



INOUE STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2018



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- **Introduction from the INOU Chairperson**

I am very pleased to introduce this new three year Strategic Plan for the INOU.

After a prolonged period of change and uncertainty, a degree of stability appears to be now emerging in the Irish labour market. The rate of job losses has slowed down and job creation has increased. The hope is that this increase will continue to gather pace in the period ahead. There has been an increase in the overall numbers of people at work and significantly, the majority of people taking up work appear to be moving into full-time positions. These are all very welcomed developments after so many years of consistently rising unemployment and the consequential fall in the number of people in work. Thankfully, the number of people losing their job as a result of redundancy has also decreased in recent years.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment is still a cause for serious concern. The economic crisis that gripped the country over the last 6 years has had a particularly devastating impact on unemployed people. As an organisation working with and for unemployed people, the INOU is deeply aware of the depth and scale of this impact.

In the last six years, over 300,000 jobs have been lost and unemployment had risen to close to 15%. In June 2014, over 386,200 people were on the Live Register – a standardised unemployment rate of 11.6%. Over 188,000 people on Register have been unemployed for a year or more. In May 2014, 74,587 people were participating on a range of labour market activation and training programmes in the hope of getting back to work. Developments in labour market policy and provision have also generated new issues for unemployed people and there is a concern that general attitudes to unemployed people may become more negative.

The challenge for the INOU over the next number of years is to reinforce and strengthen our position as the representative organisation of the unemployed, and to do so in an uncertain funding context. This Strategic Plan attempts to address this challenge.

This new Strategic Plan has been formulated following consultation and discussion with the INOU's Officers Board and National Executive Committee, the Senior Management and Co-ordinating Team, INOU staff, the General Branch of Individual Members and INOU affiliated organisations.

I would like to thank everyone for their input to the document. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Carmel Duggan, WRC Social and Economic Consultants who facilitated the strategic planning sessions and for the key role that Carmel played in formulating the final plan.

I hope you find the new Plan both interesting and informative. If you have any queries on any aspect of the document we would be delighted to hear from you.


Chairperson



• **The INOU**

The INOU was formed in 1987 against a backdrop of high unemployment, low participation rates, long-term unemployment and mass emigration. Since then, the organisation has become the foremost organisation in service provision and policy work in relation to unemployment. Currently the INOU provides services to and engages with six key groups. These are:

- unemployed people,
- local organisations which support unemployed people,
- national organisations which work on a range of equality, social inclusion and anti-poverty issues
- employers,
- policy makers and
- the media.

The work of the INOU in relation to all these groups is central to sustaining our role and relevance as the national representative organisation of the unemployed.

Our Mission

The INOU mission statement is set down in the constitution. The mission statement includes the values, vision and key aim of the organisation.

Values:

The INOU is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. It is an anti-sectarian, anti-racist, non-party political organisation which promotes equality of opportunity within society

Vision:

"Full employment for all and for an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents"

Key Aim:

"To represent and defend the rights and interests of unemployed people"



• **Strategic Plan: Context**

After a prolonged period of change and uncertainty, a degree of stability appears to be now emerging in the Irish labour market and policy context. Yet difficulties remain and despite an overall decrease in the numbers on the Live Register, unemployment will remain a significant problem particularly for young people, older people and those out of work for long periods. Developments in labour market policy and provision have also generated new issues for unemployed people and there is a concern that general attitudes to unemployed people may become more negative.

The challenge for the INOU over the next number of years is to reinforce and strengthen our position as the representative organisation of the unemployed, and to do so in an uncertain funding context. This Strategic Plan attempts to address this challenge. We will implement this plan from July 2014 to June 2017 and will monitor and review it at regular intervals during that period. The key aim of the Strategic Plan is to underpin the relevance and sustainability of the INOU as the key organisation working with and for unemployed people at a national level.

The Strategic Plan incorporates the ongoing activities of the INOU to which we are committed through current funding arrangements. It introduces new actions relating to our existing work areas and also includes actions relating to representational, organisational and governance aspects of the organisation.

The key objectives of the Strategic Plan are identified in terms of the groups which we engage with rather than in terms of our work areas. This highlights the importance of our engagement with each group and also aims to increase synergies across our various work areas. The overall approach of the Plan seeks to:

- (a) reinforce the links between INOU work areas in relation to each group;
- (b) highlight how the various actions contribute to achieving the key objectives of the Strategic Plan.



- **Key Objectives of the INOU Strategic Plan**

1. To bring about change in policy and practice that will improve the circumstances of unemployed people.
2. To further develop the role of the INOU in relation to employment including job creation, job loss and the recruitment of unemployed people, especially those who are long-term unemployed.
3. To expand and strengthen our representative role and capacity through engagement with unemployed people.
4. To support unemployed people to access welfare rights information and entitlements and education, training and employment opportunities.
5. To be a key resource for other organisations which work with and support unemployed people.
6. To further develop our work with community and voluntary organisations working to combat inequality, social exclusion and poverty.
7. To influence media and public awareness and discourse on unemployment and unemployed people.
8. To optimise our organisational capacity and effectiveness.
9. To ensure the effectiveness of our structures of governance.
10. 10. To maximise the availability and usage of resources.

In the following sections, the rationale and desired outcome from each of these objectives is noted, together with the specific sub-objectives / actions.



Objective 1: To bring about changes in policy and practice that will improve the circumstances of unemployed people

Rationale

Engaging with policy makers is important for the organisation as it enables us to advocate for policy change and it enhances our role in representing the voice of unemployed people.

There are a number of elements to the INOU's engagement with policy makers. The first of these is delivering on the INOU policy agenda for fairer and more effective policies for unemployed people. This is progressed largely through participation in high level committees, submissions to policy processes and bilateral engagement with civil servants and others within the policy making domain.

The second aspect relates to identifying information gaps in relation to current policy and provision. The Welfare to Work Information Service deals with aspects of this issue for unemployed people and the Policy Work of the INOU parallels this with feedback on information gaps to policy makers / service providers. The INOU's work through its regional Discussion Forums; Focus Groups; General Branch; outreach Training services; outreach information work and collaboration with other organisations also plays a key role.

The third aspect relates to the potential to address problems in the delivery of state services for and to unemployed people. This includes issues such as customer / client / user service practice and a lack of a person centred approach across all provision. Building on our advice and support and representational and advocacy work the INOU will continue to lobby for improved public services for unemployed people and ensure that their voices are heard within these developments.

Key Actions

- 1.1 Produce an analysis of contemporary unemployment recognising the diversity of unemployed people and the diversity of the problems they face.
- 1.2 Use this analysis to further develop a core policy agenda highlighting issues to be pursued annually or over the period of the plan.
- 1.3 Continue to produce and disseminate submissions to Government Departments and other policy processes.
- 1.4 Reinforce the INOU policy agenda by incorporating issues and data arising from contact with unemployed people including through the Welfare to Work Information Service, Unemployed Focus Groups, the General Branch and the Regional Discussion Forums.
- 1.5 Develop a mechanism to bring forward problems and issues relating to Departmental / agency practice to relevant Departments.
- 1.6 Reinforce awareness of policy work throughout the organisation and build synergies with other work areas by developing a mechanism for dialogue



within the INOU structures on the outcomes of submissions, representations etc.

- 1.7 Develop a social media strategy as a campaigning tool.
- 1.8 Continue to engage with Trade Unions and other organisations on issues relating to employment and unemployment.
- 1.9 Continue to engage with high level committees, using these to further the core policy agenda, and provide feedback within the INOU on outcomes.
- 1.10 To monitor and report on the impact of new labour market activation initiatives and to identify desired policy changes.



Objective 2: To further develop the role of the INOU in relation to employment including job losses, job creation and the recruitment of unemployed people especially those who are long term unemployed

Rationale

Employer engagement is a growing aspect of the work of the INOU and the organisation has now an established track record in this area. This work involves two aspects: providing information and supports to workers losing their jobs and to their employers and trade union representatives; and more recently engaging with employers around job creation and incentives to recruit unemployed people, particularly those who are long-term unemployed.

Both aspects are highly relevant to the INOU. This work also increases awareness of the organisation with employers and workers and their representatives. The second aspect of the work is particularly beneficial in that it gives the INOU a practical role in relation to measures designed to reduce unemployment. In continuing to provide these services to employers, we will seek to strengthen our engagement with employer organisations. We will also seek to develop a closer relationship with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. Such a relationship would reflect the importance of our work with employers and within the employment context and would parallel our relationship with the Department of Social Protection.

Key Actions

- 2.1 Review the aims of the INOU to reflect our work with employers and on job creation.
- 2.2 Continue to work with employers in relation to job creation/announcements and to generate awareness amongst employers of incentives to recruit unemployed people.
- 2.3 Continue to provide services including on-site services to employers/trade unions dealing with redundancy situations.
- 2.4 Review and improve how our services are advertised to employers and increase the profile of the organisation with employers.
- 2.5 Develop an employer section on the INOU website.
- 2.6 Develop formal links and working relationships with employer organisations in relation to our work with employers and on employment issues.
- 2.7 Further develop our relationship with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to support our work with employers and employer organisations.
- 2.8 To develop policies on job creation that focus on sustainable employment and explore the potential of social enterprise and the green economy ensuring that these actions focus on job creation and not schemes.



Objective 3: To expand and strengthen our representative role and capacity through engagement with unemployed people.

Rationale

As the national representative organisation of the unemployed it continues to be vital that this role is reflected both in our membership base and in the extent to which the issues raised by unemployed people are reflected in our policy and advocacy work. This calls for the optimum level of involvement of unemployed people in the organisation and for improved mechanisms to bring forward issues raised by unemployed people.

Key Actions

- 3.1 Review individual membership and affiliate membership categories.
- 3.2 Build the individual membership base throughout the country through broadening and promoting the benefits of membership including to users of INOU information services and those attending focus groups / information meetings.
- 3.3 Explore with INOU affiliates ways of increasing the number of individual members.
- 3.4 Build our affiliate membership with particular focus on parts of the country currently under-represented by broadening and promoting awareness of the work of the organisation and on the benefits of affiliation.
- 3.5 Explore the possibility of online surveys, Facebook pages etc. to elicit the views of members on specific issues.



Objective 4: To support unemployed people to access welfare information and entitlements and education, training and employment opportunities

Rationale:

A key mechanism for engaging with unemployed people is through the provision of a wide range of information and other services. The demands on these services has increased exponentially over the last 6 years. As the representative organisation of the unemployed, the INOU places a high priority on and commitment to both maintaining and increasing our contact with unemployed people. We are also committed to continuing to provide high quality services, not just in relation to welfare rights information but also in relation to other services such as training for individuals and labour market projects for unemployed people. The Welfare to Work Information and Advocacy Service is the most heavily used service provided by the INOU with the majority of calls being initiated by individual unemployed people. However, over the last three years, the organisation has developed significant outreach provision in terms of attendance at a wide range of information events and jobs fairs which has resulted in the organisation linking in with many thousands of unemployed people attending these events.

Contact with unemployed people, particularly through the welfare rights information service, also provides the organisation with an opportunity for gathering quality data on the contemporary experiences of unemployed people seeking welfare and labour market supports. This type of information is not widely available outside of the INOU and represents a huge information resource for the organisation. The on-going documentation and raising of issues arising from this engagement with policy makers has significant potential to enhance our representative function. Greater systematic data gathering, reporting and dissemination based on the Welfare to Work Information service will also increase synergies between our work areas and our work with different groups (i.e. our engagement with unemployed people and our engagement with policy makers and with the media).

Engagement with unemployed people through service provision also provides an important avenue for recruitment of individual members. Currently, the INOU deals with over 8,000 queries per year. This level of contact with unemployed people demands that a strategy be put in place to promote/ increase membership to people who contact the Welfare to Work Information Service (see Objective 7). In this context, a method of taking membership details without compromising the anonymity associated with the queries would need to be developed.



Key Actions

Welfare to Work Information Service

- 4.1 Continue to provide a quality, professional and consistent service to all those using the service.
- 4.2 Develop a model of service delivery that can ensure professional service and high quality staff training within the context of ongoing Community Employment staff turnover.
- 4.3 Add value to the Welfare to Work Information Service by using data generated through queries to inform our work in other areas including policy work and media work.
- 4.4 Increase the numbers of individuals availing of the information service over the next three years.
- 4.5 Continue to deliver and further develop pro-active outreach, community based information services to increase the numbers availing of the service, engagement with community based organisations and to enhance the INOU's profile.

Advocacy and representation services

- 4.6 Continue to provide the advocacy service to individuals as required.
- 4.7 Monitor the process and outcomes of the advocacy service and document and bring forward issues arising.

Information and publications

- 4.8 Further develop our website as a key information resource for unemployed people, those losing their jobs and other individuals.
- 4.9 Continue to produce publications and other resources for unemployed people and those losing their jobs.
- 4.10 Review the uptake of publications by individuals and consider the appropriateness of publications as resources for individuals - as distinct from resources for organisations.

Training and Development

- 4.11 Continue to deliver and expand the range of training for individuals including members.
- 4.12 Expand the role of focus groups and open / information meetings with unemployed people as an opportunity for them to meet and to participate in generating feedback to the INOU. This work will be particularly important in the context of planned new labour market activation initiatives.
- 4.13 Continue to document and bring forward (internally and externally) issues arising from focus groups and our other engagement with unemployed people including in relation to health and wellbeing.



Projects and Interventions

- 4.14 Develop guidelines to determine the INOU's involvement in projects and interventions initiated by other organisations and agencies.
- 4.15 Continue to seek opportunities to develop and implement projects for unemployed people and/or to collaborate with others across all sectors.
- 4.16 Document and disseminate models of good practice based on the INOU's participation in interventions and projects.



Objective 5: To be a key resource for organisations which work with and support unemployed people.

Rationale

Providing resources and services to build the capacity of member organisations which support unemployed people has been central to the work of the INOU since its foundation. This engagement with other organisations also delivers significant benefits for the INOU. It increases our profile within the sector, it extends our geographic reach and it generates some revenue for the organisation through training and membership fees. During the period of the Strategic Plan, we are committed to increasing the INOU's role and relevance as a resource provider for other organisations. This is considered to be a key mechanism to enhance the organisation's profile and relevance, the latter particularly in the context of new developments in labour market provision.

Most, if not all of the organisations which support unemployed people at local level are likely to be experiencing the same challenges and difficulties which the INOU experiences in the current context. This provides an opportunity for the organisation to further develop our role as a key provider of services and resources to other organisations.

Our engagement with local organisations is greatly facilitated through the provision of training and in the coming years, it will be important to continue to resource the sector with high quality training. It will also be important to identify emerging needs relating to training and to explore opportunities for one-off or outreach provision for community organisations.

The provision of other resources to organisations has the potential to become more important in the coming years. Continuing to disseminate policy briefings and information publications will help to extend the reach of the INOU analysis and service. Additional resources for other organisations will also be considered: for example, guidelines on engaging with the media on issues of unemployment.

Key Actions

Providing Training

- 5.1 Continue the provision of FETAC accredited training programmes to INOU affiliates and other organisations.
- 5.2 Continue the provision of other training services to INOU affiliates and other groups.
- 5.3 Develop a three year training strategy based on a comprehensive review of our existing training provision, training needs of other organisations and revenue generating potential.
- 5.4 Continue to develop Training Modules and programmes for other organisations based on identified need and on good practice generated by the INOU e.g. advocacy training.



Providing Information

- 5.5 Maximise the development of our website as a key information resource for other organisations including information providers. This work to include the possibility of developing an unemployed.ie website and a review of redundancy.ie website.
- 5.6 Review publications targeted at other organisations including an analysis of statistics for the e-bulletin and explore the possibility of using more e-bulletin formats and e-alerts, particularly in relation to policy briefings.
- 5.7 Expand on the range of information issues documented, published and disseminated to other organisations

Supporting Policy and Practice

- 5.8 Continue on a regular basis, to develop policy analysis and position papers for dissemination to other organisations to inform their policy position and policy work.
- 5.9 Engage and build links with affiliates in relation to gathering and exchanging information locally and nationally.
- 5.10 Develop and disseminate resources and guidelines for organisations working with unemployed people in relation to developing and emerging labour market interventions.
- 5.11 Develop an approach, with affiliated organisations, to respond to negative media discourse regarding unemployment.
- 5.12 Develop specific objectives for and seek to increase the number of Regional Discussion Forums for affiliates, and add extra value to these through data collection, documentation and feedback.
- 5.13 Promote the Regional Discussion Forums at local levels as a means of recruiting new affiliates.



Objective 6: To further develop our work with community and voluntary organisations working to combat inequality, social exclusion and poverty

Rationale

The INOU works in partnership with a wide range of community and voluntary sector organisations. This work allows the INOU to disseminate its policies and approaches to a wider audience and to learn from other organisations and their approach to articulating and seeking redress for their issues. Through the course of our welfare rights and training work many issues are raised with the INOU, not all of which the organisation is in a position to fully address or pursue. Working in partnership and solidarity allows us to pursue these issues in more appropriate ways and counter some of the perceptions policy makers have that the community and voluntary sector is too disparate and lacks coherency.

Key Actions

- 6.1 Continue to work with Community and Voluntary Pillar colleagues in the development of an alternative approach to the economic and social development and build on the bilateral meetings with Government Departments initiated by the Pillar.
- 6.2 Continue to work with other colleagues including the Community Platform, EAPN, VPSJ on the development of equitable socio-economic policies; inclusive activation policies; the recognition of minimum essential standards of living etc.
- 6.3 Continue to collaborate with other organisations on shared issues and to initiate collaboration in relation to the INOU's core policy agenda.
- 6.4 Continue to work in solidarity with other community and voluntary sector organisations that look to the INOU for support and the development of their work.



Objective 7: To influence media / public awareness and discourse on unemployment and unemployed people.

Rationale

Engagement with the media is an important mechanism for the INOU to raise awareness of unemployment and related issues and to endeavour to modify negative media portrayals and negative public opinion about unemployed people. Engaging with the media is also a mechanism to promote the policies of the INOU and positive developments in relation to unemployment and unemployed people including successful outcomes for job seekers.

The organisation has developed a very strong track record in media work and the INOU is now seen as a 'go to' organisation for the media on matters relating to unemployment. While this is very positive, it can tend to reflect the media's agenda and interests rather than those of the INOU. A more pro-active approach to the media will be helpful in setting the agenda and in raising the organisation's profile in relation to issues of unemployment and media portrayals of unemployment and unemployed people.

Key actions

- 7.1 Continue to respond to media queries and opportunities for media engagement.
- 7.2 Proactively set an agenda with the media in line with the objectives and core policy themes of the INOU, through regular press releases/statements/alerts and through challenging media coverage of unemployment.
- 7.3 Develop a media section on our website to provide key information to journalists and presenters.
- 7.4 Develop and disseminate an information pack for media to inform reporting on issues relating to unemployment.
- 7.5 Explore strategies to provide information through and to local media: for example, pre-recorded inputs on the INOU website.
- 7.6 Keep our affiliates informed of our engagement on key issues with the media and encourage their engagement with local media on the same issues.
- 7.7 Explore new ways to engage with local and national media to increase our profile.



Objective 8: To optimise our organisational capacity and effectiveness

Key Actions

Decision making and communication

- 8.1 Identify the potential for synergies across all areas of our work and put in place mechanisms and / or processes to maximise these, for example staff teams in relation to each key objective of the Strategic Plan.
- 8.2 Develop staff forums for joint reflection, communication and decision making with particular focus on the objectives of the Strategic Plan.
- 8.3 Develop mechanisms for more systematic data and intelligence gathering and dissemination across the organisation.
- 8.4 Develop a key role and related protocols for the Co-ordinating Team in monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- 8.5 Undertake annual reviews of the implementation of the Strategic Plan involving all staff.

Staff Development and Support

Our ability to deliver on our strategic objectives over the next 3 years will be determined by the organisation's ability to retain and develop our staff. The INOU is committed to ensuring the best possible terms and conditions of employment consistent with the financial resources available to the organisation. We are also committed to ensuring that all staff policies, procedures and practices are consistent with best Human Resource Management practices and draw on the collective knowledge of all staff. We will:

- 8.6 Review the current staffing structure in order to determine whether the existing structure will enable the organisation to meet its objectives over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan.
- 8.7 Undertake a comprehensive review of staff policies and procedures in order to ensure their continued effectiveness and relevance.
- 8.8 Continue to review Health, Safety and Welfare Policies, Procedures and Practices throughout the period of the plan.
- 8.9 Develop a Staff Support and Appraisal Process.
- 8.10 Conduct regular staff meetings and develop a mechanism to respond to issues raised by staff.
- 8.11 Improve the flow of communication to staff and ensure that all staff are aware of our work and achievements.
- 8.12 Formulate a Staff Training Plan.
- 8.13 Provide on-going management support to the INOU's Community Employment Project.



Objective 9: To ensure the effectiveness of the structures and processes of Governance

Rationale

Effective governance is an important dimension of the INOU which plays a key role in enabling the organisation to achieve our objectives.

The new context within which the INOU is working, and particularly the ongoing developments in employment and the labour market, reinforces the need to ensure that our governance structures and processes are the most appropriate to support our work over the coming years. This requires that all aspects of governance be effective in meeting the objectives and in contributing to the work of the organisation.

The uncertain funding context also means that cost-effectiveness of governance processes needs to be considered.

Key Actions

- 9.1 Identify and address any obstacles to implementing the provisions of the Constitution and those of the Standing Orders.
- 9.2 Review and clarify the role and functions of the NEC and the Officers Board and identify and implement any changes needed to reinforce their effectiveness.
- 9.3 Review and clarify the role and functions of the General Branch and identify and implement any changes needed to reinforce its effectiveness
- 9.4 Explore cost effective ways for the NEC and the Officers Board to discharge their functions including in relation to monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- 9.5 Review the objectives of the Annual Delegate Conference in the context of the Strategic Plan to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of its contribution.



Objective 10: Maximise the Availability and Usage of Resources

Rationale

Like most other organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector, the INOU is operating in a very challenging funding environment. We anticipate that this environment will not improve significantly over the period of the Plan. Indeed, the potential exists for the overall funding available to the organisation to reduce over the period of the Plan. Should this develop, the organisation will need to re-prioritise its work to match available resources.

Key Actions

- 10.1 Explore and implement means of ensuring that the organisation remains financially viable.
- 10.2 Maximise project funding in the pursuit of INOU objectives.
- 10.3 Explore other relevant funding avenues for the organisation.
- 10.4 Continue to achieve value for money across all areas of expenditure.
