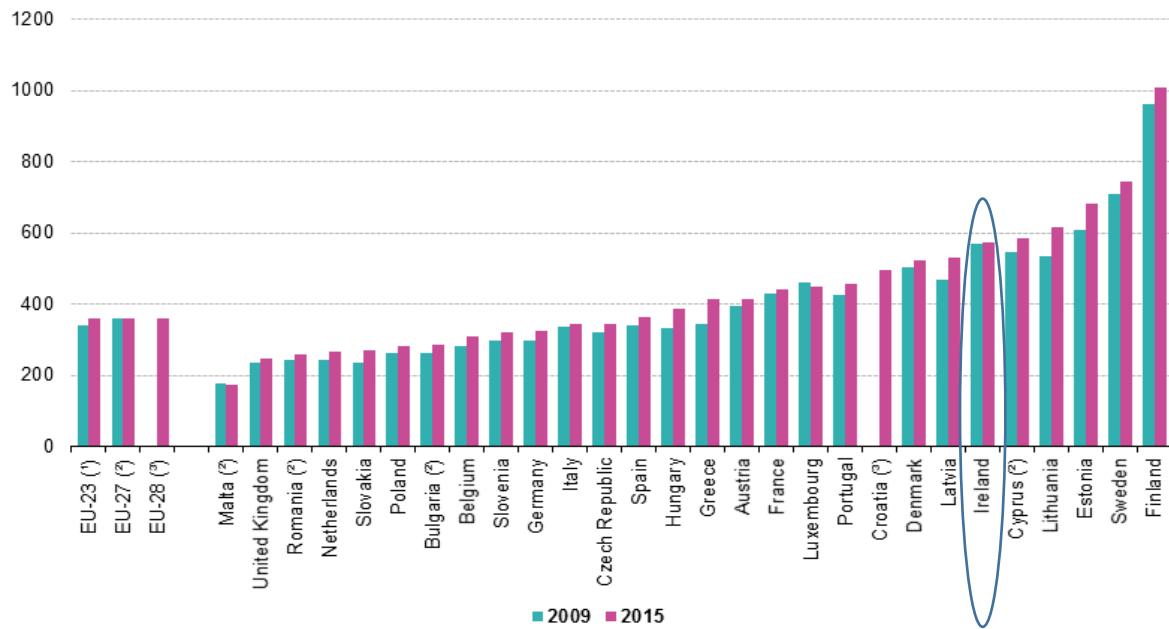
Trends in Ireland

In terms of the ecosystem status, a number of indicators for Ireland have been reported on under SDG 6. Healthy forests clearly provide several socio-economic and environmental benefits, so ensuring that forests can continue to offer these benefits remains high on the EU agenda. In Ireland, the forest share of total land area has increased slightly from just over 9% in 2009 to 10.5% in 2015 but this is significantly below the average and is one of the lowest among the EU28.

In relation to Ireland’s land degradation, artificial land cover per capita is above the EU average in 2015, as seen in Figure 22. The area affected by soil erosion by water has increased from 2000- 2012 (2012 latest available data) but is below the EU average.

For Ireland's biodiversity, no comparative data is available on the common bird index although “Ireland is the only country to have a complete network of designated sites of terrestrial habitats and species listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive” (Eurostat, 2017:312).

Figure 22: Artificial land cover per capita, by country, 2009 and 2015



(*) Not including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, Romania.

(?) 2012 data (instead of 2009).

(?) No data for 2009.

Source: Eurostat (2017: 304)

SDG 16 ‘Peace, justice and strong institutions’

SDG 16 intends peaceful and inclusive societies based on human rights, protection of the most vulnerable, the rule of law and good governance. It advocates transparent, effective and accountable justice system. This goal considers 2 sub themes and 8 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 16
Peace and personal security
Death rate due to homicide
Population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area
Physical and sexual violence to women experienced within 12 months prior to the interview (SDG 5)
Access to justice
General governmental total expenditure on law courts
Perceived independence of the justice system
Trust in institutions
Corruption Perceptions Index
Population with confidence in EU institutions

Source: Eurostat (2017)

The indicators for SDG 16 suggest a safer life for Europeans over recent years as deaths due to homicide or assault and the perceived occurrence of crime, violence and vandalism in European neighbourhoods have both fallen and are making progress towards the objective. In addition, the decline in citizens' confidence in EU institutions observable since 2000 has come to a halt, with moderate gains in trust levels for the main EU bodies since 2011. However, trends cannot be calculated due to data insufficiencies for other SDG 16 issues, such as perceived independence of the justice system and perceived corruption.

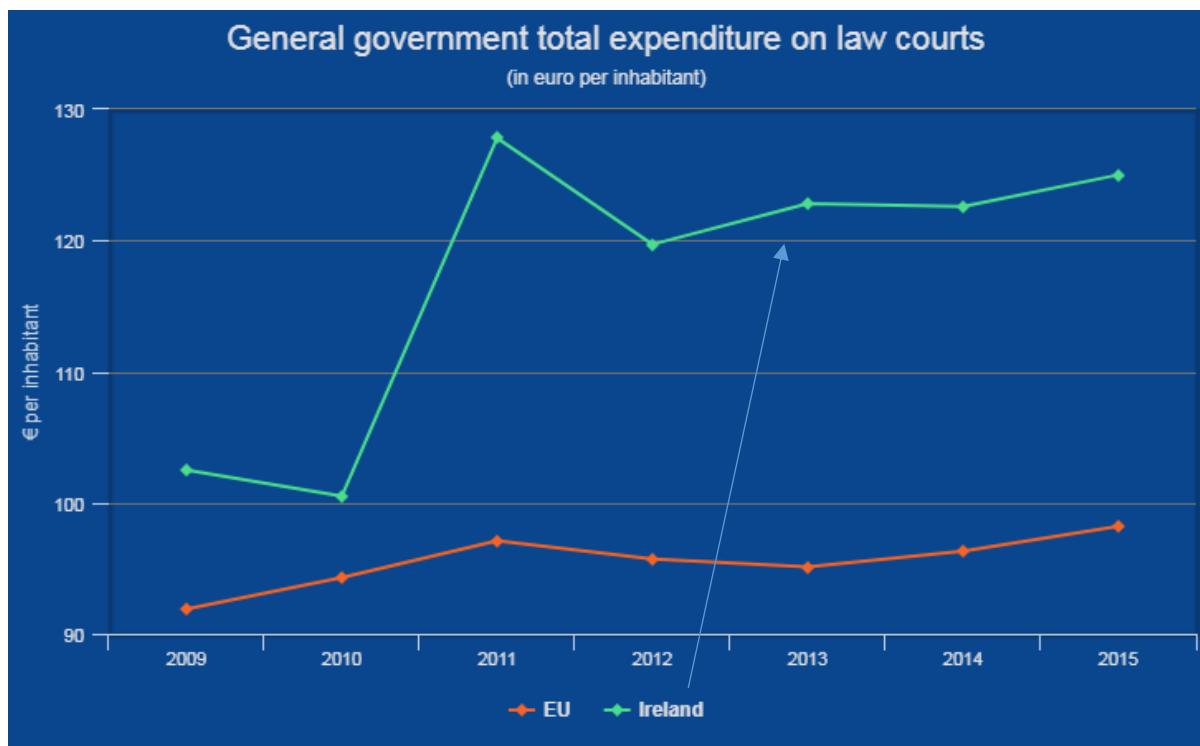
Trends in Ireland

Similarly, the data indicates Ireland is a relatively safe society with a low number of deaths due to homicide or assault, and the perceived occurrence of crime, violence and vandalism all below the EU average.

There is no single agreed way of measuring the quality of justice systems, so the budget actually spent on courts is used as a proxy for the quality of the legal system in the EU (Eurostat, 2017). In Ireland, the general total government expenditure on law courts has increased since 2009 and remains well above EU average. In 2015, this expenditure consisted of €125 per person, as shown in Figure 23.

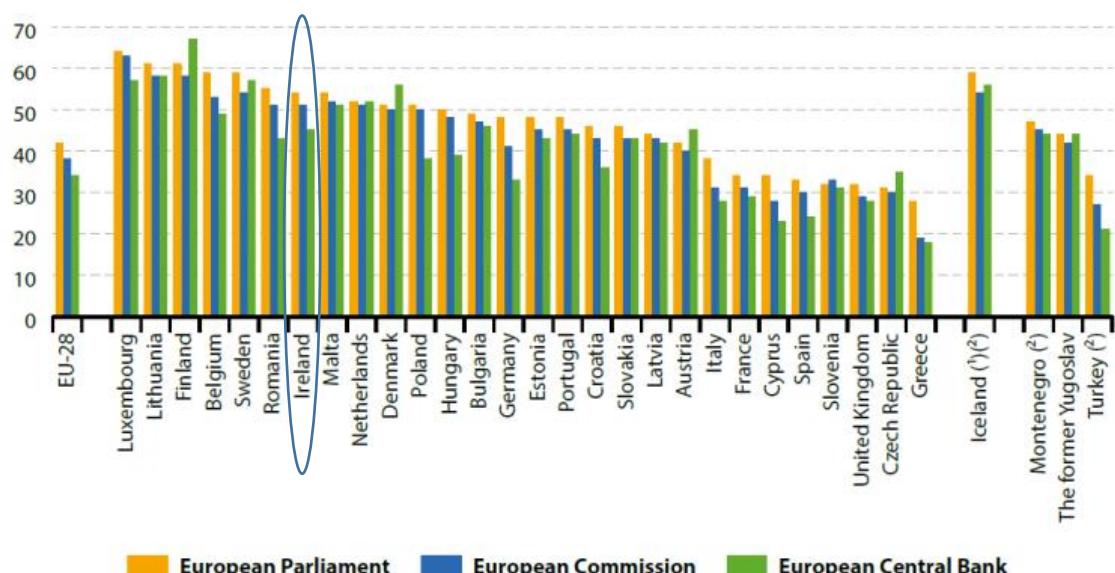
It appears that Ireland generally has a strong trust in EU institutions, with confidence in the EU Parliament, EU Commission and European Central Bank all rising since 2015. The level of trust in EU institutions was notably stronger in the European Parliament but in all three institutions, Irish citizens' trust levels were higher than the EU average (see Figure 24).

Figure 23: Ireland's general government total spend on law courts



Source: Eurostat (2017)

Figure 24: Population with confidence in EU institutions by institution, by country, 2016



(1) 2014 data for European Parliament and European Commission.
(2) 2013 data for European Central Bank.

Source: European Commission services, Eurobarometer (online data code: [sdg_16_60](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017: 331)

SDG 17 'Partnership for the goals'

SDG 17 calls for a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trading Organisation. This goal considers 2 sub themes and 5 indicators.

Indicators in SDG 17
Global partnership
Official development assistance as a share of gross national income
EU financing to developing countries
EU imports from developing countries
Financial governance within the EU
General government gross debt
Share of environmental and labour taxes in total tax revenues

Source: Eurostat (2017)

The goal seeks to improve trade relationships by strengthening global partnership, reduce protection barriers and improve the financial governance in the EU.

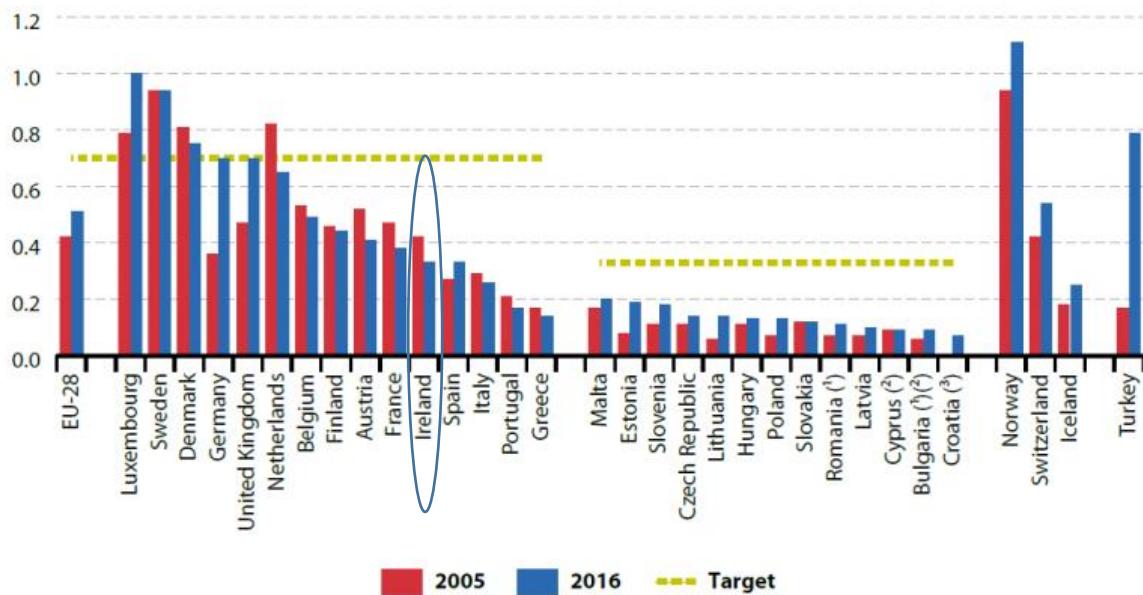
For the EU, SDG 17 reflects progress in the area of 'global partnership', where the EU's official development assistance as a share of gross national income, its overall financial support to developing countries, and imports from these nations, increased. The picture is more mixed when considering the financial governance within the EU as both indicators appear to be moving away from the sustainable development objective in the short term. Shares of environmental taxes in total tax revenues have stagnated at a low level, and many Member States' government debts remain above the reference level of 60% of GDP.

Trends in Ireland

In terms of the global partnership theme, Ireland appears to be moving away from its sustainable objective. Irelands' finance to developing countries, imports from development countries and official development assistance as a share of gross national income have deteriorated, and all are well below the EU average. Ireland contributed 0.33% of GNI in 2016 to assisting countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee list. As shown in Figure 25, Ireland's contribution is less than the EU average of 0.51% of GNI in 2016. As a member state of the EU, Ireland has a commitment to dedicate 0.7 % of GNI to official development assistance by 2030.

General government gross debt is a key parameter used for EU budgetary surveillance, which includes monitoring progress towards the EU reference value for government debt of 60% of GDP. General government gross debt in Ireland increased from 2007, peaking at 119.6% of GDP in 2012. Since then, it has been on a downward trajectory, and falls below the EU28 average to 72.8% of GDP in 2016 (see Figure 26).

Figure 25: Official development assistance as share of gross national income, by country, 2005 and 2016



Note: Data for 2016 are preliminary.

(1) 2007 data (instead of 2005).

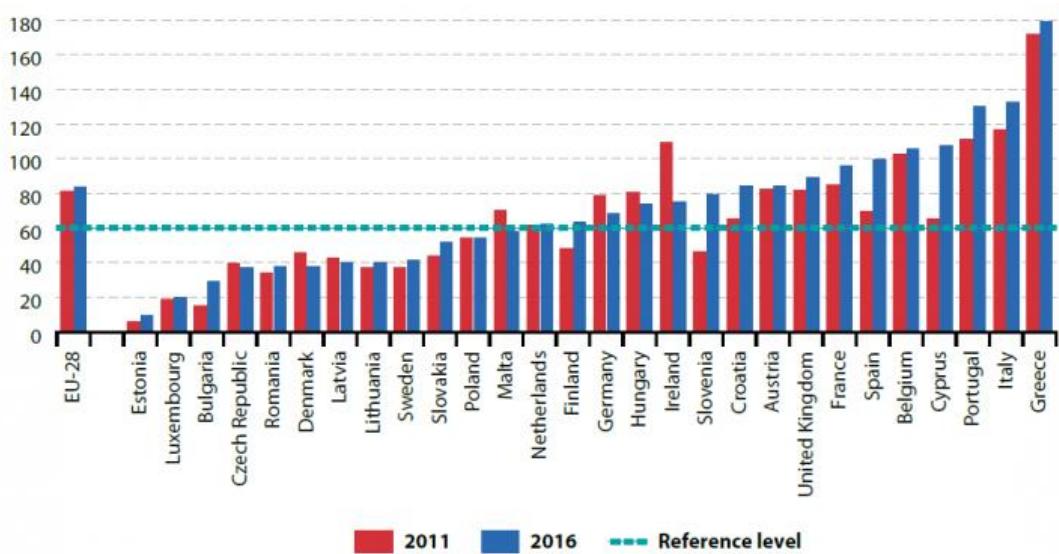
(2) 2015 data (instead of 2016).

(3) No data for 2005.

Source: OECD (online data code: [sdg_17_10](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017: 340)

Figure 26: General government gross debt, by country, 2011 and 2016



Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_17_40](#))

Source: Eurostat (2017:348)

3. Summary of Ireland's Performance

Drawing on the previous analysis, we provide a brief summary of Ireland's performance on the SDGs. In Table 2, following the method used by the Eurostat, we attempt to draw conclusions about how Ireland is progressing in its overall direction in meeting the sustainable development objective of each SDG in the short term³.

SDG 1 'No poverty'

Overall, we believe Ireland is showing modest improvement on this SDG. The basic needs subtheme shows good improvement as the lack of sanitary facilities, overcrowding, and poor living conditions are well below the EU average indicating that basic living conditions and needs have improved for Irish citizens. However, Ireland's experience on the risk of poverty theme is less impressive. In 2016, almost a quarter of the population (24.2%) are still at risk of poverty or social exclusion, above the EU28 average.

SDG 2 'Zero hunger'

Ireland is making moderate progress in meeting its sustainable objective in this area. Obesity is however a concern and the rate is 4.1% above the EU average in 2014. Sustainable agriculture production shows some improvement as agricultural factor income and government support to agricultural R&D increased. Ireland remains well above EU average on both of these indicators. However, the extent of organic farming in Ireland is poor.

SDG 3 'Good Health and Well-being'

Ireland is making good progress on this SDG as life expectancy has increased above the EU average along with self- perceived health. Health determinates in terms of disturbance by noise has reduced and falls below the EU average. However, there has been a fall in the numbers of deaths due to chronic diseases, road fatalities and suicides rate, and all of these are below the EU average.

SDG 4 'Quality of Education'

Ireland is making moderate progress on this SDG as more children are participating in early childhood education and care, fewer pupils are leaving school early, more people are attaining tertiary education and more young people are in employment. Ireland is getting closer to reaching the EU objective of 82% for the employment rate of recent graduates, reaching 79.5% in 2016 and is above the EU average. Adult literacy is a concern for Ireland as the percentage

³ We do not attempt to calculate long-term trends, given data limitations for many indicators. Our assessment takes account of progress in the indicators of each sub-theme and trends relative to the EU average.

of population between 25–64 years old participating in learning has fell since 2013 and was below the EU average in 2016.

SDG 5 ‘Gender Equality’

In Ireland, the gender gaps for early leavers from education and training and employment have narrowed and there has been an increase in leadership roles as more females are represented in senior management positions and in national parliament seats. These remain however well below the EU average. The subtheme of employment has moved away from the objective as gendered employment gap and inactivity due to caring responsibilities have all increased and are above the EU average. The gender pay gap has returned to the same level in 2010 but it remains less than the EU average in 2014.

SDG 6 ‘Clean Water and Sanitation’

Ireland performs well on this SDG. While one subtheme ‘water use efficiency’ could not be calculated due to insufficient data, the two remaining subthemes show significant improvement. Ireland has a high level of sanitation and a good standard of water quality among the EU28 countries.

SDG 7 ‘Affordable and clean energy’

The share of renewable energy has increased to 9.2% of gross final energy consumption in 2015; yet this remains well below EU28 share of 16.7%. Ireland has the highest level of energy productivity amongst the EU member states but Ireland’s energy dependence as a net importer has increased to 88.7% in 2015. An over dependence on imports of energy carriers exposes the economy to volatile world market prices and the risk of supply shortages. This is a major concern for Ireland and we conclude that this subtheme of SDG7 poses a serious challenge going forward.

SDG 8 ‘Decent work and economic growth’

Ireland has a higher real GDP per capita and resource productivity than the EU. Real GDP per capita increased from €32,400 in 2000 to €53,600 in 2016; however we argue that this is an anomaly. There has been an upturn in Ireland’s labour market as long-term unemployment declined to 4.3% in 2016 and the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) declined to 15.2 in 2016 but both are still above the EU average. The employment rate has increased to 71.4% in 2016, and is now on a par with the EU average.

SDG 9 - ‘Industry, innovation and infrastructure’

The share of expenditure on R&D has decreased to 1.2% in 2015, moving further away from Europe 2020 target of spending 3% of GDP on R&D by 2020. The share of people working in high- and medium-high technology has also fallen to 48.8% in 2016; however this is still above the EU average of 45.8% in 2016. The share of R&D personnel in the active population has

slightly risen to 1.7% in 2015. There has been progress made in terms of sustainable transport as the average CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars fell by 5.1% from 2014 to 2016 and the share of collective transport modes has increased.

SDG 10 ‘Reduce inequalities’

Ireland’s action towards reducing global inequalities has been minimal. Slightly better progress is observed on inequality within the country, as measured by the Gini coefficient and income of the bottom 40% of the population.

SDG 11 ‘Sustainable cities and communities’

There has been good progress towards meeting the sustainable development objectives of this SDG. All three subthemes reflect an improvement. The quality of life in cities and communities has significantly improved with fewer Irish living in deprived or overcrowded housing conditions, suffer from noise or are victims of crime, violence and vandalism. In terms of these indicators, Ireland lies below the EU average. Ireland has also reduced its environmental impact with regard to municipal waste management as 36.6% of total waste generated in 2012 was recycled. The number of fatal road accidents has decreased in 2015 by 66% since 2001.

SDG 12 ‘Responsible consumption and production’

Ireland has achieved moderate progress in terms of increased resource productivity and energy productivity. Some progress is being made with regards to waste generation and treatment, consumption of toxic chemicals, volume of freight transport relative to GDP, and CO2 emissions from new passenger cars. Recycling of waste materials and renewable energy shares are still considerably lower than the EU average.

SDG 13 ‘Climate Action’

Of the three subthemes, data was insufficient to comment on two subthemes ‘climate impacts’ and ‘climate initiative’. In terms of climate mitigation, Ireland’s GHG emissions still remain significantly above the EU28 average by 31.3 index points in 2015.

SDG 14 ‘Life below water’

Ireland performs poorly in meeting its sustainable objectives in the area of marine conservation and is well below the EU average. For catches in major fishing areas, Ireland is below the EU average.

SDG 15 ‘Life on land’

Of the three subthemes, the ecosystem status is making moderate progress but Ireland’s forest share area of land indicator remains well below the EU average. There has been an increase in land degradation per capita. Data was insufficient to comment on the subtheme of biodiversity.

SDG 16 - ‘Peace, justice and strong institutions’

Ireland reflects a safe society with a low number of deaths due to homicide or assault and the perceived occurrence of crime, violence and vandalism all below EU average. Ireland’s general total government expenditure on law courts has increased since 2009 and is above EU the average. Analysis shows strong trust among Irish citizens in EU institutions, with confidence in the EU Parliament, EU commission and European Central Bank all rising since 2015.

SDG 17 - ‘Partnership for the goals’

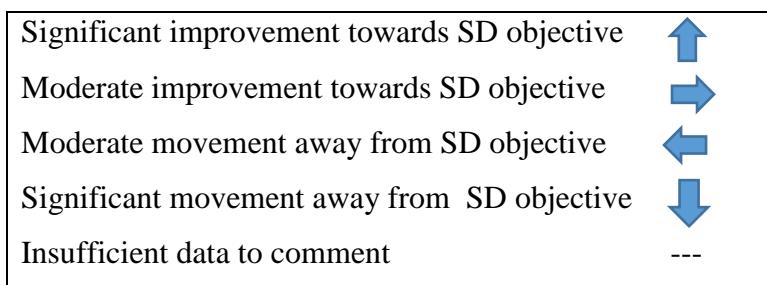
Ireland is moving away from its sustainable objective in this area. Ireland’s EU finance to developing countries, EU import from development countries and Ireland’s official development assistance as a share of gross national income have deteriorated, with all falling well below EU average. Overall, Ireland is performing poorly in meeting this goal.

Table 2: Classification of Ireland’s Progress on the SDGs over Time

Sustainable Development Goal	Progress	Subthemes	Directions	Overall Short Term progress Movement
1 ‘No Poverty’	Moderate	1. Multidimensional poverty 2. Basic needs	→ ↑	→
2 ‘Zero Hunger’	Moderate	1. Malnutrition 2. Sustainable agricultural production 3. Adverse impacts	↓ ↑ ---	→
3 ‘Good Health and Wellbeing’	Good	1. Health lives 2. Health determinants 3. Causes of death 4. Access to healthcare	↑ ↑ ↑ ↑	↑
4 ‘Quality Education’	Moderate	1. Basic education 2. Tertiary education 3. Adult education	→ ↑ ↓	→
5 ‘Gender Equality’	Moderate	1. Gender-based violence 2. Education 3. Employment 4. Leadership positions	---	→

6 ‘Clean Water and Sanitation’	Good	1. Sanitation 2. Water quality 3. Water use efficiency	↑ ↑ ---	↑
7 ‘Affordable and Clean Energy’	Moderate	1. Energy consumption 2. Energy Supply 3. Access to affordable energy	→ ← ↑	→
8 ‘Decent Work and Economic Growth’	Good	1. Sustainable economic growth 2. Employment 3. Decent work	↑ ↑ →	↑
9 ‘Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure’	Moderate	1. R&D and innovation 2. Sustainable transport	← →	→
10 ‘Reduced Inequalities’	Moderate	1. Inequalities by countries 2. Inequalities within countries 3. Migration and social inclusion	← → ----	→
11 ‘Sustainable Cities and Communities’	Good	1. Quality of life in cities and communities 2. Sustainable transport 3. Adverse environmental impacts	↑ ↑ ↑	↑
12 ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’	Moderate	1. Decoupling environmental impacts from economic growth 2. Energy consumption 3. Waste generation and management	→ → →	→
13 ‘Climate Action’	Poor	1. Climate Mitigation 2. Climate Impacts 3. Climate initiatives	→ ---- ----	↓
14 ‘Life below Water’	Moderate	1. Marine Conservation 2. Sustainable fishery 3. Ocean health	→ → ---	→

15 'Life on Land'	Moderate	1. Ecosystem status 2. Land degradation 3. Biodiversity	← --- ---	←
16 'Peace, Justice and strong institutions'	Good	1. Peace and personal security 2. Access to justice 3. Trust in institutions	↑ ↑ ↑	↑
17 'Partnership for the Goals'	Poor	Global Partnership Financial governance within the EU	↓ ↓	↓



Source: Authors' Analysis

4. References

Clark, C.M.A, Kavanagh, C., and Lenihan, N. (2018), Measuring Progress: Economy, Society and Environment in Ireland, Dublin: Social Justice Ireland

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