

INOU Submission on the development of a White Paper on Enterprise

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Introduction

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) welcomes the opportunity to engage in the consultation on the development of a White Paper on Enterprise.

“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 almost two hundred affiliated organisations and six hundred 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.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment’s letter to the INOU noted that *“The White Paper will seek to articulate what needs to be done differently to realise the vision of a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable enterprise growth model for Ireland in the future, while remaining true to what currently works well for enterprise in Ireland.”*

While the public consultation document stated that the White Paper will explore several high-level policy questions including: *ensuring enterprise growth policies are inclusive and the role of enterprise policy in further enhancing regional development; enterprise policy support for the Sustainable Development Goals; and the levers and mechanisms to deliver on enterprise policy objectives.*

Inclusive Entrepreneurship

In preparation for an OECD workshop on inclusive entrepreneurship training held in April, 2022 the table in the Appendix was created. It brings together key commitments / actions in a range of policies aimed at Travellers, women, unemployed people and people with disabilities, and was used by the INOU to reflect on the OECD’s question: *are key Government policies / strategies supporting inclusive entrepreneurship?*

In the follow-up document to this meeting the OECD noted that *“Inclusive entrepreneurship policies seek to give everyone an opportunity to create a successful and sustainable business, regardless of their gender, age, place of birth, work status or other personal characteristics. Expanding entrepreneurship can create jobs, fight social and financial exclusion, leverage technologies and help respond to economic challenges. One of the most important tools used by governments to make entrepreneurship more inclusive is entrepreneurship training since there are important entrepreneurship skills gaps across the population.”*

It will be absolutely critical that the White Paper on Enterprise commits to the development and realisation of inclusive entrepreneurship and that existing actions and commitments are strengthened and met. The development of an inclusive enterprise policy would also be in keeping with SDG 10 which focuses on *reducing inequalities* and aims to *reduce inequality within and among countries*.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Of particular importance for the INOU is SDG 8 which focuses on *decent work and economic growth* and aims to *promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*. In 2020 the INOU ran a project on Decent Work¹ and amongst the matters raised are ones that are pertinent to the development of this White Paper, including:

- *Some of these issues arise from the challenges of low population density, but concerns were articulated that there is no plan to keep rural Ireland working, to decentralise jobs and industry. Participants felt that enterprise opportunities need to be shared around rural Ireland and not just centralised in Dublin, as one participant said: “it’s time to spread the joy”. (p19)*
- *Other participants felt that social enterprises are very suitable for Travellers. It was noted that there are social enterprises that are Traveller-lead and have proved successful around the country, for example, Kingdom Furniture (Kerry), BounceBack Mattress Recycling (Galway), and that this should be explored further. (p22)*
- *Important to provide work opportunities for people who may face very considerable challenges in getting employment, could be part of Corporate Social Responsibility.*
- *Need to map the jobs that will be obsolete, identify their replacements, ensure people are given the opportunity to reskill to avail of emerging opportunities.*
- *Green jobs should be an integral part of Ireland’s enterprise strategy, building on the country’s natural strengths, and addressing our climate responsibilities justly. (p36)*

Levers and mechanisms

At the *Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 - Stakeholder Consultation Workshop* held in September, 2021 one of the breakout groups focused on the strategic objective to *Facilitate every individual to realise their full potential through engagement in economic activity*. Most of the actions discussed at this workshop could be adapted for other parts of the country and the realisation of an inclusive enterprise policy including:

- Action 1: Dublin to become a ‘City of Inclusion’

¹ Report available at https://www.inou.ie/assets/files/pdf/inou_decent_work_report_web.pdf

- Action 2: Develop a ‘Knowledge Hub’ website - information and signposting on pathways to employment for marginalised and disadvantaged communities
- Action 3: Drive a strong promotional campaign on Employer Awareness
- Action 4: Implement ‘Neighbourhood Economics’ concept - Community-led social enterprises to offer space for artisan enterprises & entrepreneurs to establish; sharing space, skills and ideas.
- Action 5: Provide access to the Google Professional Certificates initiative and / or with other partners, provide Digital Literacy and other IT related training to marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

In their March 2022 report, *Experiences and Perceptions of Discrimination In Ireland*²², the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth noted that *Unemployed adults reported the highest level of discrimination on average, ranging from 22% in 2010 to 30% in 2019. This was approximately twice the level of discrimination reported by individuals ‘in employment’, ranging from 11% in 2010 to 17% in 2019.* (p8)

Self-employment can be an important access point to the labour market for people who face exclusion and discrimination in trying to get a job. An unemployed person in receipt of a Jobseeker’s Allowance payment can apply for a Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA). According to the Central Statistics Office, in May 2022 there were 2,398 on the BTWEA and 375 on the Short-term Enterprise Allowance, a scheme that facilitates people to use their time on their Jobseeker’s Benefit payment to pursue self-employment. At present a participant could be on the BTWEA for up to two years. The INOU believes this should be increased to three years, with the participant receiving 50% of their social welfare payment in the third year.

In a White Paper dealing with enterprise policy in its totality such a change may appear too small to contemplate, but for the person who is facing barriers to employment because of their age, their ethnicity, where they live, the opportunity to create one’s own response could be life changing. It could also have a positive impact in the wider community as one person’s self-employment opportunity could grow into an enterprise that employs other people or inspires others to make such a move. To that end access to other supports and services available to micro and small enterprises will be essential.

Thank you for your time and consideration

²² Report available at <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/219979/ff3348bc-ff10-4970-880f-ccd5294e43c6.pdf#page=null>

Appendix

REPORT		
National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021	Theme and Objectives	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment and the Traveller Economy - Entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities for Traveller and Roma should be supported. 	<p>29. The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, in conjunction with Local Authorities, will arrange for the inclusion in Local Economic and Community Plans of provisions for Traveller and Roma economy supports including general policies and programmes as well as group-specific (targeted) initiatives to support Travellers and Roma in enterprise, mainstream labour market and the Traveller economy.</p>
		<p>30. The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the “first stop shop” for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to anyone interested in starting or growing their own business. A number of LEOs have undertaken targeted initiatives to engage with prospective entrepreneurs amongst the Traveller and Roma communities and other ethnic and minority groups. The LEO Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland will promote best practice activities in this area amongst all LEOs nationally.</p>
		<p>31. SICAP Programme Implementers will ensure that Traveller and Roma participants availing of SICAP supports are made aware of the opportunities for local self-employment (which may include social entrepreneurship) and, where appropriate, receive training to enhance their skills to take up these opportunities.</p>
National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020: creating a better society for all	Outcome	Actions
	Increased access to training opportunities for women	<p>1.7 Fund the provision of locally delivered courses for women, comprising a series of training opportunities on self-development and work related skills, to assist a return to the labour market and promote entrepreneurship.</p>

	Increased numbers of women engaged in entrepreneurship	1.24 Provide support for rural female entrepreneurs at start-up stage, e.g. through the 'ACORNS' programme
		1.25 Publicise and encourage participation by women in start-ups, including a targeted Competitive Start Fund.
		1.26 Support and publicise women specific entrepreneur awards and events.
		1.28 Support women in business networks to establish female specific peer learning.
		1.29 Provide funding for female entrepreneurship.
		1.30 Examine, as part of the mid-term review of the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, measures that could ensure an increased number of women start and run their own businesses.
	Poverty reduction of female-headed households, including lone parent families	1.32 Reduce the gap in poverty rates between female headed households and male-headed households. Measures to be undertaken to include programmes to assist return to the labour market and encourage entrepreneurship.
		1.35 Promote awareness of and access to Department of Social Protection employment supports, in particular in the area of entrepreneurship (Back to Work Enterprise Allowance), via DSP Case Officers and promotional campaigns, as appropriate.
Pathways to Work 2021-2025	Strand of Action	Commitment
	Working for Jobseekers	10. Increase funding and places for enterprise start-ups by jobseekers with a target of support 4,200 jobseekers to start their own business (demand led)
	Working for All - Leaving No One Behind	67. Develop a Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan.
Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024	Strategic Priority	Actions
	SP2 - Provide bridges and supports into work	2.10 Support and promote self-employment as a viable option for people with disabilities, including equal access to mainstream supports and schemes. Disability proof Local Enterprise Offices' (LEOs) services.

		The LEOs should: Implement and promote their policies of providing inclusive, comprehensive services for people with disabilities, as per s.26 of the Disability Act 2005, in conjunction with their respective Local Authority.
		Provide staff with training to ensure they are skilled to provide inclusive services
	SP6 - Engage Employers	6.17 Review access to and marketing of Enterprise Ireland and Local Employment Office programmes to entrepreneurs with Disabilities
		Enterprise Ireland will review how to ensure employers are aware of needs and potential of employees with disabilities
		Engagement between Enterprise Ireland and the NDA's Centre for Excellence in Universal Design to examine routes to commercialising universal design product ideas from NDA's annual Design Challenge