**Minutes of National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group**

**Fourth Meeting**

**Online meeting**

**11.00 am – 1.00 pm, Wednesday 30th September 2020**

Attendees:

**Andrew Forde** (AF) Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) CHAIR

**Deiric O’Broin** (DOB) Dublin City University (DCU)

**Michael Clifford** (MC) Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI)

**Mary MacSweeney** (MMS) **Dublin** City Council (DCC)

**Ivan Cooper** (IC) the Wheel

**Tammy Darcy** (TD) the Shona Project

**Eoghan Ryan** (ER) Rethink Ireland

**Larry O’Neill** (LON) Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)
**Gillian Devers** (GD) Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (checking this)
**Rónán Ó Dálaigh** (ROD) Social Enterprise Development Co. (SEDCo)
**Brendan Whelan** (BW) Social Enterprise Task Force

Also in Attendance:

**William Parnell** (WP) DRCD, **Richard Gavin** (RG) DRCD, **John Ryan** (JR) DRCD,

**Sam Dowzard** (SD) DRCD, **Íde Holden** (IH) DRCD, **Vinnie Monaghan** (VM) Department Of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI), **Chris Gordon** (CG) Irish Social Enterprise Network, **Sarah Farrelly** (SF) Trustlaw, **Derek Flanagan** (DF) Office of Government Procurement (OGP)

Apologies:

**Richard Deane** (RD) Pobal

**Therese Molyneux (**TM) Department of Justice and Equality (DoJ&E)

1. **Agenda**

The Agenda for the Fourth meeting of the National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group (NSEPIG) was approved as proposed.

1. **Minutes of the Third meeting of the NSEPIG, 22nd May 2020.**

The minutes of the Third meeting of the NSEPIG were approved with no amendments.

1. **Chairperson’s Opening Remarks**

AF said there have been many developments since last meeting in relation to social enterprise.

* AF Mentioned the formation of new Government in June, and noted there is specific mention of social enterprise in the Programme for Government, which also includes a focus on the circular economy, social innovation and sustainable procurement.
* AF Welcomed Eoghan Ryan to the NSEPIG. Eoghan replaces John Evoy on the group, as he has left Rethink Ireland. AF Thanked John Evoy for his contribution to the NSEPIG and wished him well in his new role.
* In July Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI) was established. DRCD will look to work with SERI in partnership, as we have always done, with organisations in support of social enterprise.
* The changes in composition of the group were mentioned, AF Thanked SERI for acknowledging the membership balance needs of the implementation group.
* AF noted that Senan Cooke has resigned from the NSEPIG. Senan was thanked for his huge contribution to the Implementation Group, and to social enterprise broadly.
* In the interests of balance, the Irish Social Enterprise Network (ISEN) has been invited to nominate a member to the NSEPIG and has nominated Chris Gordon.
* The Social Enterprise Task Force has ceased to exist due to establishment of SERI which affects the implementation group’s Terms of Reference (TOR). The SETF had nominated two members of the NSEPIG. Composition of group will remain same as current until a review of the NSEPIG and its TOR next year.
* There have been a number of schemes ongoing in regards to the COVID crisis – Social enterprise has benefited hugely. As an example, the Stability scheme awarded 55 social enterprises a total of 2.8m. Other schemes such as the DAF Training & Mentoring Scheme for Social Enterprise and the Small Capital Grants Scheme have been treated with as much flexibility as possible.
* Developments in the North South Collaboration - DRCD was invited to address the all-party group at Northern Ireland’s Parliament, Stormont Castle.
* The EU are aware of importance of SE and Social economy especially in light of COVID – Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, wrote to governments to emphasise the importance of SE and SEcon to the recovery. There are 3 million social enterprises in the EU providing 13.6 million jobs. The supporting Ecosystem of SE will be key to the COVID-19 recovery, and Action Plan of Social Economy is in development. DRCD hopes to play a role in this.
* Regarding a Call for social innovation competency centres. Genio and Rethink are the lead applicants. It is planned to have 5-7 competency centres in Ireland but any application needs to be representative of the whole social innovation sector.
* UN General Assembly resolutions will attempt to link social enterprise to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Q1 2021
* The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is placing significant emphasis on social enterprise and Co-operatives and taken a seat in regards to international collaborations
1. **Update on Implementation of the Policy**

RG provided a brief outline on the progress on implementing the National Social Enterprise Policy since the last meeting of the NSEPIG. Significant progress continues to be made on implementing the policy. The following points were made:

Awareness Raising - Significant progress made on which TD (Chair of Sub-Group) will talk afterwards.

* Education – DRCD will be supporting Foróige in developing an NFTE programme for social enterprise. It is hoped this will be launched in October.
* Procurement – Planning is taking place for a number (3-4) of training webinars, with the Department of Justice and OGP.
* DAF Training and Mentoring scheme, and Small Capital Grants Scheme are ongoing. Flexibility is being offered to awardees because of COVID-19.
* DRCD supported the Irish Social Enterprise Network who organised successful networking events with a good response from social enterprises.
* National Conference – A ‘Save the Date’ has issued. Further details in due course.
* Legal Form – Update by both Trust law and Rethink Ireland will follow
* Irish Research Council – As there were no successful applicants from last call, a new call for applicants was announced last week open to all disciplines.
* Benefacts – Data collection exercise e on CLGs to find proportion who are social enterprises. There are some difficulties due to the fact that 50% of CLGs do not publish full accounts it is therefore difficult to see if they are trading.

Following the presentation there was discussion on a number of topics.

Foróige – MMS suggested linking this project with the LEO Schools Enterprise Programme.

* The issue of LEOs supports to social enterprises was raised. AF undertook to discuss with LEO Centre of Excellence. It was suggested that the approach Dublin City Council took in relation to facilitating social enterprises in LEOs is working very well, and that this may serve as a template to improve services nationally. It was also suggested that a guide to LEO supports available to social enterprise be considered.
* Some social enterprises report not being eligible for COVID-19 supports because they don’t pay commercial rates. WP responded that DRCD was aware of this and had developed supports themselves for social enterprises, and community and voluntary organisations to balance this out.
* Census: It was noted that much work needs to be done in relation to developing a census for social enterprise. BW said SERI was in the early stages of planning a census and gave details of the Scottish census. AF noted that an Irish social enterprise census would need to be completed in partnership with a number of organisations to be successful. It was suggested by DOB that the definition of social enterprise is critical, and that many organisations who call themselves SE’s do not fulfil the criteria. The data collection work by Benefacts will be discussed further at the next meeting of the NSEPIG.
* The Civil Service was commended for responding rapidly to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and for showing flexibility with regard to schemes available to social enterprises.
1. **Update on Awareness Strategy development**

Tammy Darcy, Chairperson of the Awareness Strategy Sub-Group provided an update on the work of the Awareness Strategy Sub-Group (ASSG).

* The ASSG Group has met four times and focused on how to proceed in developing the strategy under 3 main headings: who are the targets; what the message is; what channels are to be used.
* The group provided their thoughts and perspectives under these headings. Responses were gathered into a consolidated Priority Targets Document.
* A workshop with DHR Communications and members of the ASSG is planned for early October. DHR will use the priority targets to build on the substantial work completed already, and will then draft an Awareness Strategy for approval.
* It was noted that as a priority the Awareness Strategy needs to benefit and reflect the whole social enterprise sector as set out in the Policy
* It was suggested at ASSG meetings that a separate Procurement Sub-Group could be set up. Improved Procurement opportunities will result from increased awareness of SE.
* There is an expectation that organisations involved with the NSEPIG will support the roll out of the Awareness Strategy.
1. **Presentation on Guide to Legal Form for Social Enterprise**

Sarah Farrelly from Trustlaw provided a presentation to the NSEPIG on the progress in drafting a Guide to Legal Form for Social Enterprise. This presentation has been circulated to the Implementation Group.

1. **Presentation on Social Considerations in Public Procurement**

Derek Flanagan from the Office of Government Procurement provided a presentation on public procurement, focusing on the social considerations of public procurement. This presentation has been circulated to the Implementation Group.

Derek also sought examples from the Group on successful social enterprise procurements.

Chris Gordon highlighted the importance of smaller contracts to many SEs.

1. **AOB**

Details of the Fifth meeting of the NSEPIG, possibly in early 2021 will be circulated to members in the coming weeks.

There being no other business the Fourth meeting of the NSEPIG was brought to a close.

**Actions as a result of the third meeting of the Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group:**

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| **Action No.** | **Action Description** | **Responsible** | **Target date** |
| Action 1 | Send an interim update to NSEPIG before next meeting on how strategy is developing.  | RG | Q4 |
| Action 2 | Date for next meeting of the NSEPIG to be circulated | JR | ASAP |