



## **Response to request for submission on National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 14 May 2019**

Charities Institute Ireland (Cii) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of a national Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland.

Cii appreciates that the Department recognises that the not-for-profit sector is represented by many different organisational structures and welcomes the Department's ambition to support these entities in their various guises. Cii welcomes the Government's decision to consolidate all social enterprise activity under the stewardship of the Department of Rural and Community Development and fully supports the need for a distinct policy to enable the social enterprise sector to grow.

Cii's exists to support and enable charities to create positive social change. Traditionally Cii has worked with larger not for profit organisations, however in recent years, our members have included organisations from across the sector including a small number of social enterprises. The common goal of all Cii's member is to demonstrate best practice and professionalism in their organisations and we believe that this is achieved through good governance, best practice fundraising and transparent financial reporting.

While the scope of our feedback is limited due to the small number of social enterprise focused members, Cii sees this consultation process and indeed the Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sectors in Ireland, and the forthcoming National Volunteering Strategy as a positive development in professionalising and supporting the entire not-for-profit sector.

### **Policy Objective One**

- **Creating Awareness of Social Enterprise**
  - Cii welcome the development of an integrated awareness campaign on the important role that social enterprises play in delivering social and societal benefits and believe that this type of initiative could have a broader impact on improving trust and confidence in the wider not-for-profit sector.
  - We would recommend that the Department invests in communicating the stories of Ireland's social enterprises, our experience is that communities are very proud of their societal contributions and welcome all opportunities to showcase their achievements. One suggestion would be to expand the scope of the Social Enterprise Forum to include some sort of recognition for innovative and impactful social enterprises.
  - The consultation document refers to increasing the awareness of social enterprise at both 2nd and 3rd level in Ireland and has identified a number of channels to do this. Perhaps the Department might consider a partnership with the Department of Education to review the traditional Transition Year mini



company scheme and rebrand as the social enterprise scheme. Another suggestion would be to include a social enterprise category at the annual Young Scientist exhibition.

## Policy Objective Two

- Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise
  - Leadership and Governance
    - Cii is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance to ensure full transparency in how we operate, and we work with our members to help them achieve similar standards of best in practice governance. The launch of the new **Charities Governance Code** will give social enterprises an excellent starting point in creating strong governance structures, however we would recommend that the Department work with organisations like Cii to provide best in practice training for these organisations.
  - Access to Finance and Funding
    - As noted the nature of social enterprises is innovative and agile in approach, this is largely due to their size and start up ethos. Cii would request that any solutions and supports identified through the consultation process, minimise the administrative burden for these entities. From Cii's experience, access to finance through government funding and grants applications can be onerous for not-for-profits of all sizes. Anecdotally, we have spoken to members who have indicated that some application processes do not merit the investment of time and resources when comparing the potential return on this investment. We would recommend that this process is streamlined as much as possible to avoid duplication of effort.

## Policy Objective Three

- Achieving Better Policy Alignment
  - Commissioning research in the area of social enterprise will be invaluable to the Department in shaping future policy. Cii's experience and indeed that of other organisations is a lack of data to inform decision making fully.
  - While some social enterprises will be aware of national and EU initiatives and development supports, many will not have the capacity or knowledge to avail of such services. The potential administrative burden should be considered to ensure that social enterprises can easily access such supports.



Cii looks forward to seeing the final policy being published and where appropriate supporting the implementation of this.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Liz Hughes", is written over a horizontal line.

Liz Hughes  
CEO, Cii

