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Social Enterprise Policy Consultation

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To whom it may concern,

This submission in response to the Social Enterprise Policy Consultation is made on my own behalf. I welcome the considerable effort put into the consultation with social enterprises in the Waterford area and formulation of this draft policy. My comments and suggestions are offered in the form of constructive criticism with the hope of developing still further a policy greatly needed by those working in this sector.

1) Definition of Social Enterprises

Page 2 speaks of not-for-profits and separates out voluntary organisations, charities, social innovators and social enterprises while on Page 19 social enterprises are acknowledged as sometimes being charities bound by the Regulator.

While the definition on Page 6 is useful I suggest it is not sufficient in so far as it does not make reference to structure.

It would be helpful for readers to understand the differentiation between the purpose of social enterprises (achieving social impact) and the legal structure chosen to deliver this. This legal structure can include:

Not for profit limited company

Company with Charitable status

Limited Partnerships etc

2) Benefits that accrue from Social Enterprise Activity

I would suggest adding (page 6) Local Level Support, the important role social enterprises play in:

The preservation and development of local heritage and culture.

With regard to the activity of our social enterprise, we have experienced significant challenges in applying for EU funding given the lack of a dedicated policy (in the areas of tourism or culture) related to industrial heritage. Many of the efforts in the field of preservation are linked to voluntary efforts of motivated and educated individuals coming together to preserve and reuse often abandoned buildings and machinery that would otherwise be lost completely.

Social enterprises offer a mechanism where such efforts can be supported to the benefit of local communities and our national efforts in tourism and heritage preservation.

3) Policy Objective One

Initiating Social Enterprises:

Consideration might be given to funding placements for interested individuals who have completed an educational course. This would allow candidates to work with existing successful social enterprises learning from best practice and by doing.

4) Policy Objective Two

Access to Finance and Funding:

It should be considered how Credit Unions, as key local institutions, have a potentially important role to play. Given their understanding of local needs and challenges, Credit Unions are in a unique situation to assist Social Enterprises. With 14.3 billion euro held in savings by Credit Unions and limited options to invest this capital, Credit Unions should be encouraged and supported to offer low interest long term capital loans to social enterprises. As well as the financial return on the loan, the social benefits to be delivered can form part of the loan agreement with agreed metrics in place to ensure delivery of these benefits within a given time period.

The Government should also offer an Interest Guarantee Scheme from a central Social Enterprise Fund that would guarantee the lender the interest of the loan limiting the risk to local and national lenders. This would make social enterprises a more attractive economic group to offer services to.

Social Enterprises and Existing supports.

I would also like to make the Department aware that some existing schemes penalise social enterprises (compared with charities) as regards the level of match funding available for certain programmes based on their 'profit generation'. Such barriers need to be identified and removed through better understanding of social enterprises among agencies at the local level.

Data and Impact:

It may be advisable to develop a **voluntary register of social enterprises** whereby an enterprise can enter its details including:

- Organisational Type
- Location
- Employee numbers and volunteer numbers (if any)
- Social purpose description
- Commercial activity description
- Turn over

- Other agreed **Key Performance Indicators** that would be used to help demonstrate the benefits delivered year on year (funds raised, meals provided, customers served, courses offered, trees planted, passengers carried etc)

From this an annual report can be produced to help raise awareness and to guide policy going forward.

With thanks,

Alan Moore

25/04/2019