



**SUBMISSION Robert Emmet CDP on DRAFT National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

Robert Emmet Community Development Project established a social enterprise In Our Shoes Walking Tours. The enterprise operates as a trading business unit of Robert Emmet Community Development Project and when it achieved sustainability in time , can be established as its own entity. It generates traded income from providing unique walking tours for tourists, meeting the growing demands of tourists for local insights into the “Real City “ and “hearing stories”,

The enterprise creates social impact by recruiting local unemployed individuals, in one of Irelands unemployment blackspots, providing training and employing them to provide unique tours of the South West inner City. It creates social value additionally by empowering people from the community to engage directly with one of the major industries in the area, the tourism industry, and also for tourists and guides by operating as a Responsible Tourism Initiative<sup>1</sup>.

The responses contained below reflect the experience of Robert Emmet Community Development Project in developing this initiative. It also reflects the challenges and frustrations faced in expanding on several other programmes which are at earlier stages but do have potential; namely the urban apiary and programmes for female refugees.

Community and voluntary organisations have unique knowledge, insights and experience of facilitating social integration, providing local services and mobilising community resources. They already deliver services and programmes which are identified as providing the same benefits which social enterprises are credited with delivering - addressing social problems, supporting the marginalised. ( Page 7)

Many already have the legal incorporation and infrastructure which can incubate support and foster social enterprise, yet the supports and grants available focus often on Social Entrepreneurs and Innovators, rather than the experience and track record of the community and voluntary organisation - offering support and focussing on primarily the leading individuals and less on the business idea or the concept.

Many of the concepts, approach and language are associated with for profit businesses and is not easily translated into community development organisations where the emphasis is on “collective” and “shared responsibility”. The unique perspectives therefore of those working at the coal face at the can often be overlooked. Significant emphasis and investment should be placed into supporting networks of community and voluntary organisations develop cultures of innovative responses– many of which could result in the establishment of social enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Irish Centre for Responsible Tourism

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.innovationunit.org>

## **Policy Objective One – Creating Awareness of Social Enterprise**

### Raising Awareness

For Consideration ( Page 15)

Stakeholders – Seek feedback about who are stakeholders are, should be much broader than just the entities involved in existing Social Enterprises ; - Should include targeting also the following – Fáilte Ireland, Third Level Business Schools, CeDAR, Bord Bia, Coillte, Intreo, Marketing Institute of Ireland, Fund Managers, IMI, Chambers of Commerce.

Target all Stakeholder entities identified which could support social enterprises at start-up phase or as potential partners or collaborators.

### Initiating Social Enterprise

For Consideration ( Page 17 )

- All of the measures mentioned needed.
- In particular supporting incubation within the community and voluntary organisations . Establishing a social enterprise requires dedicated research, feasibility studies, pilot programming, market research which all takes place before any trading can begin.
- SICAP – IRIS reporting states that the social enterprise starts (reporting of same) when traded income starts – not before. Like with any new enterprise the research and planning are essential. No support exists for this currently for experienced community and voluntary organisations who are seeking to establish a social enterprise. The work takes place in addition to other work within a community and voluntary organisation and is not accounted for on the IRIS system.
- This demands of background work limits initiation and can hamper development, growth and scale.
- Developing models of social enterprises which are projects which can be handed over to another individual should be considered, and as such considered in the grants for social innovators. Initiating a social enterprise by an individual should not feel like being locked into a project for several years. ( Perhaps this could be considered in the governance ).
- Smooth engagement with third party stakeholders (referred to above) could hugely improve this stage and phase and lead to success in the longer term.

## **Policy Objective Two – Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprises**

### Business Supports for Social Enterprise

For Consideration Page 19

- Compiling an easily accessible directory of supports for social enterprises would be essential. Collecting information from existing Social Enterprises might aid this.
- An online accessible template of business models and routes for social enterprise to support guidance and direction. Mapping the journeys others have taken would aid

the development of this. The most common statement is –“ I don’t know where to start”.

- Possibly with a series of questions and recommended options for progression. For example - asking a series of questions such as
  - o Are you employed in a community and voluntary organisation with the capacity to support this initiative.
  - o Do you intend to have traded income ?
  - o If so consider step 1, if not consider step 2 etc.

### Access to Finance and Funding

For Consideration Page 20

- Funding Support through programmes such as CSP for time limited periods for social enterprises to scale up and build revenues streams is essential. In private enterprises – access to funding to manage the development is often available. Clear metrics for roles like this could be implemented on 1-2-3 year basis - a project manager to scale the initiative .
- Clear information on Tax and VAT liability for social enterprises, especially on traded income and/or free access to accountants familiar with social enterprises via the LEO offices or Local Development Companies.
- Consideration of exemption or separate treatment of these for social enterprises
- Currently availing of the Wage Subsidy Scheme and other employment supports are only available to For Profit businesses. Direct engagement with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection making them aware of this barrier.
- Negotiation with Intreo and Department of Social Protection for smoother transitions of people moving into newly established social enterprises and the impact on Social Welfare Payments. A risk exists for all parties.
- Limited Communication within the LEO office of the supports available to social enterprises. Poor communication within the LEO office – and dedicated supports
- Seed Funding – Support funding for feasibility development, linked to a reservoir to deposit research and findings which can be accessible to others considering similar ventures.
- Access to Private Investment – Links with Fund Managers - partnering service.

### **Policy Objective Three – Achieving Better Policy Alignment**

#### Interaction with National and International Policies

For Consideration ( Page 24)

- Specific references made above to specific government departments above and specific actions which can be taken which could achieve better alignment.

Data and Impact

For Consideration ( Page 25)

- Improvements to the IRIS reporting systems for newly established social enterprises.
- Registry of failed and analysis of reasons for failures.

.

Submitted By Máirín Ó Cuireáin  
Executive Director  
Robert Emmet Community Development Project