



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection

# Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 Ambition, Goals, Commitments

Second Progress Report:  
October 2021 to June 2022

Published by

Department of Social Protection

Áras Mhic

Dhiarmada

Store Street

Dublin 1

19 October 2022

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## Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to publish the second Progress Report of the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025: Ambition, Goals, Commitments*, Government's national strategy for the reduction of poverty and increased social inclusion in Ireland.

Following a challenging first year for the Roadmap, early 2021 saw public health restrictions reintroduced to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. However, as the year progressed and the vaccination programme accelerated, society slowly reopened and gradually returned to normal. Pandemic related support measures remained in place for those who required them, nevertheless by the end of 2021 employment levels had exceeded the National Recovery Plan target of 2.5 million by the end of 2024.

While this is welcome, it is important that Government continues to support its most vulnerable citizens who may be at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which is the ambition of the Roadmap. Government, through Roadmap commitments, aims to ensure that all citizens have access to sufficient income, resources and services that allow them to play an active part in society.

As we moved into 2022, there were new challenges, both nationally and globally: significant and persistent increases in the cost of living; and the impact of the ongoing war in Ukraine. These challenges highlight the importance of protecting the most vulnerable in our society, and the need to adapt to the changing circumstances. To mitigate the increased cost of living Government announced a series of measures to support households such as providing an energy credit of €200 to all households, additional Fuel Allowance payments of €125 in March 2022 and €100 in May 2022, a reduction of 20 per cent in public transport fares until the end of the year,

reductions in the prices of petrol and diesel, bringing Budget measures forward, increasing the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance by €100, and removing the fee for the school transport scheme for the academic year

As Chair of the Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group, which monitors the implementation of the Roadmap, I welcome the collaborative work between Departments to drive the continued delivery of commitments. This report, and the accompanying Report Card, were discussed at the September 2022 meeting of the Steering Group and I thank the Steering Group for its contribution in completing this work.

This report focuses on progress made on the implementation of commitments up to the end of June 2022, including key achievements during that period. It is accompanied by a Roadmap Report Card which provides detail on progress of the individual commitments up to the end of June 2022.

I trust you will find that the progress achieved in delivering commitments during this period demonstrates Government's clear commitment to the Roadmap for Social Inclusion.

A Mid-Term Review of the Roadmap is currently being undertaken to review progress in the implementation of commitments. This includes a public consultation process and a review of the indicators used in the Roadmap. A key aim of the Mid-Term Review is to appropriately identify areas of the Roadmap which need to be prioritised in the coming years, given the changed environment since the Roadmap was published in January 2020. This will ensure that the Roadmap remains relevant to the poverty and social inclusion issues facing Irish society today.

**Joe O'Brien, T.D.**

**Minister of State with responsibility for Social Inclusion**

**Department of Social Protection**

## Introduction

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025: Ambition, Goals, Commitments was approved by Government and published in January 2020. This is the second report on progress towards the achievement of the Roadmap goals. The primary ambition of the Roadmap is to “*Reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less and to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU.*” The Roadmap translates this ambition into 7 Goals underpinned by 66 unique commitments (actions) that will be taken to help deliver these goals. It is a whole-of-Government strategy with a five-year timeframe with a mid-term review in 2022 to facilitate an evaluation of the impact of the Roadmap commitments.

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion complements other national strategies, which are crucial to ensuring that social inclusion is at the core of public policy and delivery across all departments and Government services.

The Roadmap:

- Sets out an ambition for what is to be achieved and works to ensure that these ambitions are reflected in sectoral and service plans across Government as they are renewed over the period of the Roadmap.
- Sets specific commitments, particularly with regard to income supports and employment services, which complement the sectoral approaches and ensure that the risk of poverty and deprivation is minimised, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing or at risk of experiencing the poorest outcomes.
- Sets up an evidence-based framework for monitoring and reporting progress and to inform the renewal of existing, and the development of future, sectoral strategies.

Section 1 of this Report sets out the changed environment during the first two and a half years of the Roadmap’s implementation and the governance structures put in place to monitor progress.

Section 2 provides an update on the national and EU targets against which progress is measured, using the latest data available from the annual Survey on Income and Living Conditions in 2020 and 2021. More detailed information on the trends in each measure can be found in the “*Trends in Social Inclusion Data*” document, which will be published shortly.

Section 3 reviews the key achievements up to the end of June 2022 under each of the Roadmap Goals. A report card showing the status of each of the commitments at the end of June 2022 is published alongside this report.

## Section 1: A Changed Environment

The first Progress Report set out the considerable changes that had taken place since the publication of the Roadmap in January 2020, such as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the formation of the new Government in June 2020. The Programme for Government “Our Shared Future” committed to the rigorous implementation of the Roadmap strategy.

The end of 2021 saw the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, which had seen large sections of society shutting down in the early parts of the year. However, Government continued to provide a range of supports to ensure that people who lost their livelihoods and those who were most vulnerable, would be protected in as far as possible from the ongoing impact of the pandemic and consequent public health restrictions, these included the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme, and the Enhanced Illness Benefit. As 2021 progressed, and the number of people vaccinated increased, society slowly reopened and adjusted to the “new normal.” While the arrival of the COVID-19 virus, and the resulting health, social and economic challenges, had an impact on the timing of delivery of some Roadmap commitments, work has continued throughout 2021 and into 2022 on the delivery of commitments.

New challenges impacting on society in 2022 include the significant increases in the cost of living both nationally and globally, and the impact of the ongoing war in Ukraine. By the end of June 2022 Ireland had experienced annual inflation of 9.1%, a 38 year high. This situation has been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine with, in addition to the humanitarian impact, its effect on international energy and commodity flows. The disproportionate impact of inflation on the most vulnerable in society has reinforced the importance of the Roadmap ambition and goals.

## Monitoring Progress

The Roadmap sets out how progress in implementing commitments will be monitored in the chapter on Implementation and Governance. This includes a commitment (no. 64) to establish a Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group



(SIRSG) chaired by the Minister for Social Protection. Its purpose is to oversee the implementation of the Roadmap commitments throughout the duration of the strategy.

The Steering Group was established in 2020 and comprises senior representatives of responsible departments at Assistant Secretary and Principal Officer Level, who are designated as Social Inclusion Responsibility Officers (SIROs). The objective is to ensure that implementation of the Roadmap remains on the agenda of the Management Board in each Department. The Steering Group also includes three external members from the Community and Voluntary Sector – Sr. Bernadette Mac Mahon, the Vincentian Partnership for Justice<sup>1</sup>; Dr. Patricia Keilthy, the Society of St Vincent de Paul; and Paul Ginnell, European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland. The terms of reference for the group and its membership are included in Appendix 1.

The group met three times during 2021 and in April 2022, with meetings chaired by Joe O'Brien T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Social Inclusion. Departmental representatives provided updates on progress their Departments had made towards the delivery of Roadmap commitments during the year.

The first progress report and the associated report card were considered by the Steering Group at the November 2021 meeting. Members welcomed progress made and highlighted areas for further advancement. The Group noted those commitments that had been delivered and requested that future reports and the Mid-Term Review should focus on the outcomes arising from that delivery. The importance of linking Roadmap commitments to outcomes and to the achievement of the Roadmap targets was emphasised. Progress made up to the first quarter of 2022 was discussed at the April 2022 Steering Group meeting, as well as the Social Inclusion Forum 2022 and agreeing the approach to the Mid-Term Review of the Roadmap, including the establishment of a Mid-Term Review Advisory Group, which met for the first time in June 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Thornton has replaced Sr. Bernadette Mac Mahon as the Vincentian Partnership for Justice representative from September 2022.

## Section 2: Data Trends and Research

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion contains a range of targets and measures at both national and EU level to capture progress across a number of key aspects of social inclusion (see Tables 1A and 1B of the Roadmap). Data from 2018 is used as the baseline.

Progress over the period 2020-21 will be included in the Roadmap Appendix 2: *Trends in Social Inclusion Data*. This trend document will be updated to include the data reported from the 2020 and 2021 EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) published annually by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). It has been aligned to Roadmap commitments and replaces the previously published annual *Social Inclusion Monitor*.

The implementation of a new EU Regulation on Social Statistics has implications for SILC 2020 has resulted in improved comparability of data at EU level, and welcome improvements in the timeliness of data collection and publication. However, it also results in a break in the time series, which means that the SILC data from 2020 onwards is not directly comparable with data from previous years.

SILC survey data is now collected over the first 6 months of the year based on respondents' experiences at the time of the survey and during the prior 12 months. Income data reflects the full calendar year directly preceding the survey, i.e. SILC 2021 refers to income for the period January to December 2020. Therefore the 2021 SILC data provides an indicator of status and income when the Irish economy continued to be affected by the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

The 2020 SILC survey data was published by the CSO in December 2021, followed by the 2021 SILC survey data in May 2022. The national consistent poverty rate in 2021 was 4.0%, down from 4.7% in the 2020 survey. The at-risk-of-poverty rate was 11.6% in 2021 compared with 13.2% in the 2020 survey. The basic deprivation rate was 13.8% in 2021, compared with 14.3% in 2020. Data from the 2022 survey is expected to be available early 2023.

As data collection for the 2021 SILC survey took place during the first six months of 2021, the CSO have noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions which were in place may have influenced responses to questions relating to social deprivation indicators. For example, the proportion that said they were 'unable to afford a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight' decreased 3.6 percentage points, from 7.4% in 2020 to 3.8% in 2021, while the proportion that were 'unable to afford to have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month' decreased from 10.5% in 2020 to 8.6% in 2021.

Overall, of the 13 EU indicators for which data is available, the survey data for 2021 indicates that Ireland ranks in the top 5 for 5 indicators; the top 10 for 8 indicators; but outside the top 20 for 2 indicators. (See Table 1A)

Compared to the 2018 survey data, Ireland's ranking relative to its EU peers has

- Improved on 7 measures
- Dis-improved on 5 measures
- Remained unchanged on 1 measure

Looking at the five national targets (Table 1B) the position has

- Improved on 2 indicators,
- Dis-improved on 1 indicator, and
- Remains unchanged on 2 indicators.

As the annual SILC survey data for 2021 was published by the CSO in the first half of 2022, it has been possible to report on data that refers to the period being reported on. This provides a clearer picture of the relationship between Roadmap commitments and the Roadmap targets.

**Table 1A: Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 -2025 EU Measures and Targets – progress in 2021**

	Actual (2018)	Actual (2019)	Actual (2020)	Actual (2021)	Target (2025)
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion - Become a top 5 country</b>				
<b>Measure</b>	The share of people who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) - Headline Measure				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	20.8%	20.6%	20.1% <sup>b</sup>	20.0%	16.7%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	15	15	16	14	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_PEPS01N]</i>					
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Income Distribution - Become a top 5 country</b>				
<b>Measure</b>	The income quintile share ratio				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	4.2:1	4.0:1	4.1:1 <sup>b</sup>	3.8:1	3.8:1
<b>EU Ranking</b>	10	7	7	6	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_DI11]</i>					
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Income Poverty - Become a top 5 country or improve rank within the top 5 countries</b>				
<b>Measure</b>	The share of people who are at risk of poverty before social transfers (incl. pensions)				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	41%	41.2%	41.1% <sup>b</sup>	43.3%	37.9%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	10	11	13	13	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_LI09B]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The share of people who are at risk of poverty after social transfers				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	14.9%	13.1%	13.8% <sup>b</sup>	12.9%	12.8%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	11	7	8	7	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_LI02]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The share of people who are at risk of poverty anchored in 2017 <sup>^^</sup>				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	15.6%	-	-	-	13.3%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	11	-	-	-	5
<b>Measure</b>	The in-work at risk of poverty rate				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	4.8%	4.4%	6.1% <sup>b</sup>	4.3%	3.5%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	3	3	8	4	2
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_IW01]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The AROPE rate for children under 18 years of age				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	24.7%	23.8%	23.5% <sup>b</sup>	22.8%	16%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	20	17	20	15	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_PEPS01N]</i>					

	Actual (2018)	Actual (2019)	Actual (2020)	Actual (2021)	Target (2025)
<b>Measure</b>	The AROPE rate for people with disabilities <sup>^</sup>				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	36.8%	37.8%	34.0%	38.9%	28.7%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	21	23	21	24	10
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: HLTH_DPE010]</i>					
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Housing Quality - Maintain rank within the top 5 countries</b>				
<b>Measure</b>	The housing cost overburden rate				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	3.4%	4.2%	4.5% <sup>b</sup>	2.5%	2%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	3	5	10	1	Top 5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_LVHO07A]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The overcrowding rate				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	2.7%	3.2%	3.2% <sup>b</sup>	3.4%	2.5%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	2	2	2	3	Top 5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_LVHO05A]</i>					
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Socio-Economic Aspects of Living Conditions - Become a top 5 country or maintain/improve rank within the top 5 countries</b>				
<b>Measure</b>	The share of the population who report their health as either good or very good				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	84.1%	83.9%	83.7% <sup>b</sup>	81.1%	84.2%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: HLTH_SILC_01]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The share of the population reporting unmet health care needs due to cost/expense				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	0.9%	0.9%	0.6% <sup>b</sup>	0.1%	0.1%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	18	19	18	7	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: HLTH_SILC_08]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The share of the population living in households with very low work intensity <sup>^</sup>				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	13.2%	13.8%	11.5% <sup>b</sup>	13.0%	5.5%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	26	26	25	27	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_LVHL13n]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The share of children receiving formal childcare*				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	69.2%	62.1%	77.4% <sup>b</sup>	74.6%	69.4%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	2	4	1	1	1
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_CAINDFORMAL]</i>					
<b>Measure</b>	The share of the population suffering severe material deprivation <sup>^^</sup>				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	4.9% <sup>^^</sup>	5.4%	4.1% <sup>b</sup>	N/A <sup>^^</sup>	3.1%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	14 <sup>^^</sup>	15	13	N/A <sup>^^</sup>	5
<i>[EuroStat Data Code: ILC_MDDD11]</i>					

	Actual (2018)	Actual (2019)	Actual (2020)	Actual (2021)	Target (2025)
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Social Participation and Integration - Become a top 5 country</b>				
<b>Measure</b>	Active citizenship rate**				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	13%	-	-	-	17.2%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	7	-	-	-	5
<b>Measure</b>	Participation in formal voluntary work**				
<b>Absolute Level</b>	29%	-	-	-	34.1%
<b>EU Ranking</b>	7	-	-	-	5

Note: Rankings are based upon the EU-27 (EU-28 excluding the UK). Ireland's ranking in the EU for 2021 is not available at the time of publication as not all Member States have reported their results.

<sup>b</sup> Break in time series

<sup>^</sup> 2018 baseline data has been updated by Eurostat since the publication of the Roadmap.

<sup>^^</sup> Data for 2018 was not available at time of publication of the Roadmap and 2017 data used. This has since been updated to reflect the 2018 data. Data for 2021 was not available at time of publication of this report.

\*From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age (duration: 1-29 hours)

\*\*Data relates to an ad-hoc module (2015 only) and future reporting is dependent on additional modules being available

**Table 1B: Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 -2025 National Measures and Targets – progress in 2019**

Actual (2018)	Actual (2019)	Actual (2020)	Actual (2021)	Target
<b>National Social Target for Poverty Reduction</b>				
The share of the population in consistent poverty				
5.6%	5.5%	4.7% <sup>2</sup>	4.0%	2% (2025)
<b>Child Poverty Target (BOBF)</b>				
Maintain the ambition to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two thirds on the 2011 level (107,000 children)				
92,000	97,000	86,000	62,000	37,000 (2020)
<b>Employment Target for People with a Disability</b>				
Increase the employment level of people with a disability as measured by Census data, over two censal periods				
22.3% (Census 2016)	N/A (based on Census data)	N/A (based on Census data)	N/A (based on Census data)	25% (Census 2021) 33% (Census 2026)
<b>Education</b>				
Continue to improve retention rates at second level in DEIS schools in order to reach the national norm (currently 91.6 %)				
83.8% <sup>3</sup> (2013 Cohort)	84.8% <sup>4</sup> (2014 Cohort)	TBC (2015 Cohort)	TBC (2016 Cohort)	91.6% or national norm
<b>Social Housing</b>				
Under Rebuilding Ireland, deliver 50,000 new social homes through build, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing, with the delivery of 12,000 additional social housing homes annually, through build, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing programmes				
27,086 <sup>5</sup>	28,072 <sup>5</sup>	24,622	23,312	50,000 by 2021; 12,000 annually post 2021

<sup>2</sup> Break in time series

<sup>3</sup> The retention rates to the Leaving Certificate measure the percentage of pupils who entered the first year of post-primary schools in **2013** and who sat the Leaving Certificate examination in **2018** or **2019**. See: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/retention/>

<sup>4</sup> The retention rates to the Leaving Certificate measure the percentage of pupils who entered the first year of post-primary schools in **2014** and who sat the Leaving Certificate examination in **2019** or **2020** (Calculated grades) See: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/retention/>

<sup>5</sup> 2018 and 2019 figures have changed slightly following a review of the data

The Government responded quickly to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic with the introduction of pandemic related income supports. The Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) and Wage Subsidy Schemes (T/EWSS) supported almost 1.48 million individuals over the course of their existence, with a total net expenditure of €18.44 billion. 2021 SILC data shows that Covid-19 income supports had a significant impact on the at risk of poverty rate. The at risk of poverty rate for 2021 was 11.6%, however without any Covid-19 income supports this would have been 19.9%.<sup>6</sup> Without the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, the at risk of poverty rate would have been 16.5% and without the Wage Subsidy Scheme the rate would have been 15.0%. The at risk of poverty rate for unemployed persons was 23.2%, while without Covid-19 income supports, this rate would have been 44.1%. The at risk of poverty rate for persons living in one adult households with children was 22.8%, while without Covid-19 income supports this rate would have been 37.2%. Covid-19 income supports also had a positive impact on the median household disposable income in SILC 2021. The median household disposable income in 2021 increased by 5.8% to €46,471 due to Covid-19 supports, but would have decreased by 6.2% without the Covid-19 income supports.

There was a significant body of research related to poverty and social inclusion published during the period of this report. This includes the [Poverty, income inequality and living standards in Ireland](#) report, published in May 2021 by the ESRI and the Community Foundation for Ireland, considered gaps in knowledge and understanding of poverty, income inequality and living standards in Ireland. The report brought together data from household surveys collected by the ESRI and the Central Statistics Office to create the first harmonised set of indicators on incomes, income inequality and poverty covering the period 1987 to 2019. It found that disposable income had experienced strong and progressive growth over the period between 2007 and 2017, despite the recession; the incidence of income poverty and material deprivation remain closely linked to the absence of paid work in the household; and that consideration should be given to the impact of permanent COVID-19 related job losses.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that the counterfactual 'without supports' makes no attempt to estimate likely incomes from receipt of 'traditional' out-of-work supports, like Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit, that an individual may have been entitled to receive had COVID-19 income supports not been available.



The Department of Social Protection put in place a new three year research contract in October 2020, with the ESRI, following a formal tender process. The contract will support the implementation of Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 and the national social target for poverty reduction by 2025; as well as inform the independent mid-term review of the Roadmap in 2022.

The first paper, [Technical Paper on the Measure of Basic Deprivation and Consistent Poverty in Ireland](#), published in October 2021, focused on a review of the basic deprivation measure. It found that the existing measure of deprivation remains fit for purpose.

The second paper, [Headline Poverty Target Reduction in Ireland and the Role of Work and Social Welfare](#) was published in June 2022 and provides an assessment of how social transfer policies and increased employment by under-represented groups can contribute to the reduction of consistent poverty. It found that the most effective labour market measure to reduce poverty was increasing female labour force participation and hours worked to match those of men with similar characteristics. The paper also shows that social transfers targeting children and their families (Qualified Child Increase, Working Family Payment) produce the largest reduction in child poverty, as well as for the overall population and people living in rented accommodation, a group that has experienced a sharp increase in income poverty over recent years. It found that a package of measures targeting both employment and social transfers is needed to address poverty reduction targets. Investment in services, such as health, education and housing, also provide leverage in reducing poverty, as they have a significant impact on the standard of living of low-income households.

As part of the 2022 research programme, the ESRI will review the existing indicators used in the Roadmap, which will provide options to consider alternative indicators in cases where, for instance, timely data is not available.

## Section 3: Progress Towards Achievement of Roadmap Goals

As of the end of June 2022:

- 32 of the Roadmap commitments were fully achieved or achieved with ongoing delivery;
- 3 further commitments were in progress on schedule with ongoing delivery;
- 30 commitments were in progress;
- Work on 3 commitments had yet to commence; and
- 1 was deferred due to the pandemic.

### Goal 1: Expanding the Opportunity of Employment

**Give everyone who can work the opportunity of employment as a means to improve their well-being**

#### Commitments 1 - 11

The focus of this goal is the successful, continued implementation of policies, strategies and commitments to support and improve the capacity of people to take up employment, education and training opportunities. Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- The announcement in Budget 2022 of the extension to Parent's Leave and Benefit by 2 weeks for each parent to 7 weeks in total.
- The implementation of the National Childcare Scheme continued, with a review of the first year of operation of the scheme published in December 2021.
- Under the Dormant Accounts Action Plan, additional funding of €380,000 was granted to Family Carer's Ireland and Care Alliance Ireland in October 2021, using unspent allocations under the 2020 and 2017 Dormant Accounts Action Plan.

## **Goal 2: Supporting Workers and Families – Ensuring Work Pays**

### **Ensure that workers are treated fairly and paid fairly, and that work continues to be the best route to social inclusion**

#### **Commitments 12 - 21**

The Roadmap recognises that one of the single biggest indicators of whether a person is likely to experience poverty or deprivation is whether or not they are employed. The focus of this goal is to protect and enhance the level of in-work income and to ensure that work pays.

Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- The development of a statutory code of conduct for the determination of the employment status of workers.
- The continued expansion of a dedicated unit of Social Welfare Inspectors in the Department of Social Protection, with a special focus on targeting and reducing false self-employment nationwide for the purpose of supporting employment rights and the integrity of the Social Insurance Fund.
- The publication of the 10-year Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy: *Adult Literacy for Life* in September 2021.
- The inclusion in Budget 2022 of a €10 per week increase in the Working Family Payment income thresholds for all families. This increase was brought forward to April from June 2022 as part of the package of measures to mitigate the increased cost-of-living.
- Ireland's contribution to the EU's headline poverty target of a reduction in the number of people At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion (AROPE) of 90,000 by 2030 was agreed by Government, with 50% (45,000) of these to be children. This is in line with the Roadmap target (reducing the AROPE for children from 23.9% in 2018 to 16% by 2025) and is more ambitious than the target proposed by the European Commission.

## **Goal 3: Supporting Older People – Assuring Their Income**

### **Protect the income of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments**

#### **Commitments 22 - 28**

The focus of this goal includes the protection and enhancement of State pension payments and the provision of long-term care supports to allow older people to live and age with dignity in their own homes.

Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- The Commission on Pensions published a report in September 2021 which endorsed the approach to benchmarking and indexation of state pensions outlined in the Roadmap and recommended its implementation. Government is considering the Commission's report and will respond to the recommendations in 2022.
- The continued refurbishment or replacement of public community nursing units and long-term residential care facilities for older people with 33 completed by the end of 2021 and 5 of 11 projects in 2022 completed by June 2022.
- Budget 2022 provided an increase of €5 (from €28 to €33 per week) in the weekly fuel allowance payment, and an increase in the living alone allowance to €22 per week.
- Additional lump sum payments of €125 on the fuel allowance paid in March 2022, with a further lump sum payment of €100 paid in May 2022 for all households in receipt of Fuel Allowance to assist with increases in the cost of living.

## Goal 4: Supporting Families and Children

### Reduce child poverty in Ireland and ensure that all families have the opportunity to participate fully in society

#### Commitments 29 - 40

The focus of this goal was the continued provision of supports and services to families to allow them to fully participate in society and to continue reducing the level of child poverty.

Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- *Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare 2022-2028* was published in December 2021, setting out a pathway to raise qualification levels, create professional development pathways, and promote careers in the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare sectors up to the year 2028.
- *Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare* was published in December 2021. It contains 25 recommendations which were approved Government. These include:
  - A new additional funding stream for the sector, Core Funding, to support quality of provision, improved pay and conditions for staff, management of parental fees and sustainability of services.
  - Funding for new universal and targeted measures to address socioeconomic disadvantage, building on Core Funding. Continued provision of the universal Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme and the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) with enhancements.
  - An expanded role for the State in managing and supporting supply, quality, accessibility, and affordability, including the introduction of fee controls.
  - Under Budget 2022, €221 million in full year costs has been allocated to Core Funding, to support the development of a partnership

relationship between providers and the State that reflects the public good dimension of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare.

- A 30-month pilot project, Lone Parents Digital Activation, commenced in November 2021 in the North-East region led by the Department of Social Protection partnering with One Family, with funding from the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).
- The inclusion in Budget 2022 of a €10 per week increase in the Working Family Payment income thresholds for all families. This increase was brought forward to April from June 2022 as part of the package of measures to mitigate the increased cost-of-living.
- Under Budget 2022, there was a €3 increase for qualified child dependants aged 12 and over to €48 per week and a €2 increase for qualified child dependants up to the age of 12 to €40 per week.
- In July 2022, additional measures to assist families with back-to-school costs were announced. These included an increase of €100 to the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance for each eligible child, and the extension of the school meals programme to 310 additional schools. In addition, students availing of the school transport scheme will not be charged fees for the academic year 2022/23.

## **Goal 5: Supporting People with Disabilities**

**Improve social inclusion of people with disabilities by reducing poverty rates, improving employment outcomes and delivering better services**

### **Commitments 41 - 44**

This goal aims to support and enhance the work already underway to improve the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- The inclusion in Budget 2022 of targeted measures including:
  - A €5 increase in the maximum weekly rate of Illness Benefit, Disability Allowance, Blind Pension and Invalidity Pension, with proportionate increases for people receiving a reduced rate.
  - Improvements to the means assessment of Disability Allowance to benefit those on a reduced rate of payment, and those who take up work.
  - A €3 weekly increase (from €19 to €22) to the living alone allowance which will benefit who are in receipt of the Disability Allowance or the Invalidity Pension and who live alone.
  - An increase of €5 (from €28 to €33 per week) in the weekly fuel allowance payment which will benefit people who are in receipt of the Disability allowance or the Invalidity Pension and are also in receipt of the Fuel Allowance.
  - The Wage Subsidy Scheme, paid to employers who employ people with a disability, increases from €5.30 to €6.30 per hour from January 2022.
  - The EmployAbility Service will now provide grants directly to people with disabilities in employment.
  - €10m of Covid-19 funding for 2022 was provided to maintain public health measures and to also consolidate improvements in health services for people with disabilities.
- Reforms to Community Employment (CE) schemes to promote more referrals from people most distant from the labour market, including persons with disabilities.

- The cost of disability research was published in December 2021 and has been referred to the National Disability Inclusion Strategy Steering Group to consider the actions required based on the recommendations contained in the report.



## **Goal 6: Supporting Communities**

### **Empower communities to address social exclusion**

#### **Commitments 45 - 53**

This goal recognises the strong partnership between the State and the Community and Voluntary sector in the delivery of supports at local level.

Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- The employment of Social Prescribing, supported by Healthy Ireland, to tackle the issues of loneliness and isolation.
- The expansion of the high-speed broadband network and Broadband Connection Points by National Broadband Ireland continues under the National Broadband Plan.
- The Report of the Inter-Departmental Group on Community Employment was published in December 2021 and changes to scheme eligibility were introduced from 1 Jan 2022.

The Sport Ireland Diversity and Inclusion Policy was launched in May 2022.

## **Goal 7: Core Essentials - Healthcare, Housing, Energy and Food**

### **Ensure that all people can live with confidence that they have access to good quality healthcare, housing, energy and food**

#### **Commitments 54 - 63**

This goal recognises that access to basic essential services on a free or subsidised basis to people on low incomes can reduce costs to be covered from within that low income.

Key achievements up to the end of June 2022 include:

- Addressing the healthcare needs of socially excluded groups who experience greater levels of health inequalities:
  - €10m of Covid-19 funding for 2022 was provided to maintain public health measures and to also consolidate improvements in health services for people who are homeless; and

- Budget 2022 provided for €0.5m to increase access to and provision of community-based drug and alcohol services for women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTI+ community.
- Budget 2022 provided €109 million to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to provide free energy efficiency upgrades to households that are in, or at risk of, energy poverty under the Warmer Homes Scheme, up from an allocation of €100 million in 2021.
- Budget 2022 included an increase in the Fuel Allowance rate by €5 per week to €33 per week for the duration of the fuel season.
- Additional measures were introduced in 2022 to alleviate the cost of living increases. These include:
  - an energy credit of €200 to approximately 2 million households
  - a 20% reduction in public transport fares from April until the end of the year
  - a lump sum payment of €125 on the fuel allowance paid in March, with a further lump sum payment of €100 paid in May 2022 for all households in receipt of Fuel Allowance in the last week of the Fuel Allowance season
  - a reduction of the Drug Payment Scheme threshold to €80 in one month
  - The removal of the fee for the school transport scheme for the academic year 2022/23.

## Conclusion

This report is the second in the series of progress reports on the delivery of commitments under the Roadmap for Social Inclusion. It has drawn together material from a range of sources including Government Departments and data from the CSO and Eurostat. It recognises the challenges that Ireland faced during this period of implementation, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health-related restrictions that were re-introduced, the impact of the war in Ukraine and the increased cost of living. It also acknowledges steps the Government has taken to respond to these challenges.

It highlights the progress that has been made to the end of June 2022 and the importance of a coordinated, whole of Government approach. The importance of this approach has been emphasised by Minister O'Brien at Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group meetings, where he has emphasised the need for a concerted effort across Government to achieve significant reductions in poverty rates and to increase people's access to resources and services.

## **Appendix: Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group (SIRSG)**

### **Terms of Reference and Members**

#### **Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group (SIRSG) Terms of Reference**

##### **Role and Functions**

Following the publication of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-25: Ambition, Goals, Commitments in January 2020, the Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group (SIRSG) was established to oversee the implementation of the Roadmap commitments throughout the duration of the strategy. The broad membership of the Roadmap is designed to ensure that implementation of Roadmap commitments remains firmly on the agenda of the Management Board of all responsible Departments.

The functions of the Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group include:

- Monitoring the progress of all Roadmap commitments for the duration of the Roadmap
- Discuss and agree on approaches to address any delays in implementation
- Facilitate the coordinated delivery of commitments where two or more Departments have responsibility
- Review and agree the annual Roadmap progress report to be submitted by the Minister for consideration to the Cabinet Committee with responsibility for Social Policy; and to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands for discussion.
- Propose other thematic or periodic reports on the implementation of the Roadmap for consideration by the Cabinet Committee, as appropriate

##### **Membership**

The Steering Group will comprise senior representatives of responsible Departments who will be designated as Social Inclusion Responsibility Officers (SIROs). The Steering Group will also include at least two external members.

## **Procedures**

The Steering Group will meet at least twice per year and will be chaired by the Minister for Social Protection, or the Minister of State with responsibility for social inclusion policy or their designate. The Secretariat of the Steering Group will be provided by the Social Inclusion Division, Department of Social Protection.

## **Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group (SIRSG) Membership 2021/2**

**Chair:** Minister Joe O'Brien T.D, Minister of State with responsibility for Social Inclusion in the Department of Social Protection

### **Government Departments**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth

Department of Education

Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment

Department of Finance

Department of Foreign Affairs

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science

Department of Health

Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Department of Rural & Community Development

Department of Social Protection

Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications

Department of the Taoiseach

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Department of Transport

### **Community & Voluntary Sector**

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice