



## PACE Social Enterprise response to the draft National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

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## Introduction

This document is the response from PACE Social Enterprise to the 'Draft for Public Consultation National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022' issued on Tuesday 23rd April 2019. Firstly, we would like to take this opportunity to commend the Department of Rural and Community Development on the work completed to date in order to get a National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland to this important stage. We also welcome the opportunity to share our observations on the draft policy as part of this public consultation process

## Context

As a leading social enterprise in the Criminal Justice Sector, PACE Social Enterprise broadly supports a national social enterprise policy and aims to use this document to influence positively the work of the social enterprise sector.

Having worked with people with an offending history for 50 years, PACE Organisation recognised the need for social enterprise as a solution to the lack of employment opportunities crisis for people with criminal records and created a social enterprise in 2014. As an organisation, we welcomed the Department of Justice "New Way Forward" Social Enterprise Strategy 2017-2019 when it was launched and worked closely with the Department of Justice Social Enterprise Manager to ensure that the needs of our participants were prioritised.

We believe that while the social enterprise sector in Ireland has developed positively over the past few years through grassroots and local networks of support for each other, a national policy is very much needed and welcomed. We, in PACE Social Enterprise, aim to be proactive and constructive in our approach to assisting the development of a national policy and look forward to continuing and close engagement.

## Who are PACE Social Enterprise?

PACE Social Enterprise manufactures a range of bespoke garden products, including a variety of planters and garden furniture, on a contract basis for Dublin City Council, local businesses, resident associations, schools and the general public. PACE Social Enterprise also operates a Coffee Cart called "The Mug Shot" which is located at the Fourcourts (Dublin) employing 2 fully qualified Baristas. The goal of the social enterprise is to create employment opportunities, provide work experience and progression routes for people with an offending background.

The societal issue addressed through PACE Social Enterprise is the provision of meaningful employment for people with criminal records as well as the provision of relevant work experience for this client group. Employment and meaningful use of time is a primary protective factor for the prevention of re-offending amongst the target group. PACE knows the frustration experienced by participants as they attempt to access the employment market. Our experience has shown that training and certification is not sufficient in itself to destigmatise the criminal record. Therefore, the combination of training with substantial work experience is the best solution to support employment.

The workers are involved in the design, manufacture and delivery of the products. The products are multifaceted being made in the metal/wood workshops with the plants/ flowers being grown in our polytunnel on our horticulture site. The participants are also involved with liaising with the customer and the end-user. The social enterprise provides the participants with the opportunity to improve their customer service, teamwork and general employability skills. The ultimate goal of our social

enterprise is to, through entrepreneurial avenues, provide employment and support and motivate former prisoners and offenders into meaningful jobs.

## PACE summary of recommendations regarding the Draft for Public Consultation' 'National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022'

- We suggest you review the language of “not-for-profit” and the definition used for social enterprise. Social enterprises are “for profit”. The more profit we have the better we can invest in our social mission.
- No recognition of representation networks of social enterprises through the policy. Irish Social Enterprise Network have been essential in the process of supporting and developing social enterprises in Ireland. We recommend that the strategy supports this network.
- This policy is written in a way that makes social enterprise a subsidiary of the community and voluntary sector and not a distinct sector in itself - the countries with most developed social enterprises treat it as a separate “sector”
- Language is used about social enterprise “model” but not “sector”
- Clarity needed on social enterprise ‘stakeholders’ mentioned through the report. Who are the stakeholders?
- We recommend that the language also reflects alignment with businesses, i.e. not only similarities with business
- This document does not include advocacy for a social enterprise legal type. This will need to be explored.  
e.g. Community Interest Companies (UK)
- Social enterprises at different stages require different supports. It will be necessary to stipulate how each phase of social enterprise will receive such supports. It is important that any training is tailored to social enterprises.
- There is mention that the Department will engage with the sector annually in a “Social Enterprise Forum”. Any Social Enterprise Forum will need to include appropriate representation from social enterprises (through ISEN). How will this proposed Forum be organised and by who?
- A large concern for social enterprise is the term displacement. This is the issue when social enterprises are winning private sector business. We believe that all procurement should be open to enterprises and if social enterprises are best placed to win, they should be encouraged to apply.