



European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland

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The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the National Reform Programme 2023. This submission addresses the major relevant developments and challenges for Ireland with regard to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, and which EAPN Ireland believes should be addressed in Ireland's National Reform Programme.

Broadly, the National Reform Programme must be a meaningful framework which enables Ireland to meet its anti-poverty commitments, including under the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future, the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Roadmap for Social Inclusion aims to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2025, a commitment also contained in the Economic Recovery Plan. Effectively addressing poverty and social exclusion has an important role *vis-à-vis* Ireland's fiscal policy, as poverty and its consequences will cost the state and society significantly more in the long run. A shift is required in the Government's approach to addressing rising living costs and the struggles facing low-income households. For example, the ad hoc and once off measures contained in Budget 2023 do little to address the root causes of poverty for low-income households in the long term or to mitigate the ongoing negative impacts of inflation as it continues to rise. The Government must deploy targeted investment, supports and resources to urgently address the immediate and most pressing needs, while also taking concrete actions to deliver long-term solutions to tackle income inadequacy, alongside adequate investment in public services and supports across the country. Such an approach would provide the most robust answer and solution to poverty and social exclusion in Ireland, establishing a society based on decency, fairness, and equality.

Poverty in Ireland

In recent years, extreme poverty has become a growing reality for an increasing number of individuals and families in Ireland. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) Enforced Deprivation 2022 Report¹ shows that the number of people living in enforced deprivation increased sharply in 2022. More than 876,000 people or 17.1% of the population in Ireland cannot afford at least two of what are considered eleven essential items. This is an increase of over 100,000 people from 2021. The report also shows that almost half of people (49.3%) now have at least some difficulty in making ends meet. The groups most likely to be experiencing enforced deprivation are persons who are living in one adult households with children under 18 (45.4%); unemployed (45.0%); unable to work due to long-standing health problems (42.7%); and living in rented or rent-free accommodation (34.1%). Persons unable to afford to keep the home adequately warm increased from 3.2% in 2021 to 7.4% in 2022. More than nine in ten (93.7%) households experiencing enforced deprivation had at least some difficulty in making ends meet. Households regarding housing costs as a heavy financial burden increased from 23.0% in 2021 to 30.2% in 2022. Seven in ten households (68.4%) renting or rent-free have at least some level of difficulty in making ends meet.

The latest (2022) CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) is due to be published shortly. At the time of writing, the SILC 2021² survey provides the most relevant and up-to-

¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcenforceddeprivation2022/>

² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2021/>

date official data on income, poverty, and inequality in Ireland and the groups most affected. In 2021, 11.6% of the population, or over 581,000 people, were living below the poverty line (or were 'at risk of poverty') as they had an income that was less than 60% of the median disposable income, so €15,158 per annum or €290.49 per week, an increase of €18.26 from 2020. The groups most likely to live in consistent poverty include those who are unemployed, lone parent households, those unable to work due to long-standing health problems, households with one adult under 65 years, with no-one at work, and where someone is renting or living rent free. Due to the size of the population sample used in the survey, it does not include the poverty levels amongst groups such as Travellers, Roma, migrants, or those who are homeless. The survey also shows that without COVID-19 income supports almost one in five people would have been at risk of poverty in 2021, but these supports helped reduce the levels of those at risk to 11.6%. The 2022 SILC will give a clearer picture of the situation since the removal of COVID-19 income supports. SILC 2021 also highlights the ongoing housing crisis in Ireland and the insecurity experienced by households who are renting and are more likely to be at risk of poverty than homeowners. Poverty levels are also felt in a cumulative and collective way in communities experiencing high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, compounding the social exclusion experienced by these communities.

A major challenge in recent times has been the steep rise in the cost of living. Many in society now have an income that is not adequate to meet the cost of living or to enable them to live with dignity. Inflation rose by 8.2% over the 12 months to December 2022.³ The largest increases in the year to December were in Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas & Other Fuels (+25.9%) and Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages (+11.7%). This will continue to have the most detrimental impact on rural, older, and low-income households, who spend a greater share of their income on energy and food. Households are facing increasing pressures and are being forced to make difficult and inequitable choices due to the rising cost of living. It is increasingly common that people find themselves unable to afford basic necessities due to inadequate incomes, and this requires a coordinated structural response from Government.

EAPN Ireland commissioned the Think-Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) to analyse the increasing demand for support with basic necessities in Ireland. In November 2022, we published *More Than Just a Temporary Crisis: The Growing Need for Support with Basic Necessities and the Impact on Low-Income Households and the Community and Voluntary sector*. This report reveals the impact of the growing dependence of people on charities, foodbanks and wider community and voluntary organisations to make ends meet, put food on the table and pay essential bills. The report shows that while the current cost of living crisis has led to much greater numbers of people unable to make ends meet, this is a symptom of the deep levels of poverty experienced by many people which existed before the COVID-19 crisis, and which has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis. The report reveals the negative impacts that this growing reliance on community organisations and charities for support with basic necessities has on individuals, households, and on the Community and Voluntary sector itself. While the supports with basic necessities provided by charities and foodbanks play an important role in addressing the immediate and unexpected needs of people living in poverty, their existence highlights the failure of our social protection system and wages to ensure that everyone has an adequate income to meet the cost of goods and services. A major concern is that the role of charities, including food banks, would become a normalised response to meeting the basic needs of people with inadequate incomes.

As a measure to help offset rising living costs, the Community and Voluntary sector called for the Government to increase social welfare core rates by a minimum of €20 in Budget 2023. An increase of this significance would not achieve income adequacy or lift households above the poverty line but would merely enable households to remain stagnant against the impacts of rising inflation. Instead, the Budget 2023 increase to weekly social welfare and pension

³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpi/consumerpriceindexdecember2022/>

payments was €12. This falls below inflation levels and will do nothing to prevent families and individuals falling further into poverty, or to reduce the struggles people living in poverty are facing due to increasing living costs.

Income Adequacy and Essential Public Services

Concrete commitments and action are needed from Government, not only to address the immediate impact of the cost-of-living crisis but also the underlying structural and systematic causes of poverty and social exclusion. This cannot be addressed through ad hoc, once off measures. If Ireland is to meet its anti-poverty commitments, a sustainable, long-term approach to addressing the cost of living, poverty and social exclusion is needed and must involve a commitment on a policy level to income adequacy alongside adequate investment in public services and supports, delivered by long term investment and progressive realisation.

The Government must benchmark social welfare rates to a level that lifts people above the poverty line and provides them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL). Our social welfare system should ensure that everyone, at whatever stage in life and whether working or not, has an income that allows them to live with dignity and take a full part in society. Ireland's social welfare support is not based on the cost of living and what is adequate to lift people out of poverty. Many people who are dependent on social welfare cannot afford a decent standard of living and are living in poverty. The Minimum Essential Standard of Living has been used in Ireland for more than 20 years and developed using international standards by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (now the Vincentian MESL Research Centre in St Vincent de Paul). By annually updating the cost of over 2,000 essential goods and services, it calculates the income needed for a broad range of different family types to afford a decent standard of living. This represents a basic standard below which no one should be expected to live, and meets physical, psychological, and social needs. The forensic research in calculating, and annually updating, the MESL allows for a detailed understanding of the changes in the cost of living and the impact of different policies on services and supports, and means that it recommends itself as the ideal basis for bench marking social welfare supports.

The Government must commit to introducing a living wage as calculated by the Living Wage Technical Group. The European Semester 2022 Country Report for Ireland notes that the National Minimum Wage falls short of the Minimum Living Wage.⁴ Despite an increase in the minimum wage since the Country Report was published, this is still the case. As of January 31st 2023, the hourly National Minimum Wage is €11.30, while a Living Wage based on the cost of living is €13.85 for someone working full-time (39 hours), a gap of €2.55 per hour. The minimum wage for all workers of €13.85 is recommended by the Living Wage Technical Group. This amount has been calculated to be the amount that is necessary to make a minimum acceptable standard of living possible. This is significantly higher than both the current National Minimum Wage and what it would be if the Government's proposed approach based on 60% of the median wage was fully implemented (i.e. €13.10). In addition to a living wage, the availability of "decent work" must be addressed in the context of preventing and addressing poverty. Decent work includes appropriate and safe working conditions, where the rights of employees are respected and enacted, regular and consistent hours, as well as access to a wage that meets the cost of living. The 2022 European Semester Country Report for Ireland highlights the need to help under-represented groups, particularly women, people with low skills, single parents and people with disabilities, integrate into the labour market.⁵ More needs to be done by Government, including via targeted supports, to address the multiple barriers to employment, including discrimination and bias, experienced by vulnerable and marginalised groups in society.

⁴ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en

⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en

The Government must also commit to adequate investment in and ensuring the public delivery of quality public services and supports. The 2022 European Semester Country Report for Ireland noted that “[c]oncerns remain in relation to the availability of social services for disadvantaged groups, and the situation for homeless people, people with disabilities, single parent and low work intensity households.”⁶ Ireland’s historical under-investment in public services has resulted in a situation where there is inadequate provision and a high cost for many public services. There is a direct link between the cost of goods and services and the amount of money people need in order to achieve the minimum standard of living. The more someone has to pay for directly, the more money they need to have at hand. This is particularly challenging for low-income households, which are more likely to rely on public services almost exclusively and lack the economic means to engage with private sector service provision. Investment in, and reducing the cost of, public services, such as health, housing, education, childcare, social and residential care, will help to bring the high cost of living under control and mean that people would not need as much cash in hand to pay for essential services. In order to help to ensure the requisite resources it needs, the State should broaden the tax base, moving away from an over reliance on corporate tax receipts in order to stabilise public finances in the medium and long term. If these solutions are in place, it would go some way to ensuring people can live with dignity without depending on charities as an ongoing way of meeting living costs. It would also help to ensure that Government will be better able to respond when unexpected spikes in prices arise in the future.

Addressing the Structural Housing Crisis

In the past 12 months, we have continued to see increases in rent and house prices across Ireland in addition to insufficient housing supply. The most recent rental figures show rents have increased by 13.7% in the last year.⁷ This is the second highest year-on-year increase in market rents since 2005.⁸ As of the beginning of February, fewer than 1,100 homes were available to rent, a decrease of almost 22% compared to the same date last year. Homelessness has also continued to increase. As of December 2022, the number of adults and children who are homeless across Ireland has reached a new record high of 11,632.⁹ These official homelessness figures relate only to people accessing State-funded emergency accommodation, and so do not include e.g. people sleeping rough, people couch surfing, homeless people in hospitals and prisons, people in Direct Provision centres, and homeless households residing in domestic violence refuges.

The European Semester 2022 Country Report for Ireland recognised the impact of the gap between housing supply and demand, along with rental price increases and insufficient social and affordable housing on the ongoing structural housing crisis in Ireland.¹⁰ A number of legislative measures introduced by the Government seek to address the housing and homelessness crisis in Ireland, including the Housing for All strategy. Despite some progress, the housing provision targets set by the Government’s Housing for All strategy have yet to positively impact in any substantial way on the growing number of people experiencing homelessness, the increasing number of households within the private rented sector who are at risk of poverty, and the number of households for whom homeownership is unlikely to ever be a viable option.

Rather than investing in and ensuring the public delivery of public/social housing, Ireland’s housing policy has historically involved an overinflated dependence on the private sector. Reliance on the market to increase the supply of housing has spectacularly failed to provide

⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en

⁷ https://ww1.daft.ie/report/2022-Q4-rentalprice-daftreport.pdf?d_rd=1

⁸ https://ww1.daft.ie/report/2022-Q4-rentalprice-daftreport.pdf?d_rd=1

⁹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22abb-homeless-report-december-2022/>

¹⁰ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en, p. 48

affordable housing for all. This approach to housing policy has led to a dysfunctional housing system that is a major driver of poverty. This has been exacerbated by a failure to effectively address rental price increases. The cost of renting has a major impact on the likelihood of being at risk of poverty, with the private rental sector becoming a pathway to homelessness for many. Investing in the right to quality affordable housing, including public/social housing, should be seen as a priority policy intervention to prevent homelessness and to reduce poverty and social exclusion.

To effectively address social and affordable housing needs, housing policy urgently needs to shift away from this dependence on the private housing market. This requires a major increase in the provision of direct build social and affordable housing that is owned and controlled by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies. A specific focus is needed on housing units offering tenants a differential rent as opposed to market-based rent, particularly for the benefit of households on low incomes and living in poverty and those requiring accessible housing. It is crucial that robust standards are in place to ensure that all housing meets adequate standards of habitability, accessibility, energy efficiency, location and availability of services, facilities and infrastructure in line with international standards. Tenants at risk of eviction due to unaffordable rents, or the retrofitting of properties by landlords need to be offered greater protection. The barriers to the adequate provision of Traveller specific accommodation also needs to be urgently addressed.

Access to secure, affordable, quality housing is an essential prerequisite to addressing poverty and social exclusion, together with income adequacy and other public services and supports. It is fundamental to the right to a dignified life, and is an essential foundation to full participation in society. The Government must commit to holding a referendum to enshrine the right to housing in the Constitution. This fundamental reform is crucial to ensure that the State's planning and decision-making on housing legislation, policy and other measures are designed to move towards a guarantee of access to secure, affordable and suitable homes for all. We support the recommendations put forward by the Home for Good coalition, including that a constitutional amendment be a stand-alone right which includes both a recognition of a directly enforceable right to housing and a separate statement of the State's obligation to realise that right within available resources.¹¹

Ensuring a Just Transition to a Climate Neutral Ireland

The rise in global energy prices has called attention to the precarity of people living in or at risk of poverty and energy poverty. In addition to the temporary measures already taken by the Government, this calls for longer-term structural solutions to tackle the root causes of energy poverty in order to achieve a socially-just decarbonisation as part of the transition towards a green economy. Otherwise, people living in poverty risk getting locked in the fossil fuel infrastructure in the coming years. This should ensure renovation, energy efficiency and renewable programmes for energy-poor households and those living in rented houses and social housing, by prioritising targeted public investments. Another concern is electrified transport and its impact on low-income and/or marginalised communities. While electrified transport (public transport and cars) is beneficial for the health of the whole population, access and affordability remains unequal. Transport poverty and inequalities in green mobility have a significant impact on climate change and social inclusion. In this respect, unemployed people and/or people on low incomes, as well as rural communities, could be prevented from accessing the labour market if their area is not duly served and if they remain locked in fossil fuel infrastructure (energy systems in their building and transportation).

¹¹ https://www.homeforgood.ie/assets/files/pdf/note_from_the_legal_sub-group_expanding_on_standalone_right_-_october_2020.pdf

The transition to a climate-neutral economy unlocks new opportunities for environmentally-friendly jobs. However, this should not be considered the solution per se without the social dimension, including but not limited to the challenges associated with job elimination, labour reallocation, re-skilling and up-skilling. The focus on access to quality employment complemented by adequate training and life-long learning in Principle 2 of the Climate Action Plan 2023¹² is acknowledged. However, employment and training programmes aiming at developing the skills needed for the green transition cannot ensure quality jobs and working conditions. In this regard, the Government should also guarantee a Living Wage, as outlined above, in order to overcome increasing disparities in working conditions and reduce the number of working poor. More focus is also needed to support those currently excluded from the labour market and low-paid workers currently employed in traditional energy industries. Thus, a focus on the *inclusive* upskilling and reskilling of workers and job seekers is necessary to avoid labour market polarisation and unequal access to opportunities. The dominant focus on job creation, productivity, competitiveness, innovation and economic growth, is notably dependent on market-oriented solutions rather than deep public investments and reforms. However, to realise a socially just green transition, structural solutions are needed, underpinned by person-centred and rights-based approaches. National employment and social policies should also reconcile the social and green targets, in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Access to essential services is a pre-condition for fostering inclusive participation in the green transition, but the identified measures have a disproportionate focus on changing individual consumption and mobility behaviours. This has the potential to remove responsibility from the state and the market actors and makes citizens accountable for their use of clean energies, energy efficiency programmes and alternative forms of mobility with no analysis of the State's obligation to ensure accessibility to affordable and quality services. There is a need to ensure universality, guaranteeing access to essential quality services for everybody, combined with additional targeted measures to achieve effective access for vulnerable groups and robust anti-discrimination measures. Beyond the list of services mentioned in the European Pillar of Social Rights (principle 20), EAPN considers as essential those services of general interest that are essential to the general population and where the state has an obligation to act in the public interest and deliver adequate standards for services (affordability, quality and equal treatment in access and use of services, amongst others), regardless of the nature of providers.

Community Development

Marginalised communities and those living in poverty must be able to participate in decisions that impact on their lives. A viable and robust Community and Voluntary sector is needed to ensure the voices of people in need are meaningfully included in future policy and legislative development. This ensures a long-term response to social exclusion and poverty, enabling communities to identify their needs and mobilise a collective response to relevant policy development processes. It is estimated that during the austerity period in Ireland (2008-2015), disproportionate cuts of between 35-41% were made to the Community and Voluntary sector by the Irish Government.¹³ The effects of these extensive cuts continue to impact public service delivery within disadvantaged communities across Ireland, with the replacement of community development by a top-down, individualised service delivery approach superseding more collective forms of community engagement. It was this collective engagement that enabled groups to identify their own priorities and work as key actors to bring about the changes needed to improve the lives of people experiencing poverty.

¹² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/>

¹³ <https://comhlamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/9-Paper-on-the-Destruction-of-Community-Development.pdf>

The important role community development plays in linking the voices of people of experience, in terms of poverty and inequality, to advocacy and policy development cannot be overstated. Yet the capacity to do so has been diminished to damagingly low levels. The Community and Voluntary sector continues to struggle with stagnant funding streams, and a raft of part-time insecure employment positions, trying to adequately represent the voices and perspectives of marginalised communities and those living in poverty. Presently community organisations are overwhelmed with the demands of providing basics, (such as food, heating, clothes,) to families and people in need within their localities. This has come at the expense of well-resourced long-term initiatives designed to address the underlying causes of social exclusion. As outlined above, providing support with basic necessities fundamentally changes the work of the Community and Voluntary sector. Many organisations have had to augment the services that they provide to instead provide an emergency response to service users in crisis. Support with basic necessities risks becoming normalised and this is detrimental to the missions and goals of these organisations. These same front-line organisations are also heavily involved in supporting the integration of migrants into their communities. The increased demand has not been matched by sufficient Government recognition or funding for the sector, leading to many organisations being unable to plan long-term, increased pressure on staff, and pressure to chase available funding instead of responding to the needs in their communities.

Adequate investment in and resourcing of communities and the organisations that support them is also an effective bulwark against challenges to the social cohesion, safety and sustainability of communities. This is of particular urgency in the current context of rising far-right mobilisations across the country. The Government must take seriously and address, through concrete and meaningful actions and the delivery of long-term, sustainable solutions, the serious social and economic issues facing local communities. If the Government fails to effectively address the genuine concerns of communities, it risks providing fertile ground which can enable far-right narratives to gain a foothold.

The Irish Government in recent years has taken some measures designed to reconnect with community development on a strategic level, including the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities strategy (2019-2024) as well as the subsequent funding of the Pilot Community Development Programme, a welcome step towards establishing a new programme for local autonomous community development organisations. However, the level of funding and resources required to re-establish community development in the areas most in need has not been forthcoming.

The Government must commit to adequate investment in and resourcing of autonomous community development across Ireland in order to benefit and give voice to the individuals, households and communities which are most disadvantaged in the decisions that impact them. This must involve an evaluation of how the Community and Voluntary sector could be better resourced and involved in informing policy. The Government should introduce more multi-year funding cycles to allow organisations to effectively plan long term. The Government should examine the consultation mechanisms that are currently in place with the Community and Voluntary sector to ensure an effective and meaningful voice is given to those impacted by all forms of poverty in how policies are developed and implemented.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The inability to afford basic necessities, therefore depending on provision from charities and community organisations, is a sign of deep and intersectional poverty, relevant to and experienced by a diverse number of marginalised groups in society. The fulfilment of basic needs is fundamental to human dignity, human rights, and social and economic equality. This requires a coordinated approach from the Government that is underpinned by a commitment to tackling income inadequacy and investing in public services. As a priority the Government needs to ensure that everyone has access to an adequate income, whether this is from work

or social welfare, or a mix of both. The Government must also tackle the long-term drivers of the cost of living, including the cost of services such as housing, health, and childcare, alongside tackling the current immediate drivers such as energy and fuel costs. This is necessary to ensure that everyone has access to an adequate income, quality services and the opportunity to access a decent job as per the European Pillar of Social Rights. There needs to be further investment in public services and supports, i.e. investment in direct build social and affordable housing, the adequate funding of a public childcare system, investment in health and in public transport across Ireland, particularly in rural areas.

Recommendations

Income Adequacy and Essential Public Services

- Benchmark social welfare rates against a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL).
- Move toward introducing a living wage based on the cost of living, as calculated by the Living Wage Technical Group.
- Ensure that measures to address the cost-of-living crisis prioritise those who are on low incomes and most vulnerable, with an emphasis on ensuring welfare rates and supports are adequate to afford the cost of living.
- Commit to adequate investment in and ensure the public delivery of quality public services and supports, such as health, housing, education, childcare, social and residential care.
- Introduce targeted measures to support under-represented and marginalised groups, particularly women, people with low skills, Travellers, Roma and other ethnic minorities, single parents and people with disabilities, to integrate into the labour market, including to address the multiple barriers to employment such as discrimination and bias.
- Broaden the tax base, including moving away from an over-reliance on corporate tax receipts in order to both stabilise public finances in the medium and long term, and to help ensure the requisite resources to address the current under-investment in quality public services and adequate social protection.

Addressing the Structural Housing Crisis

- Adequately invest in and increase the provision of direct build social and affordable housing as provided by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies, with a specific focus on housing units offering tenants a differential rent as opposed to market-based rent setting, particularly for the benefit of household on low incomes and living in poverty and those requiring accessible housing.
- Ensure robust standards are in place to ensure that all housing meets adequate standards of habitability, accessibility, energy efficiency, location and availability of services, facilities and infrastructure in line with international standards.
- Introduce measures to effectively address rental price increases.
- Improve protection for tenants at risk of eviction due to unaffordable rents, or the retrofitting of properties by landlords.
- Urgently address barriers to the adequate provision of Traveller specific accommodation.
- Hold a referendum to enshrine the right to housing in the Constitution, including a stand-alone amendment which includes a recognition of a directly enforceable right to housing and a separate statement of the State's obligation to realise that right within available resources.

Ensuring a Just Transition to a Climate Neutral Ireland

- Prioritise targeted public investments for energy-poor households and those living in rented houses and social housing.
- Increase investment in public transport options that are affordable, reliable and sustainable, in both urban and rural areas, particularly for people on low incomes or those

in underserved areas, ensuring that costs of the transition to green transport are not passed on in higher prices that penalise the poorest.

- Introduce measures to support those currently excluded from the labour market, and low-paid workers currently employed in traditional energy industries, including upskilling and reskilling of workers and job seekers that is inclusive, in order to avoid labour market polarisation and unequal access to opportunities.
- Ensure that employment and social policies reconcile the social and green targets, in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- Ensure universal access to essential quality services and supports, combined with additional targeted measures to achieve effective access for vulnerable groups along with anti-discrimination measures.
- Widen eligibility for and increase the weekly rate of the Fuel Allowance; introduce a partial-rate Fuel Allowance payment for those on lower rates of income who do not currently qualify.
- Establish the proposed Just Transition Commission as a matter of urgency, to guide and implement a carbon neutral transition, to meet Ireland's energy targets, build public support for climate action, with an anti-poverty and pro-equality focus to ensure that no worker or community is left behind.

Community Development

- Significantly increase investment in and resourcing of autonomous community development including further expanding the Community Development Pilot Programme.
- Evaluate how the Community and Voluntary sector could be better resourced and introduce more multi-year funding cycles to allow organisations to effectively plan long term.
- Examine the consultation and collaborative governance mechanisms that are currently in place with the Community and Voluntary sector to ensure an effective and meaningful voice is given to those impacted by all forms of poverty in how policies are developed and implemented.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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