

Social Policy Update

February 2017

Social Policy Update focuses on the social policy work of CIB and our delivery services throughout the country. It also provides information on national social policy news and developments.

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CIB Social Policy and Research News

Welcome to the February edition of CIB's Social Policy Update. In this edition, we look at the social policy work that CIB and its delivery services has been engaged in and we also review the social policy data and feedback that has been channelled to CIB from services during 2016. This feedback provides a unique source of evidence for CIB when drafting submissions and policy responses. The value of this social policy data is clearly visible in the range of submissions made to various Government departments and policy fora during 2016 and the Social Policy Returns submitted by services continue to exemplify the concerns of people as they try to access social and public services.

CIB developments and submissions

EU insolvency review

In January 2017, MABS prepared a submission in response to a Government consultation regarding a proposal on a recently published European Commission directive on insolvency, debt and restructuring. The EU proposal seeks to harmonise, for the first time, the substantive provisions of national laws and frameworks across Member States in the area of business insolvency. It covers both company debts, and the debts of an over-indebted person who is (or was) carrying on a trade or business. Under the proposal, each Member State has an option to extend the proposal's application to over-indebted persons with non-business debts. Following consultation (and agreement) throughout the member states, the proposal (or Directive) would affect Irish personal insolvency and bankruptcy law, as well as company insolvency law.

The MABS submission looked at the Directive in the context of entrepreneurs and also "natural persons" who are not entrepreneurs. Whilst noting that the proportion of new MABS clients who are classed as self-employed or entrepreneurs is relatively small (at nearly 6% in 2016), the figure has been growing since 2008. The MABS experience of dealing with these clients under the Code of Conduct for Business Lending to SMEs (2012) has informed this submission, and it looked at this experience within the context of the various proposals as laid out in the EU Directive. In particular, the Submission welcomes the proposed stay on individual enforcement actions while non-judicial preventative restructuring action was being taken and also the proposal whereby all debts would be treated in a single procedure for the purpose of obtaining a discharge. The Submission then goes on to look at the treatment of individuals under the 2012 Personal Insolvency Act (which contains many elements that are set out in the EU Directive) and suggests that the encouragement of informal negotiation around debt resolution has led to "lack of clarity in drafting insolvency legislation resulting in a burdensome process for debtors and creditors". The submission looks at the particular difficulties in the Irish context (such as verification

of debts, Circuit Court approval) and notes that early intervention is key to addressing problem debt. With this in mind, it suggests the need for the proposal to extend preventative restructuring procedures beyond entrepreneurs to allow for the same requirements for individuals.

Mortgage to Rent Scheme Review

In November 2016, CIB and MABS made a joint submission to the Department of Housing's Review of the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) Scheme, as noted in the December 2016 edition of Social Policy Update. Following on from this consultation, the Department published its review report in February 2017. Specific actions recommended by the review relate to expanding eligibility criteria (in terms of property size and valuation thresholds), improving the administration and processing of the scheme for applicants and also for lenders, local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs). The review also references a specific role for MABS, CIB and the Abhaile scheme regarding the provision of information and guidance for borrowers and also training for lenders, AHBs and insolvency practitioners. The Abhaile scheme, which is operated by MABS in conjunction with the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI), the Legal Aid Board and the Citizens Information Board, was launched in October 2016 and provides a range of services to help borrowers in distress to deal with their situation. The review of the MTR Scheme can be accessed [here](#).

Information Needs of the Deaf

In 2016, CIB commissioned research on information provision and access to public and social services for the Deaf Community. A steering group was set up with relevant stakeholders including the Irish Deaf Society, DeafHear, SLIS, CIB and St Vincent's CIC (which is based in Deaf Village Ireland, Cabra). A survey was made available to members of the Deaf Community through Irish Sign Language and in hard copy in English. Support was provided by deaf representative organisations to assist people in completing the survey. The researchers met a range of support organisations and statutory services in addition to conducting the survey. They also carried out a literature review of both Irish and international material. The researchers have submitted a draft of their report to the steering group for review and it is hoped to finalise the report by March. The report is considered to be timely in the context of the campaign for legislation on the recognition of sign language and, specifically, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality Report on the Formal Recognition of Irish Sign Language which stated "the experience of the Irish Deaf Community is one of extreme marginalisation due to the lack of sign language recognition and provision."

NAS Access Review

During 2016 Eustace Patterson Researchers carried out an independent review of access to NAS – the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities. CIB had commissioned the research in order to identify and recommend standardized processes for use by NAS to ensure effective and timely service responses to people who are seeking assistance from the service. The review positions NAS within the array of like-minded services in the Irish context and points to the need to articulate the similarities - and differences – between NAS and these other services. The report also recommends the need to focus strategically on how NAS communicates its service to the public and how it promotes its offer amongst disability service providers. The Report will be used to strategically inform the development of this national service.

Make Work Pay Working Group

CIB is represented on the Make Work Pay Interdepartmental Working Group, as set up under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities in late 2015. The Working Group has met throughout 2016 and has also taken formal submissions from relevant groups and organisations (to which CIB made a submission in October 2016). Following on from this public consultation, the Group is currently completing its examination of this wide ranging area and is due to present its report to Government within the coming months.

On the Ground: feedback from CISs and CIPS

This section features an overview of recent social policy returns from CISs and CIPS. The views expressed are those of the individual services. No editorial comment is made, unless as a point of information or clarification.

Review of 2016

An initial analysis of the caller and query data that was logged onto the Oyster system by CISs during 2016 shows that there were 607,913 callers to CISs in 2016 (a similar figure to 2015) and a total of 1,013,046 queries (a 2% increase on 2015). Some 46% of all queries were related to social welfare, with health at 8%, and then housing and also employment at 7%, being the next most-queried categories. Queries relating to medical cards far outweighed all other payments or benefits (at 54,928 queries) and the next most-queried specific payments or schemes were State Pension (Contributory) at 34,756 queries and Jobseeker's Allowance, which logged 34,179 queries.

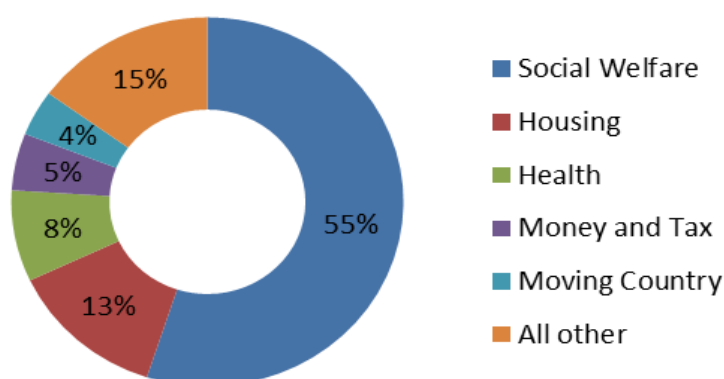
During 2016, CIB received 3,729 Social Policy Returns (SPRs) from Citizens Information Services across the country and a further 595 from the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) – bringing the total amount received to 4,324 – an overall increase of 14% on the Returns submitted in 2015.

Citizens Information Services

As noted, CIS staff submitted a total of 3,729 Social Policy Returns during 2016 – which was an increase of 22% on the Returns made by CISs during 2015. This is the most significant increase in the annual amount of Returns in recent years. As is consistent with the general business of the services provided by staff within CISs, social welfare continues to be the focus of much of the Social Policy Returns that are submitted.

During 2016, 55% of all SPRs were broadly related to **social welfare** queries and cases – this was followed by the **Housing** category at 13%, by **Health** (at 8%), **Money and Tax** (at 5%) and by **Moving Country** at 4%. When combined, these five broad information categories accounted for 85% of all of the cases that were submitted by services - with the remaining 11 categories accounting for 15% of the SPRs.

SPRs by Query Category



When the broad nature of the policy concerns are looked at, some 56% of all of the SPRs submitted by CISs can be analysed as **operational issues** – that is, cases that were deemed by the information provider to be indicative of concerns with the operation or administration of services on the ground. Services are asked to classify these

difficulties as an ‘Access or administrative barrier’ or separately as an ‘Information gap’ when logging the issue on the Oyster system. In a further 37% of cases, information providers considered that the cases demonstrated difficulties caused by **policies, legislation or guidelines** – that is, either ‘anomalies in policy’ or ‘gaps in provision’. These categorisations are useful when analysing the issues that are raised by services, as typically, the concerns that are focussed around administrative issues can be dealt with in a more straight-forward manner than those that are concentrated on policy or legislative difficulties. A further 7% of cases were classified by information providers as ‘other’.

Trends and changes in 2016

Of the 3,729 Social Policy Returns submitted during 2016, **Jobseeker’s Allowance** was the most often-reported individual payment or benefit – with 193 SPRs. This was an increase of 5% on the previous year.

Within the broad social welfare category, there was a 15% increase in the number of SPRs submitted from 2015 to 2016. This was a significant increase over the period and it should be noted that the query base from which these SPRs were generated increased by a more modest 1% (from 457,887 in 2015 to 462,738 in 2016).

When we look in closer detail at the social welfare category, SPRs were submitted concerning over 80 different payments or schemes across the range of sub-categories, which indicates that there are concerns being expressed across the array of social welfare supports that people are trying to access. This is reflective of the scale of the business that the Department of Social Protection engages in on daily basis – delivering over 65 schemes and services through 353 offices nationwide, with payments made to 1.6 million people during 2015.

Within the context of the social policy feedback, it is possible to see a focus on particular payments – with over 60% of the 2,045 social welfare SPRs focussing on ten key payments or schemes, as noted in the table below.

Payment/Social welfare sub-category	SPRs
Jobseeker's Allowance	193
Family Income Supplement (FIS)	181
Rent Supplement (RS)	152
Disability Allowance	148
Carer's Allowance	137
Illness Benefit	114
State Pension/Contributory	92
Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance	92
Jobseeker's Benefit	62
Child Benefit	53

Each of these payments has featured consistently in the Returns submitted by services during the past number of years. The amount of SPRs logged during 2016 for each of these individual payments increased on the previous year, with the exception of Rent Supplement, which has decreased by almost 30% from 2015 to 2016.

In the context of the main **Housing** category, the SPRs submitted in 2016 (471) increased by 39% on the 2015 figure –which was, in itself, a rise of 67% on the previous year. These ongoing increases indicate the scale of the difficulties that continue in the housing sector – which can be evidenced in the SPRs that were logged in the main Housing sub-categories - such as '**Local Authority and Social Housing**', '**Renting a Home**' and '**Homelessness**'.

The main focus of concern within these sub-categories includes '*Applying for Local Authority/social housing*' (which logged a 72% increase on 2015), the '*Housing Assistance Payment*' and also '*Tenants Rights and Obligations*' and '*Notice/Eviction/Disputes*' (an 86% increase on 2015). As Rent Supplement is a payment made under the Supplementary Welfare Scheme it is located within the Social Welfare category and, as previously noted, the amount of SPRs logged as Rent Supplement-related has decreased by almost 30% on 2015, with an associated increase in the SPRs that are related to the HAP (a 115% increase on 2015). This, no doubt, reflects the continuing roll-out of the HAP across local authority areas during the year.

When the **Rent Supplement** figures are combined with the main Housing SPRs, then the total for all Housing SPRs made during 2016 stands at 17% of the overall amount. The query data logged on Oyster during 2016 shows us that there were 20,198 queries related to Rent Supplement, in addition to the 75,435 queries under the general Housing category. When combined, these categories accounted for 95,633 queries – or 9% of the overall total amount of queries.

The issue of **medical cards** continues to be the dominant one within the broad Health category, with 62% of all Health-related SPRs focussing on concerns with the application, assessment, review and renewal of cards. In 2016, there was a 23% increase in SPRs concerning medical cards – this follows on from a year-on-year reduction of 38% from 2014 to 2015. Medical card SPRs were the second most-logged by information staff during the year (after Jobseeker's Allowance).

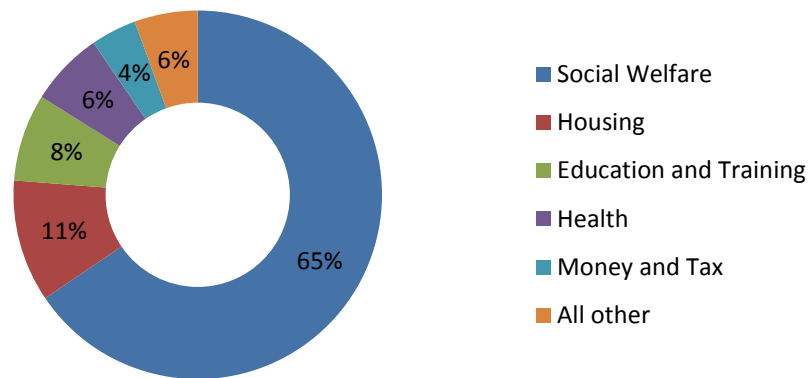
Within the broad area of **Money and Tax**, the number of SPRs has reduced by 13% on 2015 figures. This overall reduction can be attributed to the waning of Water Charges as an issue of concern for the users of CISs, with a reduction of 85% on the previous year. The main focus of SPRs within the broad Money and Tax category was that of '*Income Tax Credits and Reliefs*' and the '*Local Property Tax*' still continues to be raised as a concern.

During 2016, there was a significant increase in the number of SPRs from services relating to the broad category of **Moving Country**. This was particularly visible during the last quarter of 2016, when it appeared that the administrative changes made within the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) caused a good deal of confusion and concern for non-EEA nationals who were involved in the immigration registration/ visa renewal process. Overall, there was a doubling of the SPRs logged in relation to **Moving Country** and over one third of these SPRs detailed difficulties that applicants were experiencing with the introduction of the online-only appointment service in respect of the Burgh Quay Registration Office. There was also an increase in feedback in relation to the categories '*Leave to Remain*' and '*Irish Citizenship*'.

Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)

The 595 Social Policy Returns that were submitted by CIPS show broadly similar trends to those that were logged by CISs – although the Returns relating to social welfare featured more regularly in the overall total at 65% (as compared with 55% that focussed on social welfare from CISs). This figure is down from 72% in 2015.

SPRs by Query Category



As with CISs, housing concerns ranked second (at 11%), and Education & Training, Health and Money and Tax were the next most-often reported concerns – combining to account for 94% of all of the CIPS Returns. In terms of the **types of policy issue** being reported, 44% of all of the CIPS SPRs can be broadly analysed as operational issues, while 52% of the cases submitted related to perceived difficulties caused by polices, legislation or guidelines.

As noted, of the 595 SPRs submitted by CIPS, 65% were focussed on **social welfare** issues and payments (down from 72% in 2015). Within this, the main payments or benefits that were referenced most often by the information staff who recorded SPRs were Family Income Supplement (16%), Jobseeker's Allowance (10%) and Rent Supplement at 9%. When we look at the most-logged areas of concern amongst all CIPS Returns, we can see that HAP and Income Tax Credits and Reliefs also feature prominently.

Payment/ benefit	% of CIPS SPRs
1 Family Income Supplement (FIS)	10%
2 Jobseeker's Allowance	7%
3 Rent Supplement (RS)	6%
4 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)	6%
5 Income Tax Credits and Reliefs	3%
Total Top Five issues	32%

These key focus areas are broadly consistent with the main concerns emerging from the CISs during 2016, although it should be noted that Medical Card issues do not feature as relatively often amongst the CIPS Returns as it does within the CIS data – indeed, the Medical card did not feature within the first ten of the SPRs most often logged by CIPS during 2016. Perhaps this indicates the extent to which people seeking assistance with the Medical Card application or renewal process are more inclined to seek face-to-face help within a CIC setting, or it may indicate the extent to which the HSEs Medical Card telephone helpline is used by applicants.

In the Oireachtas

This section looks at policy-related questions and debates in the Oireachtas, with a particular focus on issues currently arising in social policy feedback from Citizens Information Services. The text may be edited. For the full text of any PQs/debates featured here, go to

www.oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie or www.kildarestreet.com

Motorised Transport Grant scheme closure [PQ 40234/16; 14 Dec 2016]

Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe (Cork East, Fianna Fail) asked the Minister for Health “the stage that has been reached in respect of the preparation of legislation to reintroduce the motorised transport grant scheme”. In a response on behalf of the Minister for Health, Minister of State with special responsibilities for disabilities, **Finian McGrath** (Dublin Bay North, Independent) stated that “conscious of the reports of the Ombudsman in 2011 and 2012 regarding the legal status of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant Scheme in the context of the Equal Status Acts, the Government decided to close both schemes in February 2013... However, the Government is aware of the continuing needs of people with a disability who rely on individual payments that support choice and independence. In this regard, monthly payments of up to €208.50 have continued to be made by the Health Service Executive to 4,700 people who were in receipt of the Mobility Allowance. The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new **Transport Support Scheme** and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the Programme for Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme. I can confirm that work on the policy proposals in this regard is at an advanced stage and I anticipate that this will be brought to Government shortly. The proposals seek to ensure that there is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation, that there is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme, that resources are targeted at those with greatest needs and that the Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis”.

UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities [PQ 3619/17; 26 January 2017]

Deputy Brendan Smith (Cavan-Monaghan, Fianna Fail) ask the Minister for Justice and Equality what “proposals there are to ratify the UN Convention of Rights for Persons with Disabilities and if she will make a statement on the matter”. **Minister Finian McGrath** (Dublin Bay North, Independent), on behalf of Minister Frances Fitzgerald, stated that “Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and since then, successive Governments have emphasised Ireland's strong commitment to proceed to ratification as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are met..... Before the State can ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, enactment of new legislation and amendment of existing legislation is required to ensure obligations will be met upon entry into force for Ireland. Ratification of a Convention before we have amended domestic legislation that contradicts it makes no sense and does nothing to ensure compliance or to actually protect the people for whose benefit the Convention exists. The previous Government published a Roadmap in October 2015, which sets out the legislative measures needed to meet those requirements, along with declarations and reservations to be entered by Ireland on ratification. Considerable progress has already been made to overcome the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the Convention. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 completed Committee Stage in the Dáil on 7 December 2016. When enacted, the Bill will reform Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights. Achieving the necessary balance between those rights and ensuring appropriate protection is crucial. The Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 was published immediately prior to Christmas. The primary purpose of the Bill is to address the remaining legislative barriers to Ireland's ratification of the UN

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). Work is ongoing on all the other issues set out in the previous Government's Roadmap for Ratification published in October 2015 and these will be progressed as Committee Stage amendments.... The precise timing of ratification now depends on how long it takes for the Bill to progress through the enactment process and on issues in relation to commencement of the Deprivation of Liberty provisions, which will be included in the Committee Stage amendments, and of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015".

Supplementary Welfare Allowance payments [PQ 2766/17; 24 January 2017]

Deputy John Brady (Wicklow, *Sinn Féin*) asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the reason for "the drop in supplementary welfare allowance scheme payments being issued from community welfare offices in recent years and if he will make a statement on the matter". In a response, **Minister Leo Varadkar** (Dublin West, *Fine Gael*), stated that "Some €378 million has been provided for the SWA scheme in 2017 including €31.5 million for ENPs (Exceptional Needs Payments) and UNP (Urgent Needs Payments)... The reductions in numbers receiving support under SWA can be attributed to the overall improvement in the economy, improvements in administration and policy changes in recent years. The numbers on the Live Register have dropped significantly from a peak of almost 450,000 in 2011 to a current figure of some 280,000 - a drop of almost 38%. For example, to focus on ENPs, expenditure has been stabilising in recent years at between €30 million and €32 million with some 100,000 ENPs made in 2016. The ENP guidelines issued to staff in 2012 and 2013 have contributed to more streamlined and consistent approaches being taken to applications across the country. The guidelines do not affect the statutory discretion available to officers administering the scheme in issuing an ENP to assist an individual or household in any particular hardship situation which may arise. Separately, my Department is leading on the provision of extra supports for vulnerable people in the development of the Personal Micro Credit scheme which aims to move people to legitimate, low cost, locally available alternative access to credit. To date, 95 Credit Unions, representing 180 credit union locations, have signed up as participants of the scheme. I can assure the Deputy that the SWA scheme is kept under review to ensure that the CWS continues to support those most in need of assistance."

Rent support recipients – county breakdown [PQ 4973/17; 2 February 2017]

In response to a Parliamentary Question from **Deputy John Curran** (Dublin Mid West, *Fianna Fail*) concerning the amount of people in receipt of rent support and of an "uplift in rent support" (under the National Tenancy Sustainment Framework – NTSF), Minister Leo Varadkar provided the following breakdown on a county basis, as of 31 January 2017:-

Total rent support payments by County at 31/01/2017
(Total RS recipients = 47,113, Total NTSF recipients – 8,353)

COUNTY	RS recipients	Uplift under NTSF	COUNTY	RS Recipients	Uplift under NTSF
CARLOW	582	74	LONGFORD	388	311
CAVAN	388	64	LOUTH	830	157
CLARE	402	60	MAYO	1,039	3
CORK	4,839	450	MEATH	968	432
DONEGAL	402	-	MONAGHAN	184	1
DUBLIN	20,315	4,238	OFFALY	550	64
GALWAY	2,418	204	ROSCOMMON	550	52
KERRY	1,511	193	SLIGO	265	1
KILDARE	2,543	549	TIPPERARY	835	283
KILKENNY	305	135	WATERFORD	577	62
LAOIS	868	119	WESTMEATH	1,255	373
LEITRIM	267	100	WEXFORD	1,946	23
LIMERICK	951	16	WICKLOW	1,935	389

Policy News, Resources and Opinion

This section features developments, resources, events and opinions likely to be of interest to those engaged in policy work. CIB does not endorse or otherwise any of the policy positions featured

CSO - Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2015



In January 2017, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) published the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2015. This is an annual survey carried out by the CSO on a representative sample of households and individuals in Ireland. The survey collects information on the income and living conditions of different households, in order to derive indicators on poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. It is carried out in every EU country under EU legislation. One of the key findings of the survey for 2015 was that the real median annual equivalised

disposable income was €19,772, which was a 6.2% increase on 2014.

In terms of poverty, the survey found that the proportion at risk of poverty in Ireland was 16.9% (which stood at 17.2% in 2014) and calculated that, if all social transfers were excluded from income, the 'at risk of poverty' rate would have been 46.3% (down from 48.3% in 2014 – a figure which peaked in 2011 at 50.7%). Those most at risk of poverty were individuals who were unemployed (43.5%) and people living in households where there was no person at work (39.6%). The 'at risk of poverty' rate was almost as high for people living in accommodation that was rented at below the market rate or rent free (39%) and households with one adult with one or more children aged under 18 (36.2%). According to the survey, 25.5% of the population experienced two or more types of enforced deprivation. This compares with 29% in 2014 (and a low of 12% in 2007). Single parent households had the highest deprivation rate in 2015 at 58%, and those living in accommodation that was rented at below the market rate or rent free, and those who were not at work due to illness or disability also had deprivation rates of over 50% in 2015. The findings for SILC 2015 can be accessed [here](#).

ESRI - A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland

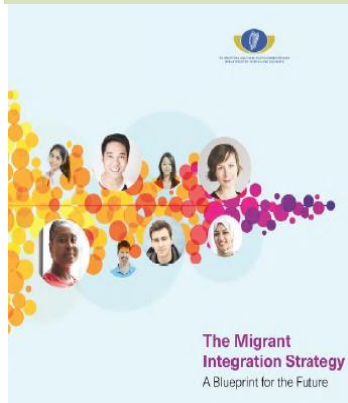


In January 2017, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published a report on the employment and living circumstances of Travellers in Ireland. The Report is based on Census 2011 data (and on the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, 2010) and it sets out to explore to what extent certain groups of Travellers (in terms of gender, age and region) experience disadvantage in four key areas of their lives – education, employment, housing and health. The Census 2011 data indicated that there are just under 30,000 Travellers in Ireland - or 0.6% of the total population. In terms of education, the report found that Travellers are more likely to

have left school early and are much less likely to have reached Leaving Certificate level – with this figure at 8% of working-age Travellers compared to 73% of non-Travellers. Just 1% of Travellers were recorded as having a college degree (compared with 30% of non-Travellers). The employment rate for Travellers aged 25 - 64 was 11%, compared with 66% for non-Travellers. The Report noted that the differences in education were very important in accounting for this employment gap and further extrapolated that, among those Travellers who had progressed in education, “the employment gap between Travellers and non-Travellers was very dramatically reduced . . . though the gap remains very large.” Most Travellers were found to live in “standard” housing (88%), with just 12% living in caravans or mobile homes and 56% considered to be living in overcrowded accommodation. The Report also noted the “widening health gap” between the Traveller and non-Traveller population – a figure which increases with age. In this regard, the authors stated that this is “a clear example of the accumulation of the effects of earlier disadvantage in education, employment, housing and other areas such as prejudice and discrimination”. On launching the Report Minister of State for Justice, David Stanton, noted that the question of the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group is currently under active consideration with Traveller

representatives having been invited to address the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Policy in the early part of 2017 to discuss the matter. It should be noted also that CIB introduced a new data field on Oyster in the last quarter of 2015 to collect information on Caller/Client Ethnicity and ethnic groups using CIS services. This is part of a wider remit to provide equality and social inclusion data and to report on the extent to which ethnic groups are availing of CIS services. In 2016, the Department of Justice also led a consultation process to develop a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy to which CIB made a number of submissions. The ESRI report can be accessed [here](#).

Migration Integration Strategy – A Blueprint for the Future



On February 7, 2017 the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald TD launched the Migrant Integration Strategy, which provides the framework for Government action on migrant integration from 2017 until 2020. CIB had made a submission on the draft Strategy during the consultation phase in 2014. The Strategy sets out a number of targets for State agencies over the coming years – with a particular focus on ensuring that mainstream services such as health, education, social protection and employment are responsive to the needs of migrants. The Strategy sets out targeted measures in this regard, including the provision of information in language-appropriate formats, intercultural awareness training for staff, and signage that indicates where interpretation services are

available. It also looks at migrant integration in the workplace, amongst civil society organisations and within the wider community. The full text of the document can be accessed [here](#). On launching the Strategy, the Government also announced the provision of a stream of funding to community-based organisations in order to promote integration at local level. Examples of activities that would be considered for funding include measures aimed at introducing newly arrived migrants to the community, activities to link migrants with opportunities locally, or activities that encourage involvement in local civil society. Further details on this *Communities Integration Fund* can be accessed [here](#).

National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand – The Housing Agency



In February 2017, the Housing Agency launched the second annual 'National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand', which brings together the up-to-date information on housing trends for 2015 and 2016 and also aims to look ahead to future demand. The Report reflects on the sector in light of the 2016 Government strategy "*Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*" and provides details on the progress made under a range of key

areas – in particular, new builds (an increase of 18% on the previous year, but still below supply requirements), house sales (declining levels of residential sales and increasing prices) and the rental sector (rising rents and demand nationally). It also analysed the latest Summary of Social Housing Assessments and identified that 91,600 households were in need of social housing support. Another area of concern noted in the report was the number of homeless people, which has increased over the last two years, and had reached over 7,000 people by the end of 2016. But it also noted that, during that period, over 5,000 sustainable exits from homelessness were recorded. The Report assesses current and future housing demand, based on data from Census 2016. It estimates that, in light of the growing population and shrinking family size, a minimum of 81,118 homes are needed in the five year period 2016 – 2020, and that 45,000 of these will be required in the five major urban centre areas. It also suggests that a further 30,000 homes will be needed every year from 2024 - almost double the current output. With regard to the changing policy and legislative environment, the Report highlights the substantial volume of legislative changes and Government initiatives that were introduced in response to housing issues during the past two years and it provides a useful summary of these changes grouped under four headings - housing legislation, taxation changes, changes to rules on mortgage lending and the changes made to housing delivery channels. The Social Housing Output in 2015 Report is available [here](#).