



# National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2024-2027

Public Consultation/SERI Response

30th January, 2024

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# A Step Change in Ambition for Social Enterprise

The time has come for a step change in ambition for social enterprise.

The second national social enterprise policy should not provide incremental policy shifts. Rather, as outlined in the NESR report:

*There is an opportunity to have greater ambition for social enterprises, as their development has the capacity to contribute strongly to the economy and to society.*

The 2019-2022 National Social Enterprise Policy set foundational framework conditions. However, as noted in the OECD report:

*Social enterprises still need to strengthen their recognition and financial sustainability.*

The White Paper of Enterprise 2022-2030 published by the DETE in December 2022 recognised social enterprises as an important part of the Irish enterprise space and acknowledged their ability to create jobs, stimulate local economic activity and support green and digital transitions.

In November 2023, the Council of the European Union adopted a Commission Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions, acknowledging that the social economy's potential in addressing regional challenges is *'largely still untapped'*.

We must set an ambitious vision for the sector and identify actions which enable us to realise it.

## **A bold vision for social enterprise in Ireland**

Our vision is ambitious but achievable:

*A national ecosystem in which social enterprise can flourish from start-up to international expansion.*

To realise that vision, within the lifetime of the second national social enterprise policy we need to work together to achieve 5 outcomes:

1. Social enterprises can avail of world-class support (financial and capacity-building) from idea stage to international expansion
2. Social enterprises have effective pathways to becoming more financially sustainable through increase traded income and cost optimisation
3. Social enterprise is universally understood among the public, policymakers and support organisations

4. Social enterprises (and social enterprise support organisations) are part of highly collaborative national and international networks, sharing resources and best practices
5. The processes underlying the social enterprise sector are radically simplified to allow enterprises to focus on impact and trading

Outcome	Priority Actions	Success Measures
<p>1. Social enterprises can avail of world-class support (financial and capacity-building) from idea stage to international expansion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eligibility criteria are changed so that social enterprises are eligible for all LEO and Enterprise Ireland support, from start-up mentoring from LEO to HPSU/venture support from Enterprise Ireland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of social enterprises supported by LEO and Enterprise Ireland</li> <li>- € funding awarded to social enterprises via LEO and EI</li> </ul>
<p>2. Social enterprises have effective pathways to becoming more financially sustainable through increase traded income and cost optimisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a national procurement-readiness programme specifically for social enterprises which covers the costs of procurement specialists to support social enterprises evaluate their existing procurement readiness as well as measures they can take to adapt their business model to become more procurement-ready.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of social enterprises in public and corporate supply chains</li> <li>- Increase in the median annual income of social enterprises from baseline of €180,000 (2022)</li> <li>- Increase in the average % of income derived from selling products/services from baseline of 31.3% (2022)</li> </ul>
<p>3. Social enterprise is universally understood among the public, policymakers and support organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using a common brand (like the GAA), develop a national accreditation system and promotional campaign for social enterprises to eliminate confusion regarding their legal status, dispel misconceptions about their funding sources and facilitate national collaboration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # social enterprises have successfully completed the accreditation process</li> </ul>

<p>4. Social enterprises (and social enterprise support organisations) are part of highly collaborative national and international networks, sharing resources and best practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allocate significant resources for the establishment and sustenance of local, national and international social enterprise networks, including funding for speakers and training sessions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of local social enterprise networks in operation</li> <li>- # of social enterprises participating in national networks</li> </ul>
<p>5. The processes underlying the social enterprise sector are radically simplified to allow enterprises to focus on impact and trading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simplify social enterprise compliance to reduce the financial and staff cost.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- % reduction in the average cost of governance and compliance for social enterprises</li> </ul>

# Consultation Process

Throughout December 2023 and January 2024, SERI conducted consultation workshops with the social enterprise sector, encompassing 7 location-based workshops (Mayo, Donegal, Cork, Inishowen, Dublin, Clare, Offaly) and two general workshops open to the entire sector (see Fig. 1 for an example of workshop structure and output).

The actions suggested in this document reflect the collective views of workshop participants as well as SERI’s Practitioner Council, Board of Directors and staff - social enterprise practitioners and supporters who’ve made considerable contributions to the sector over many years.

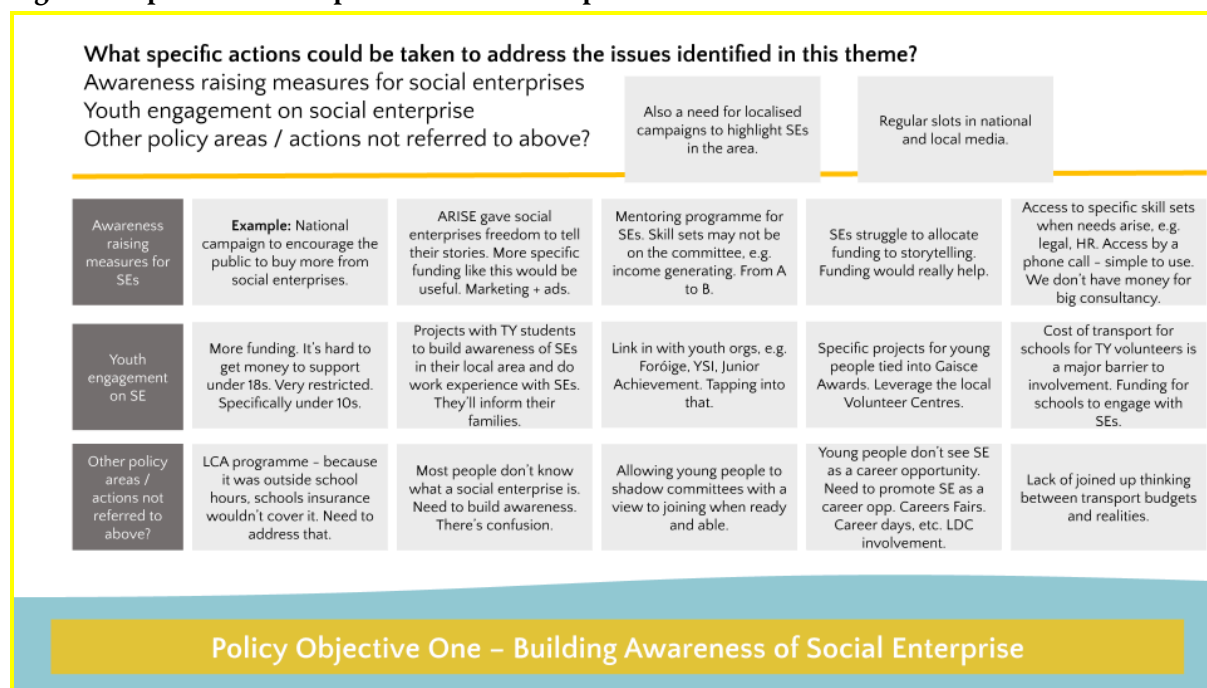
In the previous section, we outlined 5 outcomes and 5 priority actions to achieve the ambition of becoming a national ecosystem in which social enterprise can flourish from start-up to international expansion. Below, we’ve included other actions collected during the workshops.

Actions marked in **[orange]** reflect the views of multiple consultation participants. Actions marked in **[blue]** reflect the responses of individual participants. Raw qualitative data from our consultation workshops can also be found here:

## Appendix - Raw Qualitative Data

SERI previously undertook a consultation process with over 120 social enterprises in May 2023. This led to the creation of SERI’s 2024 pre-budget submission. We’ve provided a link to that document as many of the challenges and support measures identified are still relevant: [SERI Pre-Budget Submission 2024](#)

**Fig.1 Example of Workshop Structure and Output**



# Policy Objective 1: Building Awareness of Social Enterprise

*What specific actions could be taken to address the issues identified in this theme?*

## a. Awareness raising measures for social enterprises

<b>ARISE Funding Replication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide ARISE funding on an annual basis, making all content produced through ARISE funding centrally and freely available.</li> <li>- Allocate promotional funding within ARISE specifically for localised campaigns, showcasing specific products/services and highlighting the unique benefits of social enterprises to local communities.</li> <li>- ARISE funding should not be restricted to external costs. Internal staff time should be considered eligible expenditure.</li> </ul>
<b>Rollout of social enterprise accreditation (without imposing additional admin burden)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a national accreditation system for social enterprises to eliminate confusion regarding their legal status, dispel misconceptions about their funding sources and facilitate national collaboration.</li> <li>- Develop a common social enterprise logo, akin to the GAA, to build social awareness and create a recognisable national brand.</li> </ul>
<b>Raise Awareness of Social Enterprise Among Other Government Departments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organise targeted workshops and seminars for key government departments and state agencies, focusing on the enterprise, education, and health sectors, with the aim of deepening their comprehension of social enterprise principles.</li> <li>- Coordinate and lead specific interdepartmental sessions with DPER and Dept. Finance to heighten awareness about social enterprises, fostering collaboration and synchronised efforts to promote and nurture their growth.</li> </ul>
<b>Standardised Induction Pack and Training for Board Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a national standardised induction pack and online training programme for social enterprise board members, ensuring that board members fully understand the term 'social enterprise'.</li> </ul>
<b>Advertising Campaigns for Public Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launch a national PR campaign to educate the public on the distinctive nature of social enterprises, emphasising community benefits and reinvestment of profits.</li> <li>- Promote responsible consumerism among young people by emphasising the social impact of purchasing from social enterprises.</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion of Social Enterprise to Clients of Enterprise and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant enterprise and employment agencies to actively promote social enterprise as a viable option for start-up businesses.</li> </ul>

Employment Agencies	
Marketing Mentorship Programmes and Tool Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish marketing mentorship programmes to guide social enterprises through marketing, PR, and digital strategies so they can promote their businesses.</li> <li>- Develop and circulate a comprehensive communications kit/online training programme for all social enterprises to ensure a common approach to language and messaging.</li> </ul>
Buy Social Channels Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance 'buy social' channels, such as websites and apps, to facilitate easy purchasing from social enterprises and emphasise the benefits of supporting them.</li> </ul>

#### b. Youth engagement on social enterprise

<b>Volunteering Opportunities for Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop initiatives to involve young people in short-term volunteering with social enterprises, fostering a sense of ownership and connection with the sector.</li> <li>- Develop a national campaign via Volunteer Centres/Volunteer Ireland to recruit young people to social enterprise boards</li> </ul>
<b>Peer Support and Role Models for Younger Employees in the Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish peer support networks for younger workers in the social enterprise sector and highlight case studies and role models to inspire and guide young professionals.</li> </ul>
Engagement with Academic Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with third-level institutions through initiatives like the Campus Engage Network to engage young people in socially focused teaching and research.</li> <li>- Collaborate with educational institutions to develop third-level course content on social enterprise/entrepreneurship.</li> <li>- Creation of a funded chair for social enterprise within a leading higher education institution to support research and education.</li> </ul>
Work Placements within Social Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage and facilitate higher education work placements within social enterprises to provide young people with hands-on experience and insight into the sector.</li> <li>- Normalising social enterprises as a career option through initiatives like paying students through a Summer Internship Scheme to work in social enterprises.</li> </ul>
Transition Year (TY) Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce an awards programme in Transition Year to recognise and encourage social enterprise initiatives, fostering consideration of social enterprises as viable career options.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actively promote social enterprise modules developed by organisations such as Foróige to schools and youth groups.</li> <li>- Incentivise social enterprise engagement with local schools to enhance understanding and create connections with social enterprises.</li> </ul>
Partnerships with Youth Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further develop partnerships with youth organisations such as Foróige, YSI, Junior Achievement and Gaisce to tap into existing networks and promote social enterprises.</li> </ul>
Enhanced Funding for Youth Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased funding for social enterprises working with secondary schools and Youthreach programs, specifically targeting under 18s.</li> </ul>



## Policy Objective 2: Growing\* Social Enterprise

*What specific actions could be taken to address the issues identified in this theme?*

\* It was generally agreed that the name of policy objective 2 should be changed to ‘*Growing and Sustaining Social Enterprise*’ to reflect the fact that:

- (i) while growth is important, it is not the only path for social enterprises, particularly in rural areas
- (ii) given present challenges in the sector (cost of business, under-staffing, etc.), *sustaining* social enterprises may be of equal or greater importance over the next 3 year policy cycle

### a. Business support and training measures for social enterprise

<b>Collaboration with enterprise support agencies, e.g. Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, Skillnet Ireland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for a change in Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland eligibility criteria to actively support social enterprises and prevent their exclusion.</li> <li>- Ensure social enterprises can access various supports provided to private enterprises under the Digital Transition Fund.</li> <li>- Facilitate access to the Trading Online Voucher for social enterprises.</li> <li>- Specific Skillnet programmes for social enterprises</li> <li>- For high-potential social enterprises, remove all barriers to accessing HPSU or venture support from Enterprise Ireland.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Services Models</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore shared services models for social enterprises through funded pilots, particularly for staff, office space, transport, and professional services like HR and accountancy.</li> <li>- Pilot a Shared Services Model alongside Pobal’s Community Services Programme (CSP) which provides funding for two or more social enterprises to hire a shared staff member</li> </ul>
<b>Increased support via SICAP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased funding for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to better support social enterprises, acknowledging the programme’s vital role in supporting social enterprises at a local level.</li> <li>- Increase the maximum grant allowable to social enterprises from €2,500 to €5,000.</li> </ul>
<b>National Social Enterprise Training &amp; Mentoring Fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a national social enterprise training and mentorship fund (via the National Training Fund), collaborating with suppliers, state agencies and business schools to provide tailored e-learning, seminars, and mentoring in areas such as income generation, cost optimisation, social impact measurement, HR,</li> </ul>

	<p>finance, health &amp; safety, marketing, and public relations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the creation of a dedicated social enterprise support agency based on successful initiatives like Just Enterprise in Scotland, ensuring bespoke training for social enterprises is an integral part of the offering.</li> </ul>
<b>Remove De Minimis Constraint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exempt social enterprises from de minimis rules as many social enterprises are unable to take on climate-related funding because of existing de minimis rules</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion of Digital Tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launch a targeted campaign to promote existing digital tools among social enterprises, aiding them in improving efficiency and expanding their reach.</li> <li>- Facilitate increased engagement with Digital Hubs, providing more financing to support collaboration and innovation among social enterprises.</li> </ul>
<b>Addressing Minimum Wage &amp; Pension Auto Enrolment Concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address concerns regarding the impact of minimum wage increases and pension auto enrolment on social enterprises by exploring solutions, potentially involving additional funding.</li> <li>- Ring-fenced core funding for social enterprises outside of the Community Services Programme.</li> </ul>
<b>Capital Investment for Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase funding for capital investment to support infrastructure needs such as electric charging points, addressing challenges faced by social enterprises.</li> <li>- Additional funding for social enterprise capital investment</li> </ul>
<b>Labour Market Activation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Double the training grant for work-integration social enterprises whose participants are furthest from the labour market.</li> </ul>
<b>Leveraging Tourism Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support social enterprises in leveraging opportunities in tourism, especially along the Wild Atlantic Way, through increased financial and business support.</li> </ul>
<b>Insurance Reform Advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for reform in the insurance sector to address inhibitions faced by social enterprises in developing trading opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Bursaries for Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce bursaries for social enterprises to draw down for professional development, encouraging ongoing learning and skill enhancement.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration with Educational Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with educational institutions to place Masters students in social enterprises, bridging skill gaps and fostering learning opportunities. ENFUSE is a good example of best practice.</li> </ul>

## b. Increasing private sector/social enterprise engagement

<b>Leveraging the potential of ESG</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leverage Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) requirements to encourage private sector individuals to join the boards of social enterprises, potentially through partnerships with organisations like BoardMatch and the Institute of Directors (IoD).</li> <li>- Implement matchmaking and partnering schemes, connecting social enterprises with corporations based on shared goals and objectives, with a specific focus on ESG agendas and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</li> </ul>
<b>Incentivising Social Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for a policy framework mandating a percentage of tender applicants to engage in social procurement, creating a systemic approach to private sector involvement.</li> <li>- Advocate for the inclusion of community interest clauses in corporate agreements, ensuring a commitment to social impact and community development.</li> <li>- Develop a procurement-readiness programme specifically for social enterprises which covers the costs of procurement specialists to support social enterprises evaluate their existing procurement readiness as well as measures they can take to adapt their business model to become more procurement-ready.</li> <li>- Undertake research on the likely impact of a Social Value Act in the Republic of Ireland, learning from our colleagues in Northern Ireland.</li> </ul>
<b>SME Awareness and CSR Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launch awareness campaigns targeted at SMEs, emphasising the need for business advice and CSR support for social enterprises.</li> <li>- Explore opportunities for remote workers to bring CSR initiatives from urban to rural areas to counter the urban focus of larger corporations.</li> <li>- Establish mentorship programmes involving private sector individuals to provide skills-based mentorship for social enterprises.</li> <li>- Encourage short-term commitments of private sector skills to support social enterprises, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship.</li> <li>- Create a directory of CSR corporates, providing warm leads for social enterprises and including strategic plans of local SEs.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Services with Private Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate shared services partnerships between social enterprises and private sector organisations, covering areas such as HR, marketing, and other essential functions.</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Through Fáilte Ireland, foster collaboration between local tourism entities and tourism-oriented social enterprises to promote joint initiatives and services within the same space.</li> </ul>

Encouraging Business Outsourcing to SEs	- Promote the outsourcing of services by businesses to social enterprises, creating opportunities in areas such as administration, PO box services, etc.
Financial Incentives for Private Companies	- Explore the introduction of financial incentives for private companies engaging with social enterprises, such as providing services.
Conferences for Private and Social Enterprises	- Organise regional conferences bringing together private and social enterprises to foster collaboration and partnership opportunities.
Connect with Chambers of Commerce	- Establish connections with Chambers of Commerce and similar organisations to build relationships between businesses and social enterprises, leveraging local interest and resources.
Corporate Staff Volunteer Days to support new social enterprises	- Encourage large corporations to release employees for short-term assignments within the social enterprise sector, addressing staffing challenges in less well-established enterprises.

### c. Access to finance

<b>Funding Calendar and Predictability from Support Organisations and Government</b>	- Advocate for a predictable shared funding calendar to allow social enterprises to plan ahead, ensuring a steady flow of financial support from sectoral funders. - Regular and predictable funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) to ensure stability for social enterprises.
<b>Coordinated Approach to Funding Application Processes</b>	- Develop a coordinated approach to funder's application processes, ensuring social enterprises can access the working capital they need without navigating multiple complex application processes. - Explore solutions to streamline the process of grant drawdown, eliminating duplicative administrative tasks, and addressing issues related to working capital, especially in the context of delayed grant payments.
<b>Supporting Income Generation</b>	- Develop training and mentoring programmes to support social enterprises in improving traded income, enhancing their ability to generate revenue and repay loans.
<b>Multi-Annual Funding with Overhead Costs</b>	- Commit to multi-annual funding that includes reasonable overhead costs, recognizing the importance of sustained financial support for social enterprises.
Regional Focus on Philanthropy	- In the context of the National Philanthropy Policy, ensure that philanthropic efforts include a focus on regions to prevent

	neglect, supporting social enterprises across the country.
Addressing High-Interest Rates	- Work with financial institutions to address high-interest rates for social finance, ensuring fair and competitive lending terms for social enterprises.
Encouraging Credit Union Involvement	- Advocate for increased involvement of Credit Unions in funding social enterprises, particularly in areas where such initiatives are currently limited.
Bank Charge Exemptions and Simplified Processes	- Advocate for bank charge exemptions for social enterprises and simplified administrative processes, making it easier to open accounts and implement changes.
Standardising Bridging Loan Paperwork	- Advocate for the standardisation and simplification of paperwork associated with bridging loans, reducing administrative burden for social enterprises.
Linking Minimum Wage to CSP Increases	- Link Community Services Programme funding to minimum wage increases
Social Impact Bonds and Tax Incentives	- Explore the implementation of Social Impact Bonds and advocate for tax breaks for private investments in social enterprises to attract diverse funding sources.
Matched Funding Incentive	- Introduce further incentives for social enterprises to take loans with matched funding, similar to the Hybrid Social Finance model
Education for Banking Staff	- Initiate educational programmes for banking staff to improve their understanding of social enterprises, with a particular focus on the Credit Union sector, aligning values and fostering collaboration.
Addressing Risk Aversion	- Develop initiatives to address risk aversion among social enterprises concerning loans, emphasising stability of core cost funding as a mitigating factor. - Develop campaigns showcasing success stories of social enterprises that have benefited from social finance, demonstrating the positive impact of such funding.

#### d. Legal status for social enterprise

<b>LDC Role in Advising Start-Up Social Enterprises on Legal Status</b>	- Increased resources and training for Local Development Companies (LDCs) to provide better support and guidance to social enterprises on legal status matters.
<b>Educating Funders on</b>	- Develop initiatives to educate funders on the diversity of legal

<b>Different Legal Types</b>	forms for social enterprises and encourage accessibility in funding opportunities.
<b>Simplify Legal Framework and Compliance</b>	- Propose a separate legal framework for social enterprises to simplify legal responsibilities and reduce audit fees, ensuring compliance is more accessible.
<b>Reducing Financial Burden</b>	- Explore mechanisms to reduce the financial burden associated with setting up a social enterprise, possibly through grants or fee reductions for specific legal forms.
<b>Efficiency in Charity Registration</b>	- Work towards reducing the time required for charity registration, ensuring a more efficient process that takes less time and effort.
<b>Flexibility in Legal Structures for Start-Ups</b>	- Encourage flexibility in legal structures and explore the creation of a preliminary status for emerging social enterprises before committing to a specific legal form. The unincorporated association model may be an avenue for exploration.
<b>Rigid Board Member Requirements</b>	- Advocate for a review of requirements related to rotating board members, particularly in small communities, to better reflect the practical realities of social enterprises.
<b>Specific Status for Social Enterprise</b>	- Explore the possibility of creating a specific legal status or model for social enterprises, potentially inspired by successful models like the Community Interest Company (CIC) in other jurisdictions.

#### e. Voluntary (non-legal) accreditation for social enterprise

<b>National Brand/ Accreditation for SEs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the creation of a national brand or logo to identify social enterprises, providing assurance to the public that they are dealing with genuine social enterprises.</li> <li>- Ensure that any quality marks or accreditation systems are practical and beneficial for social enterprises without imposing excessive administrative burdens.</li> <li>- Consider integrating impact measurement elements into the accreditation process, aligning with the broader focus on social impact.</li> <li>- Explore a reward-based system for accreditation, recognising achievements and objectives met by social enterprises rather than imposing additional administrative burdens.</li> </ul>
<b>Exemption from Rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigate the possibility of using voluntary accreditation to exempt CLGs from certain rates or provide additional benefits.</li> <li>- Work with local governments to address commercial rates liability for social enterprises, considering the financial strain</li> </ul>

	that rates impose on these entities.
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**Other policy areas/actions not referred to above?**

<b>Extension of Tús/CE Programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extend the duration of Tús/CE programs and invest in additional training for participants. This ensures that the skills acquired by workers are utilised for a more extended period, contributing to both personal development and community impact.</li> </ul>
Procurement Guidelines for Social Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for the creation of procurement guidelines that explicitly emphasise social value alongside market value.</li> </ul>
Dedicated eTenders for Social Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the possibility of establishing a dedicated eTender platform exclusively for social enterprises. This specialised platform would simplify the procurement process and increase opportunities for SEs to secure contracts.</li> </ul>

## Policy Objective 3: Climate Action Contribution

*What specific actions could be taken to address the issues identified in this theme?*

<p><b>Support for Climate-Related Social Enterprises</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand the Community Services Programme (CSP) to include support for climate-related social enterprises, fostering inclusivity.</li> <li>- Provide targeted funding opportunities to support social enterprises in achieving government climate action targets.</li> <li>- Offer grants for full energy audits, lowering the threshold for eligibility to below €10k expenditure.</li> <li>- Provide funding for the installation of solar panels on social enterprise roofs, offering a revenue stream and supporting the transition to renewable energy.</li> <li>- Funding for local authorities to scale up small circular initiatives.</li> <li>- Funding to support social enterprises operating in the circular economy in seeking private investment with alternative funding mechanisms.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Government Collaboration for Electric Bikes, Vehicles and Charging Units</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with the government to implement a nationwide scheme for electric bikes, potentially generating employment and supporting a sustainable transport initiative.</li> <li>- Introduce specific funding programmes for electric vehicles, with a focus on social enterprises, e.g., Small Capital Grants.</li> <li>- Incentivise social enterprises to offer electric vehicle charging units, promoting tourism, employment, and hospitality.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Digital Transition Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in digital transition initiatives for social enterprises, offering coaching and guidance to enhance awareness of available opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training and Mentoring</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fund a mentoring programme for social enterprises, especially in areas like Greening Up Your Business, to ensure effective implementation of acquired knowledge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Certification and Incentives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage social enterprises to obtain certifications such as the Remark certification, and provide incentives for their contribution to climate action goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Just Transition Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue support for remote work initiatives and provide incentives for social enterprises to contribute to just transition efforts.</li> </ul>



Recording and Financial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a platform for social enterprises to record and seek financial support for the costs and time associated with carbon initiatives.</li> </ul>
SDG Focus and Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider a broader focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in addition to climate action and recognise the contributions of social enterprises in the Climate Action Programme.</li> </ul>
Engagement in Circular Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase funding and support for social enterprises involved in circular initiatives such as repair cafes and waste recycling.</li> <li>- Develop a catalogue of circular economy organisations to build awareness in the private sector and foster collaboration.</li> </ul>

## Policy Objective 4: National and International Engagement

*What specific actions could be taken to address the issues identified in this theme?*

<b>Cross-Government Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocate for increased sectoral involvement from the Department of Enterprise.</li> <li>- Facilitate regular cross-departmental meetings to enhance coordination and alignment of social enterprise policies.</li> </ul>
<b>Representative Voices for the Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fund the establishment of a strong national representative body for social enterprises to ensure their sustainability, potentially via core grant funding or matched funding similar to Rethink Ireland.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional and Local Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage a collaborative approach between Local Development Companies (LDCs), Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), and other social enterprise support organisations to avoid duplication of supports</li> </ul>
<b>Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allocate resources for the establishment and sustenance of local social enterprise networks, including funding for guest speakers and training sessions.</li> <li>- Enhance networking opportunities at the National Social Enterprise Conference, considering the possibility of organising two events per year.</li> </ul>
<b>North-South Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobby for a replacement for the Erasmus programme for cross-border cooperation, supporting opportunities for learning and collaboration.</li> <li>- Establish a support mechanism for social enterprises to trade in Northern Ireland, potentially via InterTradeIreland, fostering economic ties.</li> </ul>
<b>European and International Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate information-sharing sessions with EU bodies and countries to learn from their social enterprise sectors.</li> <li>- Encourage social enterprises' participation in the Erasmus programme and other international initiatives for cross-cultural learning.</li> </ul>

## Policy Objective 5: Data Collection & Social Impact Measurement

*What specific actions could be taken to address the issues identified in this theme?*

<p><b>Improving Social Impact Measurement for Social Enterprises</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a working group for the development of an Information Technology (IT) system or platform focused on measuring social impact, easing the burden on organisations.</li> <li>- Provide targeted business support to help social enterprises adopt a consistent framework for social impact measurement, streamlining the process and offering guidance.</li> <li>- Create easy-to-understand guidelines and training for measuring specific aspects of social impact, making the learning curve more manageable for social enterprises.</li> <li>- Advocate for funders to streamline impact assessment requirements, ensuring they are reasonable and feasible for social enterprises.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improving Baseline Data on Social Enterprises</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A second baseline data collection exercise should be undertaken within the lifetime of this policy.</li> <li>- Improve the process for social enterprise self-determination in future baseline data collection exercise to make it more robust - potentially through verification</li> <li>- Use data gathered in future baseline data collection exercises to undertake a mapping exercise, the output of which is publicly available to the sector and supporters</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhancing Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among social enterprises by creating a platform or network where organisations can share experiences and best practices in data collection and impact measurement.</li> </ul>

# About Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI)

SERI is the national organisation established by social enterprises and supporting agencies to champion for the sector and represent and promote a collective voice nationally and internationally.

## **Board members (in alphabetical order):**

Brendan Whelan  
Fergus Finlay, Chairperson  
John Kearns  
John P. Murphy  
Lorraine Corcoran  
Michelle Fogarty  
Pádraig Casey  
Páraig Hennessy  
Senan Cooke  
Shauna McClenaghan  
Tim Griffiths

## **Practitioner Council (in alphabetical order):**

Catherine Coote, Communications & Fundraising Coordinator, An Mheitheal Rothar  
Damian Howard, Director of Myshall Muintir Na Tíre, The Columban Way  
Dara Connolly, CEO, Common Purpose Ireland  
David Neville, CEO, Nurture  
Donal Traynor, Group CEO, Community Finance Ireland  
Hugh Brennan, CEO, Ó Cualann  
Janet O'Toole, Community Development Manager, Connemara West PLC  
Joseph Fogarty, Voluntary Chairperson, Café Fia - Coolaney Community Café Co-operative  
Karen O'Donohoe, Director of Development, GIY  
Kathy Purcell, General Manager, Castlecomer Discovery Park  
Linda Ledger, CEO, St. Munchin's Community Enterprise Centre  
Pascal Derrien, CEO, Migraine Ireland, Chair  
Patrick Mulvihill, Co-founder, Amicitia  
Karen Leigh, CEO & Founder, Sensational Kids  
Robert Finan, Enterprise Development Officer, The Larkin Centre for the Unemployed  
Rosemary Kunene, Founder & CEO, Dignity Partnership  
Sean Mullan, Founder, Third Space  
Senan Cooke, Co-founder, Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd  
Tara Farrell, Deputy CEO, Longford Women's Link (LWL)