



**Minutes of National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group
Seventh Meeting**

**21 July 2021
Online (via Webex)**

Attendees:

Richard Gavin (RG), Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) Chairperson
Michael Clifford (MC), Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)
Tammy Darcy (TD), the Shona Project
Richard Deane (RD), Pobal
Chris Gordon (CG), Irish Social Enterprise Network (ISEN)
Mary MacSweeney (MMS), Dublin City Council (DCC)
Prof. Deiric Ó Broin (DOB), Dublin City University (DCU)
Rónán Ó Dálaigh (ROD), Social Enterprise Development Co. (SEDCo)
Eoghan Ryan (ER), Rethink Ireland (RI)
Brendan Whelan (BW), Social Finance Foundation (SFF)

Also in Attendance:

John Gallagher (JG), John Gallagher Consulting
Anna Hogan (AH), DRCD
Íde Holden (IH), DRCD
Gareth Makim (GM), DRCD
Fintan O'Brien (FOB), DRCD
Donal O'Sullivan (DOS), Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)
John Ryan (JR), DRCD

Apologies:

Andrew Forde (AF), Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) Chairperson
Brid O'Brien (BOB), Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
Gillian Devers (GD), Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)
Ivan Cooper (IC), The Wheel
Larry O'Neill (LON), Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)
Therese Molyneux (TM), Department of Justice (DoJ)

1. Agenda & Minutes

The Agenda for the sixth meeting of the National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group (NSEPIG) was approved as proposed.

2. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

Richard Gavin chaired the meeting in lieu of Andrew Forde, welcomed participants to the meeting and introduced two new participants:

Fintan O'Brien - the new Assistant Secretary for Rural Development and Regional Affairs and Anna Hogan, the new Administrative Officer in the Social Enterprise unit.

The following updates were provided:

- In terms of supporting Social Enterprise – good progress has been made, with the launch of the Start-up Fund with Rethink Ireland and the Covid Regeneration Fund with the ILDN.
- Two further DAF announcements are due August and September. More information about DAF funding was mentioned later in the meeting.
- Other areas where DRCD are supporting social enterprise were described as inputting into the development of the LECP guidelines – to ensure that social enterprise is highlighted.
- DRCD is inputting on the National Oversight Group on development of Regional Enterprise Plans.
- A New LEADER program was mentioned as being developed – while LEADER were acknowledged as already supporting social enterprise – more work was being done to ensure that this support is increased.
- The Peace Plus Program is being developed, assurances were given that social enterprise would continue to be a key part of the program.
- A recent meeting took place between DRCD and the Charities Regularity Authority (CRA) and further meetings on Social Enterprise are planned.

Comments were invited.

3. Brief Update on Implementation of the Policy

John Ryan presented an update on Policy Implementation, covering the following points:

- The implementation of the Awareness Strategy continues with the recent publication of the third edition of the Social Enterprise Newsletter and the DAF ARISE Awareness Scheme due to be launched in September.
- The legal form study and legal evaluation of same (in partnership with Rethink Ireland) are nearly complete.
- Chambers Ireland – SE Partnership Category has closed with 5 applicants.
- Covid Regeneration Scheme - Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD announced a top up of €145,000 to bring the total funding to €945,000 to support hundreds of Social Enterprises across the country
- Start-up Scheme - Minister announced the launch of the €800,000 (over two years) Social Enterprise Start-up Fund to provide tailored supports to Start-up Social Enterprises and will support social enterprises with small grants to help them expand their businesses and create jobs.
- Irish Research Council updated that the chosen applicant for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship is now unavailable. DRCD will review the situation shortly.
- A draft Annual Report 2020 is currently with the Management Board for approval.
- A Procurement Webinar is planned for 28 July in partnership with Pobal and the Department of Justice.
- DRCD are considering a proposal from the OECD to review the policy.

4. Update on progress of the Social Enterprise Data Collection (Census) provided by RG

A proposal to commence an open tender for the Social Enterprise Data Collection (Census) has been approved by the Management Board.

- There are two stages:
 1. to design a comprehensive data collection process/methodology with social enterprise stakeholders, to establish the size and scope of the social enterprise population in Ireland and
 2. to conduct the first National Social Enterprise baseline data collection exercise in collaboration with social enterprise networks, and to present a comprehensive report.
- The decision regarding this open procurement was made to be more inclusive for social enterprise stakeholders and more in the spirit of partnership in implementing the policy.

Comments were invited.

The tender will be commencing in September, with a time-line of two months.

There was clarification that moving away from the general approach (OGP framework) would not cause difficulties, as there were good reasons for doing so, and it is hoped to attract interest from experts in the field and social enterprise stakeholders or even a collaboration of both.

5. Brief Presentation on Social Finance Project DCU/RI/ISEN/CFI

Deiric Ó Broin gave a presentation regarding the Social Finance Project involving DCU, Rethink Ireland, Irish Social Enterprise Network and Community Finance Ireland.

- The tasks of the Social Finance Project have been divided up into various work packages and assigned to the partner groups best suited to performing these tasks.
- The purpose of this project is to contribute to the development of the social finance sector in Ireland, developing financial instruments for social enterprises and supporting the wide range of social enterprise organisations working within any area that falls under the National Social Enterprise Policy definition.
- The Financing Social Enterprise in Ireland survey was announced with the request that information about it be disseminated. The survey deadline was 28 July and a second stage was mentioned in the coming months.

The market in Ireland was described as grant-orientated and inclined towards debt aversion.

6. Updates from all Members

Mary McSweeney updated the group on the following points in relation to Dublin City Council:

- The dialogue with LEO centre of Excellence and the Local Authorities was described as ongoing following the circular issued on social enterprise.
- Dublin has been selected as one of eight peer learning cities in a European peer to peer social enterprise learning scheme, they will be meeting again in October.
- Members of the NSEPIG group were invited to attend “A Global Social Economy Forum– From the margins to the mainstream” from October 4.

- Dublin City Council will be holding the Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards in September. The evaluation of applications is in progress. The NSEPIG group will be updated when the date of award and format are agreed.
- Deiric O'B informed the group that the IRC – DCU application was successful and will start on 1 September

Eoghan Ryan provided the following updates:

- The EU funded project to establish a **National Competence Centre for Social innovation** in Ireland. This was described as similar in scope to social finance with ISEN. It will look to map the social innovation system. A key part of that is looking at European practices and peer learning and the output of project is to develop an action plan.
- Rethink Ireland also shared the link for further info. on their website in connection to the **Social Enterprise Start Up Fund**: https://rethinkireland.ie/current_fund/social-enterprise-start-up-fund/ This will provide €800,000 across 2 years, with 25 awards of €12,000 in the first year. Closing date for applications is after August bank holiday weekend.
- Rethink Ireland are undertaking their own awareness raising campaign in Q4 – “The Future is Social”. Insights from the campaign, e.g. analytics from the website traffic, what worked/didn't work will be shared with the NSEPIG group.

Deiric Ó Broin updated regarding the following points:

- A Social Enterprise symposium will take place on 24-26 Aug in Waterford as part of the 2021 Irish Academy of Management Annual Conference. The following link will be shared with stakeholders: <https://iamireland.ie/annual-conference/2021-iam-annual-conference-wit.html>
- DCU has launched a resource hub “From Passion to Action”, for social innovation and social entrepreneurship education with resources such as podcasts, for those interested in Social Entrepreneurship. The following link will be shared with stakeholders: <https://www.dcu.ie/socialentrepreneurship>
- Additionally, two PhD scholarship routes were mentioned and local authorities can apply to be partners. A Higher Education steering group helped to establish a PhD network with 97% of PhD students involved.

Chris Gordon gave updates regarding the following:

- FOSO POCO project, Cork City hosted a workshop entitled *Fostering Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems Post-Covid 19* on Tuesday 21st July 2021. The project focusses on developing policies in the area of support for social enterprise and the workshop focused on the theme of *Fostering Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems Post-Covid 19*.
- The Atlantic Social Lab aims to develop and promote social innovation approaches and methods to give response to key growing social issues of the Atlantic Area.
- Michael Clifford gave feedback about Andrew Forde's presentation to the LEO network, confirming that the LEOs benefitted from a greater understanding of Social Enterprises as a result.

7. **Our Rural Future Presentation**

Gareth Makim gave a presentation on Our Rural Future.

Our Rural Future is a whole-of-Government policy for rural Ireland for the next five years. It contains more than 150 commitments across Government and focuses on sustainable economic, social, and environmental development. ORF clearly recognises the potential of social enterprises in rural development. RG added that work has already commenced on planning a Support event for rural social enterprises due to take place in October.

The policy and Work Programme are available here: www.gov.ie/ourruralfuture

8. **A.O.B.**

In response to a query regarding continued funding for social enterprises, RG stated the department will continue to ensure sufficient and appropriate funding in line with the policy and also highlight existing significant funding from the DAF, LEADER, SICAP and CSP.

The date for the eighth meeting of the NSEPIG was agreed for 21 October 2021.

There being no other business, this meeting of the NSEPIG was brought to a close.

Actions as a result of the seventh meeting of the Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group:

Action No.	Action Description	Responsible	Target date
Action 1	All presentations and links from this meeting to be circulated to members.	IH	23/07/2021
Action 2	The date for the next meeting is the 21 October 2021. Save the date calendar invites and links to be circulated to all members.	IH	22/07/2021
Action 3	Rethink Ireland "The Future is Social" - insights from the campaign, e.g. analytics from the website traffic, what worked/didn't work will be shared with the NSEPIG group.	ER	Q4