



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

Appendix 4

EU and International Initiatives

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Europe 2020 Strategy: Europe 2020 is a ten year strategy proposed for advancement of the economy of the European Union. It aims at "smart, sustainable, inclusive growth" with greater coordination of National and European policy. The strategy identifies five headline areas the EU should focus on to boost growth and employment: Employment, Research & Development, Climate Change, Education and Poverty.

Under Europe 2020, EU member states are required to set a national poverty target which will contribute to meeting the EU poverty target. The EU poverty target is to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion by 2020 (using 2008 as baseline year). Ireland's contribution to the EU target is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion between 2010 and 2020. The Irish target contributes 1 per cent to the overall EU poverty target. See Chapter 3: Poverty Trends & Targets for more information on this.

With regard to employment, the aim of the Strategy was to increase the employment rate of the population aged 20 to 64 years to at least 75% by 2020. In addition, the EU Member States set national targets for the employment rate in 2020.

European Semester Process: Through a process known as the "European Semester Process" each year, the European Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of each country's plans for budget, macroeconomic and structural reforms. It then provides EU governments with country-specific recommendations (CSRs) for the next 12-18 months. These are discussed between Member States and endorsed by the European Council.

The process also monitors EU countries' efforts towards the "Europe 2020" targets. The National Reform Programme (NRP) forms part of Ireland's involvement in the European Semester process. It reports on a wide range of targeted policies and strategies in place to address the main challenges and imbalances Ireland faces, including those identified in the annual Country Report published by the European

Commission and Ireland's country specific recommendations¹. The NRP also reports on progress towards meeting the targets for poverty reduction and the employment target and helps to inform the European Commission's approach to drafting CSRs for Ireland each year.

Social Protection Committee: The Social Protection Committee monitors the social situation in the EU and the developments in social protection policies in Member States. Based on a set of key indicators and Member States' reporting, the Social Protection Committee annual report analyses the progress towards the Europe 2020 target on reducing poverty and social exclusion together with the latest social trends to watch. The most recent social policy developments in Europe are also reported on as well as the key structural social challenges currently faced by each Member State. The Committee also promotes discussion and coordination of policy approaches among national governments and the Commission. It prepares Council discussions on social protection and on the CSR's in the context of the European Semester. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection represents Ireland on the Social Protection Committee.

The Employment Committee (EMCO): The Employment Committee operates within the Framework of the European Employment Strategy. Much of the Committee's work is now centered around the Semester Process and in particular, multilateral surveillance, that is, monitoring member countries' progress implementing reforms within the Semester and working towards the EU2020 targets. It relies on a number of tools: The Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) is an analytical tool based on a set of commonly agreed indicators; the Employment Performance Monitor (EPM) and reviews of national reforms. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation represent Ireland on the Employment Committee.

European Pillar of Social Rights: The European Pillar of Social Rights² is about delivering new and more effective rights for European citizens. It was formally

¹ Country specific recommendations are intended to provide policy guidance to each EU country on how to boost jobs and growth, while maintaining sound public finances

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/european_pillar_of_social_rights.pdf

agreed in 2017 and expresses 20 principles for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in 21st century Europe. The principles are grouped under three broad headings: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and social protection and inclusion. The Social Pillar is essentially in part complementary to the *Europe 2020* aspirations concerning the removal of people from the risk of poverty and social exclusion, through increasing the employment rate and increasing the participation in education and developing it as a life-long learning process.

European Social Charter: The revised European Social Charter³ is a Council of Europe treaty to promote and protect socio-economic rights and was ratified by Ireland in November 2000. It guarantees rights related to employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare and lays specific emphasis on the protection of vulnerable persons such as elderly people, children, people with disabilities and migrants.

The principle method of monitoring compliance with the Charter is by the submission of annual national reports for examination by the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR). The ECSR consists of 15 independent experts who examine the report and issue conclusions on each State's conformity with the Charter in January of each year.

Ireland also ratified the Additional Protocol to the Charter providing for a system of collective complaints, lodged by the social partners and other non-governmental organisations recognised by the Council of Europe. The ECSR examines collective complaints and reports on whether the State has complied with the provisions of the charter referred to in the complaint.

European Code of Social Security: The Code aims at encouraging the development of social security in all member States of the Council of Europe in order that they may gradually reach the highest level possible. The Code sets a series of standards which Parties undertake to include in their social security systems.

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter>

The Code defines norms for social security coverage and establishes minimum levels of protection which Parties must provide in such areas as medical care, sickness benefits, unemployment benefit, old-age benefits, employment injury benefits, family benefits, maternity benefits, invalidity benefits, survivors' benefits, etc.

Contracting parties are obliged to prepare reports concerning their compliance with the standards provided within the Code, Protocol and Revised Code.

UN Sustainable Development Goals: The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the global community's response to the urgent economic, social and environmental problems facing the world today, from climate change to global poverty and inequality. The seventeen SDGs set out a bold vision for a safer, fairer, and more prosperous and sustainable world by 2030. To meet the ambition of achieving the SDGs by 2030, Ireland has adopted a 'whole-of-government' approach, which means that every Government Department will have a role in implementing the Goals, together with state agencies and local authorities.

The first cross-government National Implementation Plan⁴ provides a framework for how Ireland will implement the Sustainable Development Goals from 2018-2020, to support national policies which contribute to meeting the Goals, and to facilitate multi-stakeholder participation.

⁴ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/DCCAE-National-Implement-Plan.pdf>

