



## **Roadmap for Social Inclusion: Mid-term Review**

**Submission by**

**Irish Wheelchair Association**

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**Irish Wheelchair Association** (IWA) is Ireland's leading representative organisation and services provider for people with physical disabilities. We advocate for the needs of people with physical disabilities and provide services and support to over 20,000 members in their homes and communities throughout Ireland, every year.

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) has a vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities enjoy equal rights, choices, and opportunities in how they live their lives, and where our country is a model worldwide for a truly inclusive society. We work with, and on behalf of, people with physical disabilities to drive positive change in Ireland through the influencing of public policy, the provision of quality services and striving for accessibility in all aspects of society.

### **Equality and Equity**

IWA believes in a fair and inclusive society. We work actively to ensure that every person with a physical disability in Ireland can achieve their right to an independent life, with equal access to opportunities, services and supports within their communities.

### **UNCRPD**

There are many articles in the UNCRPD which underpins independent living and the eradication of poverty. Article 19 states that people with disabilities have the right to live where they choose with the necessary supports. Article 27 states that people with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others. Article 28 states that people with disabilities have the right to an adequate standard of Living. None of these articles are being achieved for people with disabilities in Ireland

### **Poverty and Exclusion**

According to the European Disability Forum's Human Rights Report 2020, unfortunately, almost 40% of people with disabilities in Ireland face isolation, exclusion and poverty due to the lack of supports from the Government.

Disabled people are often labelled as being vulnerable, however, it is not their disability that makes them vulnerable, but rather the lack of investment from our government. On average EU countries spend 2% of their GDP (Gross Domestic Product) on disability through social protection, whereas Ireland spends 0.8% and are ranked in the bottom 5 worst countries.

### **Social Welfare**

In 2019 The Department of Social Protection commissioned a report which was published early this year with over 4,000 respondents. The Report shows that people with disabilities have a significant extra cost of living based on their disability. The report maintains that a person with a disability spends on average between €9,482 and €11,735 a year extra on expenses related to their disability, and this does not include the spiralling cost of living. The annual income for a person in receipt of a disability payment is approximately €11,500. This is clearly an insufficient amount to survive on let alone thrive, given that the money received through social welfare does not even match the cost of their disability

### **Employment**

Access to employment is a proven means of leading people out of poverty, isolation, and exclusion. People with disabilities who are not working experience lasting poverty at almost 5 times the national average (19.2% versus 4%).

The European Commission Country Report for Ireland 2019 revealed that Ireland has one of the lowest employment rates for people with disabilities in the EU (26.2 % compared to 48.1 % in the EU in 2017). Ireland also has one of the highest gaps between people with and without disabilities (45.1 percentage points) in employment. There is a severe lack of employment opportunities for people with disabilities that does not drive them further into a poverty trap. The fear of losing benefits and the absence of a “Cost of Disability Payment” deters people moving from social protection into employment. There is a dearth of knowledge amongst employers in relation to hiring a person with a disability and the imagined cost they may incur in doing so.

## **Housing**

There are 1,300 people under 65 years living in nursing homes, and greater numbers are still entering than leaving. From 2012-2018, over 800 people had moved to the community through de-congregation while almost 700 people had died in residential care. Many more will die in institutions without realising their right to live in the community.

27% of the homeless population have a disability. At present there are no houses/apartments being built that are wheelchair liveable this means that people with disabilities are being left out of the housing market completely through social housing programmes, private, or rental.

## **Recommendations**

- To bring people with disabilities out of poverty and isolation budgets must reflect the real need. A rights based cross departmental approach must be taken so that all facets of life are included.
  
- A long term “Cost of Disability” payment must be implemented in accordance with the findings of the Indcon Report.
  
- Meaningful protection to secondary welfare payments
  
- Employment initiatives that encourage employers to employ people with disabilities
  
- Amendment to the Part M Building Regulations to include wheelchair liveable accommodation