



Social Justice Ireland

National Social Monitor 2016



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Introduction

It is important to monitor society's progress. *Social Justice Ireland* understands progress as being principally about promoting the wellbeing of individuals and society as a whole.

At present, across the world in general and in Ireland in particular, the emphasis in policy-making is primarily focused on economic growth and how the market economy is developing. However there is far more to progress than getting the market right. A balance is required between the various aspects of life if the wellbeing of this and future generations is to be secured. What kind of society, served by what kind of economy do we want in Ireland?

Social Justice Ireland presents this National Social Monitor as a contribution to the public debate that is needed on Ireland's future and how Ireland is performing in terms of promoting the wellbeing of all in society.

In this 2016 National Social Monitor, *Social Justice Ireland* outlines the present situation on a range of policy issues that impact on people's well-being. The issues presented are:

1. Healthcare
2. Education
3. Housing
4. Public Participation and Communities
5. Income Distribution
6. Taxation
7. Work and Job Creation
8. Rural Development
9. Environment and Sustainability
10. Global Challenges

All of these issues have implications for Ireland's economy and how the market performs. However, they also have implications for the well-being of all of Ireland's population and for Irish society as a whole.

Society's values guide its decision-making. Its decisions shape how resources are distributed. Its values, decision-making and resource distribution guide how relationships are organised in society.

The policy areas presented in this Monitor are ones that most people would identify as crucially important for their well-being. While there has been improvement since the crash of 2008, many of these indicators have been moving in the wrong direction.

On the positive side, GDP is growing, the number of jobs has increased and unemployment has fallen.

On the negative side Ireland faces a growing housing and homelessness crisis, has a sustained problem with poverty, particularly child poverty, and faces a significant challenge in dealing with the structural nature of long-term unemployment. There is growing pressure on public services, compounded by major infrastructure deficits and a lack of public investment.

Social Justice Ireland has long advocated a new guiding vision for Irish society; one based on the values of human dignity, equality, human rights, solidarity, sustainability and the pursuit of the common good. These values are at the core of the vision for a nation in which all men, women and children have what they require to live life with dignity and to fulfil their potential: including sufficient income; access to the services they need; and active inclusion in a genuinely participatory society. These are not minority views as is sometimes stated, but reflect the aspirations of the majority of Irish citizens.

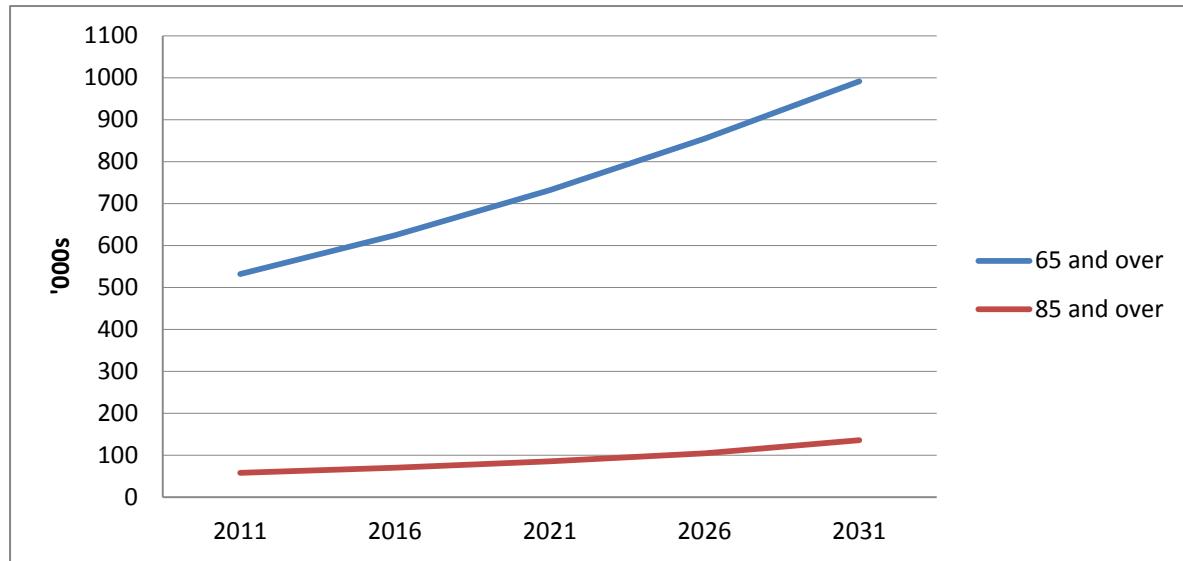
A prosperous and cohesive society is one which recognises the interdependence of social, economic and environmental priorities.

The indicators presented in the following pages show that Ireland has a long way to go to achieve such a vision. But building such a society is possible. It requires recognition of the fact that a future based on the primacy of the market is not likely to be either just or fair and it requires that priority be given to the common good.

Ireland can have a vibrant economy, decent services and infrastructure, just taxation, good governance and sustainability. In order to achieve this we need to make the correct decisions regarding the generation and allocation of resources and implement those policies that can deliver the vibrant society and economy that we want.

Healthcare

Figure 1.1: Projected Population, 2011 to 2031; ages 65+ and 85+ ('000s)



Source: Department of Health 2015, Table 1.4. Actual figure for 2011

Table 1.1: HSE Support to Older People in the Community, 2008 - 2015

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
People in receipt of home help (000's)	55,366	53,971	54,000	50,986	45,706	46,454	47,061	47,915
Home Help Hours delivered (million)	12.64m	11.97m	11.68m	11.09m	9.8m	9.73m	10.3m	10.4m
People in receipt of Home Care Packages (000's)	8,990	8,959	9,941	10,968	11,023	11,873	13,199	15,272

Source: December Performance Reports, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012; 2013; 2014. *2015 figures from January 2016 Performance Report.

Demographics

Although Ireland's population is young in comparison to those of other European countries, it is still ageing.

- There will be nearly 1 million aged 65 and over by 2031 – an increase of 86.4 per cent;
- There will be some 136,000 people aged 85 or over by 2031, an increase of 132.8 per cent;

This level of population ageing will be associated with higher levels of disability and long-term ill-health and this requires planning and investment. With an ageing

population, the acute hospital system will be unable to operate effectively unless there is a greater shift towards primary and community services as a principal means of meeting patient needs.

This is particularly so in the areas of home support and continuing care, and enabling older people to live in the community for as long as possible.

Community Care and Home Care

Support for people to remain in their own homes is a key and appropriate policy objective and coincides with the wish of

most older people. *Social Justice Ireland* is seriously concerned that adequate funding is not being provided to address the ageing of the population that will result in a steady increase in older people and people with disabilities accessing services. As table 1.1 shows:

- The level of **Home Help** service has reduced from a high of 12.64m hours delivered to some 55,000 people in 2008 to a 2015 level of 10.4m hours delivered to almost 48,000 people, a reduction of over 12 per cent in the number of people being supported by the service and a decrease of 17.4 per cent in the number of hours being delivered. This has left families struggling to cover the gaps in care for their elderly relatives.
- While the numbers being supported by **Home Care Packages** have increased year on year to the current position of 15,272 (representing an increase of 70 per cent since 2008), the average value of each HCP has fallen as the funding available has not kept pace with increased demand.

The above information is indicative of the reduced resources across these key areas of service provision at a time of an increasingly elderly population. The provision of community-based service, albeit at lower capacity over the past 5-6 years, has stretched services as far as possible in order to match need.

Over 60 per cent of the current budget for the provision of services for older people goes towards support for long-term residential care while only approximately 4 per cent of the over 65 population live in residential care settings.

Over the past six or so years, changes in public services (such as in home help hours and community nursing units, and increases in prescription charges as well as decreased frontline staff and services within the healthcare sector) have all adversely affected older people, falling most heavily on poorer groups without the income to compensate and especially on poorer people with disabilities or illness.

International experts (WHO, 2014) identified that in relation to public health spending alone, the reduction in Ireland's spending on over 65s will have fallen by approximately 32 per cent per head between 2009 and 2016.¹ An Expert Group has described Ireland's under-resourced community health services as 'perhaps the greatest deficiency in the current provision of public health services in Ireland'.²

A commitment to supporting people at home is only aspirational if funding is not provided for home help services, day care centres and home care packages. These are the very areas which must be the subject of investment to address population ageing. An open and transparent debate on the funding of healthcare services is needed, acknowledging the enormous financial expenditure on healthcare. Ireland must decide what services are required and how these should be funded and prioritized.

Policy Priorities

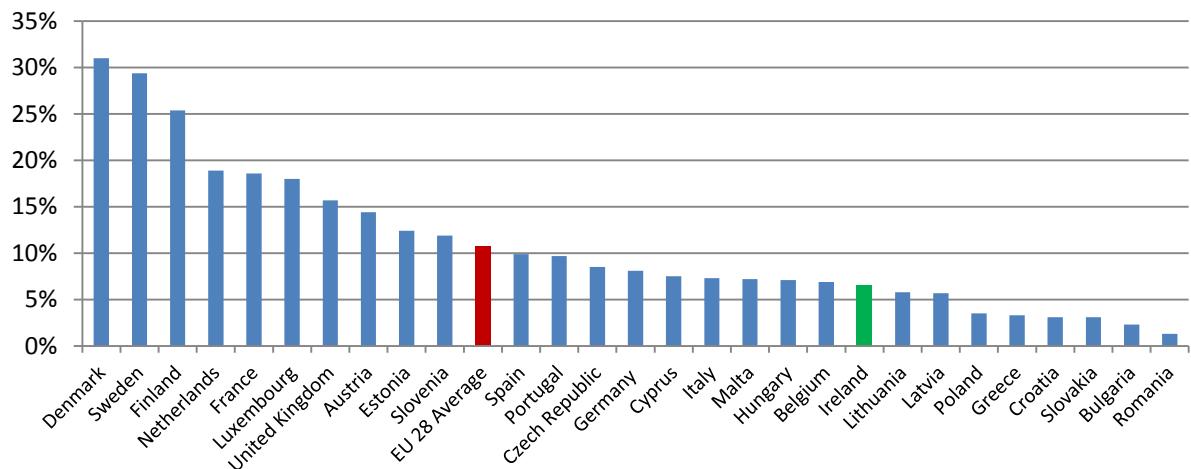
- Create a statutory entitlement to a Home Care Package. This will require increased funding, but may save the State money long-term, as HCPs allow people to remain living in their own homes, rather than entering residential nursing care.
- Create additional respite care and long-stay care facilities for older people and people with disabilities, and provide capital investment to build additional community nursing facilities. Implement all aspects of the dementia strategy.
- Enhance the process of planning and investment in the sector to ensure that we can cope with impending demographic changes.

¹ World Health Organisation
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/health-system-responses-to-financial-pressures-in-ireland>

² <http://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/report-of-the-expert-group-on-resource-allocation-and-financing-in-the-health-sector/>

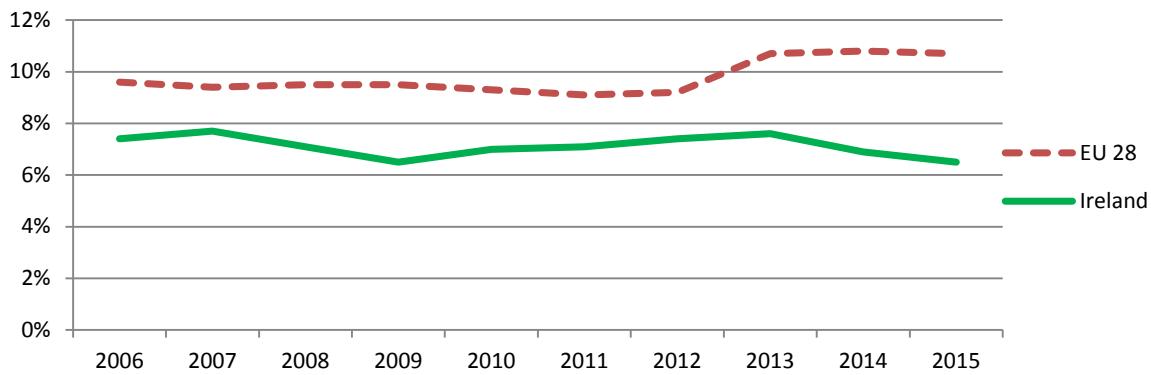
Education

Chart 2.1: Lifelong Learning Participation Rates EU28 - 2015



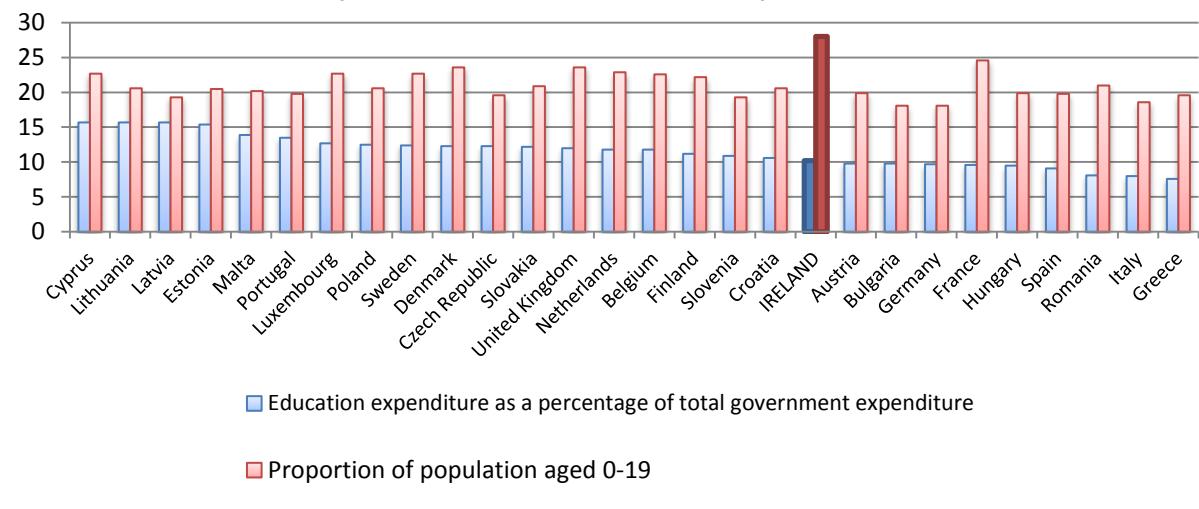
Source: Eurostat

Chart 2.2: Lifelong Learning Participation Rates 2006 - 2015



Source: Eurostat

Chart 2.3: Education Expenditure as % total Government Expenditure EU 28 2013



Source: Eurostat

Education

Education is widely recognised as crucial to the achievement of our national objectives of economic competitiveness, social inclusion and active citizenship. However, the overall levels of public funding for education in Ireland are out of step with these aspirations. This under-funding is most apparent in the areas of early childhood education and in lifelong learning and second chance education – the very areas that are most vital in terms of the promotion of greater equity and fairness.

Planning for demographic pressures

Despite Ireland having the youngest population in Europe with 28% of the population aged 0-19, Ireland spends relatively limited amounts on education. Government expenditure on education as a proportion of total government expenditure is the ninth lowest in Europe (chart 2.3) despite the significant demographic pressures at all levels of the education system. Investment is required at all levels of our education system. In reality this will mean increased expenditure, both current and capital, at all levels and over a period of time.

Life Long Learning

Skills are the currency of the modern global knowledge-based economy. Educational success is now about creative and critical approaches to problem solving and decision making. Access in adult life to desirable employment and choices is closely linked to one's level of educational attainment.

Ireland is significantly behind in lifelong learning participation rates compared to other European countries, a trend which remains little changed over time (see charts 2.1 & 2.2). The National Skills Strategy 2025 commits to promoting and supporting lifelong learning, particularly in the workplace. A focus on lifelong learning and the promotion of skills is a very welcome development when people now 'work for

life' rather than have a 'job for life'. Participating in lifelong learning has also been shown to be of benefit to people's personal development, mental health and resilience.

Skills Ireland¹ recently reported that people who already have a 3rd level qualification are four times more likely to be engaged in upskilling than those with lower secondary or less. In addition, three times as many people in professional occupations engage in lifelong learning compared to operatives or elementary grades. These are the people who are most likely to be in vulnerable precarious employment and need to reskill / upskill.

One of the barriers to lifelong learning is the lack of any grant aid for part time learners. There is a need to put suitably means tested supports in place to encourage people on low incomes to improve their skills.

It is essential that sufficient resources are allocated to the National Skills Strategy on a multiannual basis. An adequately resourced lifelong learning and adult skills strategy is an opportunity to provide people with opportunities to upskill throughout their working life and contribute to a strategy to combat labour market polarisation. It is important to equip people with the skills they need to adapt to changing economic and social conditions throughout their lifetime

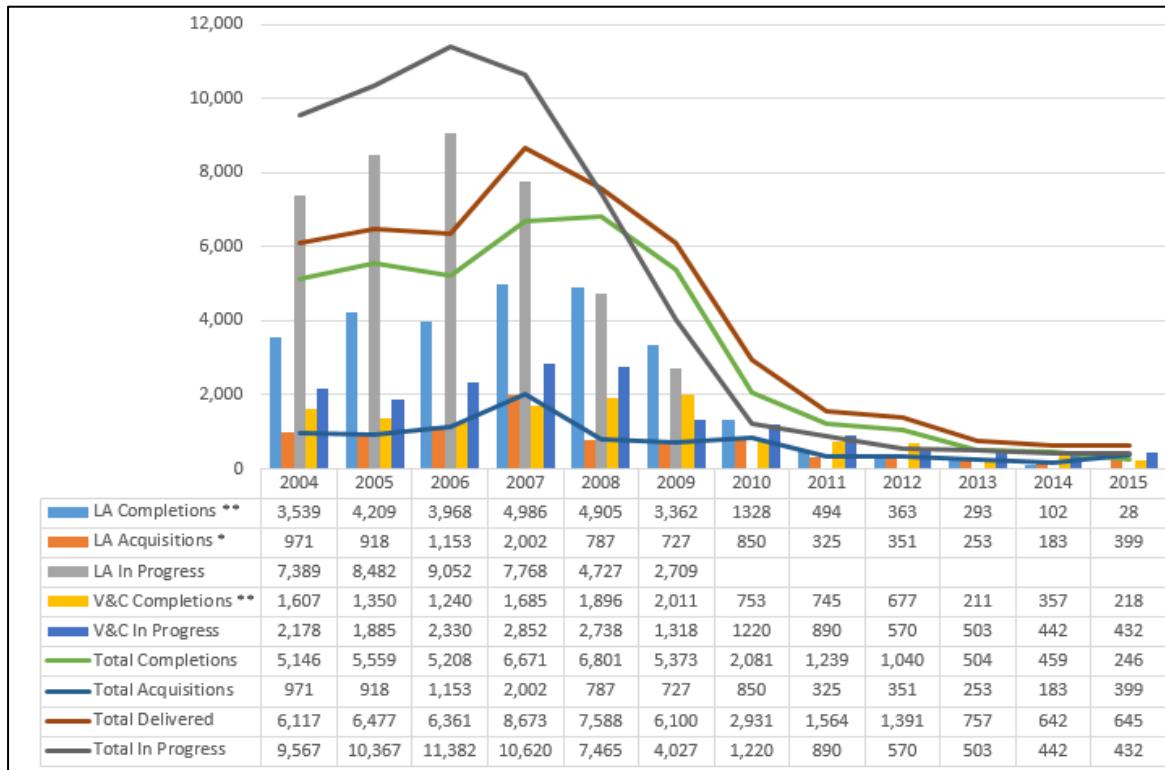
Policy Priorities

- Commit to reach the lifelong learning target set out in the National Skills Strategy and ensure sufficient resourcing of the strategy.
- Develop a long-term sustainable funding strategy for education at all levels.

¹ <http://www.skillsireland.ie/Publications/2016/Lifelong-Learning-Report-2016-Web-Final.pdf>

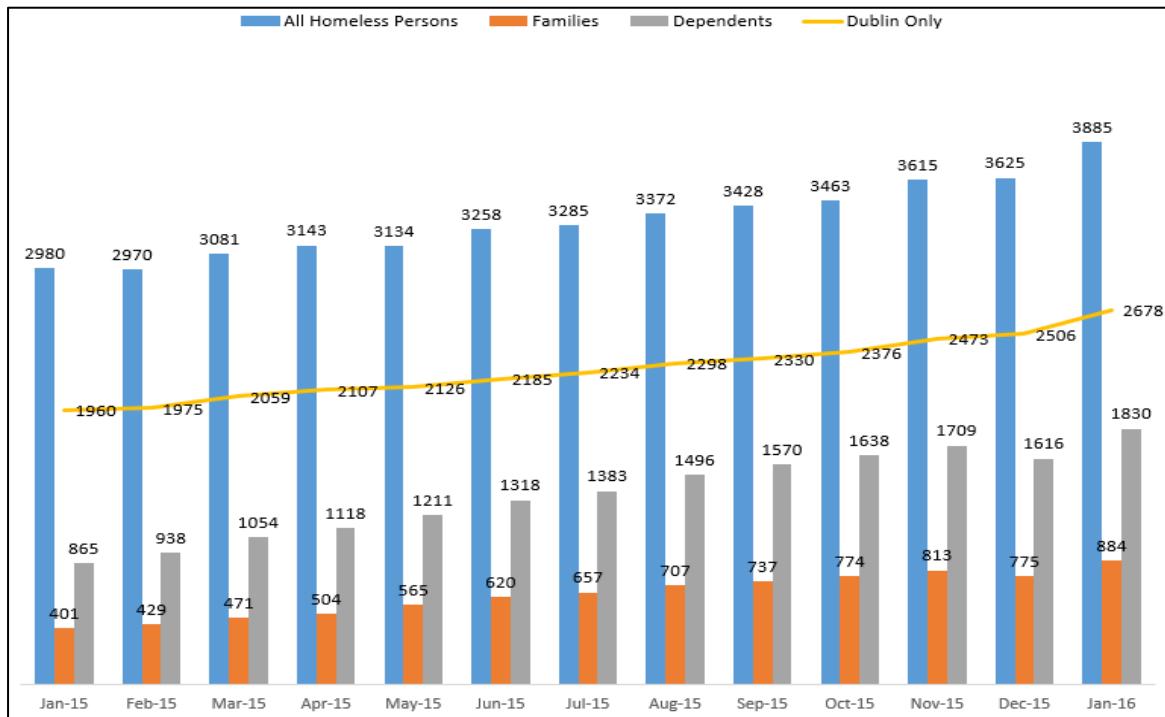
Housing

Chart 3.1: Social Housing Output 2004 to 2015



Source: Extracted from Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Housing Statistics, Overall Social Housing Statistics 2004 to 2015 *acquisitions by local authorities of second hand houses **includes units acquired under Part V, Planning and Development Acts 2000-2008 for rental purposes. V&C (Voluntary and Cooperative) housing consists of housing provided under the capital loan and subsidy and capital assistance schemes.

Chart 3.2: Homeless accessing Emergency Accommodation, January 2015 to January 2016



Source: Extracted from Breakdown of Homeless Persons in Emergency Accommodation tables, January 2015 to January 2016, Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, <http://www.housing.gov.ie>

Housing

The right to appropriate accommodation should be a basic human right recognised and respected by every State. Unfortunately, there is no legal entitlement to housing in Ireland.

In its Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2013, the Housing Agency identified 89,872 households which were assessed as qualifying for social housing. Of these 60% (54,045) were on the housing list for more than two years and 55% (49,179) were families.

Chart 3.1 shows social housing output has been in decline since 2007/2008, reaching its lowest rate in 2015. In 2015 local authorities completed just 64 housing units, voluntary and cooperative approved housing bodies completed 401. These figures give an indication of the scale of the problem and the need for significant Government investment in building social housing units.

With the latest social housing waiting list figures (Housing Agency, 2013) indicating 2499 households awaiting housing due to homelessness, and local authority returns suggesting that this number is rising (see chart 3.2), Government needs to ensure that construction of social housing is targeted to those areas with the greatest need.

Securing sufficient finance to provide the scale of social housing required is a major challenge. The Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is the largest and most comprehensive attempt to address Ireland's housing needs that any Government has published for several decades.

Despite the plan's scale it falls far short of planning to produce the number of houses required if Ireland is to eliminate its housing need. A new approach is required to secure the necessary finance if Ireland's social housing needs are to be met comprehensively.

The key challenge is to increase the supply of housing generally and of social housing in particular.

It is clear that the Exchequer cannot provide the funding necessary to deal with the current demand and more sustainable solutions are required. *Social Justice Ireland* recommends that Government put in place an off-balance sheet mechanism that could access low-cost finance required to address the lack of supply of social housing sufficient to eliminate waiting lists.

One possibility might be to use a vehicle such as NAMA which has expertise in developing such a mechanism. Given the fact that there are about 107,000 social housing units owned by Local Authorities and paying rent regularly it should be possible to put together a proposal that meets the Eurostat conditions for an acceptable off-balance sheet initiative.

Policy Priorities

- Put off-balance sheet financing structures in place to generate sufficient capital to finance the supply of new social housing needed to eliminate current waiting lists and also meet the additional demand that will emerge as Ireland's population grows.
- Explore the utilisation of NAMA as a housing agency with the ability to access and distribute appropriate off-balance sheet funding and to take an active role in the direction and support of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) in the provision of social housing.
- Reduce the time spent by anyone on a waiting list for social housing to a maximum of one year by 2021.

Public Participation and Communities



Participation

Citizen engagement and community participation are essential for the healthy functioning of any democratic society. Participation can include being an informed voter, volunteering in a local community, expressing your views in a consultation or direct involvement in policy development and decision making.

People have a right to participate in shaping the decisions that affect them and in developing and moulding the society in which they live. They are not content to be passive recipients of policies and services, designed at a distance. Many feel disenfranchised and cynical about the political system leading to apathy and disengagement.

It is crucially important as politicians talk of recovery, that people feel engaged in this process and all voices are heard in a constructive way. Social media and other IT based methods of communication and information sharing must be harnessed, along with traditional methods to involve people in dialogue and decision-making.

The Government's draft guidelines for public consultation¹ outline a good practice framework which can be used by all public bodies to involve citizens in important policies.

Social Justice Ireland believes that **a new social model for Ireland must be founded on the idea of deliberative democracy** which involves all stakeholders in the framing, implementing and evaluating of policies and measures that impact on them.² This type of process would produce evidence-based policy and ensure a high level of accountability among stakeholders.

Voter Turnout

In any democracy, voting in elections is a core right. Voter turnout in Irish general elections is close to the European average of 66%, but decreased from 70% to 65% between 2011 and 2016. Traditionally rural areas have higher voter participation than cities, although this gap is narrowing. There are concerns about the participation of young people and those living in poorer areas, where both registration and turnout are low. It is also of concern that voter turnout in local elections has been on a downward trend since 1967. The local elections in 2014 saw the second lowest official turnout in Irish local elections.³

Public participation at local government level

Within local government, there are a variety of ways in which people can have an input to decision making. One key structure to

¹ <http://www.per.gov.ie/en/minister-for-public-expenditure-and-reform-publishes-proposed-principles-to-guide-public-consultation-2/>

² See Healy and Reynolds (2011) for more on the concept of deliberative democracy.

³ Oireachtas Library and Research Services (2016) *Election Turnout in Ireland: measurement, trends and policy implications*

facilitate this is the Public Participation Network (PPN) which has been established in every Local Authority Area. PPNS are a collective of Environmental, Social Inclusion, Community and Voluntary organisations in a city/county, which come together for information sharing, capacity building and participation in local policy development and decision making. PPNS are independent of their Local Authority, but work closely with it.

Decision making and policy development in Local Government involves Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and other fora designed to bring together the perspectives of elected members, state agencies, employers, farmers, trades unions, communities and other stakeholders on a variety of issues such as economic development, social inclusion, the environment, local services etc. PPNS nominate representatives onto these bodies to bring forward the views from volunteer-led organisations on the ground, who are organised into Linkage Groups of stakeholders. These Linkage Groups give people the opportunity to put forward their opinions on specific matters which affect them.

Local Community Development Committees

Of particular interest are the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) which were initiated following the reform of Local Government in 2014. These multi stakeholder groups are involved in drawing up Local Economic and Community Plans, and in oversight of funding lines such as LEADER⁴, Town and Village renewal and the SICAP⁵ Social Inclusion Programme. PPNS have between one quarter and one third of LCDC members and through this there is a real potential for long term impact.

⁴

<https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/LEADER/Pages/LEADER.aspx>

⁵ [https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/Social%20Inclusion%20and%20Community%20Activation%20Programme%20\(SICA%20P\)/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/Social%20Inclusion%20and%20Community%20Activation%20Programme%20(SICA%20P)/Pages/default.aspx)

LEADER (€250m over 4 years nationally) is a very important programme for community development and active citizenship in rural areas as much of its grants are made to local groups who have identified key needs within their own communities. They match the incoming monies with both cash of their own and voluntary time and labour. This process, known as Community Led Local Development is a true bottom up approach, which facilitates participation.

For the first time, within this LEADER programme there is a specific strand focussed on social inclusion, specifically seeking to enhance basic services for hard to reach communities and rural youth. In addition LEADER supports economic development and environmental sustainability.

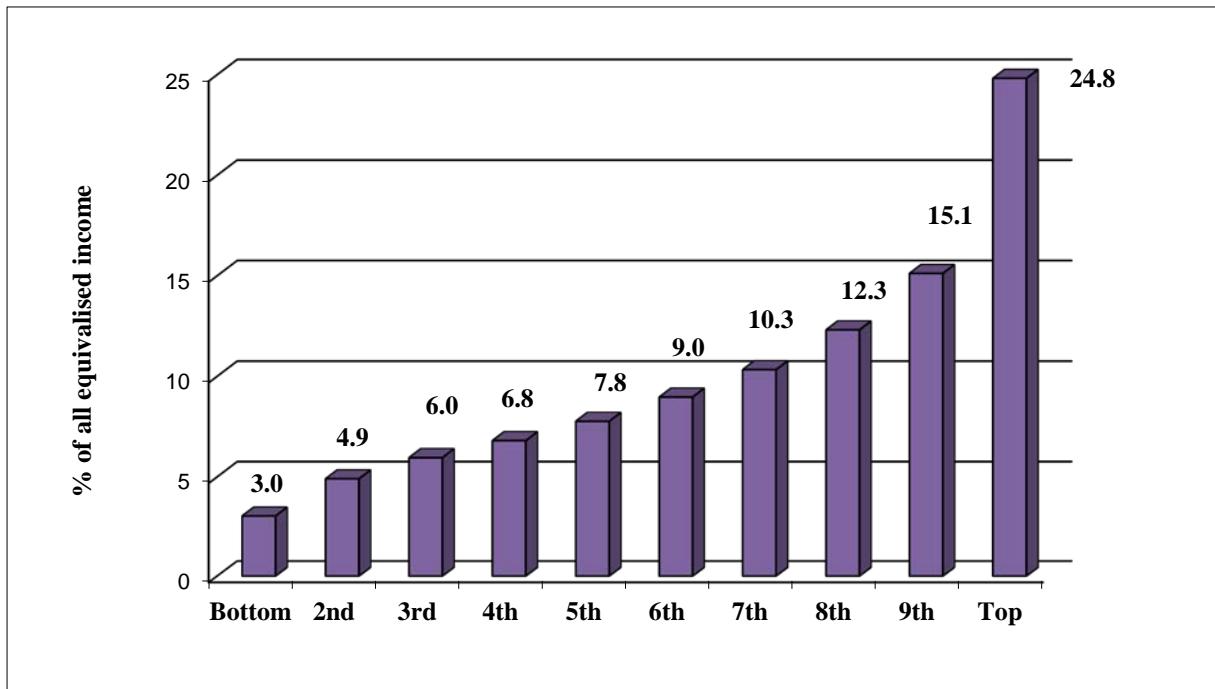
All these development are welcome, but it is imperative that the monies are spent strategically, and in a way which genuinely addresses disadvantage and poverty, and enhances social capital, active citizenship and participation.

Policy Priorities

- Use a wide range of communication strategies, including social media to increase both registration and voting figures specifically targeted at young people and inner city areas.
- Adequately resource the PPNS to enable them to foster real deliberative democracy, and ensure that Local Authorities and their structures work effectively with the PPN to maximise participation.
- Ensure that there is real and effective monitoring and impact assessment of policy implementation using an evidence-based approach. Involve a wide range of perspectives in this process, thus ensuring inclusion of all sectors in a new deliberative process of social dialogue.

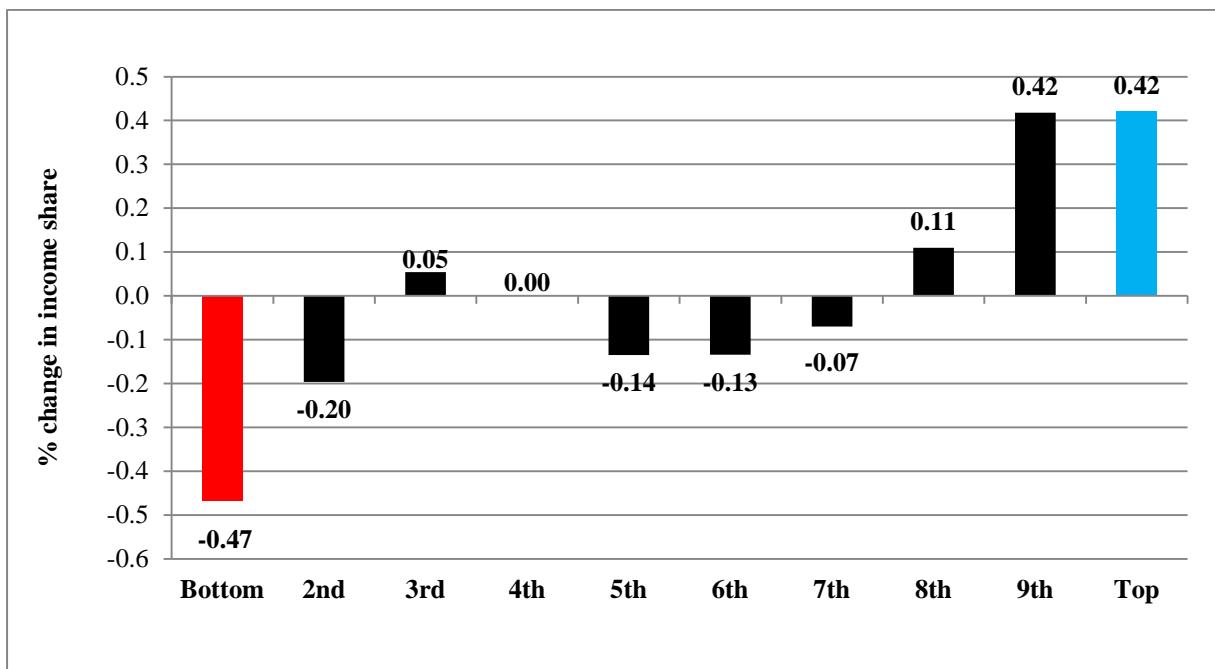
Income Distribution

Chart 5.1: Ireland's Income Distribution by 10% (decile) group, 2014



Source: CSO SILC 2015

Chart 5.2: Change in Decile Share of Equivalised Disposable Income, 2008-2014



Source: Calculated from CSO SILC Reports (various years)

Income distribution

The persistence of high rates of poverty and income inequality in Ireland requires greater attention than they currently receive. The purpose of economic development should be to improve the living standards of all of the population. Tackling high rates of poverty and inequality effectively is a multifaceted task. It requires action on many fronts, ranging from healthcare and education to accommodation and employment. However, the most important requirement in tackling poverty is the provision of sufficient income to enable people to live life with dignity. No anti-poverty strategy can possibly be successful without an effective approach to addressing low incomes.

Role of social welfare

Social Justice Ireland believes in the very important role that social welfare plays in addressing poverty. As part of the *SILC* (Survey on Income and Living Conditions) results the CSO has provided an interesting insight into the role that social welfare payments play in tackling Ireland's poverty levels. It has calculated the levels of poverty before and after the payment of social welfare benefits. Without the social welfare system almost half of the Irish population (49.3 per cent) would have been living in poverty in 2014.

Such an underlying poverty rate suggests a deeply unequal distribution of direct income. In 2014, the actual poverty rate of 16.3 per cent reflects the fact that social welfare payments reduced poverty by 33 percentage points.

The most recent data on Ireland's income distribution, from the 2014 *SILC* survey, is summarised in chart 5.1. It examines the income distribution by household deciles starting with the 10 per cent of households with the lowest income (the bottom decile) up to the 10 per cent of households with the highest income (the top decile). It measures **disposable income** which captures the

amount of money available to spend after receipt of any employment/pension income, payment of all income taxes and receipt of any welfare entitlements.

In 2014, the top 10 per cent of the population received almost one quarter of total disposable income while the bottom decile received 3 per cent. Collectively, the poorest 60 per cent of households received a very similar share (37.4 per cent) to the top 20 per cent (39.9 per cent). Overall the share of the top 10 per cent is more than 8 times the share of the bottom 10 per cent.

Income distribution data for the last few decades suggest that the overall structure of that distribution has been largely unchanged. Chart 5.2 compares the change in income between 2008 and 2014. 2008 represented the year when average incomes in Ireland peaked. Since then incomes have fallen for all, but the impact of the recession has been felt in different ways by different people/households.

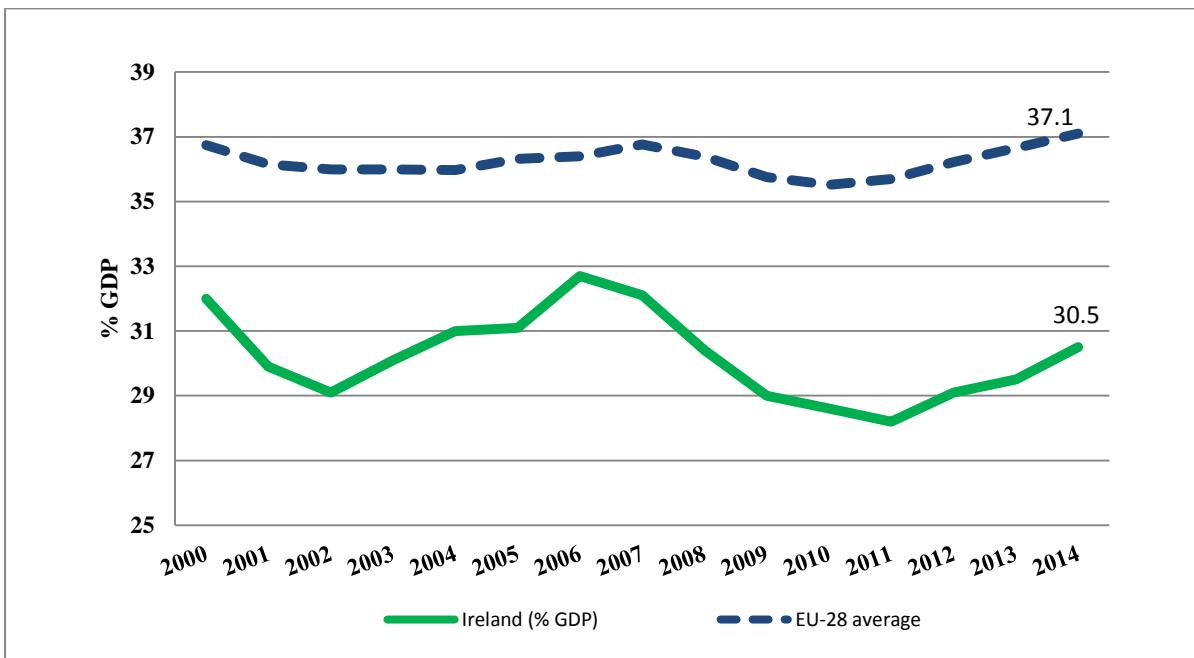
The decline in the share of the bottom two deciles highlights the reality that if we wish to address and close these income divides, future Government policy must prioritise those at the bottom of the income distribution. Otherwise, these divides will persist for further generations and perhaps widen.

Policy Priorities

- Acknowledge that Ireland has an ongoing poverty problem and set a goal of eliminating poverty in the course of a single five-year Dáil term.
- Carry out in-depth social impact assessments prior to implementing proposed policy initiatives that impact on the income supports and public services that many low income households depend on. This should include the poverty-proofing of all public policy initiatives.

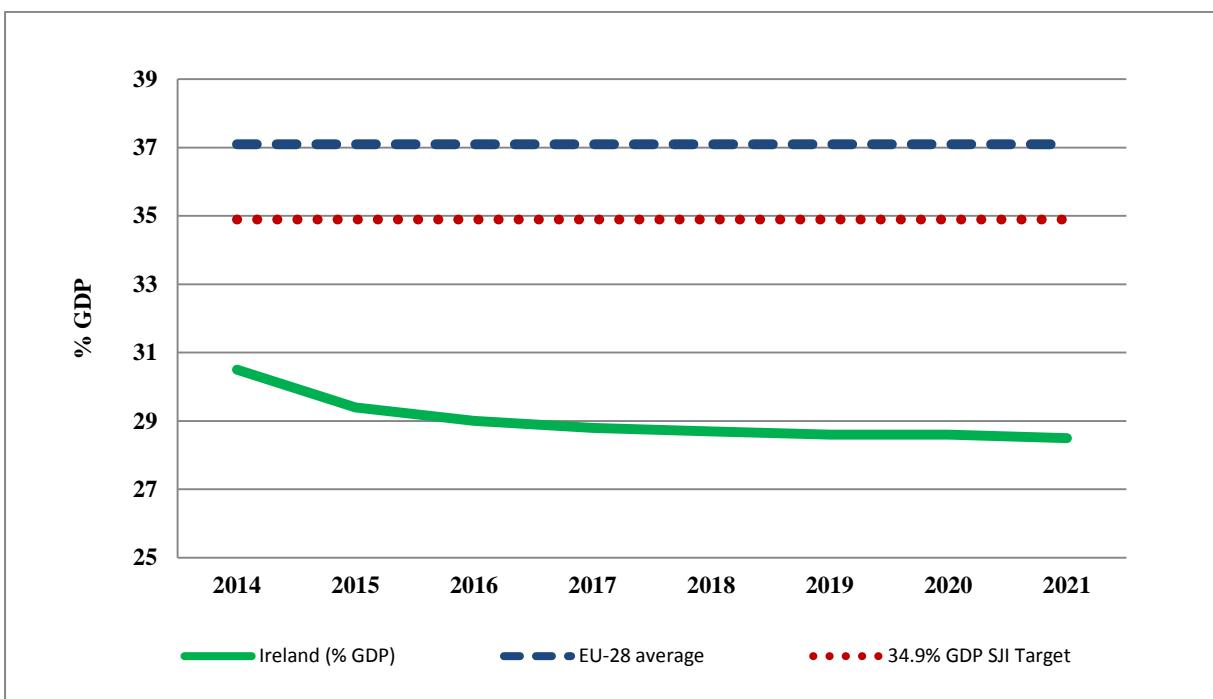
Taxation

Chart 6.1: Trends in Ireland and EU-28 overall taxation levels, 2000-2014



Source: Eurostat online database

Chart 6.2: Ireland's Projected Taxation Levels to 2021 and comparisons with EU-28 averages and Social Justice Ireland proposed target



Source: Calculated from Eurostat and Department of Finance

Note: EU-28 average was 37.1% GDP in 2014 and this value is used for all years.

Taxation

Taxation plays a key role in shaping Irish society through funding public services, supporting economic activity and redistributing resources to enhance the fairness of society. Consequently, it is crucial that clarity exist with regard to both the objectives and instruments aimed at achieving these goals.

Taxation trends

Ireland's overall tax take has remained notably below the EU average over recent years, with the 2014 value representing a marginal increase from a record low figure in 2010 (see chart 6.1). The increase in the overall level of taxation between 2002 and 2006 can be explained by short-term increases in construction related taxation sources (in particular stamp duty and construction related VAT) rather than any underlying structural increase in taxation levels.

Using Department of Finance projections on taxation, Chart 6.2 highlights just how far below average EU levels (assuming these remain at the 2014 level of 37.1 per cent of GDP) and the *Social Justice Ireland* target (34.9 per cent of GDP) Government's planned taxation revenue figures are.

Social Justice Ireland believes that, over the next few years, policy should focus on increasing Ireland's tax-take to 34.9 per cent of GDP, a figure defined by Eurostat as 'low-tax' (Eurostat, 2008:5). Such increases are certainly feasible and are unlikely to have any significant negative impact on the economy in the long term.

Reform of the tax system

The difference between the 34.9% benchmark and Government's planned level of taxation, stands at €13 billion in 2016 and averages at €15.5 billion per annum over the next six years (2016-2021). Were Government to maintain overall taxation levels at their 2014 level (30.5% of GDP),

rather than pursuing the planned reductions highlighted in Chart 6.2, the state would collect an average of €4.5 billion per annum in additional taxation revenue between now and 2021.

Future taxation needs

Government decisions to raise or reduce overall taxation revenue needs to be linked to the demands on its resources. New future taxation needs (such as servicing the national debt and ensuring our public services can adapt and meet the demands of changing demographics), are in addition to those that already exist for funding local government, repairing and modernising our water infrastructure, paying for the health and pension needs of an ageing population, paying EU contributions and funding any pollution reducing environmental initiatives that are required by European and International agreements.

Collectively, they mean that Ireland's overall level of taxation will have to rise significantly in the years to come – a reality Irish society and the political system need to begin to seriously address.

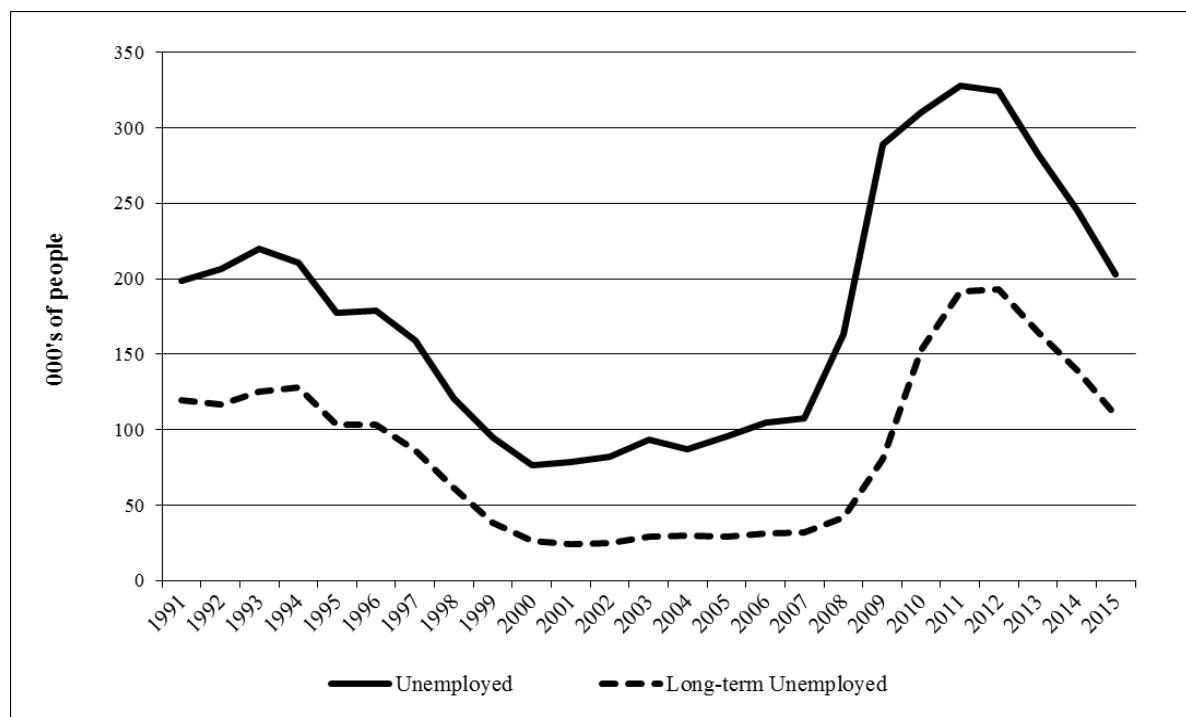
In the context of the trends in charts 6.1 and 6.2, the question needs to be asked: if we expect our economic and social infrastructure to catch up to that in the rest of Europe, how can we do this while simultaneously gathering less taxation income than it takes to run the infrastructure already in place in most of those other European countries? In reality, we will never bridge the social and economic infrastructure gaps unless we gather a larger share of our national income and invest it in building a fairer and more successful Ireland.

Policy Priorities

- Increase the overall tax take.
- Adopt policies to broaden the tax base.
- Develop a fairer taxation system.

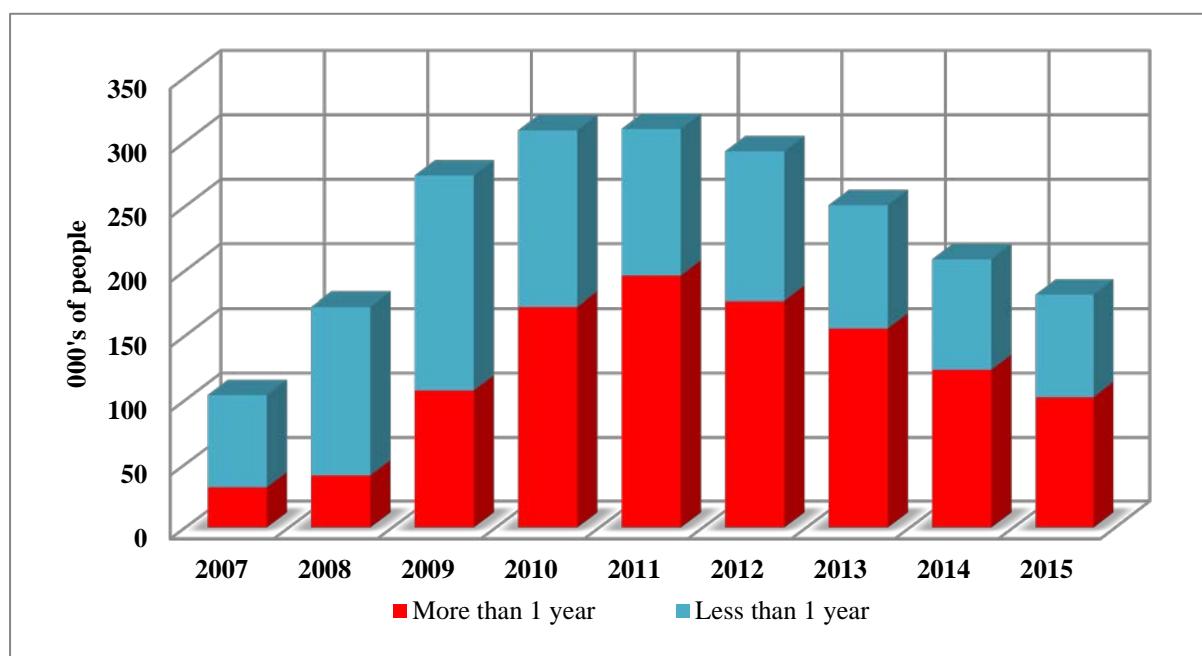
Work and Job Creation

Chart 7.1: The Numbers of Unemployed and Long-Term Unemployed in Ireland, 1991-2015



Source: CSO, Labour Force Survey and QNHS various editions

Chart 7.2: The Increased Presence of Long-Term Unemployed in Ireland, 2007-2015



Source: CSO, QNHS on-line database. Note: Data is for Q4 of each year

Trends in unemployment

As chart 7.1 shows, the period from 1993 was one of decline in unemployment. By mid-2001 Irish unemployment reached its lowest level at 3.6 per cent of the labour force. Subsequently the international recession and domestic economic crisis brought about increases in the rate.

During 2006 unemployment exceeded 100,000 for the first time since 1999 with a total of 105,100 people recorded as unemployed in mid-2006. It exceeded 200,000 in early-2009, 300,000 in 2010 and peaked at 328,000 in 2011 (chart 7.1). Unemployment has since declined, with a welcome increase in the number of jobs being created in the economy.

However the chart also highlights the rapid growth in the number of long-term unemployed (those unemployed for more than 12 months). This figure has increased more than three-fold since 2007 (chart 7.2). Quite simply, given the nature and duration of the recent economic crisis, many of those who entered unemployment in 2007-2010 have remained unemployed for more than 12 months and therefore became long-term unemployed.

The dramatic turnaround in the labour market after 2007 contrasts with the fact that one of the major achievements of the preceding 20 years had been the increase in employment and the reduction in unemployment, especially long-term unemployment.

Addressing a crisis such as this is a major challenge. However, it is clear that reskilling many of the unemployed, in particular those with low education levels, will be a key component of the response. Using the latest data, for the final quarter of 2015, 56 per cent of the unemployed had no more than second level education with 26 per cent not having completed more than lower secondary (equivalent to the Junior Certificate).

Previous experiences, in Ireland and elsewhere, have shown that many of those under 25 and many of those over 55 find it challenging to return to employment after a period of unemployment. This highlights the danger of the large increases in long-term unemployment and suggests a major commitment to retraining and re-skilling will be required. This further reiterates the need to sufficiently resource the National Skills Strategy as discussed on p.6.

According to the CSO, the group most affected by the increase in long-term unemployment has been older workers. Where people aged 45 or older lost their job, they were much more likely to find themselves unemployed one year later than the younger age cohorts measured.

A significant trend has been in the percentage of older unemployed workers that are without a job for more than a year. This has grown from 29 per cent in Q2 2009 to 69 per cent today. This highlights the added difficulty for older people in finding new employment if they lose their job, a further key policy issue which requires urgent attention.

Policy priorities

- Resource the up-skilling of those who are unemployed and at risk of becoming unemployed through integrating training and labour market programmes.
- Maintain a sufficient number of active labour market programme places available to those who are unemployed.
- Recognise the scale of the evolving long-term unemployment problem and adopt targeted policies to begin to address this.
- Launch a major investment programme focused on creating employment and prioritise initiatives that strengthen social infrastructure.

Rural Development

Table 8.1: Agency Assisted* Full-time Employment by region, 2006-2015

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	% Change 2006 – 2015
BMW	74,969	75,687	73,686	65,924	64,044	65,079	66,462	68,860	71,910	74,840	-0.2%
Midlands	14,753	14,816	14,853	12,777	12,211	12,039	12,334	13,074	13,598	14,249	-3.4%
Border	31,706	32,100	30,800	27,085	25,763	25,878	26,423	27,016	28,382	29,607	-6.6%
West	28,510	28,771	28,033	26,062	26,070	27,162	27,705	28,770	29,930	30,984	8.7%
Dublin	107,650	110,865	109,872	101,032	98,199	100,120	104,210	108,393	116,831	125,898	17.0%
Rest of South & East	137,605	138,088	134,952	120,192	118,794	119,761	122,732	125,660	132,189	140,340	2.0%
Mid East	30,912	30,154	28,715	25,798	26,104	25,786	26,389	27,269	28,779	30,128	-2.5%
Mid West	30,004	29,962	28,438	23,724	22,966	22,730	22,933	23,423	24,506	25,696	-14.4%
South East	30,932	32,250	31,591	28,270	27,646	26,705	26,717	26,676	27,767	28,889	-6.6%
South West	45,757	45,722	46,208	42,400	42,048	44,540	46,693	48,292	51,137	55,627	21.6%
All Regions	320,224	324,640	318,510	287,148	281,037	284,960	293,404	302,913	320,930	341,078	6.5%

Source: DJEI Annual Employment Survey 2015 * Employment supported by IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta

Chart 8.1: Agency Assisted* Temporary, Part-time Employment by Region, 2006-2015



Source: DJEI Annual Employment Survey 2015 * Employment supported by IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta

Rural Development

The economic recession and restructuring of agriculture and subsequent decline in off farm employment has led to a narrowing of the economic base in rural areas. The prevalence of low-paid, part-time and seasonal work is a continual trend in rural employment.

With the on-going challenges facing traditional rural sectors, including agriculture, the future success of the rural economy is inextricably linked with the capacity of rural entrepreneurs to innovate and to develop new business opportunities that create jobs and income in rural areas.

A feature of rural areas continues to be the out migration of young people to gain employment elsewhere in Ireland or overseas. There is a need to prioritise high quality jobs in the regions to prevent this outward flow.

Broadband

The provision of quality broadband to rural areas must be a priority if rural development is to be facilitated in a meaningful manner. Lack of quality broadband in rural areas is a considerable barrier to the diversification and growth of the rural economy in Ireland. State intervention must be prioritised in order to prevent the two-tier digital divide that has developed between urban and rural areas growing any wider.

Employment

Approximately 90 per cent of enterprises in the regions employ ten people or less and underemployment and flat career structures are particular features of rural areas that require attention. The lack of quality broadband is a significant barrier to job creation and economic development in the regions. The IDA made a welcome commitment to focus on employment generation outside Dublin in 2015. Details of agency assisted employment are set out in

table 8.1 and chart 8.1. There has been a welcome increase in job creation in all regions, yet some areas still lag behind, particularly the Border, Midlands and West (BMW) region. The lack of an integrated transport network, services such as childcare and infrastructure such as quality broadband present a major barrier to developing and accessing agency assisted employment across the regions.

Income

Rural areas consistently have higher poverty rates and lower median incomes than urban areas. There is significant variation within these figures and within each region. The BMW region has the highest poverty rates and the lowest median income in the State. However there is significant variation within the regions.

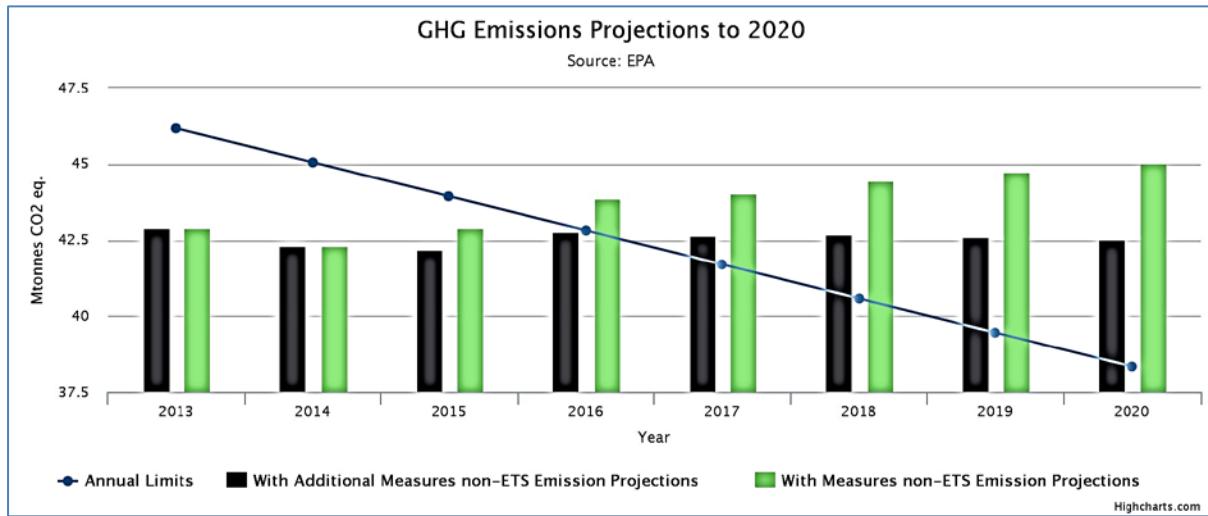
Supporting rural households to ensure that they have sufficient incomes will be crucial to the future of rural Ireland. This requires both social and economic supports, and broader skills and economic development strategies. About two-thirds of farm families require off-farm income to remain sustainable, and while recent gains in agriculture-based incomes have had an impact on the most commercial farms, solutions to the wider income problems require a broader approach, both for farm and non-farm rural families.

Policy Priorities

- Frontload investment in rural broadband.
- Ensure finance and credit schemes for rural entrepreneurs, micro-enterprises and SMEs.
- Publish a long-term rural and regional economic and social development policy. This strategy should make up a part of a new national spatial strategy.

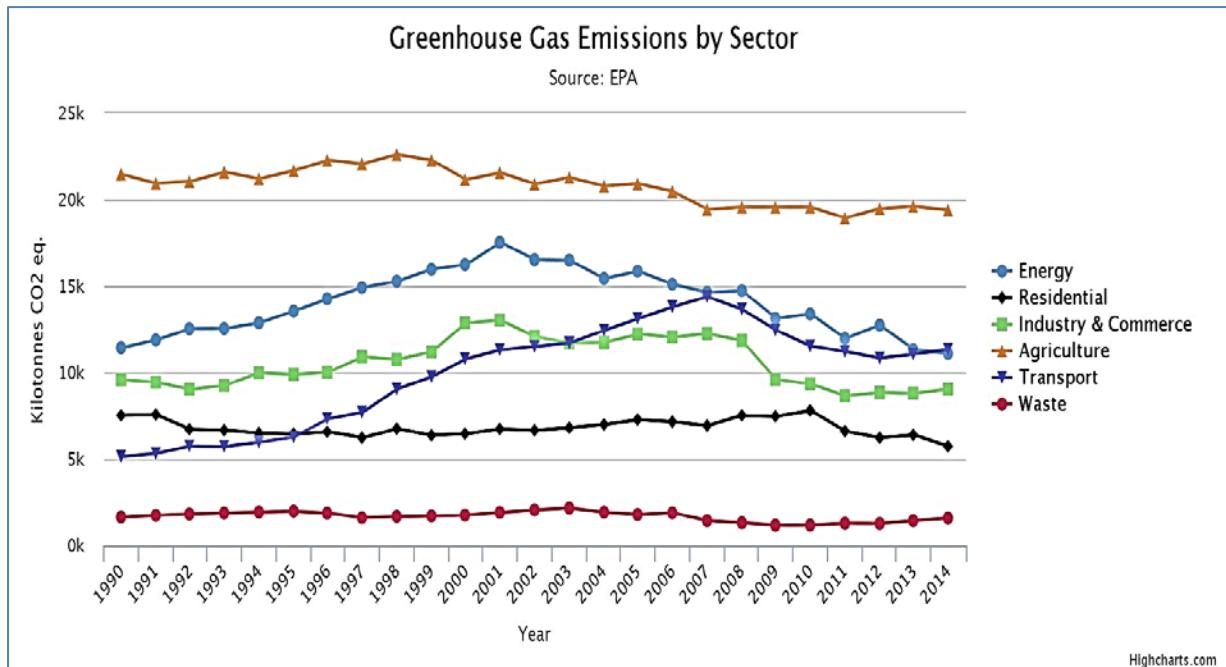
Environment and Sustainability

Chart 9.1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections to 2020



Source: EPA, Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2014-2035 and Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections to 2020 - An Update

Chart 9.2: Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector 2014



Source: EPA, Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2014-2035 and Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections to 2020 - An Update

Environment

Careful stewardship of Ireland's natural resources is required to ensure the long term health and sustainability of our environment. Unsustainable use of natural resources is one of the greatest long-term threats to humankind. It is crucial therefore, that Ireland meets the challenges of responding to climate change and protecting

our natural resources and biodiversity with policies that are based on scientific evidence and protecting the common good.

A key challenge for Ireland is to ensure that the economy and key sectors develop in a sustainable way and that economic growth is decoupled from environmental pressures.

This would require environmental considerations being placed at the centre of policy and decision making at national, regional and local levels

Climate change

The immediate challenge for Irish climate policy is to meet the EU 2020 targets for the domestic sector, which is a reduction of at least 20 per cent on the 2005 emission levels by 2020. This is a significant challenge for Government and will require major changes if the EU 2020 targets are to be met.

Ireland is projected to exceed its annual binding limits in 2016 and 2017 (chart 9.1). Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction of non-Emissions Trading Scheme¹ (non-ETS) sector emissions on 2005 levels. Non-ETS sectors are those which are excluded from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and include agriculture, transport, residential, commercial, non-energy intensive industry, and waste. The latest projections estimate that by 2020 non-ETS emissions will at best be 11% below 2005 levels compared to the 20% reduction target.

Ireland's emissions profile is dominated by emissions from the energy supply, transport and agriculture sectors (chart 9.2). Transport and agriculture represent the most intractable sectors in relation to carbon offsets and emissions mitigations. **Ireland must produce more ambitious adaptation and mitigation plans in order to meet our international commitments.** Environmental policy cannot be pursued in isolation from transport or agriculture policy; they should be integrated and developed together.

Progress towards changing farm practices has been limited and incentives to reduce on-farm greenhouse emissions have not been delivered on a wide scale. Support for sustainable agricultural practice is important to ensure the long-term viability of the sector

and consideration must also be given to how the projected increase in agricultural emissions can be offset. The agriculture and food sector must build on its scientific and technical knowledge base to meet the emissions challenge. Recognition of the 'limited' mitigation potential of the sector must not reduce efforts to reduce agricultural emissions and meet international targets and obligations.

A national sustainable transport network would represent a major step towards a low carbon, resource efficient economy. Capital investment will be required in sustainable transport infrastructure projects to ensure the reduction of transport emissions.

Ireland will face steep challenges post-2020 unless further policies and measures are put in place over and above those envisaged between now and 2020. The EPA point out that further policies are essential in order to position Ireland on a pathway towards a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy, in line with the national objective of the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Act 2015.

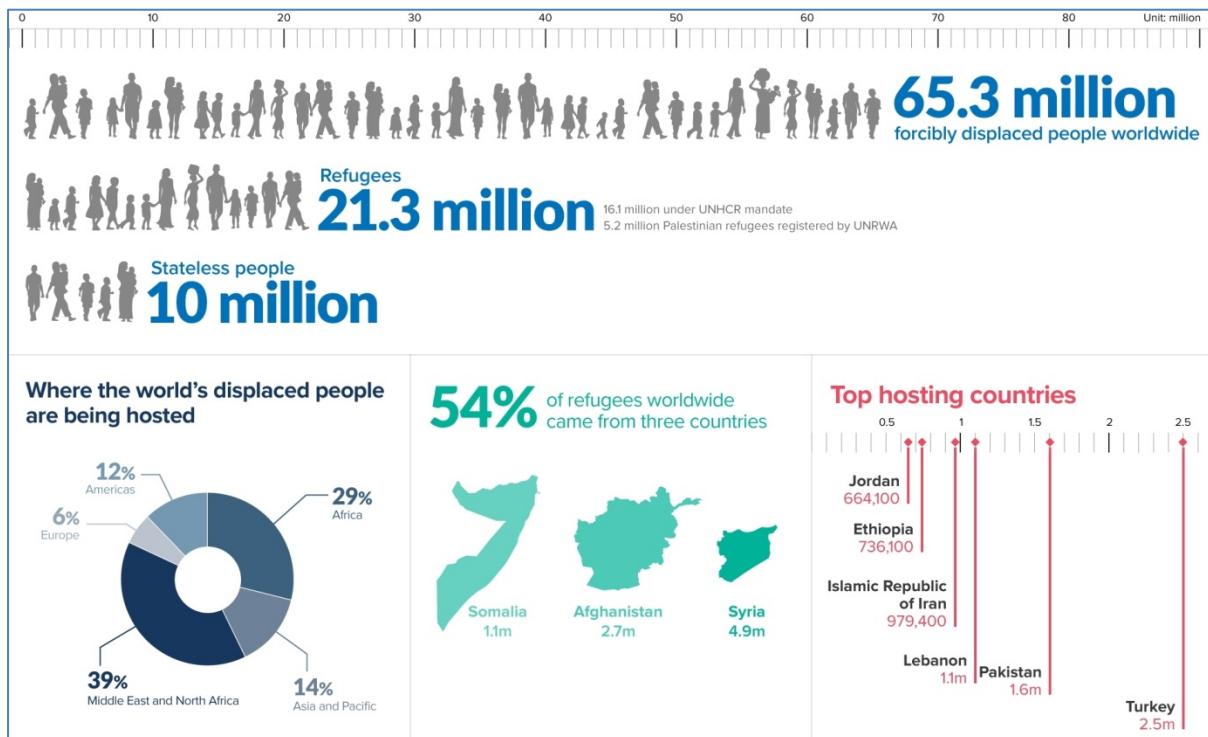
Policy Priorities

- Set ambitious emissions reduction targets for 2030 and ensure sufficient resources to support implementation of these targets.
- Ensure our climate mitigation plans support implementation of ambitious emissions reduction targets.
- Develop and promote sustainable transport and agriculture practices to reduce Ireland's emissions.
- Climate policy must be integrated into transport policy and agriculture policy.
- New measurements of progress must be adopted that include social, environmental and economic indicators.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/ets/faq_en.htm

Global Challenges

Figure 10.1: Global Displacement 2015



Source: United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2016. Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

Figure 10.2: Sustainable Development Goals



International migration crisis

The number of refugees and displaced people is consistently increasing worldwide as a result of war and conflict. Figure 10.1 shows the extent of the challenge worldwide, and the small amount of the burden borne by the EU. An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2016).

Between January and August 2016 278, 201 migrants entered Europe. This is a significant reduction from 2015 when over 1 million people crossed into the EU from Asia and Africa. However, this is countered by the presence of a further 3 million people in Turkey seeking international protection following the EU's deal with Turkey to stem migrant flows.

The Irish Navy continues to be involved in an operation in the Mediterranean and to date has rescued over 10,000 people, transiting them to Italy for processing and onward settlement. In September 2015, the Irish Government committed to take in 4,000 "programme refugees" directly connected with the EU migrant crisis. As of July 2016, only 311 of these people have arrived in Ireland, and a further 280 have been selected and are awaiting transfer here.

It is imperative that the Government moves swiftly to meet our minimum humanitarian obligation, and take in our full complement of these programme refugees, supporting them to settle in Ireland. *Social Justice Ireland* contends that Ireland needs to also take a leadership position within the EU promoting a human rights based approach to the crisis, and work to open borders and facilitate resettlement. As inward migration to Ireland and Europe of displaced people will be a feature of the coming years, it is essential that Ireland takes a pro-active approach, which is based on the human right of every person to live life with dignity.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development (figure 10.2) were adopted at the UN General Assembly on 25th September 2015. These goals make up the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which is defined as a 'plan of action for people, planet and prosperity'.

The SDGs have been designed for the entire world. The emphasis is on national ownership of the goals, with each Government setting its own national targets to be supported by national development strategies and financing. The link between sustainable development and economic, social and environmental policies is highlighted by the UN, as is the need to support the most vulnerable countries that face particular challenges in achieving sustainable development.

The SDG's present both a challenge and an opportunity for Ireland. The challenge will be in setting national targets, implementing these targets, monitoring progress and ensuring the appropriate budget lines, structures and indicators are put in place to achieve these goals. Implementing the SDG's provides Ireland with the opportunity to enhance our place in the world and to work for a just world where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential¹.

Policy Priorities

- Take a leadership role within the EU and UN on meeting the challenge of the migrant crisis in a way which respects human dignity.
- Become a global leader on the development and implementation of national targets for the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹ One World, One Future: Ireland's Policy for International Development (2013) <https://www.irishaid.ie/about-us/policy-for-international-development/>

Social Justice Ireland is an independent think-tank and justice advocacy organisation of that 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.



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Acknowledgement

This work has been partly supported by the Scheme to Support National Organisations via the Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and Pobal.

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