

# THE FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

## *of the* **Community Platform**

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### INTRODUCTION

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The Community Platform is a network of 28 national networks and organisations working to address poverty, social exclusion, and inequality. Our objectives are to facilitate solidarity amongst the organisations involved, organise community sector participation in partnership arrangements with the State, and establish a critical voice for equality, rights and anti-poverty interests at a national level.

This paper sets out some key elements of the situation in Ireland after six years of austerity policies and proposes policy directions for a future Ireland that would better reflect the values of the Community Platform. It builds on a body of policy work done in previous years by the Community Platform and is based on discussion and exchange with our member organisations.

It is published in what is a crucial year as we struggle to emerge from recession and crisis. It is essential that we not only undo the damage of policies that have deepened poverty and inequality but also set out and implement plans for an economy and society based on new values.

At United Nations level there are critical decisions to be made in relation to universal Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, and the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. At a European level, the mid-term review of Europe 2020 Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth comes at a time of growing recognition that austerity policies have failed many people and that climate change threatens the very survival of the planet. At a national level there is significant debate on alternatives to austerity as a range of centenaries are marked, an election looms, political parties develop their manifestos, and new political and civil society formations are explored.

### A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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The Community Platform seeks an inclusive, sustainable and equal Ireland. Our vision for the future reflects a shared value base of equality including economic equality, social inclusion, social justice, dignity, participation, and sustainability. These values should underpin the policies, programmes and practices required to achieve this future inclusive, sustainable and equal Ireland.

Members of the Community Platform work to challenge poverty and inequality experienced on the grounds of gender and gender identity; family status, including carers and lone parents; age, including children, young people and older people; disability; sexual orientation; ethnic origin, including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, Travellers and Roma; religion, including minority religions; and socio-economic status, including people who are unemployed or low paid, homeless people, and prisoners.



**THE CURRENT SITUATION**

The failure to espouse the values of the Community Platform has contributed to the onset of crisis. Austerity policies have seen many of these values further compromised. This is captured in the data below, particularly in comparisons between 2008 and 2014, or the most up-to-date data available.



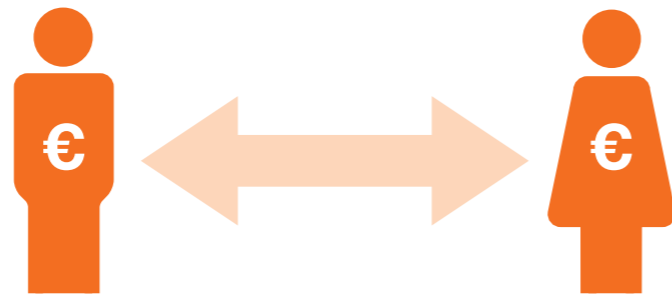
**Economic Equality**

Household net wealth (the value of all assets such as housing, land, investments, valuables, savings and private pensions, less any borrowings such as mortgages, loans, and credit card debt) amounted to 378 billion Euro in 2013. Those in the top 20% of the income distribution possess 39.7% of all the wealth, the same share as all those in the bottom 60% of the income distribution. Those in the bottom 20% of the income distribution possess 11.4% of all the wealth. Households with one adult and children make up 4.4% of households but have 0.7% of the wealth. (Household Finance and Consumption Survey, CSO, 2015).

In 2008 the bottom 10% earned 3.5% of all income whereas the top 10% earned 24.4% of all income. In 2013 the bottom 10% earned 3.2% of all income whereas the top 10% earned 24.5% of all income. The quintile share ratio, the income share of the top 20% divided by the share of the bottom 20%, was 4.8 in 2013. This is down from 5.0 in 2012 but up from 4.5 in 2008. (SILC, CSO, 2015).

The highest income group lost 15.5% of their income and the lowest income group lost 12.75% under budgets for 2009 to 2015. For most other income groups, the income loss was between 10% and 11.25% (ESRI 2015). Women within couples saw a 13.6% loss of income in comparison to an 8.9% drop for men under budgets for 2008 to 2013 (Equality Authority and ESRI 2013).

The gender pay gap widened from 12.6p.p. in 2009 to 14.4p.p. in 2012, despite a temporary fall in 2011 to 11.7p.p. Women (9.5%) were only half as likely as men (18.2%) to earn more than 50,000 Euro in 2011. Only 16% of those receiving full contributory pensions are women. 50.3% of women and 41.8% of men earned less than 20,000 Euro (Women and Men in Ireland, CSO, 2013).



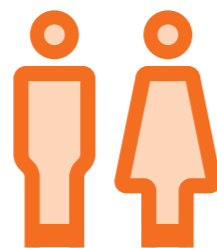
**GENDER PAY GAP WIDENED 12.6% IN 2009 → 14.4% IN 2012**

The cost of disability is estimated at 207 Euro per week for the average disabled household. The direct cost of disability equates to 35.4% of disposable income for these households. (Inclusion Ireland, 2014).

**Social Inclusion**

In 2014, 1,938,300 people were employed in the fourth quarter; 213,600 people were unemployed, an unemployment rate of 10.4%; 38,800 young people (15–24) were unemployed, an unemployment rate of 20.3%; and 123,400 people were long term unemployed, a rate of 5.7%. (CSO, QNHS, 4Q2014).

In 2008, there were 2,052,000 people employed in the fourth quarter; 170,600 people were unemployed, an unemployment rate of 7.7%; 50,000 young people (15–24) were unemployed, an unemployment rate of 16.3%; and 40,500 people were long term unemployed, a rate of 1.8%. (CSO, QNHS, 4Q2008).



**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FIRST QTR 2015 9.9%**

The Traveller unemployment rate was 84.3% in 2011, up from 74.9% five years earlier. 86.6% of Traveller men and 81.2% of Traveller women were unemployed in 2011. 32.7% of Traveller women were identified as on home duties compared to 17.5% of the general population. (CSO, Census 2011).



**69% OF TRAVELLERS WERE EDUCATED TO PRIMARY LEVEL OR LOWER**

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 disability had a higher unemployment rate (22% compared to 16% of other adults). (ESRI and Equality Authority, 2013).



**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY 22% COMPARED TO 16% OF OTHER ADULTS**

Women in couples did 37% of the paid work, 72% of the unpaid work, and 55% of the total work per day in 2005. (ESRI and Equality Authority, 2008).



**ONE IN SIX ADULTS, 550,057 PEOPLE, FOUND READING AND UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY TEXTS DIFFICULT IN 2012.**

One in six adults, 550,057 people, found reading and understanding everyday texts difficult, including reading a leaflet, bus timetable or medicine instructions, in 2012. One in four adults, 763,969 people, had difficulties in real world maths, from basic addition and subtraction to calculating averages (OECD 2013). The numbers at risk of poverty rose from 14.4% in 2008 to a high of 16.5% in 2012 and decreased to 15.2% in 2013. However, this is calculated as those earning below 60% of the median income and this threshold has gone down from 12,455 Euro in 2008 to 10,531 Euro in 2013. The rate for women was 15.4% and for men was 15.1%. It was 31.7% for lone parents, 36.7% for unemployed people, 17.9% for children, 18.1% for people not at work due to illness or disability, and 9.2% for older people (65+). (SILC, CSO, 2015).

**DEPRIVATION (BEING UNABLE TO AFFORD TWO FROM A LIST OF BASICS)**



**13.7% OF THE POPULATION IN 2007**



**30.5% OF THE POPULATION IN 2013**

The numbers experiencing consistent poverty has doubled from 4.2% in 2008 to 8.2% in 2013. This is the number of people below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold who also experience deprivation. The rate for women was 8.5% and for men was 8%. It was 23% for lone parents, 23.9% for unemployed people, 11.7% for children, 10.8% for people not at work due to illness or disability, and 1.9% for older people (65+). (SILC, CSO, 2015).

In November 2014, 168 people were sleeping rough in Dublin City, an increase of 21% on the previous year (Dublin City Council). In April 2015, 3,144 adults and 1118 children were in emergency accommodation for homeless persons (DoE, 2015). Over 89,000 households were in need of social housing in 2013 and 2,499 of these households were in need of housing due to homelessness (Housing Agency 2013).

**APRIL 2015, 3,144 ADULTS AND 1,118 CHILDREN IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS**



**Dignity**

26% of women surveyed in Ireland had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or non-partner since the age of 15 (FRA 2014). 15% of women and 6% of men have experienced severely abusive behaviour from a partner and an estimated 213,000 women and 88,000 men have been severely abused by a partner at some point in their lives (COSC 2008). 20% of girls and 16% of boys experience contact sexual abuse in childhood; 42% of women and 28% of men experienced some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime; 47% of those reporting abuse had never told anybody (SAVI 2002).

There are 4,357 asylum seekers in Direct Provision, including 1,527 children. 1,684 of them were in Direct Provision for five or more years (ORAC 2014).

There is 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.



There have been calls from the UN Human Rights Committee for the Government to recognise Travellers' ethnic identity.

Gender recognition legislation is currently being enacted. However, it includes a number of barriers and falls short of best practice.

4,199 people with intellectual disabilities aged 18 and over live in community group homes; 2,420 people live in residential centres; and 1,231 people live in other full-time settings. (National Intellectual Disabilities Database 2013).

#### Participation

Women make up 15.7% of the members of Dail Eireann. Only 13.3% of Ministers were women. Less than one in five local authority members were women (Women and Men in Ireland, CSO, 2013). Women make up 10.7% of the boards of large listed companies (EU Commission 2013).



**15.7%** OF DÁIL EIREANN MEMBERS ARE WOMEN

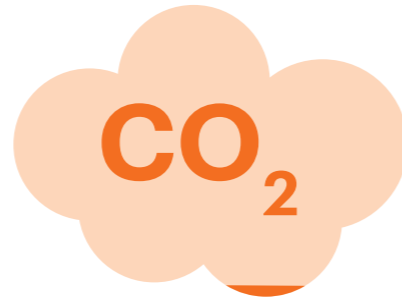
The voluntary and community sector contracted in the order of -35% by end 2013, with a reduction in staffing of over 11,000 people (Harvey, ICTU, 2012).

#### Sustainability

Ireland is failing to meet the 20% EU target for the reduction of emissions. Ireland is predicted to reduce emissions by a mere 3% by 2020. Agriculture and transport contribute most to this problem (EC Country Report 2015).

Evidence found of rural decline in Galway includes education levels in small and medium-sized towns and the open countryside that are lower than the national average. These areas are disproportionately reliant on declining industrial sectors, and poverty rates are higher in the towns (Teagasc 2014).

IRELAND IS PREDICTED TO REDUCE EMISSIONS BY A MERE **3%** BY 2020



## POLICY DIRECTIONS

The Community Platform, in seeking an inclusive, sustainable and equal Ireland, promotes a new model of development based on our values.

#### ECONOMIC EQUALITY

The Community Platform seeks policies to advance a tax regime that is progressive and equitable, in particular:

- i. Move the Irish tax system towards the EU norm, including a tax take as a percentage of GDP of between 40% and 45%.
- ii. Increase the income tax rate for high earners. Introduce a wealth tax on all assets for high earners. Increase Capital Gains Tax and Capital Acquisitions Tax. Introduce a Financial Transactions Tax.
- iii. Reduce tax expenditures and subject any remaining to a cost-benefit analysis including distributional, equality and economic impact analysis. Impose a sunset clause on all corporate and business tax expenditures except those with demonstrable social and economic benefits.
- iv. Introduce a refundable tax credit system for people on low incomes.

We seek policies to advance income equality, in particular:

- i. Develop and implement a methodology to calculate a living wage to at least achieve a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. Ensure that this wage is paid in all sectors. Increase of all basic social welfare levels to the level of the Minimum Essential Standard of Living.
- ii. Implement the pay transparency initiatives recommended by the European Commission to reduce the gender pay gap.
- iii. Provide adequate pensions and secondary income supports to all people in later life.
- iv. Adequate provision for the additional cost of disability calculated for people with disability.

#### SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Community Platform seeks action on job creation based on a commitment to decent work, in particular:

- i. Promotion of and support for the creation of decent jobs.
- ii. A person-centred Public Employment Service that ensures access to decent employment for unemployed people and others distant from the labour market. Employment supports that take account of diversity, including responding to the needs of those with care responsibilities.
- iii. Provision of quality education and training to unemployed people and those distant from the labour market that matches people to the most appropriate opportunities for them.
- iv. Full implementation of the right to collective bargaining.
- v. Reinforcement of the instruments and institutions for the protection and enforcement of employment standards. Measures to tackle insecure contracts and precarious working conditions.
- vi. Use of public procurement tenders to ensure successful tenderers implement quality employment standards.
- vii. Amendment of equality legislation to ensure protection for LGBT employees of employers working to a religious ethos.

We seek renewal for public services and publicly funded services, in particular:

- i. Increased investment in public services to ensure they are adequate to meet the needs presented.

- ii. Implement a change programme to enable access for all to public services; bring a focus on equality, inclusion and sustainability to bear in decision-making; ensure public services are tailored to meet the needs of all and to respond to diversity; and achieve participation by those in receipt of public services in their design, renewal, and evaluation.
- iii. Reform social protection systems, guided by the goal of equality and the imperative to adjust for diversity, including responding to the needs of those with caring responsibilities.
- iv. Implement a health and social care strategy to provide the necessary services and supports to enable people to live independently for as long as possible in their own homes.
- v. Provide for access to more intensive learning options for adults with literacy or numeracy needs and low or no qualifications.
- vi. Increase in publicly-subsidised, comprehensive, and affordable early years and after school care infrastructure along with training, living wages and quality conditions for childcare staff.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Community Platform seeks policies to advance the elimination of poverty and social exclusion, in particular:

- i. The development and implementation of a new, cross-governmental, and more ambitious National Action Plan for Social Inclusion based on the right to an adequate standard of living.
- ii. Restore full social welfare payments to those under 26 years.
- iii. Reverse the reduction in the income disregard for lone parents on One-Parent Family Payment.
- iv. An increase in the minimum wage commensurate with the cost of living.
- v. Increase access to housing, in particular social housing. Invest in Traveller-specific accommodation. Increase resources to tackle homelessness.

- vi. Increase rent supplement levels to match market rent levels. Regulate rent levels.

### DIGNITY

The Community Platform seeks a valuing of human dignity, in particular:

- i. Enact immigration legislation to reform all aspects of the system. Introduce a Single Application Procedure with a one-off scheme to address the situation of those in the current system. Ratify the EU Directive on reception conditions for asylum seekers.
- ii. Replace Direct Provision with a rental allowance or housing assistance payment. Increase the payment to asylum seekers and their children. Afford asylum seekers the right to work after six months.
- iii. A labour migration policy that caters for all skills shortages, including low paid sectors. Amendment of the employment permits system to allow for change of employers and an opening of the eligible categories. A regularisation system for undocumented migrants.
- iv. Gender Recognition legislation that does not put additional barriers in the way of young trans people seeking recognition.

- v. Official recognition of Traveller ethnicity.

- vi. Increased and adequate funding for domestic and sexual violence services, including, in particular, provision by independent non-statutory organisations, to meet current needs. Ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Review of how domestic violence cases are dealt with by the police and by the legal system. A commitment to a progressive whole of society response including an integration of responses into strategies to tackle discrimination and poverty. A new SAVI report to update the data from the 2002 report and a prevalence study of school-based sexual harassment and assault.

- vii. Introduction of civil marriage equality.

### PARTICIPATION

The Community Platform seeks fulfilment of the rights of communities to participate in decisions that impact on their lives and broader and more critical participation of people in political and economic decision-making, in particular:

- i. Action to address the invisibility of minority groups in representational political processes at local and national levels.
- ii. Steps to increase the number of women and people from minority groups participating in the political system at all levels.
- iii. Creating and supporting opportunities for the active participation of marginalised communities in participative forms of democracy.
- iv. Steps to establish the empowering processes needed to engage people in framing and making political decisions at national and local levels

- v. Creation of opportunities and provision of resources to support the participation of marginalised communities in decision-making bodies, democratic institutions, and consultative and representative bodies.

- vi. Actions to increase the number of women and people from minority groups on boards of private companies.

### SUSTAINABILITY

The Community Platform seeks a model of development that is balanced and environmentally sustainable, in particular:

- i. Implementation of EU targets for reduction of emissions and for the provision of renewable energy without derogations.
- ii. A White Paper on rural development that addresses poverty issues and seeks to reverse rural decline.

## DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The Community Platform is concerned to renew the drivers of change that contribute to an inclusive, sustainable and equal society.

### COMMUNITY SECTOR

The Community Platform seeks a renewed, innovative, independent and effective community sector working with resourced communities that are thriving and diverse, in particular:

- i. Funding programmes that enable an autonomous, effective, and independent community sector.
- ii. Increased and adequate funding for community sector organisations and their work in advocacy, community development, community education for citizenship, and community empowerment.

- iii. A renewed dialogue between the state and the community sector on the nature, role, purpose and value of community development work.

- iv. Support for innovation by community sector organisations in responding to issues of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and inequality.

### STATUTORY BODIES

The Community Platform seeks an effective equality, inclusion and human rights infrastructure, in particular:

- i. Re-establish an independent agency to promote and support the design and implementation

of social inclusion objectives and a local infrastructure to implement anti-poverty programmes and projects.

- ii. Increase funding to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to ensure it can implement all of its functions to full effect.

## POLICIES AND POLICY MECHANISMS

The Community Platform seeks mechanisms that make equality, human rights, and social inclusion central to policy related decision-making, in particular:

- i. Steps by public bodies to gear up to and pursue an effective implementation of the public sector duty to have regard to combating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity, and protecting human rights. Publication by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission of a Code of Practice that sets a standard for its implementation.
- ii. Provide for sanctions in the event of a public body failing to implement the new public sector duty, and amend the definition of human rights in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act to ensure that the public sector duty encompasses economic, social and cultural rights.
- iii. Ensure public sector procurement includes social criteria and social clauses that advance social

inclusion, equality and public benefit, and requires quality employment conditions in winning companies.

- iv. Implement proofing mechanisms in policy-making to assess impact on people experiencing poverty, women and minority groups; and in budgeting at national level and within the public sector bodies to assess the impact public expenditure and taxation have on these groups as a means of embedding values of equality and inclusion in the planning, design, implementation and review of economic and social policy.
- v. Develop and implement national plans to advance equality for women, address racism and support integration, and achieve social inclusion.
- vi. Hold a referendum to enshrine economic, social and cultural rights in the Constitution. Legislate to transpose international commitments to economic, social and cultural rights into domestic law. Ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.



**COMMUNITY PLATFORM**  
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

## CURRENT MEMBERS

Age Action Ireland

ATD 4th World

Community Action Network

Community Workers' Co-operative

Cairde

Debt and Development Coalition Ireland

European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

Focus Ireland

Gay and Lesbian Equality Network

Immigrant Council of Ireland

Irish Association of Older People

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

Irish Penal Reform Trust

Irish Refugee Council

Irish Rural Link

Irish Traveller Movement

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

National Adult Literacy Agency

National Network of Women's Refuges and Support Services

National Traveller Women's Forum

National Women's Council of Ireland

Pavee Point Travellers Centre

Rape Crisis Network Ireland

Simon Communities of Ireland

Threshold

Voluntary Drug Treatment Network

Vincentian Partnership for Justice

Women's Aid