



working to build a just society

Social Justice Matters: 2021 guide to a Fairer Irish society

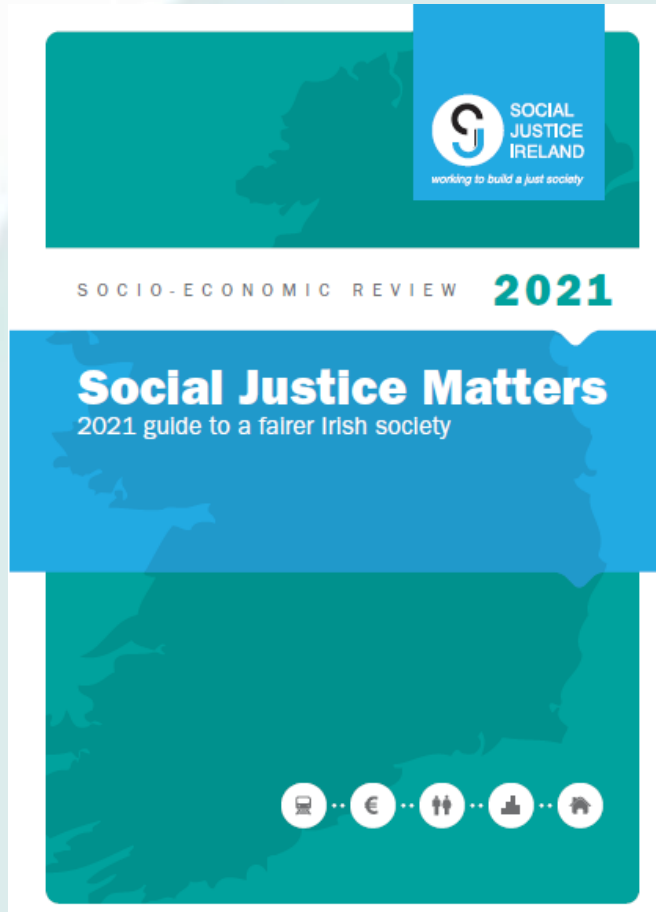
23rd March 2021

#SocialJusticeMatters

Social Justice Ireland – who we are

- Independent social justice think-tank.
- Develop and deliver independent and credible social analysis.
- Identify sustainable options for the future.
- Provide viable policy pathways forward.
- Influence the public debate to ensure it focuses on what matters most to people who are poor or vulnerable or in need.
- We work to improve public policy in order to improve society and the lives of people.
- Our work is underpinned by human rights and the common good.

Social Justice Matters: 2021 guide to a Fairer Irish Society



- Annual Socio-Economic Review
- What are the key long term challenges facing Government?
- What are the facts, trends and potential solutions
- Covers ten key policy areas
- Independent analysis
- Detailed policy proposals
- Key annual reference point on social justice and social policy issues

2021 – a time of reckoning

- Moment of change
- Deficits exposed and exacerbated
- Our response?
- A framework for a fairer future

A New Social Contract

- Time for change – a new Social Contract.
- Government policy must be focused on delivering five outcomes simultaneously:
 - a vibrant economy;
 - decent infrastructure and services;
 - just taxation;
 - good governance;
 - sustainability.
- Do-able, desirable, effective and efficient.

Change is possible – Change is necessary

- From welfare state to neoliberalism to ?????
- Vision: A new Social Contract
- Process: A new Social Dialogue
- Outcome: Curing the viruses of social injustice, inequality, marginality and environmental destruction

Key long term challenges facing Government

- A market-driven housing system
- Inequality
- Demographic Change
- Unemployment, underemployment and low-paid employment
- A two-tiered healthcare system
- Climate Change
- Just Transition
- Decline of rural communities

Policy Framework for a new Social Contract

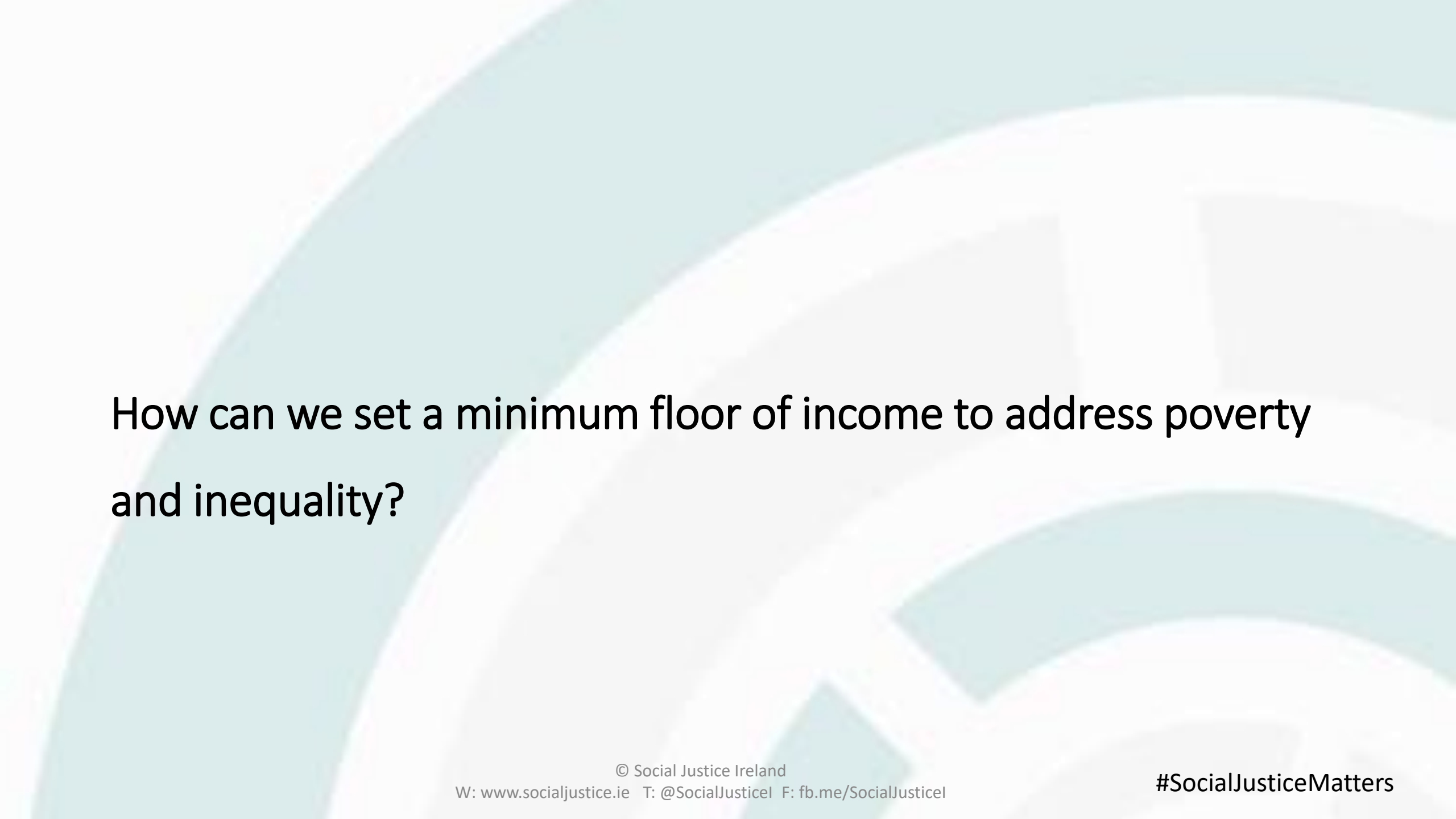
Vibrant economy	Decent services and infrastructure	Just taxation	Good governance	Sustainability
Deal with the Deficit	Increase Investment	Increase the overall Tax-Take	Open, transparent, accountable structures	Climate Justice
Financial Stability	Quality Services	Taxation Governance	Social Dialogue	Protect the Environment
Boost Public Investment	Minimum Social Floor	Broader Tax Base	Real Participation / Deliberative Democracy	Balanced Regional Development
Decent Jobs				Sustainable Progress Index
Reduce Inequality				

Building a new Social Contract

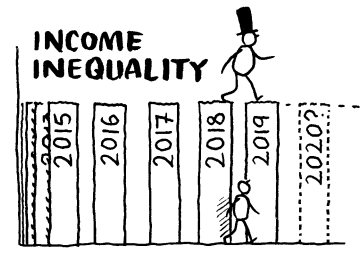
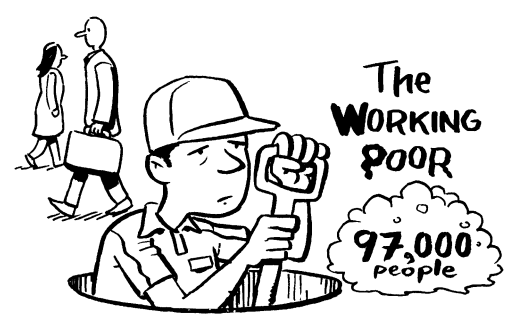
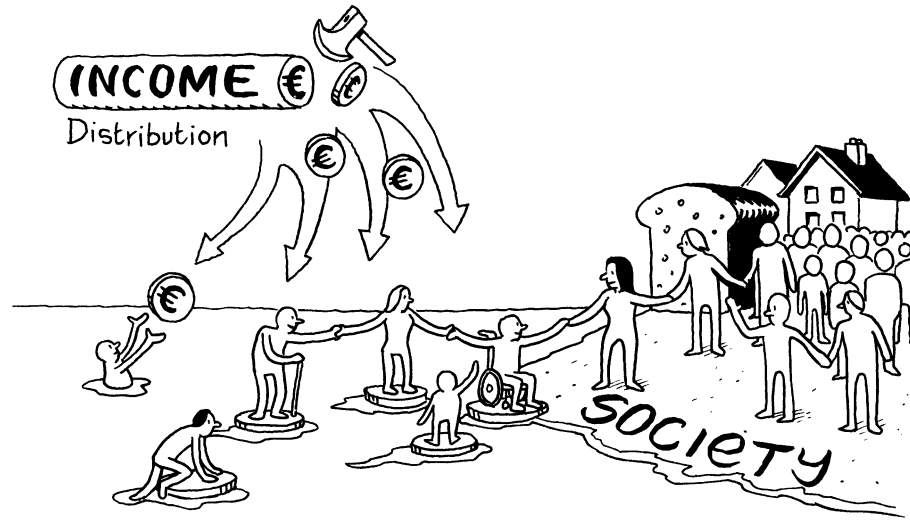
- Structure our economy for the good of society
- Rethink the interaction of employment and work, taxation, and welfare
- Universal Basic Income and Universal Basic Services.
- Continue to resource a public sector that meets our needs.

Funding a new Social Contract

- It will cost money
- Tax take should rise, but reasonably.
- Tax expenditures and an effective corporate tax rate.
- Ireland needs to have a real debate – service levels AND economic sustainability



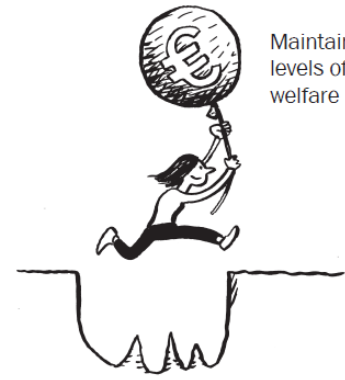
How can we set a minimum floor of income to address poverty and inequality?



Policy Solutions



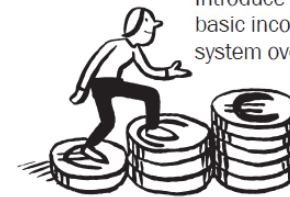
Set a goal of eliminating poverty in a single five year Dáil term



Maintain adequate levels of social welfare payments



Benchmark adequate levels of social welfare payments.



Introduce a full basic income system over time.



Introduce a cost of disability payment.




Make personal tax credits refundable.



Introduce a Living Wage.



Adequate payments for children.



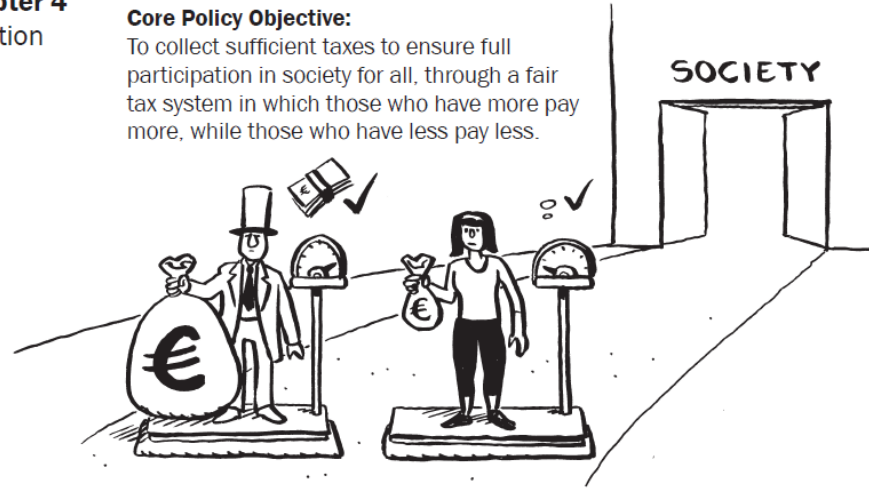
What can we afford to finance in the years immediately ahead?

Chapter 4

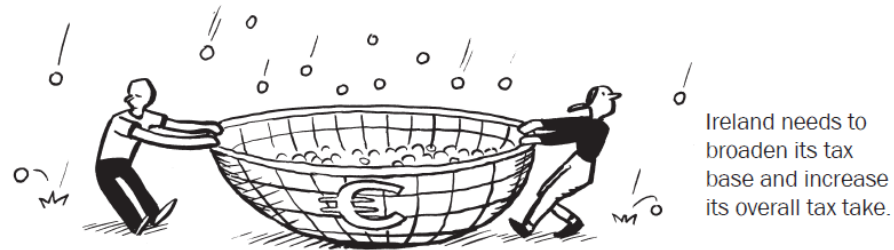
Taxation

Core Policy Objective:

To collect sufficient taxes to ensure full participation in society for all, through a fair tax system in which those who have more pay more, while those who have less pay less.



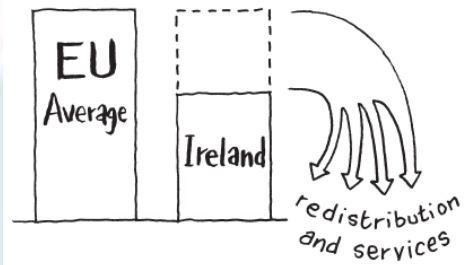
Key Issues/Evidence



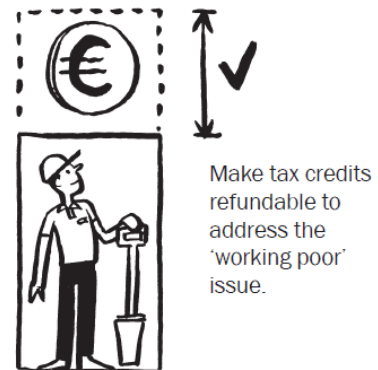
Decisions to raise or reduce overall taxation revenue should be linked to demands on resources now and into the future including:



Policy Solutions



Move towards increasing the total tax-take so that sufficient revenue is collected to provide redistribution and public services at European-average levels.



Make tax credits refundable to address the 'working poor' issue.



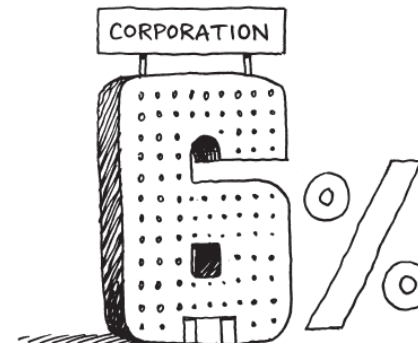
Include the cost of tax expenditures in the budget process.



Poverty proof budget tax changes to ensure they do not widen rich poor gap.



Adopt policies which further shift the burden of taxation from income tax to eco-taxes on the consumption of fuel and fertilisers, waste taxes and a site value tax.



Ensure that corporations based in Ireland pay a minimum effective corporate tax rate of 6 per cent.

How can we address labour market challenges of low pay, under employment and the employment impacts of COVID-19?

Chapter 5

Work, Unemployment and Job Creation

Core Policy Objective:

To ensure that all people have access to meaningful work.



Key Issues/Evidence



The phenomenon of widespread unemployment looks set to return once the temporary Covid-19 employment supports are phased out.



There were 6.6 million less hours of work in 2020. The largest impacted sectors are frequently identified as having larger number of female workers and low paid workers.



Pre-pandemic labour market issues remain, in particular, long-term unemployment is still a major labour market challenge.



Many workers on temporary Government support payments will be unable to return to work or will only be able to return to working less hours that they wish to have.



Young people have been severely impacted by Covid-19 job losses with data suggesting the existence, and expected future growth, of a severe youth unemployment problem.

Policy Solutions



Recognise that the term “work” is not synonymous with the concept of “paid employment”. Everybody has a right to work, i.e. to contribute to his or her own development and that of the community and the wider society. Work and a job are not the same thing.



Launch a major investment programme focused on prioritising initiatives that strengthen social infrastructure.



Adopt policies to address the worrying issue of youth unemployment. These should include education and literacy initiatives as well as retraining schemes.



Recognise the challenges of long-term unemployment and of precarious employment and adopt targeted policies to address these.



Resource the up-skilling of those who are unemployed and at risk of becoming unemployed through integrating training and labour market programmes.

How can we deliver affordable and appropriate accommodation and put an end to our market driven dysfunctional housing system?

Chapter 6

Housing and Accommodation

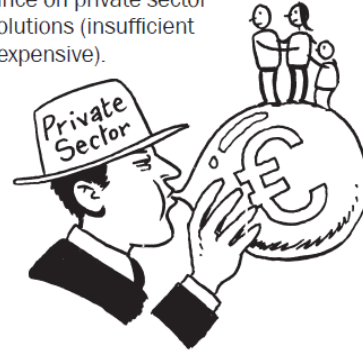
Core Policy Objective:

To ensure that adequate and appropriate accommodation is available for all people and to develop an equitable system for allocating resources within the housing sector.



Key Issues/Evidence

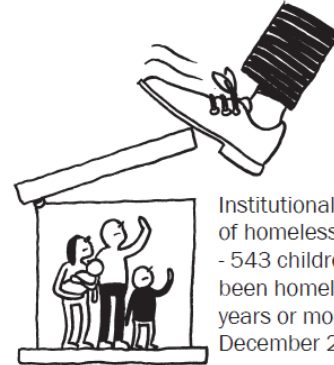
Reliance on private sector for solutions (insufficient and expensive).



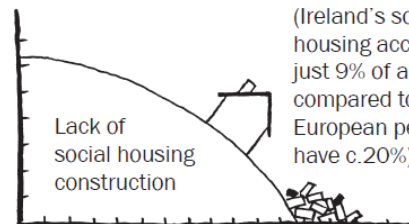
Increased homelessness (from 6,525 in July 2016 when Rebuilding Ireland began to 8,200 in December 2020).



Both rents and purchases are unaffordable, particularly for single people and those on an average wage.



Institutionalisation of homeless families - 543 children have been homeless for two years or more as of December 2020



(Ireland's social housing accounts for just 9% of all housing, compared to our European peers who have c.20%).

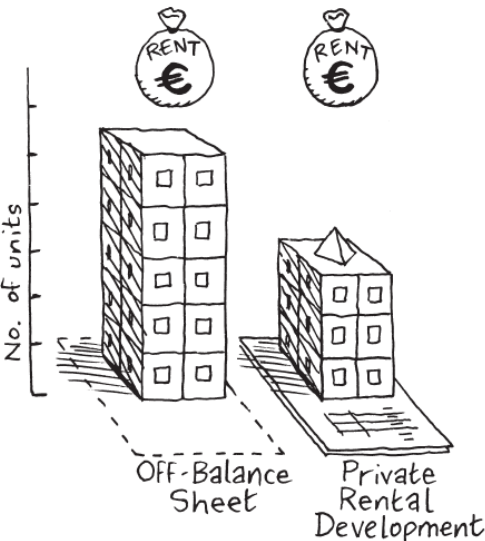
Policy Solutions



Housing First with wraparound services extended to families.



Increase the provision of social housing to a target of 20% of all housing.



Introduce cost rental as an affordable rental model.



State investment in social and affordable housing.



Ensure no state land suitable for housing is sold to private developers



Limit the time families spend in Family Hubs.

How can we ensure that the additional resources in our healthcare system are deployed in a way which delivers the transformation of the health service in line with Sláintecare?

Chapter 7

Healthcare

Core Policy Objective:

To provide an adequate healthcare service focused on enabling people to attain the World Health Organisation's definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

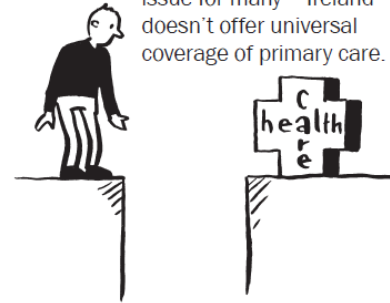


Key Issues/Evidence

Health = a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and must be seen as so.



Access to healthcare is an issue for many – Ireland doesn't offer universal coverage of primary care.



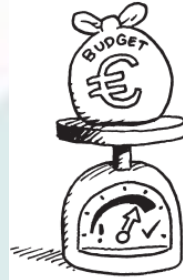
Ireland has one of the worst waiting list times in Europe.



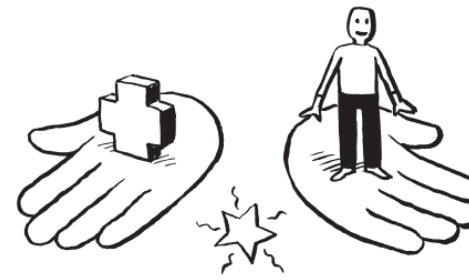
Our population is growing and it is ageing which means we need a different approach to healthcare – one we can access in our communities, close to home.



Policy Solutions



Ensure that announced budgetary allocations are valid, realistic and transparent and that they take existing commitments into account.



Complete roll-out of Community Health Networks to ensure the availability and quality of Primary and Social Care services



Ensure medical card coverage for all people who are vulnerable.



Act effectively to end the current hospital waiting list crisis.



Create a statutory entitlement to Home Care Services.



Create additional respite care and long-stay care facilities for older people and people with disabilities.



Properly resource and develop mental health services.

Institute long-term planning and investment in the sector, acknowledging the impending demographic changes in Ireland, to ensure that we can cope with these changes.



How do we address the impact of lost learning on students at all levels in the past twelve months?

Chapter 8

Education and Educational Disadvantage

Core Policy Objective:

To provide relevant education for all people throughout their lives, so that they can participate fully and meaningfully in developing themselves, their community and the wider society.

Key Issues/Evidence

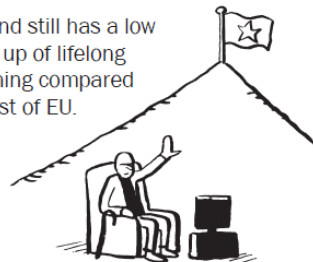


Covid-19 will widen the learning gap between pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their more affluent peers.

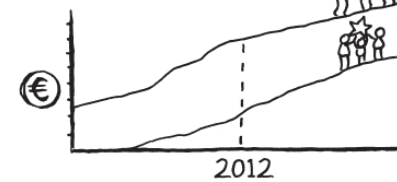


Ireland has the second lowest expenditure on ECCE for 3 to 5 year olds in OECD.

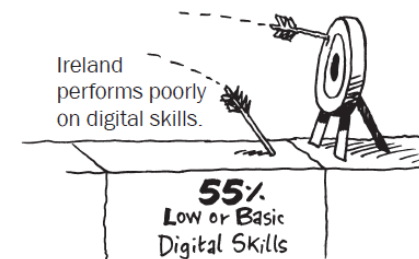
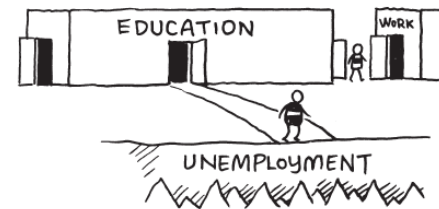
Ireland still has a low take up of lifelong learning compared to rest of EU.



The achievement of pupils in schools with concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is still well below that of other schools. Progress has stalled since 2012.



The longer a person stays in education the more likely they are to be in employment.

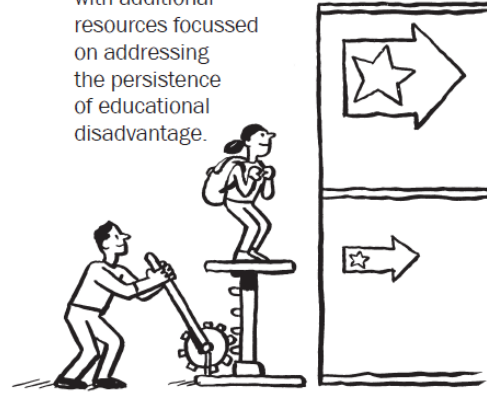


Policy Solutions

Deliver a long-term sustainable, appropriately funded education strategy that takes a whole-person, life-cycle approach to learning with due consideration to education as a part of the commons.



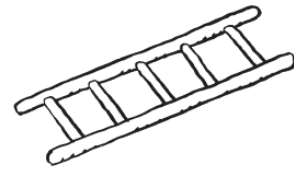
Make the improvement of educational outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and disadvantaged communities a policy priority with additional resources focussed on addressing the persistence of educational disadvantage.



Commit to increasing investment in Early Childhood Care and Education by 0.1 per cent of GDP annually to reach 1 per cent of GDP by 2026.



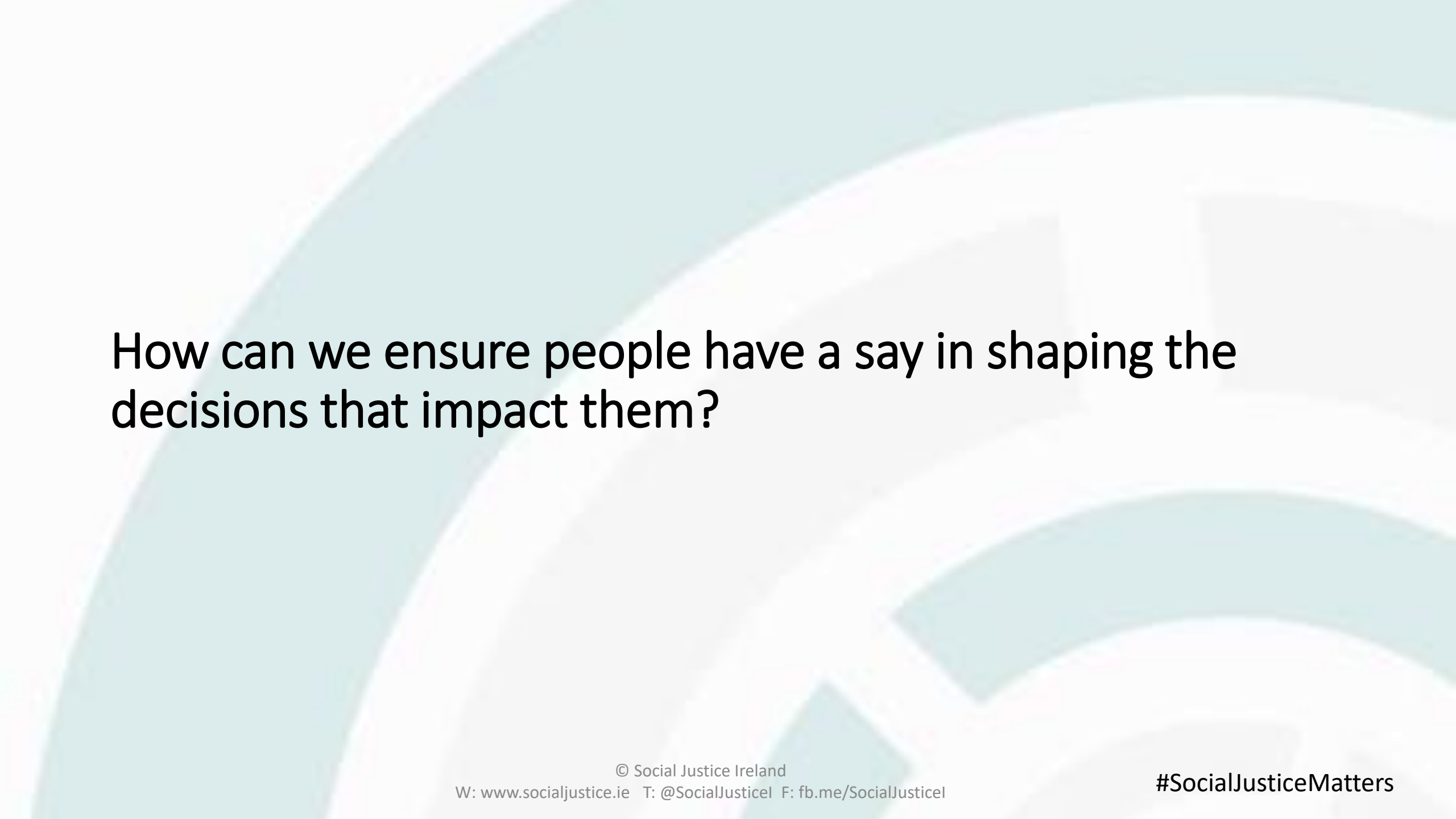
Revise our training and lifelong learning target to reach 15 per cent by 2022 and to reach 20 per cent by 2026, ensuring sufficient resources are made available.



Develop an integrated skills development, digital transition, vocational training, apprenticeship and reskilling strategy.



Develop a framework to deliver sustainable funding revenues for higher education over the next five years with a roadmap to 2028.



How can we ensure people have a say in shaping the decisions that impact them?

Chapter 10

People and Participation

Core Policy Objective:

To ensure that all people from different cultures are welcomed in a way that is consistent with our history, our obligations as world citizens and with our economic status.

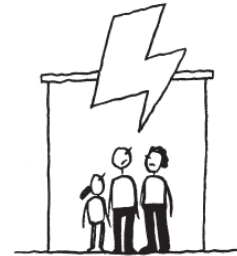
To ensure that every person has a genuine voice in shaping the decisions that affect them and that every person can contribute to the development of society.



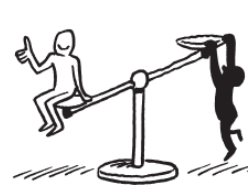
Key Issues/Evidence



Lack of planning for a changing and ageing population.



Human Rights violations in Direct Provision centres.



Racism, particularly in political discourse.



Funding for the Community and Voluntary sector still not restored to pre-crisis levels.

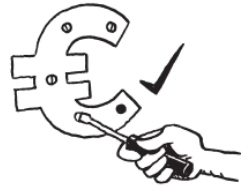
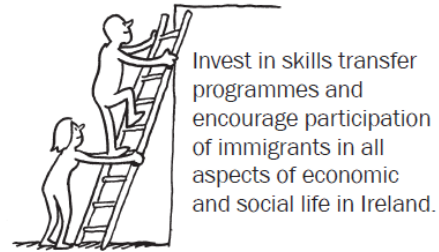



Ireland not meeting our UN obligations.



Lack of sustained social dialogue at local and national level.

Policy Solutions





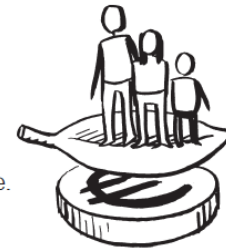
How do we promote the sustainability agenda and meet our climate targets in a fair way?

Chapter 11

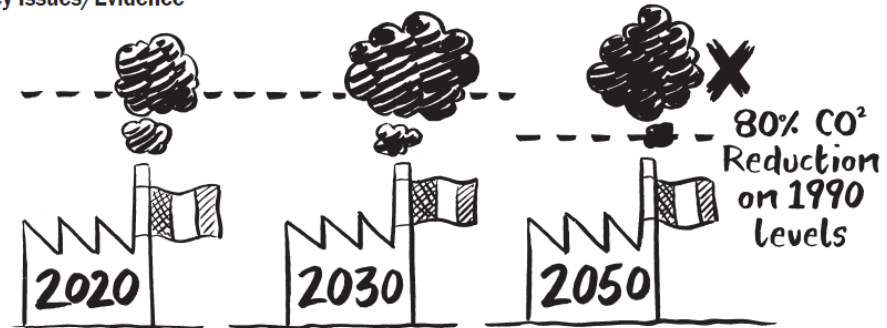
Sustainability

Core Policy Objective:

To ensure that all development is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.



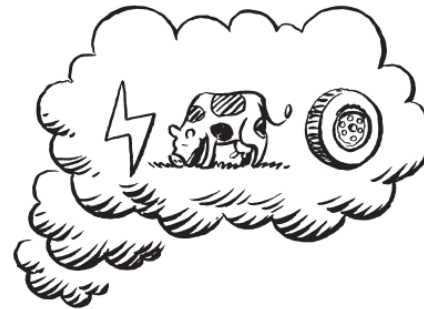
Key Issues/Evidence



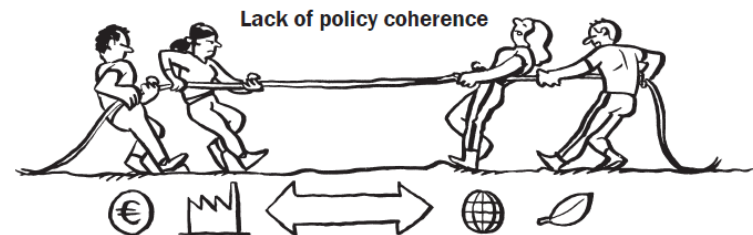
Ireland will not meet our 2020 emissions targets and we are on track to overshoot our 2030 emissions targets.

Ireland is heading in the wrong direction to meet our national 2050 emissions goal.

Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase in line with economic and employment growth in the energy industries, agriculture and transport sectors – despite the impact of Covid-19.



Our emissions are dominated by agriculture, transport and energy.



Agricultural expansion and economic expansion policies.

Commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals on climate action and protecting our environment.

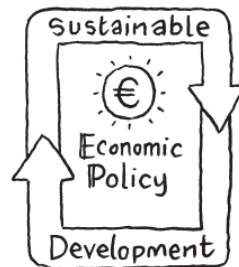
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Policy Solutions

Set ambitious emissions reduction targets for 2030 and ensure sufficient resources to support implementation of these targets

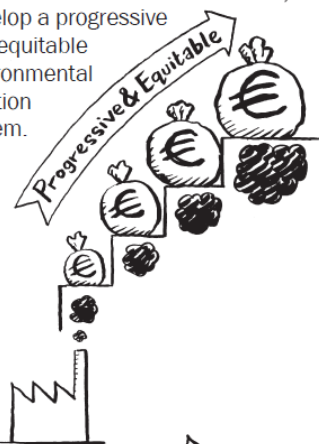


Ensure our climate mitigation plans support implementation of ambitious emissions reduction targets.

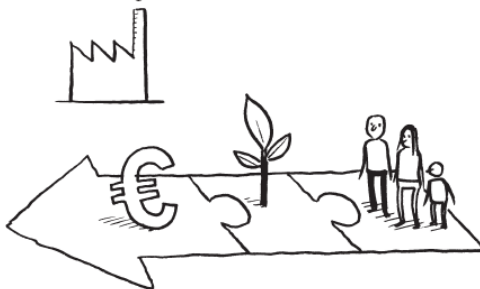


Integrate a Sustainable Development Framework into economic policy.

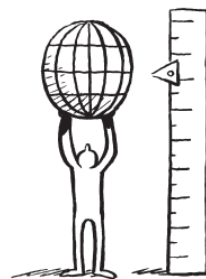
Develop a progressive and equitable environmental taxation system.



Set out a mitigation and transition strategy to prepare communities and people for changes that adapting to meet our climate targets will bring.



Develop a new National Index of Progress encompassing environmental and social indicators of progress as well as economic ones.



Adopt targets and a reporting system for each of the Sustainable Development Goals.



Implement a circular economy strategy for Ireland.



Develop a Just Transition Dialogue structure at regional and national level.

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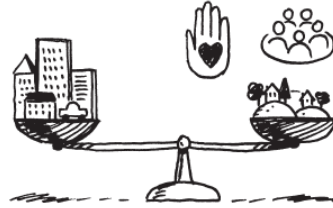
How do we ensure that rural Ireland is not left behind?

Chapter 12

Rural Development

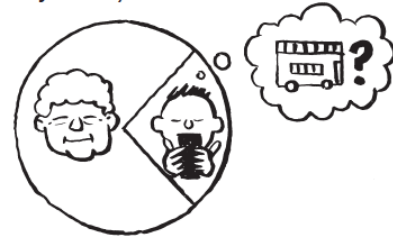
Core Policy Objective:

To achieve balanced regional development, with a particular emphasis on providing the sustainable public services and employment opportunities required.



To secure the existence of substantial numbers of viable and sustainable communities in all parts of rural Ireland

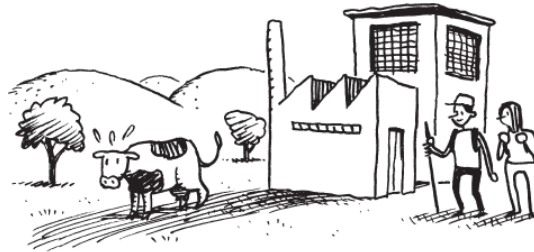
Key Issues/Evidence



Rural areas generally have an older population, higher rates of part-time employment and lower median incomes than the national average.



The average distance to most everyday services for people in rural areas is at least three times longer than for people in urban areas.



The driver of the rural economy in Ireland is diverse – involving agriculture, services, manufacturing, tourism and others.



Supporting rural households to ensure that they have sufficient incomes will be crucial to the future of rural Ireland.

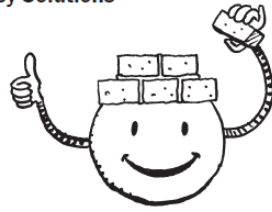


Lack of quality broadband is a considerable barrier to the sustainable development of rural Ireland.



Investment in education and training for people in low skilled jobs or unemployed in rural areas would deliver a major social and economic return.

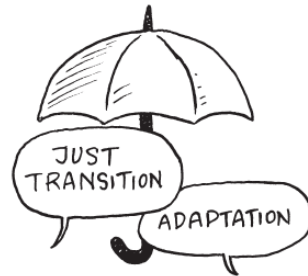
Policy Solutions



Ensure rural development policy is underpinned by social, economic and environmental wellbeing.



Prioritise rolling out high speed broadband to rural areas.



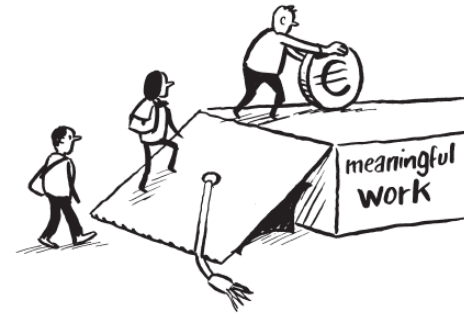
Establish a Just Transition and Adaptation Dialogue to ensure rural areas are not disproportionately impacted by climate adaptation or automation.



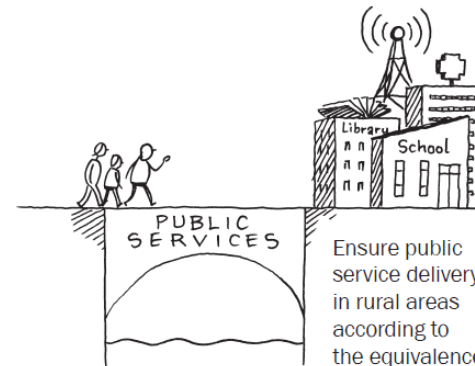
Provide integrated supports for rural entrepreneurs, micro-enterprises and SMEs.



Invest in an integrated, accessible and flexible rural transport network.



Invest in human capital through targeted education and training programmes, especially for older workers and those in vulnerable employment.



Ensure public service delivery in rural areas according to the equivalence principle.

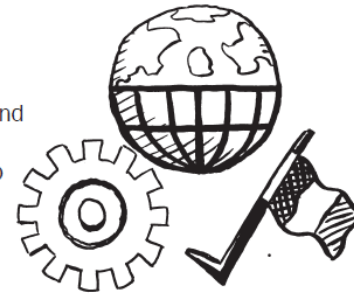
Why our commitment to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) is so important

Chapter 13

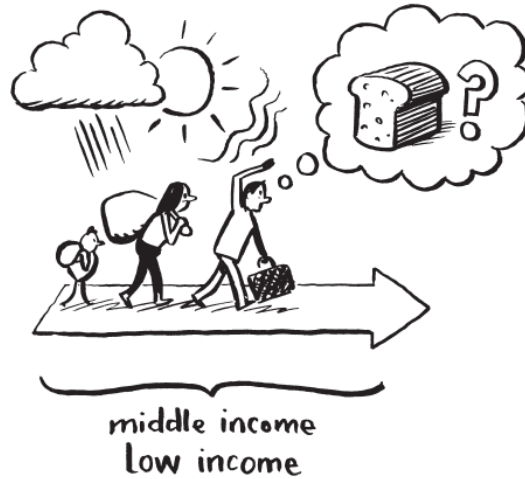
Global South

Core Policy Objective:

To ensure that Ireland plays an active and effective part in promoting sustainable development in the Global South and to ensure that all of Ireland's policies are consistent with such development.



Key Issues/Evidence



The effects of climate change have increased the vulnerability of many communities leading to enforced migration, internal displacement, poverty, hunger and even death. Food production is a huge challenge for communities constantly forced to move.



Nine out of ten countries most at risk of extreme weather are developing countries in the low income or lower-middle income country groups.



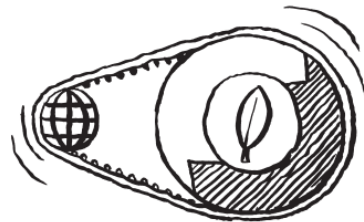
Supporting developing countries to develop and implement just taxation systems would give a huge boost to local social and economic activity. Ireland's taxation system should facilitate and not hinder this process.

UN Target
0.7% GNP
to Overseas
Development
Assistance

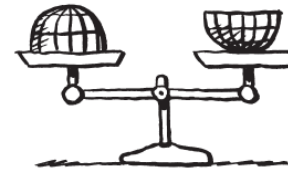
Renew Government's commitment to meet the United Nations target of contributing 0.7 per cent of national income to ODA by 2030 and set a clear pathway to achieve this.



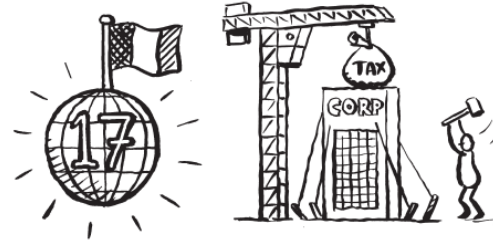
Ensure that Irish businesses operating in developing countries – in particular Irish Aid country partners – are subject to proper scrutiny and engage in sustainable development practices.



Work for changes in the existing international trading regimes to encourage fairer and sustainable forms of trade.



Take a far more proactive stance at government level on ensuring that Irish and EU policies towards countries in the Global South are just.



Play a prominent role in the support and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular work with other governments to end the race to the bottom on corporate tax rates.



Continue to support the international campaign for the liberation of the poorest nations from the burden of the backlog of unpayable debt.



Take a leadership position in international arenas to encourage funding for programmes and research aimed at mitigating and resolving the AIDS/HIV crisis.

Time for change – time for a new Social Contract

‘Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around... Our basic function [is] to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable’. Milton Friedman (1982)

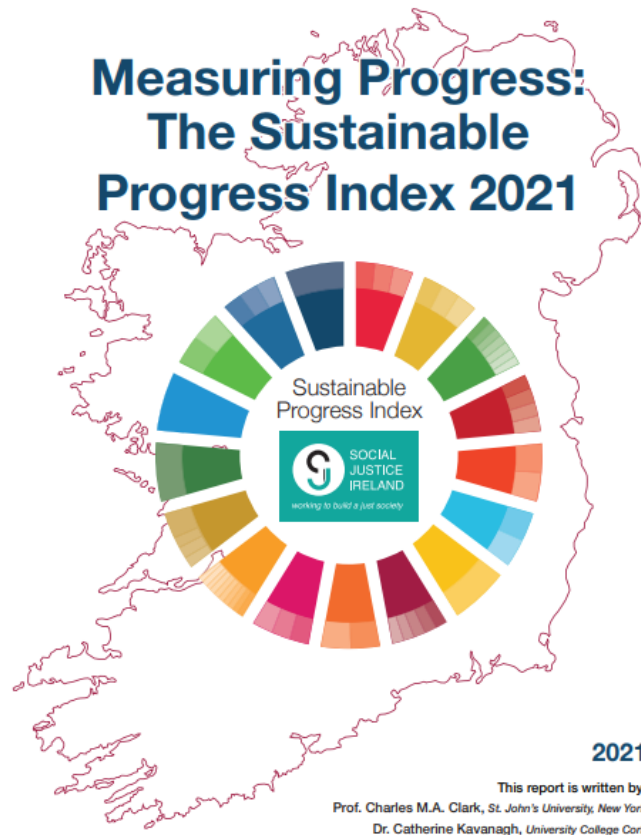
- Ireland, and indeed the planet, now faces crisis; we cannot go back to business as usual.
- We have reached a point where adoption of new ideas and policies is surely a necessity. This would result in a fairer more just society.



SOCIAL
JUSTICE
IRELAND

working to build a just society

Questions



This report is written by:
Prof. Charles M.A. Clark, *St. John's University, New York*
Dr. Catherine Kavanagh, *University College Cork*

Policy Briefing is a regular publication issued by Social Justice Ireland. It addresses a wide range of current policy issues from the perspective of the common good.

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- Failure to increase core social welfare rates.
- Failure to make tax credits refundable to address the working poor issue.
- No investment research and expansion.

Received 12 October 2004; accepted 12 November 2004

Social Justice Ireland

Building a New Social Contract

Policy Recommendations

September 2020

Colette Bennett, Seán Healy,
Eamon Murphy, Michelle Murphy

