

10.

PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION

CORE POLICY OBJECTIVE: PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION

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.

People have a right to participate in shaping the decisions that affect them and to participate in developing and shaping the society in which they live. These rights are part of *Social Justice Ireland's* Governance policy pillar as set out in Chapter 2. In this chapter we set out some of the implications of these rights and how they might be met in Ireland today.

People

Migration issues of various kinds, both inwards and outwards, present important challenges for Government and Irish society. The circumstances that generate involuntary emigration must be addressed in an open, honest and transparent manner. For many migrants immigration is not temporary. They will remain in Ireland and make it their home. Irish society needs to adapt to this reality. Ireland is now a multi-racial and multi-cultural society and Government policies should promote and encourage the creation of an inclusive and integrated society in which respect for and recognition of all cultures is an important right for all people.

The key challenge of integration

The rapid internationalisation of the Irish population in recent years presents Ireland with the key challenge of avoiding mistakes made by many other countries. The focus should be on integration rather than on isolating new migrant communities. Census 2011 showed that there were a total of 544,357 non-Irish

nationals – representing 199 different nations - living in Ireland in 2011 (CSO, 2012: 8). It also showed that that 268,180, or 15.1%, of the workforce are non-Irish nationals (CSO, 2012: 19). These figures are unlikely to change significantly over the next few years, even when allowance is made for emigration. Spending cuts have had significant impact on strategies on integration. The fourth report (2012) of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) highlighted:

- the closing of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) in December 2008, and the subsequent loss of the reporting of racist incidents carried out by the NCCRI;
- the lack of adequate language support in the classroom for the 10% of primary school and 12% of post-primary school children from an immigrant background;
- the withdrawal of funding of the Integrate Ireland Language and Training centres; and
- the non-renewal of the Action Plan Against Racism (2005-2008).

Discrimination against Travellers

In Irish society, Travellers have often faced discrimination and the state has been slow to recognise Traveller's culture to be respected as a right. In the Programme for Government and National Recovery 2011-2016 the Government commits to promoting 'greater coordination and integration of delivery of services to the Traveller communities across Government, using available resources more effectively to deliver on principles of social inclusion particularly in the area of Traveller education' (Government of Ireland 2011: 53). While the structures recommended by the Task Force on the Travelling People have been established, it is very important to ensure that the recommendations of the report are fully implemented. The fourth report of the ECRI highlighted the fact that Travellers still face problems related to adequate accommodation and recommended that Government introduce measures binding on local authorities to support the National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy and fully implement the 1998 Traveller Accommodation Act. It also called on the Government to reduce health inequalities, particularly in relation to the Travelling Community. This is particularly important as Travellers have a lower life expectancy rate and a higher rate of chronic diseases than the rest of the population (Pavee Point, 2012).

Migrant Workers

The latest figures from the Central Statistics Office for nationality and employment are presented in Table 10.1. They show that after a significant fall between 2008 and

2011 the numbers of non-Irish nationals in employment has begun to increase, though the numbers in employment have yet to recover to the peak level in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Table 10.1: Estimated number of persons aged 15 years and over in employment and classified by nationality Q4 2007- Q3 2014, by '000

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Irish | 1,804.20 | 1,736.00 | 1,632.50 | 1,603.20 | 1,584.30 | 1,579.70 | 1,626.20 | 1,642.3 |
| Non-Irish | 334.7 | 316 | 255.2 | 220 | 223.5 | 269.2 | 283.6 | 284.6 |
| <i>Including</i> | | | | | | | | |
| UK | 51.4 | 51.8 | 44.9 | 34.1 | 29.4 | 46.5 | 49.8 | 49.3 |
| EU15* | 34.5 | 33.7 | 28.5 | 22.9 | 21.1 | 29.1 | 27.7 | 22.0 |
| EU15/28 | 167.7 | 150.9 | 114 | 107.8 | 114.3 | 125.9 | 130.2 | 129.9 |
| Other | 81 | 79.6 | 67.9 | 55.3 | 58.7 | 67.7 | 75.9 | 83.4 |
| Total | 2,138.9 | 2,052.0 | 1,887.7 | 1,823.2 | 1,807.8 | 1,848.9 | 1,909.8 | 1,926.9 |

Source: CSO QNHS Series (2008-2014). 2007-2013 Q4/ 2014 Q3. *excluding Ireland and UK

There has been criticism of Irish immigration policy and legislation specifically due to the lack of support for the integration of immigrants and a lack of adequate recognition of the permanency of immigration. Three significant areas of concern are:

- Work permits are issued to employers, not to employees, which ties the employee to a specific employer, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and reducing their labour market mobility.
- The Irish asylum process can take many years to reach a conclusion and most refugees coming onto the Irish labour market are *de facto* long-term unemployed. A process for training and education of asylum seekers is needed so that they can retain and gain skills (ECRI, 2006 & Employers Diversity Network, 2009).
- The existence of up to 26,000 undocumented migrants working in Ireland, one in five of whom has been here for over ten years⁷³. Without credentials they are denied access to basic services and vulnerable to exploitation by employers. The Irish Migrant Rights Centre has proposed an Earned Regularisation Scheme to provide a pathway to permanent residency (Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, 2014).

⁷³ http://www.mrci.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MRCL_policy-paper_FINAL.pdf

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Until recently, the number of refugees forced to flee from their own countries in order to escape war, persecution and abuses of human rights had been declining worldwide over a number of years. Recent reports by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre signal a sizeable reversal of this trend. In 2013 there were at least 33.3 million people internally displaced by armed conflict, generalised violence and human rights violations across the world, a 16 per cent increase on 2012 (IDMC, 2014). Of the 8.2 million people newly displaced in 2013, the majority (78 per cent) come from five countries affected by conflict: Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Nigeria and Sudan.

Irish people have had a long tradition of solidarity with people facing oppression within their own countries, but that tradition is not reflected in our policies towards refugees and asylum-seekers. *Social Justice Ireland* believes that Ireland should use its position in international forums to highlight the causes of displacement of peoples. In particular, Ireland should use these forums to challenge the production, sale and free access to arms and the implements of torture.

Despite this tradition of solidarity with peoples facing oppression, racism is an everyday reality for many migrants in Ireland. Preliminary figures from the Immigrant Council of Ireland show an 114 per cent increase in the number of racist incidences reported in the first six months of 2014 with the majority of cases occurring in a person's local workplace or in the home⁷⁴. This increase in reported racism is very worrying and *Social Justice Ireland* urges Government to provide leadership in dealing with the issue. An integrated policy response is needed to address the root causes of racism within communities; political and institutional responses are required to address this problem in order to prevent it deteriorating. The establishment of Citizenship Ceremonies by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence and the reforms to the procedure of assessing and processing citizenship applications are welcome and have the potential to promote inclusiveness and integration.

Table 10.2 shows the number of applications for asylum in Ireland between 2000 and 2014. In 2014 Ireland experienced a 53 per cent increase in asylum applications. 2,360 people were deported from Ireland in 2014, of whom 2,147 were refused entry into the country at ports of entry (Department of Justice and Equality, 2014).

In the third quarter of 2014, there were 177,000 applicants for asylum in the European Union; the top three largest nation of origin for applicants were

⁷⁴ <http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/index.php/media/press-releases/847-racism-reports-increase-by-114-in-first-six-months-of-2014>

Afghanistan, Eritrea and Syria, reflecting the terrible situations in those countries (Eurostat, 2014). The UNHCR estimates that at least 3,419 migrants died at sea in 2014 trying to cross the Mediterranean to get into Europe. It has warned that the policies of some governments were increasingly seeing keeping foreigners out as being a higher priority than upholding asylum⁷⁵.

Table 10.2 Applications for Asylum in Ireland, 2000-2014

| Year | Number | Year | Number | Year | Number |
|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| 2000 | 10,938 | 2005 | 4,323 | 2010 | 1,939 |
| 2001 | 10,325 | 2006 | 4,314 | 2011 | 1,290 |
| 2002 | 11,634 | 2007 | 3,985 | 2012 | 956 |
| 2003 | 7,900 | 2008 | 3,866 | 2013 | 946 |
| 2004 | 4,766 | 2009 | 2,689 | 2014 | 1,456 |

Source: Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (2014), *Statistical Report December 2014*

The third report of the ECRI identified difficulties in gaining recognition for professional qualifications as a major challenge facing refugees and asylum-seekers when they have been granted leave to stay in Ireland. It means refugees are often unable to find employment commensurate with their qualifications and experience, impeding their full integration into society. It also means their valuable skills, which could contribute to the Irish economy, are unused or underused (ECRI, 2006). *Social Justice Ireland* proposes that asylum-seekers who currently are not entitled to take up employment should be allowed to do so with immediate effect and that structures are established to recognise professional qualifications. The fourth ECRI report has already been highlighted; its recommendations should be implemented in full.

While asylum-seekers are assigned initial accommodation in Dublin, most are subsequently allocated accommodation at locations outside Dublin, pending the completion of the asylum-seeking process. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) was established to perform this task. The latest statistics from the RIA show that there are 34 accommodation centres throughout the country accommodating 4,360 people, of whom one third are children (RIA, 2014). Over 3,000 people have been in direct provision centres for two or more years and 1,600 have been in direct provision for five or more years. The system of direct provision relies heavily on private operators. €54.22 million was spent on direct provision in 2014 of which €43.7 million went to 25 commercially owned centres.

⁷⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/5486e6b56.html>

The policy of “direct provision” employed in these centres results in these asylum-seekers receiving accommodation and board, together with €19.10 direct provision per week per adult and €9.60 per child. Over time this sum has remained unchanged and its value has therefore been eroded by inflation. Between 2001 and 2014 the purchasing power of these payments has been decreased by almost 20 per cent. Furthermore, many asylum-seekers have been placed for long periods of time in these centres, with 9 per cent residing in the centres for over seven years (Joyce, C. & Quinn, E., 2014). This situation, combined with the fact that asylum-seekers are denied access to employment, means that asylum-seekers are among the most excluded and marginalised groups in Ireland.

Social Justice Ireland proposes that asylum-seekers who currently are not entitled to take up employment should be allowed to do so with immediate effect and that the direct provision payments should be increased immediately to at least €65 per week for an adult and €38 per week for a child. Removing employment restrictions and increasing the direct provision allocation would cost €12.5m per annum⁷⁶ and provide noticeable improvements in the subsistence life being led by these asylum-seekers. The accommodation centres must also be examined; some of the centres, which include a former leisure centre, are not appropriate places for people to live, and serve to isolate asylum seekers. A recent report by the European Migration Network and the ESRI highlights some of the problems with Ireland’s reception system. These are a lack of privacy, overcrowding, limited autonomy, and insufficient homework and play areas for children (Joyce, C. & Quinn, E. 2014). Despite Government acknowledging that the reception system is unsuitable for long-term residence of asylum seekers, progress on developing an alternative procedure has been extremely slow. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence established a Working Group to report to Government on improvements to the ‘protection process’ including direct provision and asylum seekers supports in late 2014. The Working Group is tasked with identifying a practical range of recommendations to Government on improvements to the direct provision system, improved supports for asylum applicants and improvements in the processing of applications. The establishment of the Working Group is a long overdue and welcome development, however it is unfortunate that the recommendations must ensure that the overall cost of the protection system to the taxpayer is reduced or remains close to current levels⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ *Social Justice Ireland* calculation based on 2010 data.

⁷⁷ <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Ministers%20Fitzgerald%20and%20O%20R%20C3%ADord%C3%A1in%20announce%20composition%20of%20Working%20Group%20to%20examine%20improvements%20to%20the%20Protection%20process%20and%20the%20Direct%20Provision%20system>

Emigration

Emigration has increased dramatically since 2009. It should be noted that in all migration statistics the year end is April of the year in question. Net migration was negative in 2010; the first time since 1995 more people had left Ireland than returned or arrived from elsewhere. Net outmigration was 27,400 in 2011, rose to 34,400 in 2012, and fell slightly to 33,100 in 2013 and fell again to 21,400 in 2014. During 2008 and 2009 the majority of those emigrating were from the new accession countries. However, from 2010 the largest group emigrating were Irish nationals; 42,000 left in 2011, 50,900 left in 2013, while 40,700 left in 2014. Overall, emigration of all nationalities is estimated to have reached 81,900 in 2014. Table 10.3 below outlines the numbers of people leaving the country between 2006 and 2014, both Irish and non-Irish nationals.

Table 10.3: Estimated Emigration by Nationality, 2006 – 2014, by'000

| Year | Irish | UK | EU 13* | EU 10/12** | Rest of World | Total |
|--------------------|-------|-----|--------|------------|---------------|-------|
| 2014 | 40.7 | 2.7 | 10.1 | 14.0 | 14.4 | 81.9 |
| 2013 ⁷⁸ | 50.9 | 3.9 | 14.0 | 9.9 | 10.3 | 89.1 |
| 2012 ⁷⁹ | 46.5 | 3.5 | 11.2 | 14.8 | 11.1 | 87.1 |
| 2011 | 42 | 4.6 | 10.2 | 13.9 | 9.9 | 80.6 |
| 2010 | 28.9 | 3 | 9 | 19 | 9.3 | 69.2 |
| 2009 | 19.2 | 3.9 | 7.4 | 30.5 | 11 | 72 |
| 2008 | 13.1 | 3.7 | 6 | 17.2 | 9 | 49.2 |
| 2007 | 12.9 | 3.7 | 8.9 | 12.6 | 8.2 | 46.3 |
| 2006 | 15.3 | 2.2 | 5.1 | 7.2 | 6.2 | 36 |

Source: CSO (2013), *Population and Migration Estimates*.

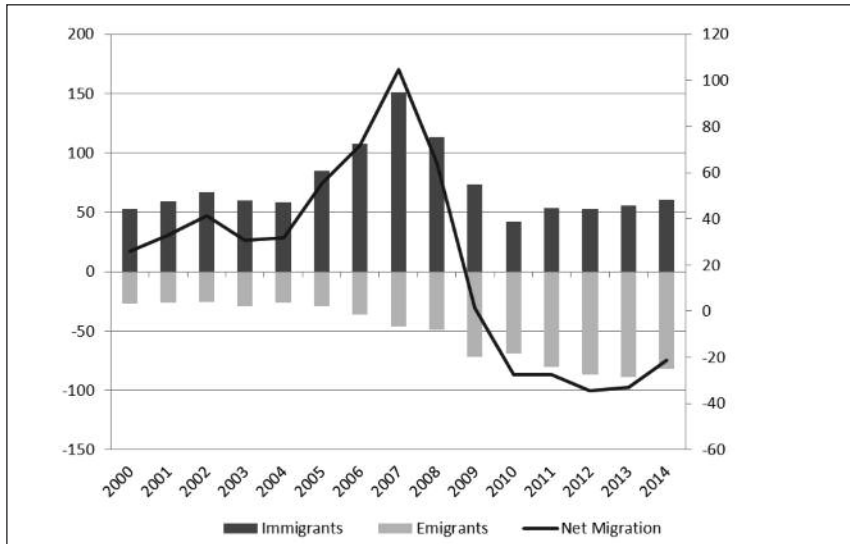
*EU 15 excluding UK and Ireland. **EU MS that joined in 2004 and 2007

The rate of emigration of Irish nationals has more than tripled since 2008. This demonstrates the lack of opportunities available for people in Ireland, especially for those seeking employment in the 15-44 age group. Of those who emigrated in 2014, more than 33,500 were aged 15-24 and 37,600 were aged 25-44. The austerity programme is contributing to Ireland's loss of young people, the implications of which are stark as this loss will pose significant problems for economic recovery.

⁷⁸ Preliminary.

⁷⁹ Preliminary.

Chart 10.1 – Immigration, Emigration and Net Migration, 2000-2014



Source: CSO, *Population and Migration Estimates (2014)*.

This emigration ‘brain drain’, which in some quarters is perversely being heralded as a ‘safety valve’, is in fact a serious problem for Ireland. It may well result in a significant skills deficit in the long-term and hamper Ireland’s recovery. *Social Justice Ireland* has highlighted the need for a skills transfer programme for returning migrants in order to ensure the skills that they have acquired whilst working abroad are recognised in Ireland (see chapter 9 for further details). Sadly, emigration has been one of the factors keeping the unemployment rate down. In December 2012, the IMF estimated that had all the employees who lost their job at the outset of the crisis remained in the labour force, the unemployment rate would have been 20 per cent (IMF, 2012: 5). In their latest staff working document on Ireland the IMF highlight the problem of high youth unemployment (22 per cent) and the challenge it poses. Given the continuing weakness of domestic demand and investment in the economy induced by austerity budgets it is likely that emigration will continue for the foreseeable future. Unless there are measures in place to increase employment at a faster pace by boosting domestic demand and investment, outmigration will continue.

Participation

The changing nature of democracy has raised many questions for policy-makers and others concerned about the issue of participation. Decisions often appear to be made without any real involvement of the many affected by the decisions’

outcomes. The most recent in-depth analysis of voter participation was undertaken in 2011 by the CSO. In a quarterly national household survey module on voter participation and abstention, issued in November 2011, the CSO provided an insight into how people regarded the electoral process. It found that just over 62 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 voted in the 2011 general election. This contrasts with participation figures of 92 per cent for older voters aged 55 to 64 years (CSO 2011: 3). The survey also found that over one-third of those who did not vote were not registered to vote, 11 per cent of non-voters said they had 'no interest', 10 per cent were 'disillusioned' with politics and 11 per cent had difficulty getting to the polling station (this was particularly common among non-voters aged 55 and over). (CSO, 2011:4) Those educated to primary level only were most likely to say they did not vote because they were disillusioned with politics.

These findings suggest that many people, especially young people and those who have lower educational attainment levels, have little confidence in the political process. They have become disillusioned because the political process fails to involve them in any real way, while also failing to address many of their core concerns. Transparency and accountability are demanded but rarely delivered. Many of the developments of recent years will simply have added to the disillusionment of many people. A new approach is clearly needed to address this issue. Although Government is engaging with members of civil society on eight specific issues as part of the Constitutional Convention⁸⁰, it can ill afford to ignore the lack of trust and engagement of civil society in the democratic processes of the state.

Some of the decision-making structures of our society and of our world, allow people to be represented in the process. However, almost all of these structures fail to provide genuine participation for most people affected by their decisions, resulting in apathy towards participating in political processes. The decline in participation is exacerbated by the primacy given to the market by many analysts, commentators, policy-makers and politicians. Most people are not involved in the processes that produce plans and decisions which affect their lives. They know that they are being presented with a *fait accompli*. More critically, they realise that they and their families will be forced to live with the consequences of the decisions taken. This is particularly relevant in Ireland in 2015, where people are living with the consequences of the bailout programme and repaying the debts of European banks through a programme of austerity and upward redistribution of resources. Many feel disenfranchised by a process that produced this outcome without any meaningful consultation with citizens. It is crucially important as politicians and policy makers begin to talk of recovery that people feel engaged in this process. In order to ensure that the recovery reaches all sections of society then we must ensure that all voices are heard.

⁸⁰ For more information see <https://www.constitution.ie/Convention.aspx>

Many people feel that their views or comments are ignored or patronised, while the views of those who see the market as solving most, if not all, of society's problems are treated with the greatest respect. This situation seems to persist despite the total failure of market mechanisms in recent years and despite the role these very mechanisms played in producing Ireland's range of current crises and the associated EU-level crises that are not currently being recognised by most decision-makers. Markets have a major role to play. But it needs to be honestly acknowledged that they produce very mixed results when left to their own devices. Recent experience has shown clearly that markets are extremely limited in terms of many policy goals. Consequently other mechanisms are required to ensure that some re-balancing, at least, is achieved. The mechanisms proposed here simply aim to be positive in improving participation in a 21st century society. Modern means of communication and information make it relatively easy to involve people in dialogue and decision-making. The big question is whether the groups with power will share it with others?

A forum for dialogue on civil society issues

A new forum and structure for discussion of issues on which people disagree is becoming more obvious as political and mass communication systems develop. A civil society forum and the formulation of a new social contract against exclusion has the potential to reengage people with the democratic process. Democracy means 'rule by the people', which implies that people participate in shaping the decisions that affect them most closely. What we have, in practice, is a highly centralised government in which we are 'represented' by professional politicians. The more powerful a political party becomes, the more distant it seems to become from the electorate. Party policies on a range of major issues are often difficult to discern. Backbenchers have little control over, or influence on, Government ministers, opposition spokespersons or shadow cabinets. Even within the cabinet some ministers seem to be able to ignore their cabinet colleagues. The democratic process has certainly benefited from the participation of various sectors in different arenas. It would also benefit from taking up the proposals to develop a new social contract against exclusion and a new forum for dialogue on civil society issues.

The failure to discuss openly a range of civil society issues that are of major concern to large numbers of people is contributing to disillusionment with the political process. When discussion or debate does take place, furthermore, many people feel that they are not allowed to participate in any real way. The development of a new forum within which a civil society debate could be conducted on an on-going basis would be a welcome addition to Ireland's political landscape. Such a forum could make a major contribution to improving participation by a wide range of groups in Irish society.

Social Justice Ireland proposes that Government authorises and resources an initiative to identify how a civil society debate could be developed and maintained and to examine how it might connect to the growing debate at European level around civil society issues. There are many issues such a forum could address. Given recent developments in Ireland, the issue of citizenship, its rights, responsibilities, possibilities and limitations in the twenty-first century is one that springs to mind. Another topical issue is the shape of the social model Ireland wishes to develop in the decades ahead. Do we follow a European model or an American one? Or do we want to create an alternative – and, if we do, what shape would it have and how could it be delivered? What future levels of services and taxation will be required and how are resources to be distributed? The issues a civil society forum could address are many and varied and Ireland would benefit immensely from having one.⁸¹

Deliberative Democracy

To facilitate real participation a process of ‘deliberative democracy’ is required. Deliberative democratic structures enable discussion and debate to take place without any imposition of power differentials. Issues and positions are argued and discussed on the basis of the available evidence rather than on the basis of assertions by those who are powerful and unwilling to consider the evidence. It produces evidence-based policy and ensures a high level of accountability among stakeholders. Deliberative participation by all is essential if society is to develop and, in practice, to maintain principles guaranteeing satisfaction of basic needs, respect for others as equals, economic equality, and religious, social, sexual and ethnic equality.

Social Justice Ireland believes a deliberative democracy process, in which all stakeholders would address the evidence, would go some way towards ensuring that local issues are addressed. This process could be implemented under the framework of the Council of Europe’s *Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities*. The Charter states that shared social responsibility in terms of local government requires that local government ‘frame local policies which acknowledge and take into account the contribution made by everyone to strengthening social protection and social cohesion, the fair allocation of common goods, the formation of the principles of social, environmental and intergenerational justice and which also ensure that all stakeholders have a negotiation and decision-making power’ (Council of Europe, 2011). We believe these guidelines can be adapted to the Irish context and would be useful tools for devising a policy to promote greater alignment between local government and the community & voluntary sector in promoting participation at local level. This would involve:

⁸¹ For a further discussion of this issue see Healy and Reynolds (2003:191-197).

- Local government, the community & voluntary sector and the local community working together to ensure the design and efficient delivery of services for local communities to cater for the specific needs of that particular local community.
- Highlighting the key role of social citizenship in creating vibrant, participative and inclusive communities.
- Direct involvement of local communities, local authorities, state bodies and local entrepreneurs in the policy making and decision making processes.
- Ensuring all voices are heard (especially those of people on the margins of society) in the decision making process.
- Reform of current local government structures to better involve local communities in the governance of and decision making in their local area.
- An increased sense of ‘ownership’ over local government by the local community, which will only come about with increased participation. The community & voluntary sector has a key role to play in this.

All communities are different and not every community has the capacity or the infrastructure to engage meaningfully with and participate in local government. This is where the community and voluntary sector has a key role to play in informing, engaging with and providing the local communities with the skills to participate in and contribute to local government.

Citizen Engagement

In October 2012 the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government published *‘Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government’*. The document outlines a vision for local government as ‘leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably’ (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012: iii). One of the stated aims of this process of local government reform is to create more meaningful and responsive local democracy (DECLG 2012:148) with options for citizen engagement and participative democracy outlined in the report. The new framework for public engagement and participation, introduced after the local and European elections in May 2014 is called “The Public Participation Network” (PPN). The PPN facilitates input by the public into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation and decision-making committees within local government. The role of the PPN⁸² is:

⁸² For a detailed outline of the structure of the PPN see section 3 of the Working Group Report.

1. To contribute to the local authority's development for the County/City a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.
2. to facilitate opportunities for networking, communication and the sharing of information between environmental, community and voluntary groups and between these groups and the local authority.
3. to identify issues of collective concern and work to influence policy locally in relation to these issues.
4. to actively support inclusion of socially excluded groups, communities experiencing high levels of poverty, communities experiencing discrimination, including Travellers, to enable them to participate at local and county level and to clearly demonstrate same.
5. to encourage and enable public participation in local decision-making and planning of services.
6. to facilitate the selection of participants from the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors onto city/county decision making bodies.
7. to support a process that will feed the broad range of ideas, experience, suggestions and proposals of the Network into policies and plans being developed by agencies and decision makers in areas that are of interest and relevant to the Network
8. to work to develop the Environmental, Community and Voluntary sectors so that the work of the sectors is clearly recognised and acknowledged and the sectors have a strong collective voice within the County/City.
9. to support the individual members of the Public Participation Network so that:
 - They can develop their capacity and do their work more effectively.
 - They can participate effectively in the Public Participation Network activities.
 - They are included and their voices and concerns are heard.

The PPN structure embeds the need to develop sustainable communities and to consider the well-being of communities at the heart of the local decision making process. It is important that the necessary resources are made available to ensure that the PPNs function effectively and that members are given the training and support required to enable them to represent their communities. Most of the PPNs were established by the end of Q1 2015. However several have not followed the correct processes in choosing representatives for local authority structures and this is an issue that must be rectified or the key focus of the PPNs will be lost and they will not deliver on their potential impact on local development.

A deliberative democracy structure and framework embedded into the citizen engagement and local government structures can enhance community involvement in decision making and the policy making process at a local level. It can also ensure that governance, participation and policy evaluation are reformed in line with the Good Governance part of the Policy Framework for a Just Ireland detailed in chapter 2.

Supporting the Community & Voluntary Sector

The issue of governance is of major importance for Government and for society at large. Within this wider reality it is an especially crucial issue for the community & voluntary sector. The community & voluntary sector is playing a major role in responding to both the causes and the consequences of these crises. It should also play a major role in public discussion regarding what type of economic and social vision Ireland wants to pursue in the future. Support for the work of the community and voluntary sector is crucial and it should not be left to the welcome but very limited charity of philanthropists. Funding required by the sector has been provided over many years by Government. In recent years, however, the level of state funding has been reduced, with obvious consequences for those depending on the community & voluntary sector. It is crucial that Government appropriately resource this sector into the future and that it remains committed to the principle of providing multi-annual statutory funding.

Social dialogue is a critically important component of effective decision making in a modern democracy. Now that the economy is beginning to improve and some additional resources are likely to be available, Government is proposing to begin a process of social dialogue as it prepares a multi-annual plan for Ireland's development. A social dialogue process would be a very positive development for Ireland at this point in our recovery. Government needs to engage all sectors of society. Otherwise it is likely to produce lop-sided outcomes that will benefit those who are engaged in the social dialogue process while excluding others, most notably the vulnerable. If Government wishes the whole society to take responsibility for producing a more viable future then it must involve all of us. Responsibility for shaping the future should be shared among all stakeholders. There are many reasons for involving all sectors in this process: to ensure priority is given to well-being and the common good; to address the challenges of markets and their failures; to link rights and responsibilities.

A process of social dialogue involving all and not just some of the sectors in Irish society would be a key mechanism in maximising the resources for moving forward and in ensuring the best possible outcomes for Ireland. Ireland urgently needs to set a course for the future that will secure macroeconomic stability, a just tax system, strengthened social services and infrastructure, good governance and a real commitment to sustainability. A social dialogue process that includes all the stakeholders in Irish society would go a long way towards achieving such a future.

The Community & Voluntary Pillar provides a mechanism for social dialogue that should be engaged with by Government across the range of policy issues in which the Pillar's members are deeply engaged. All aspects of governance should be characterised by transparency and accountability. Social dialogue contributes to both transparency and accountability. We believe governance along these lines can and should be developed in Ireland.

Key Policy Priorities on People and Participation

- Immediately increase the weekly allowance allocated to asylum-seekers on 'direct provision' to at least €65 per week for an adult and €38 for a child and give priority to recognising the right of all refugees and asylum-seekers to work.
- Adequately resource the PPN structures for citizen engagement at local level and ensure capacity building is an integral part of the process.
- 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.