2017 is an important year. It marks 20 years since Ireland’s first anti-poverty strategy when the Irish Government set its first target for poverty reduction. Over the past 20 years the Government has had mixed results in addressing poverty.

There are 403,000 people in consistent poverty in Ireland. This has a very negative impact on people, families and communities and is unacceptable in one of the wealthier countries in the world.

The Government is in the process of reviewing its current anti-poverty plan, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, and developing a successor. This new plan must be ambitious both in the targets it sets out and particularly in the range of policy choices it outlines to achieve this target. Primarily the new plan has to be rooted in a vision for a society free from poverty and inequality. It will not succeed unless there is a commitment from the highest level of Government to achieving it.

This poverty briefing updates the one produced in 2015. It gives an overview of poverty in Ireland today and how it is experienced across a number of policy areas. It then makes proposals for a range of policies which are needed if the Governments new anti-poverty plan is to be comprehensive and effective not just in eliminating the consequences of poverty but also its causes.

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2. National and EU commitments to reducing poverty Page 3
3. The reality of poverty and social exclusion Page 7
4. Towards a new anti-poverty strategy Page 13
1. What do we mean by poverty?

Experiencing poverty is not just about lack of income but also about barriers in access to services and opportunities which prevents people from participating fully in society. It is very connected to the experience of social exclusion and to wider inequalities in society. This is captured in the national definition of poverty:

“People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities considered the norm for other people in society.”

Poverty is not inevitable but as a result of policy choices. In Ireland poverty levels are officially measured using three main measurements: at-risk of poverty, material deprivation and consistent poverty (see Note 1 below and www.eapn.ie).

The Three official ways of measuring Poverty

Relative Poverty/At Risk of Poverty

Anyone with an income which is less than 60% of the median (or middle) income is referred to as being either relatively poor or ‘at risk of poverty’. Incomes in households are weighted depending on the number of adults and children to arrive at an equivalised disposable income for each individual. This was €229.97 per week in 2015, and 16.9% of the population had incomes below this amount.

Material Deprivation

Not being able to afford at least two of the eleven goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living. 24.4% of the population experienced material deprivation in 2015. The current 11 indicators are:

1. Two pairs of strong shoes  
2. A warm waterproof overcoat  
3. Buy new not second-hand clothes  
4. Eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day  
5. Have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week  
6. Had to go without heating during the last year through lack of money  
7. Keep the home adequately warm  
8. Buy presents for family or friends at least once a year  
9. Replace any worn out furniture  
10. Have family or friends for a drink or meal once a month  
11. Have a morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight, for entertainment

Consistent poverty

People who experience both of the above are relatively poor (less than 60% of median income) and materially deprived because they cannot afford two of the eleven agreed items. 8.7% of the population were in consistent poverty in 2015.

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2 Disposable income is based on income from work and welfare transfers minus taxes. To get the equivalised disposable income per person the disposable income is divided by the equivalised household size. The equivalised household size is calculated by adding the total weighting given to every person in the household. Weightings are as follows, the first adult (14 years and over) is given a weighting of 1, each additional person 14 and over a weighting of 0.66 and each child under 14 years a weighting of 0.33.
2. National and EU commitments to reducing poverty

Ireland set its first poverty reduction target in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in 1997 and a new target in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. This was updated for 2015-2017. The poverty target under the National Action Plan for Social Exclusion 2007-2016, also called the ‘national social target for poverty reduction’, is to “reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2 per cent”.

Based on the commitment in the Programme for Government to ‘developing a new integrated framework for social inclusion, to tackle inequality and poverty’ the Government is now in the process developing a new anti-poverty plan and as part of this is reviewing the existing poverty target.

In addition to the commitments at national level, the Irish Government, along with all other EU member states, has also signed up to the Europe 2020 Strategy. This strategy contains five targets which they agreed to achieve by the year 2020. One of these targets is to “lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020”. When the target was set there were an estimated 115.9 million people in poverty or social exclusion in the EU. The target is therefore to reduce this to 96.9 million people or less by 2020. However, in 2015 there were almost 117.8 million people in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, almost 2 million more than when the target was set.

As part of its commitment under the Europe 2020 Strategy the Irish Government committed to reducing the number of people in ‘combined poverty’ by a minimum of 200,000 between 2010 and 2020 (from 1.412 million to 1.212 million people). In 2015 there were 1.562 million people in combined poverty, 150 thousand higher than when the target was set. This had fallen from a peak of 1.741 million people in 2013.

In 2014 the Government also set a child poverty target. This target is “to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level”. In 2015 there were 139,000 children in consistent poverty, 22,000 more than when the target was set.

As an additional national commitment to reducing poverty, the Irish Taoiseach and President were among the world leaders of nearly 200 countries which signing up to the UN ‘Global Goals’ (Sustainable development Goals) in September 2015 which include the overall goal of “ending of poverty in all its forms”.

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3 At risk of poverty or social exclusion, abbreviated as AROPE, is the calculation used at EU level for the Europe 2020 poverty target and refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (below the 60% poverty line), or severely materially deprived (lacking 4 of 9 items) or living in a household with a very low work intensity (aged 0-59 and the working age members in the household worked less than 20% of their potential during the past year.)


5 Combined poverty is the combination of three indicators – All those who are either in consistent poverty or at-risk-of-poverty or experience basic deprivation.


The Department of Social Protection each year produces the Social Inclusion Monitor\(^8\) to report officially on how Ireland is progressing towards its commitments to poverty reduction.

**Progress against targets**

As can be seen in Graph 1 below poverty levels in Ireland have increased dramatically since the crisis began in 2008. One quarter of the population in 2015 could not afford 2 of 11 essential items and therefore experience material deprivation.

In 2015 almost 17\% of the population, or more than 783,000 people, were at risk of poverty (or relatively poor) because their disposable income\(^9\) was below the poverty line of 60\% of the middle (median) income of all people in the country. This had grown from 14.4\% in 2008. The poverty line in 2015 was €229.97 per week for an individual.

In 2015, 8.7\% of the population (over 403,000 people) was in consistent poverty because they were both at-risk of poverty and experienced material deprivation. Despite a small fall in 2015 the level is still double that of 2008. The Government has a commitment to reducing this to 4\% by 2016 and to at least 2\% or less 92,000 people by 2020\(^{10}\).

Graph 1: Poverty levels in Ireland 2003-2015

![Graph 1: Poverty levels in Ireland 2003-2015](image)

More vulnerable and marginalised groups in society experience higher levels of poverty than the general population. Some of these are captured in the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Survey of Income and Living Conditions.

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\(^9\) Individual disposable income is worked out taking account of the number of people in the house and allocating an amount of the household income to each of them giving different weighting to the first (1.0) and subsequent adults (0.66) and to children under 14 (0.33). This is called the equivalised disposable income.

\(^{10}\) Department of Social Protection 2012. National Social Target for Poverty Reduction. [http://www.socialinclusion.ie/NPT.html](http://www.socialinclusion.ie/NPT.html)
The CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions says that in 2015:

- Of those covered in the Survey, single parent households, people not at work through illness or disability, unemployed people and people renting at below the market rate or rent free have the highest poverty levels (see Graph 2).
- 25% of the population are experiencing deprivation, more than double that of 2008 (13.8%). This is 31.4% for children, 53.4% for those who are unemployed and 58.7% for single adult households with children.
- One in five of those at work experienced deprivation in 2015 compared to almost one in 14 in 2008.
- One in ten could not afford to keep their home adequately warm, up from 6% in 2008.
- Despite a small decrease in level of the overall population below the poverty line between 2014 and 2015, it increased from 38% to 43.5% for those who were unemployed and from 25.2% to 34.8% for those not at work due to illness or a disability.

Graph 2: Poverty levels for selected group

There are other groups such as Travellers, homeless people and migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, who experience high levels of poverty but are not captured by official statistics. Poverty is also higher in some geographical areas such as disadvantaged urban areas and many remote rural areas.

While statistics are important they can only provide a limited view of the reality for people living in poverty. Many people face complex issues linked to a lack of an adequate income, whether in or out of work, lack of access to an adequate level of accommodation, education, health, care and other services or face a range of barriers in access to these services and to employment. The Community Platform captures some of this reality through presenting the life stories of a range of people from across the country in ‘Now You See Us’11.

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How Ireland Compare

In order to measure levels of poverty and progress on targets all EU countries report to Eurostat using comparable data. However, as the way in which Ireland measures and presents the levels of poverty for national purposes is slightly different from that required by Eurostat there is some difference in the levels of poverty for Ireland as shown in national EU reports. However it is still useful to look at the EU reports to see how Ireland compares to other countries.

The table below covers the headline measures used for the Europe 2020 poverty target. This includes the overall indicator for those at risk of poverty or social exclusion and then the three elements that make up that indicator which are at-risk of poverty, experiencing severe material deprivation and living in a household with very low work intensity. Anyone experiencing one of these is said to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Ireland has a higher than average level of risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU, 26% compared to an EU average of 23%. It has just below average levels of at-risk of poverty (16.6% compared to 17.3%) and just above average levels of material deprivation (7.5% compared to 8.1%). Ireland has the highest levels of people living in low work intensity households in the EU with almost one fifth of the population compared to 10.7% for the EU.

Table 1: Levels of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion</th>
<th>% At-Risk of Poverty</th>
<th>% Severe material Deprivation</th>
<th>% Low work intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-28 average</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>26.0 (12th highest)</td>
<td>16.6 (13th highest)</td>
<td>7.5 (16th highest)</td>
<td>19.2 (highest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 3 shows how Ireland compares for to other EU countries for those at-risk of poverty, or living below the 60% poverty line in their countries.

3. The reality of poverty and social exclusion

Poverty and social exclusion have many causes and impact on different people in different ways. This can be because of a lack of access to adequate income, quality services or a decent job. Many people who experience poverty and social exclusion are disempowered and have more limited say in the decisions that impact on their lives. They can have long-term impacts on the social and emotional well-being of people. Poverty and social exclusion are not inevitable but as the result of policies can only be effectively addressed through tackling their structural causes. The following are some of the issues that face people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Income
In 2015, over 783,000 people in Ireland had an income which put them at-risk of poverty. The social welfare rate of €193 received by most people is €36.97 below the 2015 poverty line of €229.97. The jobseekers rate for those under 26 years and for those 26 years of age are €127.27 and €82.17 respectively below the poverty line. According to the 2017 report on a Minimum Essential Standard of Living, excluding pensioner families, the other ten most common family types depending on social welfare will have a weekly income gap of between €15.87 and €169.58 12.

Inequality
It has been shown that inequality is bad for societies. While it is a root cause of poverty and social exclusion it not only impacts negatively on those on the lowest incomes but on almost everyone throughout society 13. In 2015 the top 20% of income earners have 4.7 times the income of the lowest

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20%\textsuperscript{14}. This shows a reduction from 5 times in 2014. For EU comparative purposes the rate of inequality was 4.5% compared to 5.2% average for the EU 28 as a whole\textsuperscript{15}. The European Commission’s Social Situation Monitor showed that in 2013 the wealthiest 10% in Ireland had one quarter of the national income while the bottom 10% only has around 3.3%\textsuperscript{16}. Also, in EU comparative terms, while the risk of poverty levels of 16.6% in Ireland is just below the EU average, if social transfers (tax and social welfare changes) are excluded then Ireland’s at-risk of poverty level would be 36.2% compared to and EU average of 26.1%\textsuperscript{17}.

In relation to overall wealth, self-employed households had a median (middle) net wealth\textsuperscript{18} in 2013 of €307,000 (self-employed people make up 9.1% of all households and 23.3% of all net wealth) while those in the top 20% of households had €207,000. At the other end of the scale households with one adult and children had a net wealth of €1,400 (They made up 4.4% of the population and 0.6% of all net wealth). Those households headed by an unemployed person having a median net wealth figure of €7,200 (12.8% of the population and 3.9% of all net wealth)\textsuperscript{19}.

“It’s hard for people coming from disadvantaged areas where there are very little resources because they can’t access the same opportunities as people from more advantaged areas.”

Focus group participant 2017

Access to quality employment

Employment continued to increase with 2,063,000 people in employment in the second quarter of 2017, up 48,100 from the same time in 2016 and now just over 30,000 below the peak in mid-2007\textsuperscript{20}. The employment rate for those aged 15-64 years of age was 65.7% (60.4% for women and 71.1% for men) in Ireland compared to 66.9% (1\textsuperscript{st} quarter of 2017) for the EU as a whole. There are 440,600 people working part-time which is 55,000 more than in mid-2007 and 1 in 5 or 20% of these part-time workers are now underemployed.

Unemployment has fallen from over 15% in 2012 to 6.2%, or 136,700 people, in the second quarter of 2017 compared to an EU rate of 8.3% (Quarter 1 2017). Long-term unemployment as a proportion of those unemployed continues to fall and is now under half of those who are unemployed. While unemployment for those under 25 years of age had been falling every month since July 2010 the increase three months in a row over the summer of 2017 is worrying.


\textsuperscript{18} Net wealth is all forms of wealth including the family home minus any debt.


“The unemployment rate is dropping, so that is good in one sense, but there is still a good number of people out there in the community who are looking for jobs, so jobs is still a big issue”.

Participant as Social Inclusion Forum preparation meeting

The overall increase in employment and fall in unemployment generally hides the fact that some groups are still being left behind and who face particular barriers in accessing and remaining in employment. We know that persistent joblessness is more common for women, older adults, those with lower levels of education, adults with a disability and in one-adult households with children. In mid-2016 the employment rate for people parenting alone 15-64 years old was 56.4% compared to 74.4% for all adults in couples with children and 64.7% for the full population\(^{21}\). In 2011 just 11% of Travellers were in employment compared to a 66% rate for non-Travellers at the time\(^{22}\). Older and longer-term unemployed people are facing ageism in the labour market, even when they have the right qualifications and work experience.

**Structural unemployment** is an issue that faces many marginalised communities, an issue which needs to be addressed as part of the Action Plan for Jobs. This involves addressing the range of issues facing groups including access to services, discrimination and the deepening skills gap between people living in jobless households and emerging job opportunities.

While the numbers of those at work is increasing there are ongoing concerns regarding the quality of employment, including the adequacy of pay. One on four of those experiencing material deprivation is in work and 1 in 10 of those in consistent poverty\(^ {23}\). Before social transfers 1 in 5 of those in work is at risk of poverty with transfers reducing this to 5.5%. While transfers such as in work welfare payments are important they cover over issues of inadequate pay. There is a major gap between the National Minimum Wage of €9.25 per hour and the hourly living wage for a single adult working full time of €11.70 in 2017\(^ {24}\). The Government has committed to raising the Minimum Wage to €10.50 by 2021. In 2015 Ireland had the third highest proportion of low paid jobs in the OECD with 24% of workers estimated to be on low pay\(^ {25}\).

There are also issues regarding the rise in precarious forms of work which have increased over the past number of years\(^ {26}\). These issues need to be addressed if Ireland is to have a sustainable recovery and those in work can earn a decent income.

In recent years the Government has introduced many measures to support the move from welfare into work. Under the Pathways to Work strategies it has reformed the National Employment Service with the


\(^{24}\) Living Wage Technical Group 2017. [https://www.livingwage.ie/](https://www.livingwage.ie/)

\(^{25}\) OECD. Wage Levels 2015 [https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/wage-levels.htm](https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/wage-levels.htm)

establishment of Intreo offices throughout the country and through JobPath has introduced private companies to deliver employment services to those who are long term unemployed. Those most distant from the labour market however are still dependent on the Local Employment Service, where they exist, and the services delivered through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme or employability services for people with disabilities. EAPN Ireland’s concern throughout this process is that the culture applying to all activation services would mean that everyone could have access to a quality person centred service that treats them with dignity. While anyone who wants to access the public employment service can now do so under the recent Pathways to Work strategy, EAPN Ireland’s concern throughout this process is that everyone could have access to a quality person centred service that treats them with dignity. The increase in negative conditionality including cuts to welfare payments (penalty rates) is therefore of concern. From their introduction in 2011 until May 2017 penalty rates have been applied to over 34,000 social welfare recipients.

Addressing adult literacy and numeracy needs

Unmet adult literacy and numeracy needs are a key concern for Ireland as they have devastating consequences for individuals, families, communities, society and the economy. Recent research\textsuperscript{27} shows that one in six Irish adults (521,550 people) find reading and understanding everyday texts difficult: for example, reading a leaflet, bus timetable or medicine instructions. One in four (754,000 people) has difficulties in real world maths, from basic addition and subtraction to calculating averages.

Ireland’s National Skills Strategy sets a target to upskill 165,000 people from Level 1 or below for literacy from currently 17.5% to 12% by 2025.\textsuperscript{28} However, it is proving a challenge to increase the targeted numbers of adults up to level 3. To meet the target Ireland must urgently address the current gap in intensive and flexible adult literacy provision. We need a policy measure that offers all adults with literacy, numeracy and digital needs and less than a QQI Level 4 qualification a high quality and relevant learning programme with a local education and training provider. This would include intensive and flexible options; appropriate supports as required (income, transport, child and elder care), work placement where appropriate and progression opportunities.

Housing and Homelessness

The ongoing shortage of affordable private and public housing is causing great difficulty for many individuals and families, directly resulting in a daily increase in homelessness. Delivery on Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness has been slow.

As the months and years progress the homelessness crisis has become much deeper. In the year to August 2017 the number of men, women and children living in emergency accommodation increased by 25% from 6611 to 8270. This includes 3,235 adults with no dependents in their care and 1,442 families with 3,048 children. Many thousands more are experiencing housing insecurity\textsuperscript{29}.

\textsuperscript{27} Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012 Survey Results for Ireland: CSO, Dublin
\textsuperscript{28} Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025
\textsuperscript{29}
“I was working and then I got sick and lost my job. Very quickly things changed...there’s a stigma to being homeless, you distance yourself from others. You feel a psychological shock.”

Focus group participant 2017

The rough sleeper count, which currently only takes place in the Dublin region, is carried out twice a year. The most recent count in April 2017 confirmed that there were 218 people without a safe place to sleep in Dublin City on that particular night. This included 161 people sleeping rough and 57 people sheltering at the Nite Café (DRHE 2017), a 35% increase on August 2016. While 84% of those sleeping rough are men. Ireland has the highest rate of women homelessness in Europe. Women’s homelessness is also more hidden.

According to a count by local authorities in 2016 there are 1,499 Traveller families living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions – 536 were deemed to be on unauthorised sites and 963 sharing houses.

Rebuilding Ireland is overly reliant on the private sector to provide housing. There are at least 90,000 households on Local Authorities housing waiting lists. This includes 7,600 people with disabilities. Rebuilding Ireland strategy only aims to deliver 47,000 social houses by 2021 and the majority of these will be in the private rental sector. Increases in Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment thresholds in 2016 are welcome but the increase in rent levels, alongside a lack of available rental properties, increasingly makes this an unaffordable option for many families. 91% of properties available to rent are beyond the reach of people dependent on state housing benefits. Rents increased by 11.8% (12.3% in Dublin and 11.9% outside Dublin) in the year to the second quarter of 2017. There was also an ongoing fall in the available of properties to rent in most regions reaching new record lows nationally.

Disability

In 2016 only 36% of people with a disability age 20-64 are working compared to 68.5% of the overall population. People with disability had a higher unemployment rate (22% compared to 16% of other adults in 2013).

Childcare

Ireland spends 0.5% of GDP on early childhood care and education compared to an OECD average of just over 0.7% of GDP. UNICEF recommends a spend of 1% of GDP on childcare. The Government has begun the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, with additional supports for those on low incomes, which could help increase affordability. There will need to be additional resources allocated to implement this scheme over the coming years.

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30 Dublin Region, Spring Count on Rough Sleeping April 2017
33 Ibid.
36 OECD, Public spending on early childhood education and care 2013
Migration - Asylum system/migrant workers

In 2015 the net income of non-Irish nationals in Ireland was 18% lower than that of Irish nationals, an increase from 16% in 2014. While in 2015 there were similar deprivation rates for Irish and non-Irish nationals, 24.1% of non-Irish nationals were at risk of poverty compared to 16.1% for Irish nationals. The consistent poverty levels for non-Irish nationals was 10.1% in 2015 compared to 8.6% for Irish nationals.

Migrants are overrepresented in low-paid sectors of employment, among minimum wage recipients and among those working part-time or unusual hours. Among the underlying factors which put migrants more at risk of poverty find a poorly managed labour migration policy; a lack of planning for economic integration and limited access to social protection.

Policies which limit the mobility of migrant workers or which do not promote the recognition of skills and education funnel migrant families into low-paid jobs and consequently leave them at risk of poverty. Access to social protection is conditioned on the category of immigration status a person has leaving large categori es of the migrant population without access to certain basic services which act as a safety net against poverty. Furthermore, the misapplication of the Habitual Residence Condition which has been proven to disproportionally impact on migrant families has been pointed out as another factor leading to homelessness and destitution.

There are 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.

“Undocumented migrants want to be visible and want to participate in the community. We don’t want a barrier between the Irish and the undocumented. We are not criminals, we are human beings”.

Undocumented worker in Dublin

The system of Direct Provision system for asylum seekers and its detrimental impact on those who live there have been highlighted repeatedly as a breach of human rights. Asylum seekers in Direct Provision have to live on €19.10 per week for an adult and €15.60 for a child (due to increase to €21.60 for all asylum seekers in August 2017). Ireland is alongside Lithuania as the only two EU countries to opt out of the EU Reception Conditions Directive which would allow asylum seekers to work after 6 months in the asylum system. In May 2017 the Supreme Court found that complete ban on the right to work was not justified and was contrary to the constitutional right to seek employment. It has postponed a ruling until November 2017 in order to give the Government a right to respond.

Participation

The community and voluntary sector plays an essential role in providing supports to the most marginalised communities and in ensuring that they have the capacity to have a say in decisions which impact on their lives, resulting in more effective policy making. However, state supports to the community and voluntary sector were cut by over 35% between 2008 and 2012 with this continuing in
subsequent year\textsuperscript{37}. This has all had a particular negative impact at local level where budgets have been cut and community organisations have lost their independence through changes in local structures.

Health
There is a direct connection between poverty, social exclusion and inequality and worse health outcomes for those on lower incomes and from marginalised communities. This is exacerbated in Ireland by our two-tier health system. Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas is over 4 years shorter than those in the most affluent areas (73.7 compared to 78 years) while the difference for women is 2.7 years (80 compared to 82.7 years)\textsuperscript{38}. Life expectancy at birth for male Travellers is 61.7 years and for females is 70.1 years\textsuperscript{39}.

\textsuperscript{37} B. Harvey, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Community Sector Committee 2012. Downsizing the Community Sector. \url{http://www.ceeds.ie/files/resources/downsizingcommunitysector.pdf}
\textsuperscript{38} CSO 2010. Mortality Differentials in Ireland \url{http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/Mortality_Differentials_in_Ireland.pdf}
4. Towards a new anti-poverty strategy

The Government is committed to publishing a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion for 2018-2020. To be effective and make a serious impact on poverty as outlined above this strategy must be:

A comprehensive strategy

The strategy must be led from the top and involve a commitment by all of Government, not just ‘social’ ministries, to fight poverty. Many of the instruments to do this were spelled out in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) nearly 20 years ago, but the resources and political commitment to make this happen have been lacking.

Poverty impact assessment is a vital part of this. The Programme for Partnership Government commits to develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights. This should build on existing policy which began with the NAPS in 1997, but has been weakly implemented. All major policies, including budget proposals, should be assessed for their impact on poverty and altered so as to contribute to policy reduction at the planning and implementation stages. This process must be open so as to bring it into public and political debate.

The strategy must be designed and implemented with the participation of people affected by poverty at all stages. It must provide resources to support for the independent voice of people experiencing poverty and their organisations to develop and participate in decision-making.

A strategy for a decent income

The strategy must ensure that everyone, in work or out of work, has access to a guaranteed income which allows them to live with dignity. Minimum social welfare levels should be set at a level which is both above the 60% at-risk of poverty level\(^{40}\) and provides people and families with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living\(^{41}\). Groups currently excluded from minimum welfare payments, such as asylum seekers in direct provision and young people need to be brought into the system. The strategy must also provide for an information campaign to ensure that people are aware of their rights and well-resourced advice and advocacy services.

See EMIN (EAPN led project): Roadmap to an adequate minimum income system in Ireland\(^{42}\)

A strategy for quality jobs

The strategy must improve the quality of work, which has been eroded during the recession. This means ensuring that those at work are paid at least the Living Wage rate of €11.70 per hour\(^{43}\) (for an individual working full time) and addressing the causes of precarious work, including zero and low hour contracts. Intreo (welfare to work) and other employment activation services need to develop a supportive culture which empowers people to make positive choices for their futures. The Intreo service needs to be adequately resourced and staff provided with the level of training needed to provide a person-centred and inclusive service.

See: EAPN Ireland submission to the Low Pay Commission, 27th March 2015\(^{44}\) and EAPN Ireland Position Paper on Positive Activation, July 2015\(^{45}\)

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\(^{40}\) Based on the Survey of Income and Living Conditions this would have been €229.97 in 2015.

\(^{41}\) www.budgeting.ie

\(^{42}\) Roadmap to an adequate Minimum Income for Ireland 2015

\(^{43}\) www.livingwage.ie

\(^{44}\) EAPN Ireland Submission to the Low Pay Commission, 2015.

A strategy for quality services

The strategy must plan for the development of quality services available to all, in areas such as health, education, transport etc. These should also be assessed to ensure that particular supports are put in place to support the most vulnerable and those on low income and facing discrimination.

Investment in affordable, accessible and quality early childhood care and education must be increased towards the OECD average of 0.7% of GDP. We need a policy measure that offers all adults with literacy, numeracy and digital needs and less than a QQI Level 4 qualification a high quality and relevant learning programme with a local education and training provider.

The Government must also move to address health inequalities a key element of which is the immediate implementation of the Slaintecare Report published by the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare.

See: Community Platform *Six principles for an inclusive health policy*.46

A strategy to end homelessness and ensure housing for all

The Rebuilding Ireland review must include a raft of new measures to address the crisis effectively. These must be published so that progress can be measured. needs to be effectively and urgently implemented so as to increase the supply of housing to a level which meets demand and ensures access to affordable housing for everyone. The only long term, sustainable solution to this crisis is to build more social and affordable housing. Local authorities should build and provide social housing in a planned way to meet future needs and approved Housing Bodies must be able to access finance in a way which enables them to play a key role as social housing providers.

Adequate resources must be provided to fully implement a Housing First approach to homelessness. People need to move out of emergency accommodation as soon as possible and not become trapped in homelessness longer than is necessary.

Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment must be maintained at levels which meet market rents so that people can stay in the homes they already have and move on from emergency accommodation.

In order to incentivise homeowners to sell, rent, or lease their empty homes back to the State the Repair and Leasing and Buy and Renew schemes need to be more ambitious with higher targets and more attractive to homeowners.

There must be a cross departmental National Homelessness Sub-Strategy, under Rebuilding Ireland, with ring fenced funding for implementation.

An independent Traveller Accommodation Agency must be established to oversee the provision of appropriate and quality accommodation, including Traveller specific accommodation that meets the needs of all Traveller families in a reasonable timeframe.

A strategy based on human rights, dignity and equality

The strategy must be built from an explicit human rights foundation. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a positive duty on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights, in their daily work. This duty must be supported from the top levels of Government and resources need to be provided to the Irish Human

Rights and Equality Commission and civil society organisations to support public sector bodies to implement their duty.

Measures must be immediately to hold a referendum on enshrining economic, social and cultural right into the Constitution, as proposed by the Constitutional Convention. Existing legislation on equality and human rights must be strengthened to recognise socio-economic status an additional ground for discrimination.

The strategy must introduce comprehensive legislation dealing with all aspects of immigration and residence, including a fair and pragmatic regularisation scheme for undocumented migrants in Ireland and a fair asylum system. Ireland must reverse its current position and opt into the EU Reception Conditions Directive for asylum seekers47 which, among other things, would allow asylum seekers to work. We must see an end to the direct provision system, a speeded up the process for processing applications for refugee status and the right for asylum seekers to access adequate social welfare supports and to work after six months of their refugee application process.

A strategy which we can afford

The strategy must include a five-year plan to bring overall Irish taxation levels from around 30% of GDP per year at present towards the EU average, which is currently just under 40% of GDP. Without this revenue we will not be able to invest in quality public services and social protection and to address inequality.

This will involve increasing taxes on wealth, social insurance, financial transactions and other progressive forms of taxation. Ireland should opt into the Financial Transaction Tax being developed by countries representing over 80% of the Eurozone.

See also: Community Platform, Paying Our Way, Progressive proposals for reforming the Irish tax system.48

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**EAPN Ireland and the Policy Group**

Established in 1990, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty. It is the Irish national network of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Europe), which has two decades of experience in lobbying for progressive social change at European level.

EAPN Ireland supports a network of over two hundred local, regional and national organisations and individuals’ committed to tackling poverty through a range of actions including community development, policy analysis and lobbying, campaigning and participation. EAPN Ireland aims to build the capacity of its membership to engage with national and European policy making through training, information dissemination, collective action and networking.

EAPN Ireland convenes a Policy Group from among its members to coordinate our efforts in the fight against poverty and to connect this to EU policy development and their implementation in Ireland. It is made up of representatives of the following organisations:

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• Age Action Ireland
• Congress Centres Network
• Disability Federation of Ireland
• EAPN Ireland
• Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
• Irish Traveller Movement
• Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

• National Adult Literacy Agency
• National Youth Council of Ireland
• National Women’s Council of Ireland
• One Family
• Simon Communities of Ireland
• SIPTU.

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