

Overview of ReCreate:

ReCreate is a social enterprise with a vision to foster creativity, curiosity, care for the environment and one another. We are a registered charity and based in Dublin 12.

Our impact is:

Creative: We work to inspire creativity and enable all in society the opportunities to experience the extensive benefits of creativity in their everyday lives. We do this through running creative workshops and providing affordable access to materials to our members. Our members are made up of schools, community groups and creches.

Environmental: Promoting a reuse, circular economy, ReCreate partners with over 300 Irish suppliers to divert over 200 tonnes from landfill annually. These unused excess materials are collected from our suppliers and made available to our members for creative purposes.

Social Inclusion: We believe in an inclusive society where everyone is included. We provide work experience placements and promote inclusive practices through our research projects.

ReCreate employs 6 full-time staff members, 5 part-time staff as well as providing 15 weekly volunteer placements for adults with additional needs or who are distant from the labour market for a variety of reasons through the Tús programme.

Response to Social Enterprise Policy:

We very much welcome the long-anticipated publication of the National Social Enterprise Policy and look forward to Social Enterprises playing an increasingly valuable part of Ireland's economy.

Specifically, we would like to highlight the following proposed amendments to the policy:

Definition:

The term 'social enterprise' is one that is not well understood in Ireland. It is often confused with non-profit, charity or community group. There is a very valid place for each of these distinct groups, however we believe social enterprises should be and are a defined economic sector and as such feel the proposed definition is too broad and will lead to continuing confusion.

We view a social enterprise as an economically viable trading company that has a social mission at the forefront. We find it unhelpful that the term 'non-profit' is referenced in the proposed policy and used inter-changeably with social enterprise.



It dilutes the development of both sectors. It is vital that defining characteristics of each sector are clarified. A governance structure then needs to be put in place.

One of the defining characteristics of a social enterprise is its trading element. The term 'having an ambition to trade' on page 2, leaves a wide interpretation. We believe this should be time bound and a social enterprise should have some level of traded income within 12 - 24 months of trading. We believe that level of traded income should be set as a minimum level (15% within 24 months).

The term 'voluntary boards' excludes a number of existing social enterprises. As the sector of social enterprises increases there are more social enterprises not coming from the traditional charity sector background. Whilst governance is absolutely required – a voluntary board should not be specified. Paid directors under CLGs are allowed.

There are increasing numbers of grass-roots 'Social Entrepreneurs' who are currently sole traders working in local communities who are excluded from the provided definition of social enterprises.

The document refers to several other pieces of research that it relies on, it would be very helpful to have the research referenced and research accessible.

Specific feedback on the questions raised:

Policy Objective One – Creating Awareness of Social Enterprise:

- 1. Working closely with social enterprise stakeholders to develop an Awareness Strategy to raise the profile of social enterprises in Ireland.*

We would welcome this initiative. ReCreate are a member of ISEN (Irish Social Enterprise Network) and would like to see this helpful network developed and further resourced. We see ISEN as an independent network that represents the voice of social enterprise and would like to see more resources to develop into a similar resource like Charities institute Ireland.

We are keen to ensure that social enterprises themselves are at the centre of any development of such measures. Whilst we are grateful for the support of funders, government etc – their view is often through a specific lens.

ReCreate are also members of CRNI network which represents the Reuse sector. Given the wide-reaching remit of the social enterprise sector we feel this is a good model to help with specific challenges related subject specific issues.

We welcome formal recognition of the social enterprise as a valued stand-alone sector with huge potential for growth. We see the sector as distinct at equal distance from profit industries and charities.



- 2. Identifying, with social enterprise stakeholders, best practice examples of social enterprises to improve public understanding of such enterprises and to highlight their contribution to society and the economy.*

Again, we would welcome this initiative and as a social enterprise we already learn a great deal from our peers and through researching other projects.

Resources are a continual stretch for social enterprises so having best practice examples broken down by subject matter would be very helpful. Often it is the learning from the journey that is the most important and so asking social enterprises to share their 'warts and all' learnings is key.

We define a social enterprise as a trading organisation with a social mission and ethos and so it is vital that the best practices held up are reflective of the definition to avoid further confusion.

- 3. Holding an annual Social Enterprise Forum for all stakeholders to participate in shaping policy, building understanding of social enterprise, disseminating information, and sharing best practice.*

Having been fortunate enough to attend SEWF in Scotland last year, it was very encouraging to see examples of so many other social enterprises across the globe and have the opportunity to hear worldwide experience.

Accessibility and relevance are key factors for a social enterprise forum. Charities Institute Ireland have recently developed regular discussion forums on very specific topics e.g. 'legacy giving'. Whilst these are not relevant for us and so I have not attended, feedback has been great and a high sign up suggests demand. A similar forum for social enterprises would be very welcome. Topics such as: Procurement, Pricing, measuring impact are discussions we have on an ongoing basis with other social enterprises and having a forum such as this would be ideal. These 'working groups' help to inform an on the ground picture of policy requirements and sharing best practices.

The further development of an independent body such as ISEN is crucial to manage and curate these supports.



Other suggestions:

- Development of an Irish Social Enterprise Podcast series
- Enhanced support for a national network (including rural communities) will lead to increased awareness.
- Public campaigns through newspaper and online specifically targeting Irish businesses to build awareness around socially minded businesses to increase B2B trading opportunities.

4. Supporting social innovation and social enterprise start-ups through targeted programmes and initiatives.

There seems to be considerable differences in the treatment of social enterprises by LEO's across the country. A co-ordinated support for start-up social enterprises through LEO's that is the same quality as a traditional enterprise would be very effective.

ReCreate took part in the first PLATO programme for social enterprises last year. Whilst this was a great opportunity to learn and develop, most of the speakers were either from commercial background or charity background and so had very limited experience with social enterprise and the specific challenges. There is a great opportunity to further develop this programme and scale across the country. Some of the group have naturally formed an ongoing informal group which meet on a bi-monthly basis.

5. Exploring the scope for further inclusion of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship modules in the education and training system

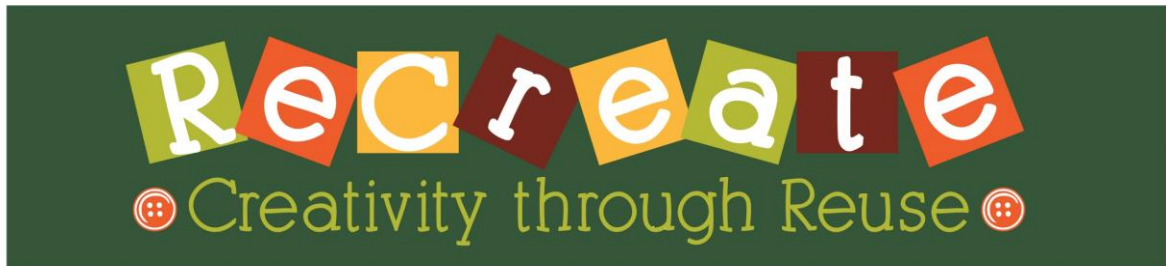
Expanding the current education offerings for social enterprise is crucial. Whilst this is already an increasing area in 2nd and 3rd level colleges there is great potential to embed even further in a co-ordinated fashion. Social enterprise is becoming a real contender as a career choice and as such we need to recognise the opportunity and be equipped to attract those candidates graduating from college with a well-developed & well-resourced sector.

With some 3rd level colleges now offering degree and master's in social enterprise this should be further developed to be included in general business degrees etc. It is important that the definitions etc that are being used are consistent.

6. Working with education and research bodies to further support the development of social innovation.

Ensuring everyone has access to the research and can feed into it is key.

Research can be very powerful in adding credibility to a social enterprises' outcomes however accessing research opportunities can be limited.



Working with professional bodies to ensure they include social enterprise specific training on their CPD remits.

Other suggestions:

An increased level of professionalism in the social enterprise sector is required where there are real career opportunities and a career progression path. To attract key candidates there needs to be clear communication and messaging around what working in a social enterprise involves. This feeds into the structure and definition of a social enterprise.

- Including as a condition of funding for social enterprise a certain number of hours speaking at local primary/secondary schools promoting the work of social enterprises.
- Through ISEN having a central portal for research opportunities for social enterprises and the research results available.
- Regulatory and insurance roadblocks make it difficult to accept placements (transition year). Support to reduce the requirements for accepting people on to these placements.

Policy Objective Two: Growing and strengthening Social Enterprise

- 7. Compiling and making available information on the various business supports available to social enterprises, along with details of the providers of those supports.*

It would be great to see more supports for scaling social enterprises. There are a range of supports for the initial stage of social enterprises but less for the scaling up phase.

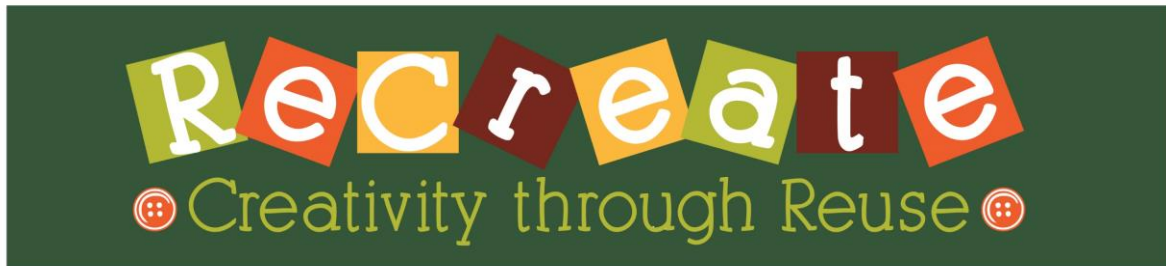
- 8. Identifying any gaps which may exist in business supports available to social enterprises and working to address those gaps.*

Delivery of business supports are often from either those in the charity space or the business space. Providing specific training for social enterprises is vital for the growth of the sector. This could be done in the form of short-courses through colleges already offering social enterprise education.

- 9. Providing access to advice and supports to assist social enterprises and social entrepreneurs to develop their business proposals.*

Again, like above, the challenge to date on the ground is that supports available are coming from one or other lens and do not have the practical experience to understand the on the ground challenges that social enterprises face.

For entrepreneurs starting traditional enterprises there are a range of supports available which social entrepreneurs are excluded from. It would be helpful to increase access.



10. Providing tailored training for social enterprises to help them improve their business potential as well as leadership and governance skills.

Specifically providing support and training for board members is great. ReCreate was very fortunate to have a funded place (through SEI) on the 'Bolder Boards' training run by Dan Pallotta last year. However, this is inaccessible to many social enterprises.

Other suggestions:

- As there is currently no register of social enterprises, the government could run a campaign encouraging companies based around the country to donate a certain amount of volunteer hours in their area of expertise through their CSR. To encourage social enterprises to 'register' as a social enterprise they could then receive a voucher for volunteer hours on a subject matter they need support on. This could be legal, finance, HR, marketing, pricing etc. This could be managed through ISEN (if resourced).
- Setting up a shared services facility for social enterprises to avail of synergies and value for money.

11. Cataloguing and disseminating information on financing/funding schemes available to social enterprises at national and EU levels.

Great idea, it can be overwhelming searching for funding as there are so many variants. Dormant funds provide very helpful detailed transparent feedback on funding applications which would be insightful to others.

Similar to The Wheel - funding point (although it is behind a paywall) a specific funding track of opportunities available for social enterprises.

Training and support on funding opportunities through EU funding model.

Better access to financing through mainstream funding.

12. Identifying gaps in financing/funding schemes and working to address those gaps.

As stated above there is a requirement to fund social enterprises at various stages of their development.

13. Exploring the potential for new innovative funding schemes for social enterprises.

Social Impact Bonds have been very successful in supporting social businesses throughout the world. Increasing awareness and understanding around what social impact bonds are and how they can support social enterprises is key.



As documented by the recent report – ‘Boosting social entrepreneurship and social enterprise development in the Netherlands’ on social enterprise, various other avenues such as:

- Impact oriented angel investor networks
- Crowdfunding platforms supporting impact projects
- Increased support for social enterprises through CSR programmes

14. Seeking to improve alignment of funding schemes to support the objective of social enterprises, whilst avoiding any displacement of existing supports for community and voluntary organisations.

Duplication should be avoided for any organisations, in many current funding applications there is the question – Is there anyone currently doing the same as you and how do you differ – this provides a helpful view as it brings to the surface any possible displacement. However, collaboration is key to ensure the best possible supports are made available without duplication.

Other suggestions:

- A government scheme to help support awareness around social investment.
- Creating an organisational structure whereby social enterprises can attract social investment (either through SIB's or investment) where a financial return can be paid.
- Tax deduction for companies making 'donations in kind' or 'volunteer hours' when an expertise is utilised. This will encourage supports to the sector.

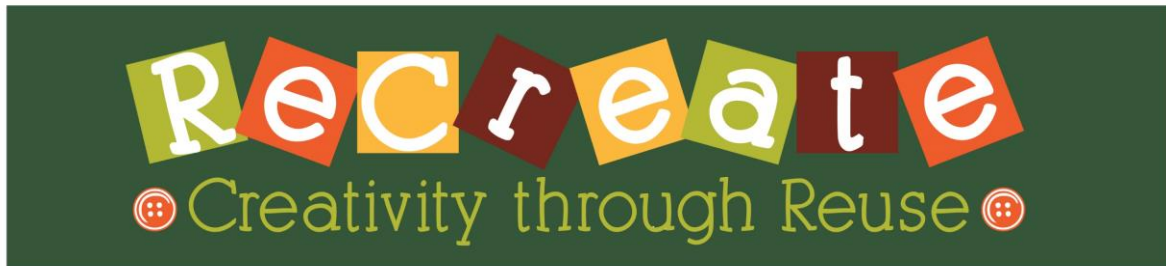
15. Supporting capacity-building for social enterprises in relation to procurement processes through workshops and training.

Whilst it is wonderful to see the inclusion of 'Social Benefit Clauses' in procurement opportunities such as the National Children's Hospital it is vital that training is provided to public procurers on how to evaluate tenders and how to understand the process. It is crucial that public procurers are invested in the process of including social enterprises.

The size and requirements of many large public tenders mean that for many social enterprises they are simply inaccessible. With support and coordination from a national body like ISEN, large tenders could be sub-contracted to a wide range of social enterprises.

16. Working with stakeholders to identify how to improve opportunities for social enterprises in the business-to-business supply chain.

Government policy should align with EU guidance on the promotion of strategic public procurement, such as the 'buying social: a guide to taking account of social considerations in



public procurement” and with the office of government procurement “Information note on incorporating social consideration into public procurement.

17. Helping policy makers to better understand how procurement can be used to facilitate the advancement of social policy objectives within appropriate and structure public procurement guidelines.

Development of a triple bottom line scoring framework – this will help to build a more holistic approach to procurement.

Other suggestions:

- Including ‘social buying’ as a topic in procurement education courses to build an awareness from the start.
- Help social enterprises to close the circle and feedback how social buying has made an impact. Good news case studies will help build traction.
- A significant awareness and education campaign are required to ensure all parties engage with public procurement. This campaign can then extend to private companies to encourage them to follow suit.

Policy Objective Three – Achieving Better Policy Alignment:

18. Developing a better understanding of the interaction between social enterprise and relevant policy areas across government to ensure closer alignment with social enterprises and enabling social enterprises to increase their contribution to delivering on policy objectives.

Building cohesion amongst all various key government departments around social enterprise is vital. A coordinated and consistent approach is required.

There is significant opportunity for labour activation through social enterprise for those marginalised and most vulnerable in our society. We have already seen recent developments in social enterprise in the Justice dept (through probation services). It is critical that these approaches are joined up and not operated as silos.

19. Ensuring that Ireland engages closely on social enterprise policy development at international level so that Ireland can influence international policy development and where relevant, social enterprises can benefit from international supports.

It has been well documented that Ireland is lagging in terms of creating a supportive environment for social enterprises. We must ensure that we learn from our international counterparts and put best practices in place.



ISEN are a representative for ENSIE and SEEN at European level – having an independent voice for social enterprises at these platforms is crucial.

Other suggestions:

- Developing an easy platform/portal for social enterprises to be kept in formed of international developments on social enterprises.
- Financial supports/scholarships for leadership teams from social enterprises to attend SEWF or other relevant trainings.
- Continuing the dialogue with social enterprises themselves to identify how policy affects them.
- Clarity on policies that affect social enterprises and training on how to implement required changes.

20. Improving data collection relating to the extent of social enterprise and the areas in which social enterprises operate.

A register of social enterprises needs to be developed and kept up to date (like Benefacts)

21. Developing mechanisms to measure the social enterprise and economic impact of social enterprises across the full spectrum of social enterprise.

Impacts should be linked to SDG goals, this can then be comparable and collatable. This would require significant training for social enterprises to embed this practice but would allow a comprehensive overview of impact social enterprises are making.