



13/11/2018

INOUE Submission on the Review of the Community Services Programme

Bríd O'Brien
IRISH NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED
policy@inou.ie

INTRODUCTION

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Community Services Programme.

“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 200 affiliated organisations and 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.

COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMME

In the documentation on the review of the Community Services Programme (CSP) it notes that ‘no formal review has been carried out since the programme was introduced in 2006’. The CSP grew out of the Social Economy Programme (SEP), which was funded through the Employment Development and Human Resources Operational Programme, and as Wider Equality Measure Study, WRC Social and Economic Consultants reviewed the SEP¹.

☛ The issues explored in this report could be usefully referenced in the CSP review.

The stated aim of the Social Economy Programme was:

“To support the development and operation of enterprises that engage in economic activity between the private and public sectors in order to meet social objectives and in so doing create sustainable employment. The Programme will seek to develop the entrepreneurial and business potential of such enterprises and will be particularly targeted at disadvantaged communities, communities of interest and long-term unemployed persons.”

Three categories of enterprises were envisaged:

- *Community Businesses: ultimately financed from trading income alone and which would be expected to move into self-sustaining viability in the medium term.*
- *Deficient Demand Social Economy Enterprises: where the demand for particular goods and services within a community is not matched by resources to pay for these, due to disadvantage or low density of population.*
- *Enterprises Based on Public Sector Contracts: which deals with the potential for subcontracting public sector expenditure in disadvantaged areas and communities to local Social Economy Enterprises.*

Under this programme most enterprises categorised themselves or were categorised as community businesses, which implied a capacity, or a potential capacity to generate additional income. However, the reality was that more of them were deficient demand enterprises, meeting an essential need in a local community that otherwise would not have been met by either the state or the private-for-profit sector.

¹ Available at

https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/measure_19_social_economy_programme_wider_equality_study_pdf.pdf

- ☛ **The INOU welcomes that this issue will be examined under point 3 in the review process: “services being delivered to vulnerable communities that would not be delivered otherwise”. Even with the economy overall improving the harsh reality is that there are many communities in urban and rural areas struggling to survive.**

COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMME REVIEW

Two of the strands of the CSP are of particular interest to the INOU:

- Strand 2 – Community Services for Disadvantaged Communities
- Strand 3 – Community Organisations Employing People Distant from the Labour Market.

The organisation notes that in the review process it will consider ‘*Whether the programme as currently structured is appropriate and delivering on the strategic goals of the Department*’. One of the Department’s Strategic Goals² is to “*Support local communities to develop, empowering them to identify their needs and aspirations and providing them with the opportunities, skills and confidence to influence, shape and participate in decision-making processes which affect them.*” Integral to the development of this in a holistic way is access to sustainable employment for people who are long-term unemployed, marginalised or distant from the labour market.

- ☛ **The INOU welcomes that “job opportunities and career advancement for people from marginalised communities” will be explored under point 4 of the review. However, it will also be important to bear in mind that for some participants, programmes like the Community Services Programme are the only access point to the labour market.**

At the time of the WRC review the INOU noted the chronic underspend on the Social Economy Programme, and that the full year budget target of €51m, which was a PPF commitment, had not been achieved. The WRC noted that in 2004 expenditure on the SEP was €39.5m. If the original budget target had been reached and maintained, the current budget would be €59m, €13m higher than the current budget of €46m.

Concerns have been raised with the INOU about the funding difficulties in maintaining and developing a business under the CSP. For example, financial supports have not moved in line with changes in the National Minimum Wage; and given the cost of living the manager’s salary is insufficient to attract the right people to undertake the work.

- ☛ **The INOU notes that under point 5 of the review the “role and structure of the CSP funding contribution” will be examined, and “Whether the programme is providing value for money” will be considered. The importance of programmes like CSP to provide funding in areas that are often under resourced should not be underestimated; and it will be important for the review to be conducted in a manner that does not undermine confidence or ability to maintain and develop the work.**
- ☛ **The ability of many organisations to draw on other sources of funding to compliment and consolidate their work and its impact on their communities should be seen as a strength and “The overlap or complementarity with other Government-funded programmes and schemes” (point 6) should be examined from a constructive perspective.**
- ☛ **The overall impact of the Community Services Programme to address socio-economic disadvantage should be incorporated into this review.**

² DRCD Annual Report 2017 <https://drccd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/DRCD-Annual-Report-2017.pdf>