



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

2021 Social Inclusion Forum Closing Plenary Session Friday 16 April

Overview of key points agreed
at Forum workshops





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Workshop 1: Core Essentials – Healthcare, Housing, Energy and Food

Facilitator: Tricia Keilthy, Society of St. Vincent de Paul

102 participants

Key points:

- Ensuring income adequacy and minimum standard of living to prevent poverty, including energy and food poverty.
- Access to affordable services (health, education, housing, transport) and adequate information about these supports available to those who most need them.
- Prevent food poverty and the normalisation of food banks in Ireland. This includes extending Hot School Meals programme to outside of school term to prevent “holiday hunger.”



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- Pre-existing vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by COVID-19. These include a “digital divide” on IT access and literacy; as well as higher household bills during restrictions.
- The need to ensure affordable housing and recognise housing as a social determinant of health and wellbeing
- A Just Transition is needed to ensure vulnerable groups and low income families are not excluded or driven into energy/fuel poverty.



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Workshop 2: Supporting Families and Children

Facilitator: Saoirse Brady, Children's Rights Alliance

108 participants

Key points:

- Target of 0% of children in consistent poverty. The definition of child poverty should be broadened to include more holistic indicators, with specific targets for vulnerable and marginalised groups not currently captured in data.
- Increased participation and engagement of children and young people in policy making structures, particularly through outreach to engage with marginalised children and those experiencing poverty.



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- Ensure adequacy of income and targeted social welfare supports to prevent families entering poverty. There were also calls for increased service provision through early learning and care, education and housing also needed and access to more universal supports particularly for those experiencing in-work poverty.
- Parental health and wellbeing are key determinants of children’s wellbeing. There were calls for more universal supports for families and acknowledgement of the “working poor”.
- The new child poverty target needs whole-of-government support and adequate poverty-proofing measures. There were calls for a new Child Poverty Unit to oversee this and the EU Child Guarantee.



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Workshop 3: Expanding the Opportunity of Employment

Facilitator: Bríd O'Brien, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed.

123 participants

Key points:

- Rollout of LES is welcome, but it is important to ensure schemes are client-focused and meet individual needs. A holistic approach similar to SICAP recommended.
- Specific employment and childcare supports needed for vulnerable groups who face additional barriers to employment, including discrimination.
- Early interventions of career guidance and tailored employment guidance is important. Pathways such as the *My Journey Distance Travelled Tool* developed for SICAP give a sense of ownership and utilise a person's capabilities and strengths.



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- Barriers to education and employment in rural areas need to be addressed. These include lack of transport links, broadband connectivity and matching people's skills with the jobs available in their area, be urban or rural, is important. Social enterprise can play an important role in this area.
- Greater engagement and communication needed with local stakeholders to ensure supports are targeted at the right people at the right time. There is sometimes a lack of cohesion in this area, which can impact negatively on participation and lead to exclusion.



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Workshop 4: Making Sure Voices are Heard

Facilitator: Paul Ginnell, European Anti-Poverty Network

110 participants

Key points:

- Everyone has a right to participation in policy making, but must be meaningful and avoid “box-ticking” - co-creation approach is necessary in policy making at all levels –based on set standards.
- More should be done to include diverse and marginalised voices – Need to implement Public Sector Duty - 9 grounds, plus socio-economic status as 10th ground - needs to be included in legislation.
- Public Participation Networks are vital, but often too large to meaningfully address challenges in social inclusion and representation of marginalised groups.
- Effective Community Development takes time, expertise and resources. This includes more qualified community workers and designing programmes and services to suit communities’ needs. Need to rebuild a programme for autonomous Community Development– new pilot programme a good start. Role of Community Development in challenging policy needs to be respected.



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- Participation strategies need to be supported and implemented locally to ensure participation of marginalised voices, including guidelines for front line staff to promote engagement/participation, and training on equality/diversity. A focus on improving digital/literacy skills to enable tech solutions for engagement is also needed.
- Visible results needed to reflect the contribution and effort of communities, community workers and organisations. This would encourage further participation and representation and help overcome disillusionment. “Nothing about us, without us!”. Implementation of agreed strategies is essential.



Thank you