



working to build a just society

Social Justice Matters: 2022 guide to a Fairer Irish society

20th April 2022

#SocialJusticeMatters

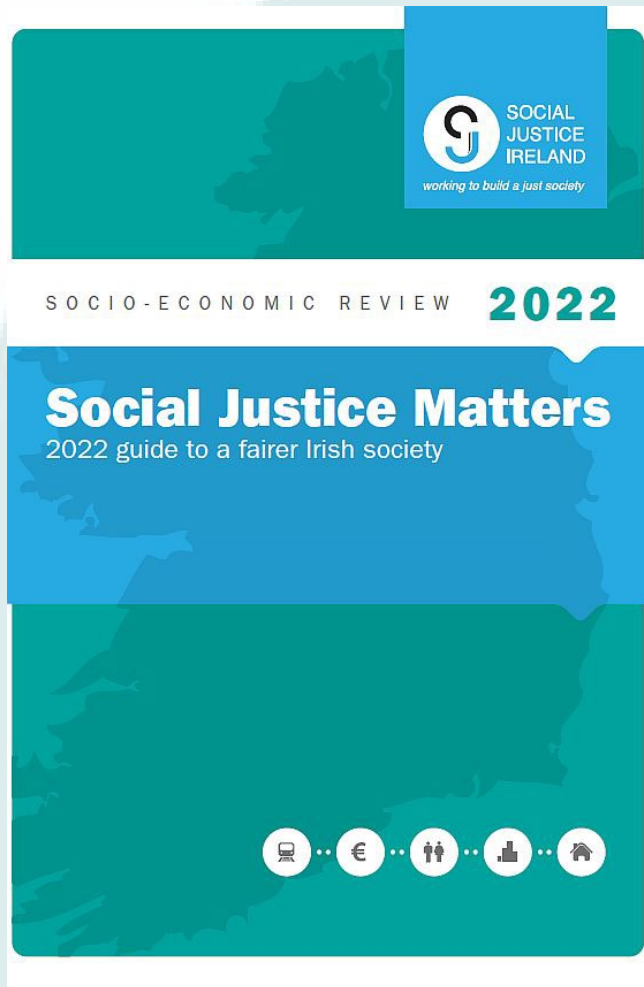
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Social Justice Ireland – who we are

- 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: 2022 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

2022 – a moment of reckoning

- Irish society continues to face great social and economic upheaval.
- There is now a dawning and widespread recognition that our economy and society, both here in Ireland and more broadly, must change to become more equal, more just, and more sustainable if we are to meet the needs of the people and the challenges of the future.
- We will need to create new, and to repurpose old, institutions to manage and implement this transition.
- *Social Justice Matters 2022* outlines a framework to address Ireland's challenges in an integrated and sustainable manner.

Time to deliver on Programme for Government commitments

- Time for change – a Wellbeing Framework for 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.
- This approach is not simply do-able; it is also desirable, effective and efficient.

A Time to Transition

- First, we will need to forge a new social contract to replace the outdated neo-liberal consensus of the 1980s.
- Second, we will need effective governance mechanisms to forge a consensus on the detailed steps ahead.
- Finally, we will need to find the means to finance the transition, recognising that any short-term cost will be far outweighed by the consequences of failure.

Time for real social dialogue

- Social dialogue involving ALL stakeholders.
- A model of Social Dialogue is required focussed on a broad-based enhancement of capabilities in the economy and society.
- Developing mutually acceptable solutions to problems
- Ensuring support for such solutions when implemented - Consensus
- Also: Increase transparency of budgetary and other important decisions.
- Current level of engagement of policy makers and of wider public is too low.

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

Wellbeing 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				

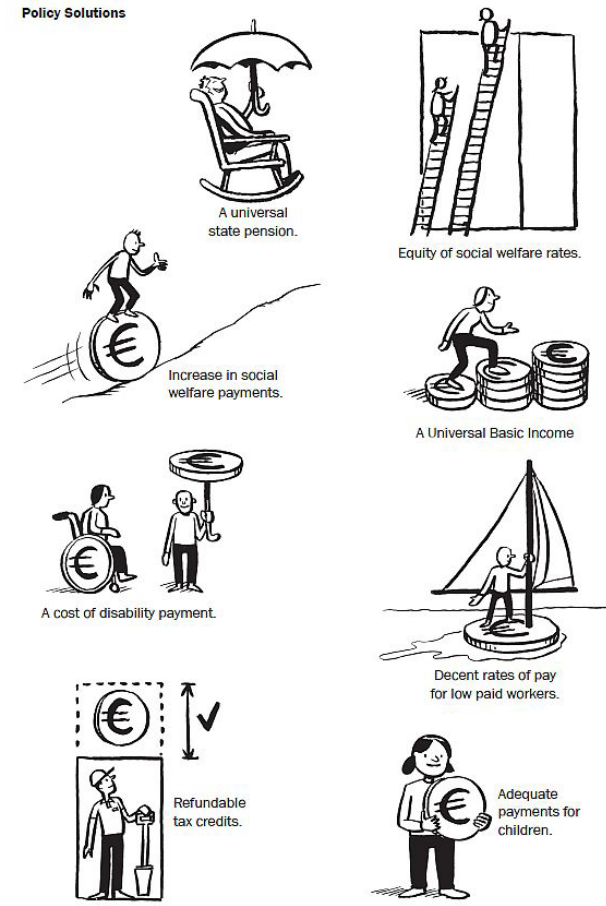
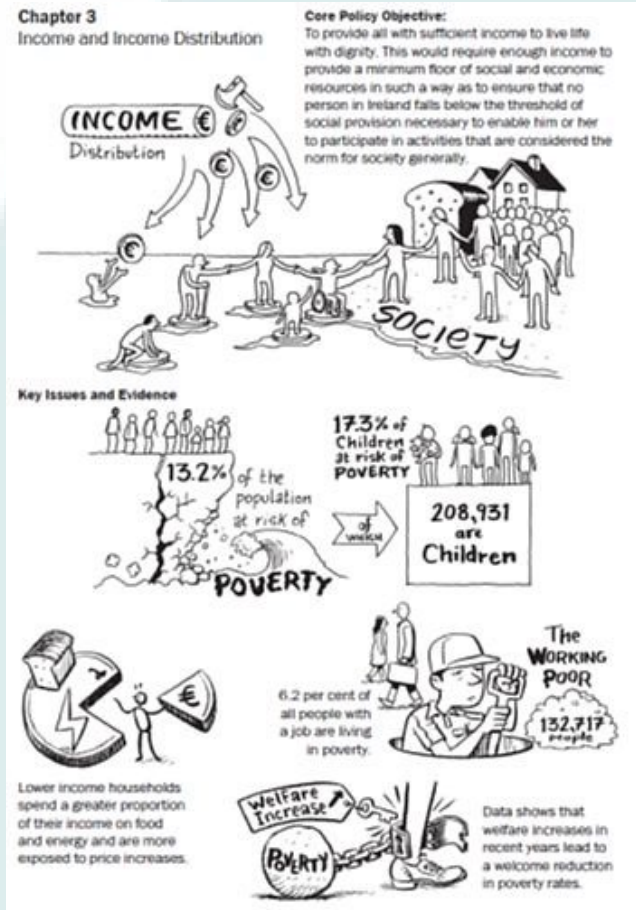
Building a Wellbeing Framework

- Structure our economy so that it works for the good of society
- Rethink the interaction of employment and work, taxation, and welfare
- Give serious consideration to policies such as a universal basic income and universal basic services.
- The implementation of a Wellbeing Framework and the development of a new Social Contract requires that Government engage with all stakeholders to develop a series of policy responses that are fit for purpose.
- The current cost of living, energy and food crises in Ireland demand that all stakeholders have a seat at the table. These issues are too important, and too volatile, to be left to vested interests alone. A new social dialogue is essential to ensure that no-one is left behind in this transition.

Strategic Investment in Wellbeing

- While this Wellbeing Framework we describe is eminently deliverable, it will cost money
- Requires the adoption of counter-cyclical fiscal policies.
- While recovery is underway for some, we can see that it is unfolding in different ways for different groups and different parts of our country. Policy must be better focused on addressing and minimising these divisions.
- We need a “war-time” approach – borrowing, taxation and warehousing.

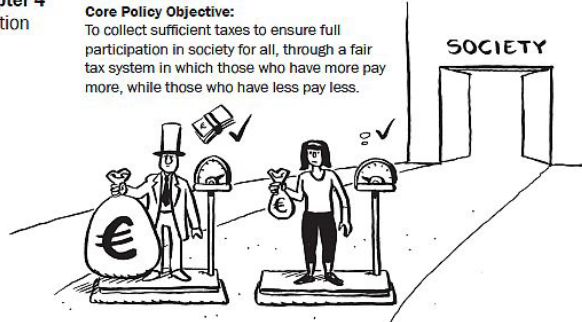
How can we set a minimum floor of income to address poverty and inequality?



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



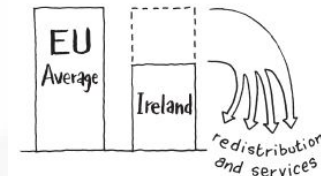
Ireland needs to broaden its tax base and increase its overall tax take.

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



Suggestions that higher levels of taxation will damage Ireland's competitiveness relative to other countries are not supported by international studies of competitiveness.

Policy Solutions



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



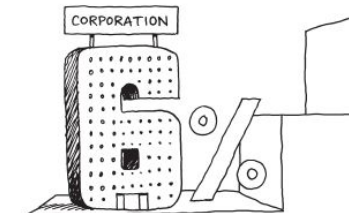
Poverty proof budget tax changes to ensure they do not widen rich poor gap.



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.



Continue to reform the area of tax expenditures and monitor on an on-going basis the cost and benefits of all current and new tax expenditures.



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



Ireland's labour market has recovered strongly from the period of closures and lockdowns throughout much of 2020. Although the numbers unemployed are slightly increased, all other indicators report a strong improvement.



While the number of people employed is higher now than at anytime, just over one in five workers are part-time workers and there are 110,000 of these who are underemployed.



One third of those who are unemployed are long-term unemployed. As the pandemic unemployment payment is phased out, there is potential for the numbers unemployed and on welfare supports for more than one year to increase.



The growth in the number of individuals with less work hours than ideal and in precarious employment situations is a major labour market challenge and one which may grow in the period ahead.

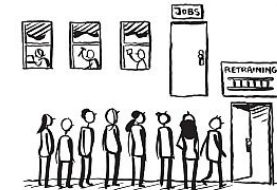
Policy Solutions



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. This, however, should not be confined to job creation. Work and a job are not the same thing.



Launch a major investment programme focused on prioritising initiatives that strengthen social infrastructure, including a comprehensive school building programme and a much larger social housing programme.



Adopt policies to address the worrying issue of youth unemployment. In particular, 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.



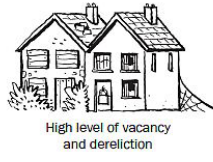
Key Issues/Evidence



Population expansion, need more homes



Lack of suitable housing for older people and people with disabilities



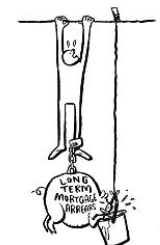
High level of vacancy and dereliction



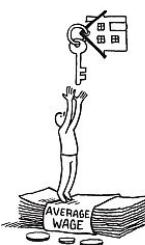
High number of homeless and not all being counted



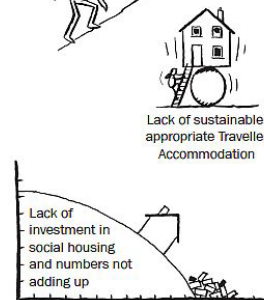
Poverty problem among renters



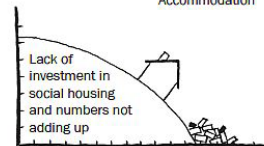
Long Term Mortgage Arrears increasing



House purchase and Rent are unaffordable



Lack of sustainable, appropriate Traveller Accommodation



Lack of investment in social housing and numbers not adding up

Policy Solutions



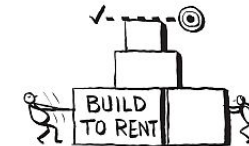
Housing First for Families.



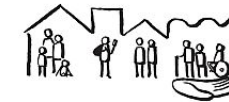
Set a target of 20 per cent of all housing stock to be social housing.



Address affordability through supply-side cost reductions



Reduce reliance on the Build to Rent sector.



Life-cycle approach to housing development and town planning.



Invest in an equity scheme for borrowers in late state mortgage arrears of 10 years+.



Encourage the right type of supply



Deal with vacancy and dereliction.



Sanction Local Authorities who do not utilise their budget for Traveller accommodation.



Introduce legislation to limit the length of time families can spend in Family Hubs and other emergency accommodation.

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 additional resources committed for the development of the healthcare system in 2021 are retained and used to implement Sláintecare.



Increase the availability and quality of Primary Care and Social Care services.



Ensure medical card coverage for all people who are vulnerable.



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.



Create a statutory entitlement to Home Care 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:

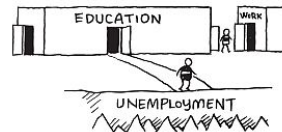
To provide relevant education for all people throughout their lives, so that they can participate fully and meaningfully in developing themselves, their community and the wider society.

Key Issues/Evidence

Despite some progress, the achievement of pupils in schools with concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is still well below that of other schools.



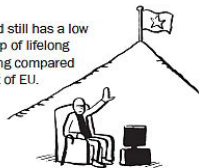
The longer a person stays in education the more likely they are to be in employment. The risk of unemployment increases considerably the lower the level of education.



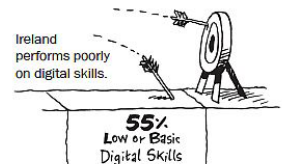
Ireland has the second lowest expenditure on ECCE for 3 to 5 year olds in the OECD.



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



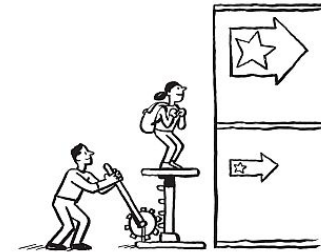
Ireland performs poorly on digital skills.



Policy Solutions



Commit to reducing class sizes and pupil teacher ratios at primary and post primary level by 1 point per annum to 2030.



Make the improvement of educational outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and disadvantaged communities a policy priority.



Fully resource 'Adult Literacy for Life'.



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 2027.



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



To meet the digital and green transitions develop an integrated skills development, 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

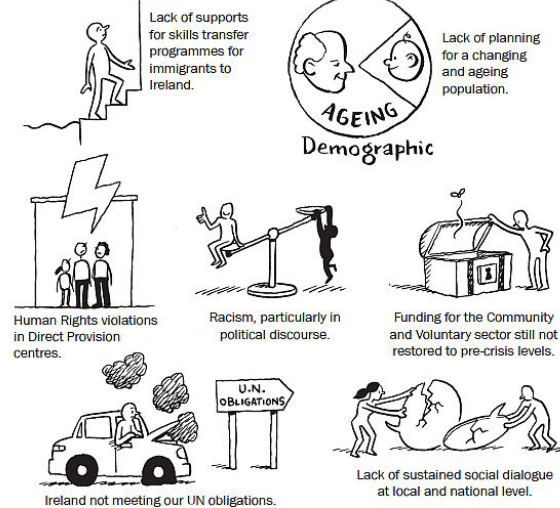
Core Policy Objective:

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.



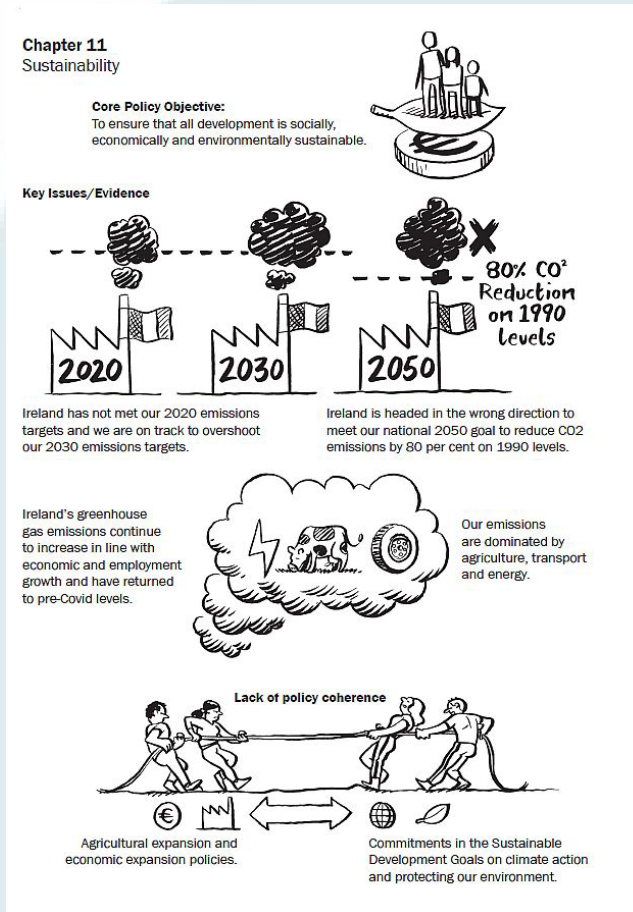
Key Issues/Evidence



Policy Solutions



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



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 sustainable public services and employment opportunities.



To secure the existence of viable, vibrant and sustainable communities in all parts of rural Ireland.

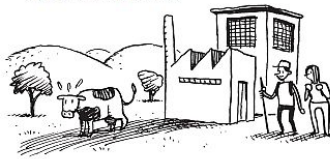
Key Issues/Evidence



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 that investment is balanced between the regions.



Sustainable agricultural practices and sustainable land management must form the basis of future agricultural policy.



Prepare for the digital transition by investing in the regions and in social, infrastructural and human capital supports.



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

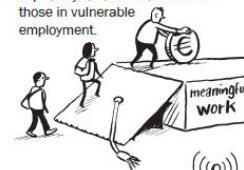


Invest in an integrated, accessible and flexible rural transport network.



Prioritise rolling out high speed broadband to rural areas.

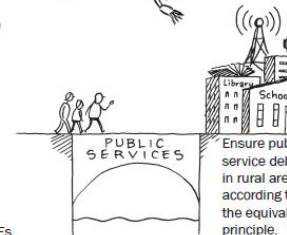
Invest in human capital through targeted education and training programmes, especially for older workers and those in vulnerable employment.



Establish a Just Transition and Adaptation Dialogue for rural areas.



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



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



Climate change = forced migration.



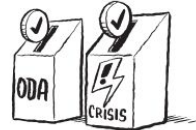
Disease does not respect borders.



Need to combat racism in policies



Just taxation in the Global South.



ODA target should not include costs of crises such as Ukrainian supports.

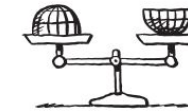
Policy Solutions

UN Target

0.7% GNP

to Overseas Development Assistance

Renew its commitment to meet the United Nations target of contributing 0.7 per cent of national income to ODA by 2027 and set a clear pathway to achieve this.



Ensure that Irish and EU policies towards countries in the Global South are just.



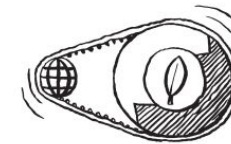
Support implementation of SDGs in Global South.



Proper scrutiny for Irish Aid partners in Global South.



Debt forgiveness for poorest nations.



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



Take a person-centred approach to the AIDS/HIV crisis in Global South.

Time for change – time for a Wellbeing Framework

‘The reality is that inequality causes real suffering, regardless of how we choose to label such distress. Greater inequality heightens social threat and status anxiety, evoking feelings of shame which feed into our instincts for withdrawal, submission and subordination: when the social pyramid gets higher and steeper and status insecurity increases, there are widespread psychological costs. Status competition and anxiety increase, people become less friendly, less altruistic and more likely to put others down.’

(Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018, p. 58)

- More equal societies are better societies.
- Ireland, and indeed the planet, now faces new and mounting crises; a situation where business as usual can mean only social and environmental catastrophe.



SOCIAL
JUSTICE
IRELAND

working to build a just society

Questions



Social Rights for All?


Time to Deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights.



European Research Series

From the Crash to Covid and Beyond

Review of the Social Situation in Europe and Considerations
for a More Sustainable and Inclusive Future

 Social Justice Ireland
2021