



## **Draft Minutes of National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group Special Meeting**

**19 February 2021**

**Online (via Webex)**

### **Attendees:**

1. **Andrew Forde** (AF) Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), Chairperson
2. **Michael Clifford** (MC) Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)
3. **Ivan Cooper** (IC) The Wheel
4. **Tammy Darcy** (TD) The Shona Project
5. **Richard Deane** (RD) Pobal
6. **Gillian Devers** (GD) Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)
7. **Chris Gordon** (CG) Irish Social Enterprise Network (ISEN)
8. **Mary MacSweeney** (MMS) Dublin City Council (DCC)
9. **Therese Molyneux** (TM) Department of Justice (DoJ)
10. **Prof Deiric O'Broin** (DOB) Dublin City University (DCU)
11. **Brid O'Brien** (BOB) Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)
12. **Rónán Ó Dálaigh** (ROD) Social Enterprise Development Co. (SEDCo)
13. **Larry O'Neill** (LON) Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)
14. **Eoghan Ryan** (ER) Rethink Ireland (RI)
15. **Brendan Whelan** (BW) Social Finance Foundation (SFF)
16. **Donal O'Sullivan** (DOS) Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)
17. **William Parnell** (WP) DRCD
18. **Richard Gavin** (RG) DRCD
19. **John Ryan** (JR) DRCD
20. **Sam Dowzard** (SD) DRCD
21. **Íde Holden** (ÍH) DRCD

### **Introduction and Agenda:**

The Chair welcomed participants to the extraordinary meeting, and noted that there would be two key items to be discussed -

- 1: Social Enterprise Awareness Raising Strategy 2021
- 2: Draft National Social Enterprise Census 2021 – Concept Paper

## **Item 1: Social Enterprise Awareness Raising Strategy 2021**

Richard Gavin thanked the Awareness Strategy Sub-Group for their work to complete the Awareness Raising Strategy for Social Enterprise.

RG then presented the Awareness Raising Strategy to the group including an outline of the process involved. The Strategy was broadly welcomed by the NSEPIG and the following points were raised by members of the group:

- The involvement of the social enterprise sector in the implementation of the Awareness Raising Strategy was underlined – that all members of the NSEPIG have a critical and active role to play in the implementation of the Strategy if it is to be successful.
- The importance of continued collaboration between officials and stakeholders was underlined.
- It was noted that there may be an opportunity for social enterprises or stakeholders to tender to support the design process or future hosting of a website called for by the Awareness Raising Strategy.
- The location of a social enterprise website should be carefully considered, particularly if it is to be on the Gov.ie website. It was noted that there can be some difficulties in finding documents on Gov.ie. It was suggested a standalone website may be created that could be linked to Gov.ie and similarly it was suggested that this could be something which social enterprise could tender for.
- The importance of local radio in creating awareness around the strategy was underlined.
- The opportunity to mainstream supports and raise awareness with ‘Social Enterprise Boot camps’ was mentioned.
- A point was made about the strategy supporting the creation of market opportunities, which will in turn will support the capacity building of social enterprises.
- MC welcomed the strategy, and said the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is supportive of the strategy from an employment generation point-of-view. AF noted this and mentioned that DRCD will also be meeting with the LEOs in the near future to discuss further collaboration, in particular to ensure a consistent understanding of Social Enterprise amongst providers of mainstream business supports.

## **Second Item: Draft National Social Enterprise Census 2021 – Concept Paper**

Sam Dowzard gave a presentation on the Draft National Social Enterprise Census 2021 Concept Paper. The Paper was noted as being intended to stimulate discussion, generate feedback, and to draw out the expertise of the NSEPIG and other social enterprise stakeholders.

It was highlighted how crucial improving data collection is in order to develop a reliable and comprehensive evidence base to better inform policy development. It was also noted that a reliable evidence base can help to raise awareness and demonstrate the importance of social enterprise in Ireland.

- The rationale and goals of the census were stated as:
  - To establish an accurate and accessible dataset regarding the size and scope of social enterprise.
  - To be as comprehensive as possible given the spectrum of social enterprise in Ireland
  - To create a rigorous and repeatable methodological framework
- There was a universal agreement about the need for a census from the NSEPIG and in that regard the Concept Paper was welcomed by the Group. The Group additionally recognised that it was a considerable project to be undertaken. It was also noted that the first census of social enterprises will be the most important one.
- The question of eligibility and categorisation of social enterprise was noted as crucial to the intended approach, as well as the importance of rooting the methodology in the definition found in the National Social Enterprise Policy.
- The implications of Covid-19 and the involvement of the CSO in the process were mentioned as factors to be considered.
- Due to the importance of the project it was suggested that forming a Sub-Group of the NSEPIG should be reflected on. This point was confirmed by the Chair as an intention.
- The group considered the time line for the project to be ambitious. AF acknowledged that while this was this case the very ambitious timeline was deliberate in order to highlight the importance of this work and to progress it expeditiously. However, AF noted that the project would not be unnecessarily rushed as ensuring the exercise's success is the main goal.
- Transparency and the issue of abridged accounts was noted as an issue which should be considered. It was noted that a new Charities Act will not allow registered charities to publish abridged accounts.
- Input at a local level was stressed as a critical success factor. The Local Development Companies (LDCs) were highlighted as being in a position to play a key role in the process. The importance of demonstrating the value of participation for social enterprises was also noted.
- The importance of ensuring broad alignment with EU orientations on social enterprise was mentioned.
- The value of a longitudinal approach to this study was highlighted as was the need to ensure clarity between concepts such as 'mapping', 'survey', and 'census' activities.
- 'Survey Fatigue' among social enterprises should be considered in the planning of a census.

#### **AOB**

- The group was invited to email any other inputs.
- The next meeting of the NSEPIG will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021.
- The development of a new Social Enterprise Newsletter was mentioned to the group as part of the Awareness Raising Strategy.

- William Parnell informed the group that this would be his last meeting as he is retiring and wished the group success in the future. The NSEPIG thanked William for his contributions and wished him well in the future.

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