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INOUE Presentation to Workshop 1: Inter- agency co-operation for a more inclusive local labour market

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Introduction

On behalf of the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE), I would like to thank Pobal for the invitation to talk to you today about *“Inter-agency co-operation for a more inclusive local labour market”*. Such work does not take place in a vacuum, and so this presentation will incorporate a national and policy context and explore the opportunities and risks from the perspective of unemployed people.

“The INOU is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. The INOU represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment and cannot obtain it. We promote and campaign for policies to achieve full employment for all. We also campaign for an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents. The INOU is an anti-sectarian, anti-racist, non-party political organisation which promotes equality of opportunity within society.” (INOUE Mission Statement)

The organisation has over 210 affiliated organisations and 2,100 individual members. We work at the local and national level on issues affecting unemployed people through the provision of training and welfare rights information services; analysis of Government policies and related advocacy work; and working with a wide range of other organisations on issues of common concern.

Current Context

According to the latest Quarterly National Household Survey, Quarter 2 2016, there were 2,014,900 people employed in Ireland: the last time this figure was over 2 million was in the final quarter of 2008. However, there were 154,700 more people in employment at the height of the Celtic Tiger: 2,169,600 in Q3 2007. In Q2 2016 1,553,000 people were employed full-time and 461,900 were employed part-time: representing 77% and 23% of those in employment. This compares to 82% and 18% of people employed in Q3 2007: when 1,779,400 people were employed full-time and 390,200 were employed part-time. Feedback to the INOU shows an on-going concern about the quality of employment available in local areas.

In Q2 2016 there were 187,800 people unemployed, of whom 95,900 were unemployed for more than a year. The last time there were less than 100,000 people unemployed for more than a year was in Q3 2009, when there were 80,300 people long-term unemployed. In recent years the Central Statistics Office has published a figure called the *Potential Additional Labour Force (PALF)*. PALF captures people who are not deemed unemployed because they did not answer ‘yes’ to the job seeking and job availability questions. In Q2 2016 there were 39,200 people described as being part of PALF, a figure that has remained over 30,000 since the crisis hit. Behind these statistics are people who have lost heart trying to find work, a challenge noted by INOU members and affiliates is *“Employers not getting back to people when they apply for jobs”*. For other people there are logistical difficulties

that cannot be sorted out until they start work, yet starting work without resolving these difficulties is problematic. Access to affordable childcare and transport are two such issues, and addressing them can be particularly challenging if the work on offer is short-term, piece-meal or uncertain.

Challenges to be acknowledged and addressed

- Discrimination in the labour market.
 - ♦ Broaden out the equality grounds to include socio-economic status.
 - ♦ Central Statistics Office Equality Module August 2015¹, based on the Quarterly National Household Survey Q3, 2014, noted the second highest rate of discrimination was reported by people who are unemployed: at 23%. The highest rate was experienced by people from non-white ethnic backgrounds: at 28%.
 - ♦ 'In looking for work' the issue of age featured very strongly with 46% of respondents noting it as an issue. This is very much in keeping with the feedback the INOU receives from older, long-term unemployed people.
- Lack of specific system wide targets to tackle structural unemployment, household joblessness and inequalities in the labour market. And when targets are set a lack of flexibility locally to address, for example, the fact that not everyone experiencing disadvantage lives in a disadvantaged area.
- Imbalanced regional and occupational spread of employment, in particular sustainable / decent job opportunities.
- Imbalanced regional and local spread of services that assist people to take-up employment e.g. accessible transport and childcare.
- Inconsistent provision of relevant and meaningful education, training and employment programmes which really benefit unemployed people and others of working age distant from the labour market.

Realising an inclusive labour market

At the INOU's Annual Delegate Conference in May, the Government was urged *"to develop a person centred activation process that ensures that the individual is supported to make an informed choice: a process that seeks to enable people to participate but refrains from coercing people into unsuitable activation programmes or unsustainable jobs."* Such an approach is key if an inclusive labour market and improved outcomes for unemployed people and others of working age are to be realised.

To that end employment services must:

- Be a person centred service for everyone of working age;

¹ Full document available at: <http://cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-eq/qnhsequalitymodulequarter32014/>

- Be pro-active and supportive;
- Ensure the full & pro-active provision of information;
- Ensure flexibility in the system to facilitate participation;
- Deliver good support services with a particular focus on re-skilling; provision of childcare; accessible transport;
- Ensure integrated provision within and across relevant Departments, Agencies, organisations on the ground;
- Identify clear pathways from Activation Programmes out into the wider labour market;
- Commit to and deliver on an inclusive service and identify how the requirements of 'public sector duty' will be met; and,
- Provided with the proper resources to deliver on such a service.

Positive Duty

Of course no-one is an island, though many people experience isolation and exclusion, they do so because of a collective identity, for example their ethnicity, their class or an issue, life experience they may share with others, for example a disability, parenting alone. This shared experience and the experience of this community or group has an impact on how easily or not anyone from this community or group can access employment. For instance, the *Action Plan for Jobs 2016*² notes "*People with disabilities are only half as likely to have a job as the population at large.*" (p34) According to Census 2011 "*Unemployment in the Irish Traveller community was 84.3 per cent in 2011, up from 74.9 per cent five years earlier.*" This compares with a national unemployment rate of 19.2%, up from 8.5% in Census 2006³.

'Positive Duty' was introduced in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, and it has an important role to play in addressing discrimination and exclusion from the labour market. According to Section 42 (1) of the IHREC Act "*A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to-*

- a) *Eliminate discrimination,*
- b) *Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and*
- c) *Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services."*

² Full document available at: <https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Action-Plan-for-Jobs-2016.pdf>

³ Please note these figures come from the Principle Economic Status question on the Census form, while the official unemployment figures are derived from the Quarterly National Household Survey using ILO criteria.

In their May 2011 briefing paper⁴, the Equality Rights Alliance note “A positive duty seeks to ensure that the promotion of equality and human rights becomes a core part of the way in which the organisation operates and conducts its business by:

- Supporting an informed and evidence-based approach to the work of public sector organisations,
- Requiring public sector organisations to not only take steps to avoid discriminating against employees and service users, but to actively promote equality for, and respect and protect the human rights of, service users and employees,
- Seeking to ensure that public sector organisations meet the needs of all service users and employees,
- Aiming to make tangible differences in the lives of people experiencing inequality, exclusion and human rights abuses.

Positive duties are not about creating more red tape and bureaucracy. They are not an add-on or a further burden but an integral part of the way in which business is conducted.”

Active Inclusion

In *Pathways to Work 2016–2020*⁵, in the section entitled Expanding Scope and Coverage – Active Inclusion, that this P2W “includes specific actions to increase labour market participation and employment progression of people who are not currently active in the labour market and to apply the concept of active inclusion as a guiding principle – particularly in the period from 2018 – 2020.” (p18)

So what does ‘active inclusion’ mean? In 2008, the European Commission adopted a Recommendation on the active inclusion of people most excluded from the labour market. This recommendation sought to promote a comprehensive strategy based on the integration of three key elements: adequate income support; inclusive labour markets; and, access to quality services.

In January 2013 the European Commission published the Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion “Assessment of the implementation of the European Commission Recommendation on active inclusion: A study of national policies”. In this report they noted “The most common weakness is that, while some elements of all strands are often present, many Member States’ strategies tend to be imbalanced. Often far greater attention is given to the inclusive labour market strand, and in particular to activation measures, than to the adequate income support and access to quality services. The unbalanced approach often seems to reflect a lack of understanding amongst policy makers as to what the term active inclusion means. Thus, while the phrase “active inclusion” increasingly appears in policy documents, activation.”

⁴ Full document available at: <http://www.eracampaign.org/uploads/ERA%20briefing%20paper-%20Public%20sector%20Positive%20Duty.pdf>

⁵ Full document available at <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/PathwaysToWork2016-2020.pdf>

It is critically important that in further rolling-out the changes envisaged in *Pathways to Work* and other policy documents that the means of engaging with unemployed people and others of working age distant from the labour market moves away from a conditionality approach, to one that seriously strives to be person-centred, pro-active and inclusive. This demands that the starting point is not how people can be fitted in, but how services can be designed and evolve to truly include, how services interact and work together to produce long-term and sustainable outcomes.

Integrated Services

In 2008 the INOU ran a seminar entitled “*Getting it Right, Linking Training and Education to Employment*”⁶ The seminar brought together a wide ranging audience including Government Departments, INOU affiliated organisations, employers' organisations training providers, and state agencies with specific remits for education and training provision, and amongst the speakers was Hugh Rodgers, Senior Employment Officer with FÁS in Cork. Hugh told the seminar about the Mahon Point Project and the work undertaken to ensure that people living in an area with high unemployment could gain access to opportunities this project would present. He identified the key factors to enabling the project’s success as:

- A clear focus and vision
- Setting targets
 - ♦ 456 people availed of the training provided.
 - ♦ 78% placement rate from the training.
 - ♦ 310 / 615 people placed in employment were from the Mahon area.
- A lead co-ordinator
- Partnership approach
 - ♦ The active involvement of the developer was seen as critical.
 - ♦ As was a very active local community association.
- Local involvement
 - ♦ A survey was conducted of the residents, analysing their training needs and working preferences.
 - ♦ Contacts were made with local community groups and through programmes like Community Employment facilitated the provision of training programmes.

In March 2015, the Department of Social Protection published Maurice Devlin’s report on the pilot of the Youth Guarantee entitled “*Policy and Practice Report, Key learning from the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Project*”⁷ Lessons arising are very similar to the ones arising from the Mahon Point Project, in chapter 7, under the heading ‘Partnership’ it says:

“There is a need for clarity in relation to such matters as:

⁶ Seminar report available at http://www.inou.ie/download/pdf/getting_it_right_seminar_report.pdf

⁷ Full document available at <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/Key-Learning-Ballymun-Youth-Guarantee-Project.pdf>

- *roles and responsibilities of partners (a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ is advisable at a minimum);*
- *key shared objectives;*
- *KPIs, reporting and monitoring;*
- *governance;*
- *management (including dedicated project management for partnership work).”*

In her presentation to the Pobal SICAP Targeting Support Event in May this year, Nuala Whelan from the Ballymun Jobs Centre, who were one of the partners in the Youth Guarantee Pilot, noted the key lessons for the further development of the Guarantee in Ireland as:

- *“Positive and Supportive client-centred approach*
- *An Interagency approach – with a lead organisation driving the process (employment focused)*
- *Good quality career advice - ongoing*
- *Quality offers and wrap around support*
- *Employer Engagement*
- *Local, Innovative, Flexible Responses - take a risk!*
- *All young people, not just those claiming Job Seekers payment”*

In the INOU’s recent submissions to the Action Plan for Jobs 2017⁸ and Budget 2017⁹, the organisation called for *“A properly resourced integrated, inter-departmental and inter-agency approach that ensures the maximum possible number of unemployed people get access to decent jobs”* and *“The pro-active and timely provision of good information and practical supports to unemployed people on decent job opportunities.”* The INOU not only sees the economic value of such an approach, but the positive social and personal impact of engaging with unemployed people in a supportive manner and enabling them to make well-informed choices.

This will require a mapping exercise that identifies both emerging job opportunities and potential job losses; exploring alternative enterprises and jobs; and the education and training supports that are required to ensure unemployed people of all durations can gain access decent employment.

Elements of an integrated approach would include early engagement with companies that make job announcements with a view to gathering information on the nature of the positions to be filled; clarification on the skills, experience and competencies required to successfully do the jobs; and, the recruitment process to be used for filling the positions. This in turn should inform the work of the local employment services and education and training provision to unemployed people and others of working age, which requires enhanced local inter-agency and inter-organisational cooperation.

⁸ Full document available at: http://www.inou.ie/download/pdf/inou_apj_2017_submission.pdf

⁹ Full document available at: http://www.inou.ie/download/pdf/inou_pbs_2017.pdf