

European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

Briefing on poverty, 2015 and proposals for 2016-2021



This paper is produced by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland. It gives an overview of poverty in Ireland today and makes proposals to political parties who wish to make a serious impact on poverty during the term of the next Dáil.

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“Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.”

Nelson Mandela

01

Introduction

Poverty in Ireland is not new. Even during the years of economic boom before 2008, poverty levels in Ireland were higher than in many Western European countries. Since 2008, those already suffering from poverty, who have the least to give, have suffered most. Lone parents, unemployed, people with disabilities, Travellers and other ethnic minorities have been particularly hard hit.

Polls show that most people in Ireland want to live in a less divided society and want to see an end to poverty and its symptoms like homelessness and unemployment. This can be done if we invest in the policies and resources to build up services, guarantee income and promote quality jobs. Achieving this will not be easy, but we have never been better placed to end poverty.

The next five years will be crucial. As we rebuild from recession we face some fundamental choices: Do we want to rebuild a divided or integrated society? Can we tolerate persistent homelessness? Can we see another generation of children with wasted futures? This paper explores the reality of poverty in Ireland today and proposes policies for the five-year term of the next Dáil.

02

What do we mean by poverty?

Experiencing poverty is not just about lack of income but also about barriers in access to services and opportunities which prevent people from participating fully in society. It is very connected to the experience of social exclusion and to wider inequalities in society. This is captured in the national definition of poverty:

In Ireland poverty levels are officially measured using three main measurements: at-risk of poverty, material deprivation and consistent poverty (see below and www.eapn.ie).

“People are living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities considered the norm for other people in society.”¹

THE THREE OFFICIAL WAYS OF MEASURING POVERTY

Material Deprivation

Not being able to afford at least two of the eleven goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living. 29% of the population experienced material deprivation in 2014. The current 11 indicators are:

1. Two pairs of strong shoes	2. A warm waterproof overcoat
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	3. Buy new not second-hand clothes
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week	6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money
7. Keep the home adequately warm	8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year
9. Replace any worn out furniture	10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment	

Relative Poverty/At Risk of Poverty

Anyone with an income which is less than 60% of the median (or middle) income is referred to as being either relatively poor or ‘at risk of poverty’. Incomes in households are weighted depending on the number of adults and children to arrive at an equivalised disposable income² for each individual. This was €209.39 per week in 2014, and 16.3% of the population had incomes below this amount.

Consistent poverty

The proportion of people who experience both of the other forms of poverty and so are at-risk of poverty/relatively poor (less than 60% of median income) and materially deprived because they cannot afford two of the eleven agreed items. 8% of the population were in consistent poverty in 2014.

1. Government of Ireland 2007. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. <http://www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/NAPinclusionReportPDF.pdf>
2. Disposable income is based on income from work and welfare transfers minus taxes. To get the equivalised disposable income per person the disposable income is divided by the equivalised household size. The equivalised household size is calculated by adding the total weighting given to every person in the household. Weightings are as follows, the first adult (14 years and over) is given a weighting of 1, each additional person 14 and over a weighting of 0.66 and each child under 14 years a weighting of 0.33.

Ireland set its first poverty reduction target in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in 1997 and a new target in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016.

Then in 2010 Ireland and the other EU member states signed up to the Europe 2020 Strategy. This strategy contains five targets which they agreed to achieve by the year 2020. One of these targets is to “lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020³”. Using 2008 statistics as the baseline year when the target was set there was an estimated 116.6 million people in poverty and social exclusion in the EU. The target is therefore to reduce this to 96.6 million people by 2020 (using 2018 statistics). However, in 2014 there were almost 122 million people in the EU at risk of poverty and social exclusion, well over five million more than when the target was set⁴.

To meet its commitment under the Europe 2020 Strategy the Irish Government revised the existing poverty target it had set in the National Action Plan for Social Exclusion 2007-2016 and set a ‘national social target for poverty reduction’. This target is to “reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2 per cent”.

In September 2015, the Irish Taoiseach and President were among the leaders of nearly 200 countries which signing up to the UN ‘global goals’ which start with the “ending of poverty in all its forms”.

In 2014 the Government also set a child poverty target. This target is to “lift over 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, reducing the number of children in consistent poverty from 107,000 (using 2011 levels)⁵. In 2014 there were 134,000 children in consistent poverty.

The Department of Social Protection each year produces the Social Inclusion Monitor⁶ to report officially on how Ireland is progressing towards its commitments to poverty reduction.

PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

As can be seen in Graph 1 below poverty levels in Ireland have increased dramatically since the beginning of the crisis. 29% of the population in 2014 could not afford 2 of 11 essential items and therefore experience material deprivation. This more than doubled since 2008.

In 2014 over 16% of the population, or around 751,000 people, were at risk of poverty (or relatively poor) because their disposable income was below the poverty line of 60% of the middle (median) income of all people in the country. This had grown from 14.4% in 2008 despite that fact that someone had to have less than €238.69 per week to be below the poverty line in 2008, whereas in 2014, because incomes in Ireland were lower, the poverty line was €209.39 per week⁷.

In 2014, 8% of the population (over 369,000 people) was in consistent poverty because they were both at-risk of poverty and experienced material deprivation. Despite a small fall in 2014 the level is still almost twice as high as in 2008. The Government has a commitment to reducing this to 4% by 2016 and to at least 2% or less 92,000 people by 2020⁸.

More vulnerable and marginalised groups in society experience higher levels of poverty than the general population. Some of these are captured in the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Survey of Income and Living Conditions. See Graph 2 overleaf.

3. Those at risk of poverty or social exclusion are those who are at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity (aged 0-59 and the working age members in the household worked less than 20% of their potential during the past year).
4. Eurostat 2015. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_50&language=en
5. Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people 2014–2020. http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf
6. Department of Social Protection 2015, Social Inclusion Monitor 2013. www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/2015-03_SIM2013_rpt_Final.pdf
7. CSO 2015. Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2014. <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions2014/>
8. Department of Social Protection 2012. National Social Target for Poverty Reduction. <http://www.socialinclusion.ie/NPT.html>

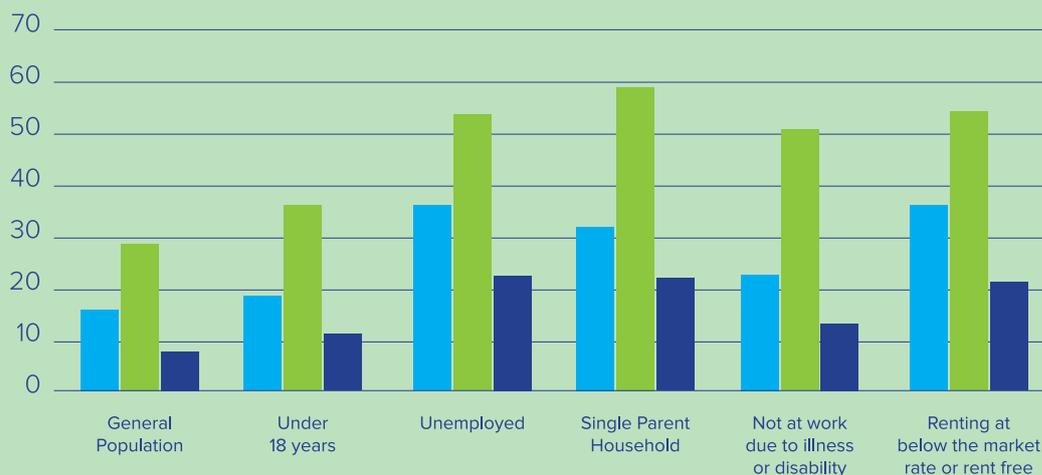
**Graph 1:
Poverty levels
from 2008 - 2014**



	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016 interim target	2020 final target
At risk of poverty	14.4	14.1	14.7	16.0	16.5	15.2	16.3		
Material Deprivation	13.8	17.1	22.6	24.5	26.9	30.5	29.0		
Consistent Poverty	4.2	5.5	6.3	6.9	7.7	8.2	8.0	4%	2%

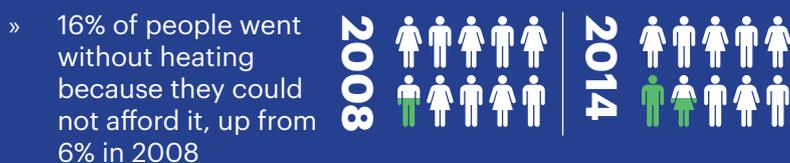
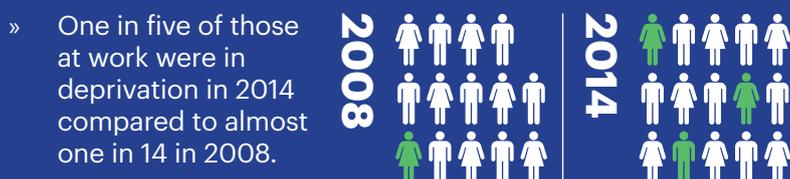
**Graph 2:
Poverty levels for
specific groups**

- At risk of poverty
- Material Deprivation
- Consistent Poverty



THE CSO SURVEY OF INCOME AND LIVING CONDITIONS SAYS THAT IN 2014:

- » 29% of the population are experiencing deprivation, nearly triple the number in 2008. For children this is 36%.
- » Of those covered in the Survey, single parent households, people not at work through illness or disability, unemployed people and people renting at below the market rate or rent free have the highest poverty levels.



There are other groups such as Travellers, homeless people and migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, who experience high levels of poverty but are not captured by official statistics. Poverty is also higher in some geographical areas such as disadvantaged urban areas and many remote rural areas.

It is also important to note that 2.4% of those in work in 2014 were in Consistent poverty. This equates to 11% of all those in consistent poverty. Over one in seven of those at-risk of poverty and one quarter for those in material deprivation are in work.

While statistics are important they can only provide a limited view of the reality for people living in poverty. Many people face complex issues linked to a lack of an adequate income, whether in or out of work, lack of access to an adequate level of accommodation, education, health, care and other services or face a range of barriers in access to these services and to employment. The Community Platform captures some of this reality through presenting the life stories of a range of people from across the country in 'Now You See Us'⁹.

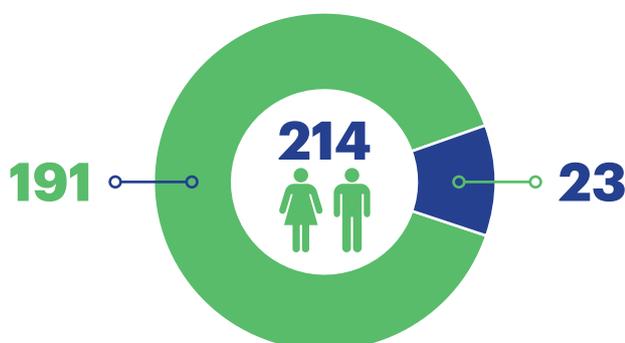
9. Community Platform 2014, Now You See us: The human stories behind poverty in Ireland. <http://communityplatform.ie/now-you-see-us.html>

Poverty and social exclusion have multi-dimensional causes and as highlighted above impact on different people in different ways, whether it's because of inadequate income or lack of access to quality services or a decent job. Many people who experience poverty and social exclusion are also disempowered and have more limited say in the decisions that impact on their lives. Poverty and social exclusion have long-term impacts on the social and emotional well-being of people. The following are some of the issues that face people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

INCOME

In 2014, over 750,000 people in Ireland had an income which puts them at-risk of poverty. Social welfare rates are also not enough for people to have a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. In 2015, 191 of 214 urban household types, who were dependent on social welfare could not afford a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. For these family types the weekly income gap varies from almost €39 to over €204¹⁰. It is expected that following Budget 2016 this number will increase from 191 to 198 urban household types next year¹¹.

In 2015, 191 of 214 urban household types, who were dependent on social welfare could not afford a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.



"They come to us after school and we give them help with their homework. What we finding is an increasing number are presenting hungry and what we find is that we need to feed them before we can teach them, and that's hugely difficult for us as an organisation and for the children because they can't concentrate if they're hungry."

Community Worker in Laois¹².

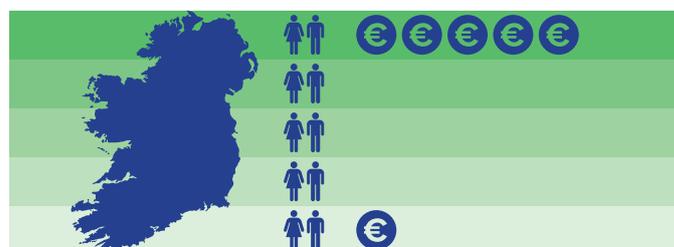
"I was diagnosed with MS and can't work anymore, the mortgage is in arrears. My daughter turns 18 soon and her Child Benefit will stop. Do I ask her to stop studying for the Leaving and go out and work? We really depend on that money to get from one end of the month to the next."

Single parent in Donegal as told to the Disability Federation of Ireland.

INEQUALITY

It has been shown that inequality is bad for societies. It not only impacts negatively on those on the lowest incomes but on almost everyone throughout society¹³.

In Ireland the top 20% of income earners have 5 times the income of the lowest 20%¹⁴.



10. Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice 2015. Minimum Essential Standard of Living 2015. http://www.budgeting.ie/publications/technical-a-working-papers#MESL_Annual_Update
 11. Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice 2015. Budget 2016: Minimum Essential Budget Standards Impact Briefing. http://budgeting.ie/images/stories/Publications/Budget_Analysis/Budget_2016_-_MEBS_Impact_Briefing.pdf

12. Most of the quotes in this document are from Community Platform, 2014 – Now you see us: The human stories behind poverty in Ireland <http://communityplatform.ie/nowyouseeus.pdf> and the EAPN Ireland and Community Workers Cooperative video submission to the national Social Inclusion Forum 2015 <http://youtu.be/bFqoYQwi39k>.
 13. K. Pickett and R. Wilkinson 2009, The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better <https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resources/the-spirit-level>
 14. CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2014.

In relation to overall wealth self-employed households had a median (middle) net wealth¹⁵ in 2013 of €307,000 (self-employed people make up 9.1% of all households and 23.3% of all net wealth) while those in the top 20% of households had €207,000. At the other end of the scale households with one adult and children had a net wealth of €1,400 (They made up 4.4% of the population and 0.6% of all net wealth). Those households headed by an unemployed person having a median net wealth figure of €7,200 (12.8% of the population and 3.9% of all net wealth)¹⁶.

ACCESS TO QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

In 2012 the Department of Social Protection absorbed FAS National Employment Service and rolled out a revamped incomes and employment service to people who were short-term unemployed and in receipt of a Jobseekers payment through their Intreo Offices. People in receipt of other working age payments found themselves referred to other services: employability if they were in receipt of a disability payment; the Local Employment Service if they were long-termed unemployed or in receipt of a One Parent Family Payment; or no service at all if they were unemployed and did not qualify for a social welfare payment. EAPN Ireland regards this situation as inequitable and one that must be addressed: the National Employment Service should be accessible to all and should be designed to meet the needs of the people seeking its services and supports.

The overall unemployment figure has fallen below 10% but there is a high risk of some groups getting left behind. For example, only 36% of disabled people have a job, yet with the right supports this could rise to 50%¹⁷. Though 53% of people parenting alone are in the labour market, changes in supports for one parent families is leading to greater barriers to them entering or remaining in employment. Older and longer-term unemployed people are facing ageism in the labour market, even when they have the right qualifications and work experience. Structural unemployment is an issue that faces many marginalised communities, an issue that was not adequately addressed before the crisis, and one which the depth of the crisis has exacerbated, in particular the deepening skills gap between people living in jobless households and emerging job opportunities.

“Sometimes I wish he would just come back and sign on, I really do but I know eventually we’d lose everything, I know we would, so he’s trying everything. We’re just about alright for this month. I don’t know what we’ll do next month. It’s massive stress, but that’s our life.”

Mother from West Clare, whose husband works in construction in England.

“We’re in a low class area but guaranteed we have the same qualifications and the same determination and capabilities as those high class areas, just because we’re from a low class area. There’s brilliant people in this area”

Young person from Ballymun

While the numbers of those at work is increasing (63.1% in Quarter 2, 2015) there has also been an increase in precarious work¹⁸.

In 2014 Ireland had the fourth highest proportion of low paid jobs in the OECD.¹⁹

This needs to be addressed if Ireland is to have a sustainable recovery and those in work can earn a decent income.

15. Net wealth is all forms of wealth including the family home minus any debt.

16. CSO Household Finance and Consumption Survey 2013 <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/socialconditions/2013/hfcs2013.pdf>

17. D. Watson, G.Kingston and F. McGinnity, Equality Authority and ESRI 2010. Disability in the Irish Labour Market Evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010. <http://media.tcm.ie/media/documents/e/ESRI%20Disability%20in%20the%20Irish%20Labour%20Market%20Report%202010.pdf>

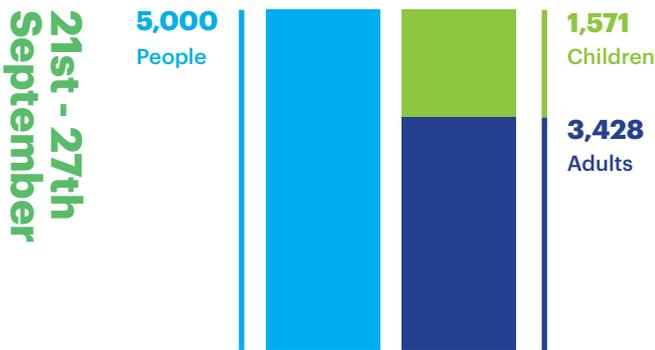
18. Mandate Trade Union 2012. www.tuleftforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/decent-work.pdf

19. http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2014_emp_outlook-2014-en

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The number of people and families entering emergency accommodation around the country continues to increase.

During the week of 21st – 27th September 2015, there were 5,000 people in emergency accommodation. This included: 3428 adults (2,448 with no dependents), 738 families and 1,571 children²⁰.



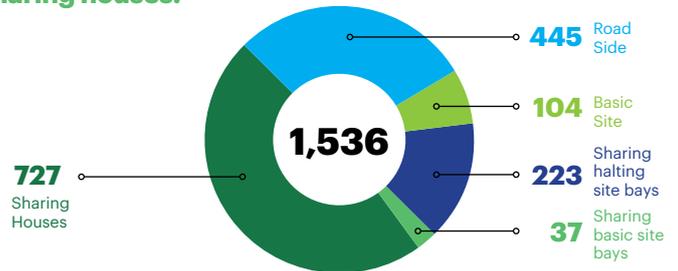
The rough sleeper count, which currently only takes place in the Dublin region, is carried out twice a year. The most recent count in April 2015 confirmed that there were 151 people without a safe place to sleep in Dublin City on that particular night; this reflected a minimum of 105 people sleeping rough plus a further 46 people in the Nite Café. This is a 19% increase from April 2014 when 127 people were counted as sleeping rough on this night.

There are currently 90,000 households on Local Authorities housing waiting lists. New social housing as set out in the Social Housing Strategy will take up to two years to complete. The reliance on the private rented sector to provide social housing is not sustainable. People in receipt of Rent Supplement/ Housing Assistance Payment limits are being pushed out of the private rented sector. Limits have not changed since June 2013 while rents have increased by 20% during this time. Rents increased by an average of 8.5% in Quarter 2 2015 from the same period in 2014. The number of properties available to rent during this time decreased by over 30%²¹. This is pushing people into homelessness and preventing people from moving out of homelessness. It is extremely difficult for people in receipt of Rent Supplement to find accommodation within the limits. Discrimination against rent supplement recipients by landlords continues, with some looking for work or previous landlord references.

“We are having a very major issue at the moment which is the lack of accommodation and the Rent Allowance. We have many people clients coming in who are desperate because they are about to be made homeless through mortgage repossessions and all of that. It’s even more upsetting for them because they don’t know where they are going. They now know that there is no-where to rent in Portlaoise or the surrounding areas at the moment. And we know that from the auctioneers. So where do they go?”

Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) Worker

According to a count by local authorities in 2014 there are 1,536 Traveller families living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions – 445 on the side of the road, 104 on basic services sites, 223 sharing halting site bays, 37 sharing basic site bays and 727 sharing houses.



At the same time funding for funding for Traveller accommodation has been cut from €70 million to just over €4 million per annum with progress on Traveller accommodation being blocked at local level.

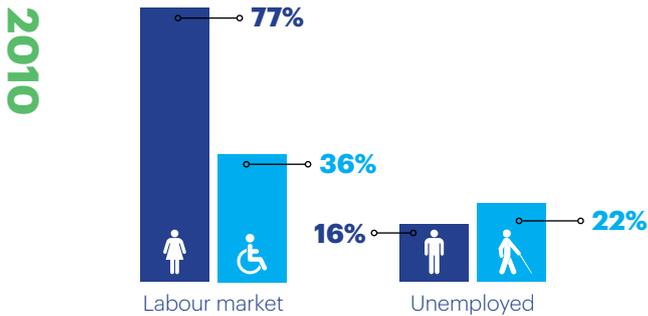
“I met a Traveller woman in April 2014 who was homeless. She just got a home two weeks ago (February 2015). The issues that she experienced in the intervening time have had a detrimental effect on her and will probably take a long, long time for her to get over. Her mental and her physical health were impacted as well as our own organisation. Our own mental health was affected by meeting with this woman on a continuous basis and seeing the deterioration in her health”.

Traveller worker in Tullamore.

20. DECLG Homeless figures Sept 2015 <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/SpecialNeeds/HomelessPeople/>
 21. Daft.ie Quarterly Rental Report Q2 2015 <http://www.daft.ie/report/q2-2015-daft-rental-report.pdf>

DISABILITY

People with a disability, in 2010, were less than half as likely to be active in the labour market than the general population (36% compared to 77% of other adults). People with a disability had a higher unemployment rate (22% compared to 16% of other adults)²².



"I am a visually impaired woman who has spent the past 4 years living independently in Dublin. I am interested in accessing programmes which are available but because of my disability I am not on the live register and therefore I can't access them. This means I live on a tight budget which given that I volunteer shows that I want to work".

Woman with a disability

CHILDCARE

Ireland spends 0.5% of GDP on Early childhood care and education compared to an OECD average of 0.8% of GDP²³.

"Putting a child in a crèche costs like a hundred quid a week. How can anyone go out to work for that? Give your child to a stranger to work for nothing? There is just no incentive".

Single parent from Dublin on Community Employment Scheme

MIGRATION - ASYLUM SYSTEM/MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrants in Ireland are 5% more likely to be at risk of poverty than the indigenous population but the figures go up to 11% if we talk about non-EU migrants²⁴.

Migrants are overrepresented in low-paid sectors of employment, among minimum wage recipients and among those working part-time or unusual hours. Among the underlying factors which put migrants more at risk of poverty include a poorly managed labour migration policy; a lack of planning for economic integration and limited access to social protection.

Policies which limit the mobility of migrant workers or which do not promote the recognition of skills and education funnel migrant families into low-paid jobs and consequently leave them at risk of poverty. Access to social protection is conditioned on the category of immigration status a person has leaving large categories of the migrant population without access to certain basic services which act as a safety net against poverty. Furthermore, the misapplication of the Habitual Residence Condition, which has been proven to disproportionately impact on migrant families, has been pointed out as another factor leading to homelessness and destitution.

There are an estimated 26,000 undocumented migrants. There are a further estimated 5,500 children with undocumented parents (MRCI, 2014). MRCI have identified nearly 200 cases of forced labour over the last decade and referred 30 cases for investigation since enactment of the Human Trafficking Act 2008.

Asylum seekers in Direct Provision have to live on €19.10 per week for an adult and half of this for a child.

M T W T F S S



Ireland is alongside Lithuania as the only two EU countries where asylum seekers are not allowed to work while awaiting a decision on their refugee application.

22. ESRI and Equality Authority, 2013. Disability in the Irish Labour Market: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010 <https://www.esri.ie/publications/disability-in-the-irish-labour-market-evidence-from-the-qnhs-equality-module-2010/>

23. OECD (2011), Doing Better for Families

24. CSO, Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2013.

"People live in Direct Provision from one year up to eleven years and during that your life is on pause, because you are not allowed to work, you are not allowed to cook for your children and children who are older they aren't not allowed to go to third level education. I think that this unacceptable"

Asylum seeker in Direct Provision

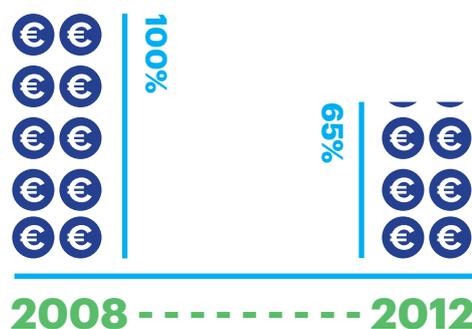
"I've been living here for over twelve years with my wife and two daughters. Everybody's good to me and my family. It's just working life that's very difficult. I'm a professional chef for the last twenty seven years. I'm a very good chef. When I came to Ireland, I had many awards in this field. Before the recession, I was working in the one restaurant for over five years. I had a visa at that time but the owner did not renew my work permit. I feel he used me. I don't have a status now. I'm working, no stamps, no work permit. It's a very bad situation".

Undocumented worker in Dublin

PARTICIPATION

The community and voluntary sector plays an essential role in providing supports to the most marginalised communities and in ensuring that they have the capacity to have a say in decisions which impact on their lives, resulting in more effective policy making. However...

...state supports to the community and voluntary sector were cut by over 35% between 2008 and 2012...



...with this continuing in subsequent year²⁵. This has had a particular negative impact at local level where budgets have been cut and community organisations losing their independence through changes in local structures.

"The cuts are all cumulative. Within our organisation, we've got health, childcare and education services and supports. All the things that are important to meeting the needs of a community. But all those strands of work have been cut and butchered where only 'frontline' services are seen as a priority. But what does that mean? At the end of the day, areas like this need an integrated service response, not just a simple one".

Community Worker in Fatima, Dublin

25. B. Harvey, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Community Sector Committee 2012. Downsizing the Community Sector. <http://www.ceeds.ie/files/resources/downsizingcommunitysector.pdf>

We urge all parties and candidates for the next Dáil to commit to a new five year strategy against poverty and social exclusion covering the term of the next Dáil, to replace the current National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016).

A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

The strategy must be led from the top and involve a commitment by all of Government, not just 'social' ministries, to fight poverty. Many of the instruments to do this were spelled out in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) nearly 20 years ago, but the resources and political commitment to make this happen have been lacking. The current National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016) is be up for renewal and this gives us the opportunity to identify the investments and policies needed to make a serious impact on poverty.

Poverty impact assessment is a vital part of this. As required by the NAPS, all major policies, including budget proposals, should be assessed for their impact on poverty and altered so as to contribute to policy reduction at the planning and implementation stages. This process must be open so as to bring it into public and political debate.

The strategy must be designed and implemented with the participation of people affected by poverty at all stages. It must provide resources to support for the independent voice of people experiencing poverty and their organisations to develop and participate in decision-making.

A STRATEGY FOR A DECENT INCOME

The strategy must ensure that everyone, in work or out of work, has access to a guaranteed income which allows them to live with dignity. Minimum social welfare levels should be set at a level which is both above the 60% at-risk of poverty level²⁶ and provides people and families with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living²⁷. Groups currently excluded from minimum welfare payments, such as asylum seekers in direct provision and young people need to be brought into the system. The strategy must also provide for an information campaign to ensure that people are aware of their rights and well-resourced advice and advocacy services.

» *See EMIN (EAPN led project): Roadmap to an adequate minimum income system in Ireland²⁸*

A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY JOBS

The strategy must improve the quality of work, which has been eroded during the recession. This means ensuring that those at work are paid at least the Living Wage rate of €11.50 per hour²⁹ (for an individual working full time) and addressing the causes of precarious work, including zero and low hour contracts.

Intreo (welfare to work) services need to develop a supportive culture which empowers people to make positive choices for their futures. These services must be available to everyone who wants to access them, including those who are on different working age social welfare payments or none and people over 65 years. The Intreo service needs to be adequately resourced and staff provided with the level of training needed to provide a person-centred and inclusive service.

» *See: EAPN Ireland submission to the Low Pay Commission, 27th March 2015³⁰ and*
» *EAPN Ireland Position Paper on Positive Activation, July 2015³¹*

26. Based on the Survey of Income and Living Conditions this would have been €201.82 in 2013. www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditions2013

27. www.budgeting.ie

28. Roadmap to an adequate Minimum Income for Ireland 2015. <https://eminnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/emin-ireland-2014.pdf>

29. www.livingwage.ie

30. EAPN Ireland Submission to the Low Pay Commission, 2015. <http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/submission-to-the-low-pay-commission.pdf>

31. EAPN Ireland Position Paper on Positive Activation, 2015. <http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/position-paper-on-positive-activation1.pdf>

A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY SERVICES

The strategy must plan for the development of quality services available to all, in areas such as health, education, transport etc. Those should also be assessed to ensure that particular supports are put in place to support the most vulnerable and those on low income and facing discrimination.

There is a particular need to increase investment in affordable, accessible and quality early childhood care and education towards the OECD average of 0.8% of GDP.

A STRATEGY TO END HOMELESSNESS AND ENSURE HOUSING FOR ALL

The strategy needs to increase the supply of housing to meet demand, so local authorities need to start building and providing social housing in a planned way to meet future needs. Approved Housing Bodies need to be recognised as providing housing and ease of access to finance needs to be available to them.

It must also provide adequate resources to fully implement a Housing First approach to homelessness. People need to move out of emergency accommodation as soon as possible and not become trapped in homelessness longer than is necessary.

Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment must be increased to levels which meet market rents so that people can take up accommodation and avoid falling into homelessness.

There is a need for an independent Traveller Accommodation Agency to oversee the provision of appropriate and quality accommodation, including Traveller specific accommodation, that meets the needs of all Traveller families in a reasonable timeframe.

A STRATEGY BASED ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DIGNITY AND EQUALITY

The strategy must be built from an explicit human rights foundation. To ensure this, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission requires the supports and resources to implement its mandate, including progressing the positive duty which requires public bodies to “have regard to” the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights for all public service organisations.

Parties are urged to support a referendum on enshrining economic, social and cultural right into

the Constitution, as proposed by the Constitutional Convention, and pass legislation to recognise economic status an additional ground for discrimination.

There is a need to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority, responding to the views of the UN Human Rights Committee, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2008) and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The strategy must also include a National Traveller Agency to drive and monitor the implementation of policies across health, education, accommodation, employment and anti-racism.

The strategy must introduce comprehensive legislation dealing with all aspects of immigration and residence, including a fair and pragmatic regularisation scheme for undocumented migrants in Ireland and a fair asylum system. Ireland must opt into the EU Reception Directive for asylum seekers³² which, among other things, would allow asylum seekers to work. We must see an end to the direct provision system, a speeded up the process for processing applications for refugee status and the right for asylum seekers to access adequate social welfare supports and to work after six months of their refugee application process.

A STRATEGY WHICH WE CAN AFFORD

The strategy must include a five-year plan to bring overall Irish taxation levels from their current 30% of GDP to the EU average, which is currently 40% of GDP. Without this revenue we will not be able to invest in quality public services and social protection and to address inequality.

This needs to be done in a progressive way, so that those who can contribute most, including profitable business, the financial sector, property owners and those on high incomes contribute a fair share. This will include higher rates of tax on high incomes, removing regressive tax reliefs, cracking down on tax evasion and tax havens, introducing effective wealth taxes, increasing employers’ social security contributions and corporation tax to EU average levels. Ireland should also opt into the Financial Transaction tax being adopted by most countries in the Eurozone.

» *See also: Community Platform, Paying Our Way, Progressive proposals for reforming the Irish tax system*³³

32. EU Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:031:0018:0025:EN:PDF>

33. Community Platform 2011, Paying Our Way: Progressive proposals for reforming the Irish tax system. [http://communityplatform.ie/uploads/payingourway_preview%20\(2\).pdf](http://communityplatform.ie/uploads/payingourway_preview%20(2).pdf)

EAPN IRELAND AND THE WORKING GROUP ON EUROPE 2020

Established in 1990, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty. It is the Irish national network of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Europe), which has two decades of experience in lobbying for progressive social change at European level.

EAPN Ireland supports a network of over two hundred local, regional and national organisations and individuals' committed to tackling poverty through a range of actions including community development, policy analysis and lobbying, campaigning and participation. EAPN Ireland aims to build the capacity of its membership to engage with national and European policy making through training, information dissemination, collective action and networking.

EAPN Ireland convenes the **Working Group on Europe 2020**, which aims to ensure the implementation of the social inclusion and equality commitments of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It is made up of representatives of the following organisations:

- » **Age Action Ireland**
- » **Congress Centres Network**
- » **Disability Federation of Ireland**
- » **EAPN Ireland**
- » **Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed**
- » **Irish Traveller Movement**
- » **Migrant Rights Centre Ireland**
- » **National Adult Literacy Agency**
- » **National Youth Council of Ireland**
- » **National Women's Council of Ireland**
- » **One Family**
- » **Simon Communities of Ireland**
- » **SIPTU.**



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