

Social Enterprise Summit

Outcomes Report



Council Chambers, Dublin City Hall

Wednesday, 16th October, 2019

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Social Enterprise Summit - Contributions	4
2.1	Lord Mayor’s Welcome	4
2.2	Section 1: Setting the Context	5
2.2.1	European Context	5
2.2.2	National Context	7
2.2.3	Dublin Context	10
2.2.4	Socio-Economic / Social Enterprise Development Context	12
2.2.5	Northern Ireland Context.....	14
2.3	Section 2: Social Enterprise Ecosystem.....	17
2.3.1	Accelerators	17
2.3.2	Supports	19
2.3.3	Procurement	20
2.3.4	Marketing.....	24
2.3.5	Training	26

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1 Introduction

Social Enterprise Summit took place on the 16th October 2019 in Dublin City Hall at which leading stakeholders and social enterprise representatives came together to focus on and discuss the current status and future direction of social enterprise development in Dublin and Ireland. It was broadcast live online and the recording is available to view on the Dublin City Council webcast site¹. Councillor Racheal Batten, Deputy Chairperson of the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee of Dublin City Council was the chairperson of the summit.

Aims of Social Enterprise Summit:

- Share knowledge & perspectives
- Facilitate networking
- Obtain insights
- Highlight opportunities for collaboration

At the summit, international, national, local stakeholders discussed key areas and provided insights on context, trends, challenges, opportunities and the social enterprise ecosystem. Various contributors also highlighted future plans to promote opportunities for potential collaboration.

Social Enterprise Summit - Programme:

- 09:00 Registration, Refreshments & Exhibition Space
- 10:00 Summit
- 12:00 Networking Lunch & Exhibition Space
- 13:00 Close

As part of Dublin City Council's efforts to showcase and procure from local social enterprises, the summit proudly commissioned catering services from:

Third Space² (Dublin City Social Enterprise Award - 2016 Awardee)

The summit was led by Dublin City Council and organised in partnership with various stakeholders such as the Dublin City Social Enterprise Committee and the European Commission. It was part of a social enterprise regional event series which represented Dublin's involvement in the European Commission's: European Social Economy Regions (ESER) - 2019 Project³. The objective of the ESER project was to build networks of social economy and social enterprise stakeholders and to raise awareness of the social economy at regional and local level in the various participating regions.

The summit also took place as part of the Dublin City Summit series. The series is an initiative of the Economic and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of Dublin City Council, the committee is made up of councillors and industry representatives. Each summit brings together key stakeholders including policy makers, elected officials, topic experts and practitioners to share insights, information and perspectives in order to encourage greater collaboration, awareness and development regarding relevant policy issues and challenges facing the city. Previous summits as part of the series include: Brexit Summit 2016, Infrastructure Summit 2017, and Apprenticeship Summit 2018.

As part of the summit, an exhibition space featuring social enterprises and relevant support organisations was provided to encourage further networking, awareness of supports and showcasing of social enterprise products and services. Details of the exhibitors are provided in **Appendix**.

¹ ED&E SPC – Social Enterprise Summit https://dublincity.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/449935

² Third Space – Social Enterprise Café <http://thirdspace.ie/>

³ ESER 2019 https://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/european-social-economy-regions-2019_en



2 Social Enterprise Summit - Contributions

2.1 Lord Mayor's Welcome

Lord Mayor of Dublin, Paul McAuliffe officially opened the Social Enterprise Summit by acknowledging Counsellors Racheal Batten and Colm O'Rourke and welcoming all attendees. He stated that it was great to see the council chamber being used for this event. He recalled the first ever Dublin City summit, held during his tenure as Chair of the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee in the same chamber, which convened stakeholders from across the city to discuss and debate outside of the strict protocols of politics. He introduced the social enterprise summit as the fourth in a series that has covered topics such as Brexit, infrastructure, and recruitment for apprenticeships (and how they can solve the labour shortage). Regarding the summit, he stated:

'I can't think of a better topic for us to address at this time, because as we head into the coming months and years, social enterprises are really going to be at the heart of the way that we can deliver public services, the way that we can develop community, and the way that communities and the economy can come together.'

He remarked that it is fitting that the chamber is used to look at the current status and future direction of social enterprise development in Dublin. The Lord Mayor highlighted social enterprise as a key way that communities and areas in a city like Dublin, can be improved by bringing about economic benefits such as job creation (often for those who are very marginalised in society), community benefits such as social inclusion and education, and policy benefits such as service delivery and active citizenship. He extended a particular welcome to those present from the relevant sectors.

As well as facilitating dialogue between leading stakeholders regarding social enterprise development, he presented the summit as an opportunity to highlight challenges and opportunities for various social enterprise and stakeholder representatives. Stemming from this, Mr McAuliffe expressed the intent that collaboration would occur and develop between the different social enterprise and organisations present, and noted that the summit was an opportunity to connect and engage with policymakers.

He outlined how strengthening the regional social economy is key to the European Commission and European Union and how they are striving ahead in terms of how social enterprises can benefit society. He gave a special welcome and his appreciation to the European Commission representative, Karel Vanderpoorten, whose presence he believed underscored this. He also acknowledged the other contributors, including Colin Jess who came to speak about social enterprise in Northern Ireland.

The Lord Mayor emphasised the central role that Dublin City Council plays in social enterprise and made particular mention of Greg Swift, Mary MacSweeney and the team in the Economic Development Office in this regard as well as for organising the event. ‘I think we’re a leader in how social enterprise is delivered in the city and how it’s supported, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t need to go further, we absolutely do!’ He concluded by telling the participants that, ‘By making your contribution, you’re having a direct impact on how policy is formed in this area,’ given that all the presentations and contributions would be put together in an Outcomes Report (as done for previous summits) and circulated to policymakers.

2.2 Section 1: Setting the Context

The first section focused on the overarching context of the social economy and social enterprise development, commencing with an international and then national and local contextual overview.

2.2.1 European Context



Karel Vanderpoorten, European Commission, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

In his address, Karel Vanderpoorten said he was delighted to be back in Dublin on behalf of the Directorate-General and spoke of his ‘special relationship with Ireland and Dublin’ through his first contact with Larry O’Neill and the ILDN, to whom he had the honour of showing the European Commissions’ visitor centre and highlighting social enterprise development from a European perspective and through several subsequent visits.

Mr Vanderpoorten highlighted the new financial programming period that is being assembled and urged social enterprise to be proactive in the process. Referencing his own background with the European Social Fund (ESF), which also exists in Ireland, he explained how the fund is locally organised with management authorities based at national, regional or even local level. With the development of these programmes taking place in the Member States, he advised reaching out to the management authorities to help shape them.

Regarding the financial programming period, he stated: 'This is happening as we speak, with operational programmes being assembled and partnership agreements with different kinds of sectors being negotiated, so it's very important for social enterprise – enterprises themselves but especially the networks – to reach out to the management authorities of the ESF to claim their presence in the operational programmes. If not, social enterprise may not get enough attention, so now is the time to have your say.' He offered help through his contacts across Europe who are working with the ESF and determining specific priorities for social innovation, social enterprises and transnational cooperation.

The second fund that he felt may be relatively unknown, was the European Commission (EC) Fund – a financial instrument for investment capital for social enterprises. Rather than being about subsidies and funds, he described it as a pilot programme that will be transferred into a larger fund called Invest EU that manages all of the financial instruments. Within the larger fund, one of the four elements is dedicated to social investment and skills. Mr Vanderpoorten believes that the current EC will be adopted and the programme will most likely be enlarged quite extensively. Accordingly he stated that 'it's very important that we create some kind of intermediate level of social finance so please be proactive and stimulate the social finance people that are able to provide access to it and change these guarantees into loans for the sector.'

Although a basic approach, he cited the one specific angle he wished to tackle in what the Commission is trying to do for the next seven years as 'new and innovative means of financing social enterprises'. Further to 'pay for result' and 'social impact bonds', that everyone has heard about and is a somewhat controversial debate, he advocates that, 'We should be open to new ideas and not only listen to these new proposals but also put forward other proposals.'

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He raised the practice of match funding, where citizens, enterprises and government raise one euro respectively, as an interesting alternative and wants people to consider developing these programme types: 'Match funding creates an accountant's approach where all endorse the investment that is done commonly; it can leverage much more than by a Government grant, citizen or enterprise investment alone. It's quite advanced but we should dare to explore these kinds of new financial methods.'

Another area he highlighted was: skills, something that is not easy for social enterprises because of its broad nature. He reflected specifically on business skills and those for WISE (work integration social enterprises), e.g. social enterprises that work with people who have disabilities and people who have no direct access to the regular labour market. He highlighted that the Commission is pushing for a specific programme in the knowledge that working with this cohort demands other types of skills and HR management to adapt processes to include them in the labour market, give them proper labour assignments, and improve their job satisfaction. The Commission is thus seeking members with experience in these specific skills to design tailored training programmes to teach managers, job coaches and others how to develop their enterprises and to support them. To this end, he confirmed that he would be happy to hear from any training centres or those with knowledge in the specific practices of job carving, job crafting, disassembling jobs, etc. For basic business skills, he reiterated that the use of the ESF is very important because the absence of specific training for social enterprise does not mean that other lines cannot be accessed. Mr Vanderpoorten's final words of advice were:

'Try also to reach out to the regular training lines in the ESF and to train managers and employees with these as well as those specifically for social enterprises.'



2.2.2 National Context



William Parnell, Assistant Secretary General, Department of Rural and Community Development

William Parnell began by thanking the Chair and Lord Mayor and expressing his delight at seeing so many people and indeed familiar faces taking an interest in the summit. Mr Parnell set out to give a ‘whistle-stop tour’ of the new National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-22⁴ that was published in July.

While recognising that social enterprises have been in existence in Ireland for decades, Mr Parnell remarked that the publication of the new policy signals a new phase of social enterprise development. He explained that the Department hopes that the new policy will create an enabling environment for social enterprises to grow and to contribute to our economic and social progress in the years ahead.

He described the four-year policy as part of a suite of Department of Rural and Community Development initiatives to support the full range

⁴ National Social Enterprise Policy <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/e779c3-social-enterprise-policy/>

of organisations that provide services to communities or tackle social or societal issues. He mentioned two other documents within the suite which are the strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland⁵ and the national volunteering strategy⁶.

He posed the ‘multimillion dollar question’ of what is a social enterprise, explaining that no two countries regard a social enterprise in the same way due to differences in geographies and cultures. The definition developed for the policy within an Irish context and with stakeholder buy-in, states a social enterprise is:

- An enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact rather than maximizing profit for its owners or shareholders
- It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and / or services, and by reinvesting any surpluses into achieving social objectives
- It is governed in a fully accountable and transparent manner independent of the public service.

Mr Parnell explained that the definition is consistent with EU definitions and is very helpful in providing a shared understanding. He stressed that the definition does not diminish the spectrum of social enterprises that exist in Ireland and outlined the country’s range of social enterprises which all play an important role and include:

- Work integration social enterprises (WISE’s) that mostly work with disadvantaged groups in providing education and training to help them integrate into the workplace;
- Those that help other enterprises to develop;
- Deficient demand social enterprises that fill a gap where there isn’t a large enough market for commercial provision (very often these are found in very disadvantaged or remote areas);
- Environmentally focused social enterprises; and
- Those that adapt a cooperative model but refrain from distributing profits (unlike big cooperatives).

He also mentioned social innovators and entrepreneurs as they are an important part of the ecosystem, given that their initial ideas and sparks often form the genesis of social enterprises.

Addressing the reason for publishing the policy, Mr Parnell said it was to recognise that social enterprises deliver important economic, social and environmental returns, particularly in Ireland where there is significant potential for growth. ‘There’s a spectrum of social enterprises across the board, from some who are very entrepreneurial-minded (and are even Enterprise Ireland client companies) but with the objective of always putting their purpose over profit. Others that are perhaps less entrepreneurial are nonetheless providing a crucial social or community service.’

‘Social enterprises deliver important economic, social and environmental returns, particularly in Ireland where there is significant potential for growth’.

He recounted that social enterprise has been very poorly understood in Ireland until now: ‘We know how long social enterprises have been in existence in Ireland but they’ve been under the radar with limited data on their scale, scope and impact so it’s been difficult for them to access supports and to expand and grow. For many years, social enterprise stakeholders were advocating for a policy and we were lagging behind other EU Member States in not having one.’ There was also fragmentation of

⁵ Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities – A five year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland <https://assets.gov.ie/26890/ff380490589a4f9ab9cd9bb3f53b5493.pdf>

⁶ National Volunteering Strategy <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/fc55b9-public-consultation-on-draft-national-volunteering-strategy-2020-202/>

responsibility for social enterprise across Government. Employing the saying about the right person being in the right place at the right time, Mr Parnell lauded Minister Michael Ring in the Department of Rural and Community Development (established two years ago with specific policy responsibility for social enterprise) and his excellent understanding of it.

He emphasised that the publication of the policy is trying to provide a framework to enable enterprises to grow, 'Looking around the room and the exhibition downstairs, I think we're reaching a point where social enterprise is being mainstreamed.'

The policy is based around three objectives:

1. Building awareness of social enterprise;
2. Growing and strengthening social enterprise; and
3. Achieving better policy alignment.

While short on time, he gave examples of some of the commitments made to try and progress each objective. This included developing an awareness strategy so the general public and public bodies know what social enterprises are, sharing best practice through an annual Social Enterprise Conference on 21st November (International Social Enterprise Day), and working with education and research bodies to see how they can help in supporting social enterprise development.

In terms of growing and strengthening social enterprise, Mr Parnell brought up the business supports (like business skills) mentioned by Karel Vanderpoorten and how providing these supports was a key objective. He referenced information on financing, working to support social enterprises in public procurement, and looking at the existing legal forms for social enterprise to examine if there is a deficit as this is something that has come up in consultations.

Towards better policy alignment, he said that it was important to try to create a better understanding across Government of the interaction between social enterprise and Government. As such, he highlighted policies such as the Action Plan for Rural Development, Future Jobs Ireland, and the Climate Action Plan, all of which contain references to social enterprise. 'As we face new challenges in the years ahead, I believe that social enterprise will be well placed to find solutions to policy issues'.

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In terms of the role of local authorities, he highlighted Dublin City Council as a 'real leader' with the Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards and explained that local enterprise offices have a role to play along with the context of public procurement.

He summarised by saying how the new policy recognises the value and impact of social enterprises, includes 26 specific and time-bound commitments, and complements other policy initiatives. 'Importantly, we want it to be delivered in partnership with the sector so we're in the process of setting up an implementation group that will comprise at least 50% stakeholders from the sector; and a representative from the County and City Management Association will be invited to join the group'.

He confirmed that implementation has begun through: the launch (and assessments) of a training and mentoring call for proposals; establishing the implementation group; a Social Enterprise Research Fellowship in conjunction with the Irish Research Council (announced this week); the upcoming conference; recent dialogue with the Higher Education Institutes; imminent further funding announcements and engagement at an international level.

2.2.3 Dublin Context



Mary MacSweeney, Deputy Head of Enterprise and Economic Development and Chair of the Dublin City Social Enterprise Committee of Dublin City Council

Mary MacSweeney began by expressing her delight in seeing so many people in the chamber, as an example of Karel Vanderpoorten's advice about social enterprise needing to claim their presence. As Chair of the Social Enterprise Committee, she has learnt a lot about the area in the last number of years and described how many representatives are playing different and important parts, but that 'there is definitely a strength in the collective'.

'There is definitely a strength in the collective'

As Dublin's third event as part of the European Social Economy Regions 2019 project, aimed at better networking and bringing people together to utilise the strength of the collective, she stressed that the summit (as the final event) was a testament to what can be done collectively, despite everyone's challenges and resource limits and provides a platform to progress from.

In working with start-ups and scaling companies through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) and Economic Development Office of Dublin City Council, we recognised that a lot of the supports that work well for businesses would also work well for social enterprises. In the policy context, through the Economic and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee, the local authority has also looked at ways to support and recognise the important role of social enterprises at ground level and to celebrate that. She used the example of commissioning Third Space a local social enterprise café to cater at the summit and at other events as another way of delivering on the national policy of raising awareness.

'Like all things in life, the more you know, the more likely you are to use the resources that are available and you can gain excellent value and quality through the social enterprise sector'.

Regarding the policy context, Ms MacSweeney pointed out that the council is supported by legislation such as the Local Government Reform Act 2014⁷, which states that the promotion of economic development includes: creating and sustaining jobs, supporting enhancement of local innovation capacity and supporting local enterprise. It states that the promotion of local and community development includes supporting social enterprise, social capital, volunteering, and active citizenship.

She also highlighted the policy objective in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022⁸, as that of promoting and facilitating Dublin as a hub for social enterprise in order to help address some of the city's critical needs. She pledged to continue to work with those in the chamber to try and put Dublin

⁷ Local Government Reform Act 2014 <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/1/enacted/en/html>

⁸ Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 <http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-planning-city-development-plan/dublin-city-development-plan-2016-2022>

on the map as a great place for social enterprise and its development. She also referenced the Local Economic and Community Plan⁹ 2016-2021, which includes an objective to promote and support the development of social innovation and enterprise. ‘Some of us work without considering how important the policy context is and in a lot of cases, the policy is the practice, so as one of 31 local authorities we’re happy to work across the network nationally of LEO’s and other local authorities to learn from what they’re doing and to share our practice with them.’

Another way of working with the sector, she said, was by celebrating the work of the social enterprises themselves. The Dublin City Social Enterprise Committee, comprising a range of stakeholders including social enterprise practitioners and support organisations, has been organising the Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards for the past five years. She expressed her gratitude to the Department of Rural and Community Development for co-funding the initiative and introduced the Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards - Impact Report¹⁰ produced by Norman Thompson which capture details of the awardees to date and their associated impact. The report is another way of raising awareness of the strong social enterprises present in the Dublin region.

In regard to capacity building, Dublin City Council has worked with different players in various areas. One such area is training in which we have worked with An Cosán Virtual Community College, Technological University Dublin and Plato business network which organised a social enterprise founders’ network for sharing knowledge. LEO mentoring is also available as we have identified mentors with specific skill sets around social enterprise and LEO grants are available depending on eligibility. As well we actively look at market opportunities for social enterprises to be able to sell their wares in a mainstream capacity. Ms MacSweeney was delighted to hear from the European Commission about their plans, how they are seeing opportunities for social enterprise to work alongside traditional enterprise and how there might be better alignment between different sectors. ‘We would support that and have seen it in practice between the LEO supports and how social enterprises have availed and made good use of enterprise supports when given the opportunity.’

Her view of the future is that, ‘We’re in a great place to work collectively for a further expansion of the social enterprise sector in Ireland and in Dublin.’ Dublin City Council is also working with other sections internally, such as with Bruce Philips who has started a dialogue about how the Liberties could become a hub for social enterprise development. She also referred to Mary Harvey’s work in Rialto with active social enterprises that have been successful in tendering at the National Children’s Hospital. She affirmed that Dublin City Council is happy to utilise its network and opportunities to further support the growth of the social enterprise sector.

‘We’re in a great place to work collectively for a further expansion of the social enterprise sector in Ireland and in Dublin.’

In picking up on the European Commission’s comments on different possibilities brought about by blockchain, Artificial Intelligence and the use of technology within the social economy, she said that Dublin City Council was wide open to joining in those conversations and sharing the learning to build on what is a strong foundation for social enterprise.

⁹ Dublin City Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021 <http://www.dublincity.ie/LECP>

¹⁰ Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards – Impact Report <https://www.localenterprise.ie/DublinCity/Documents/Dublin-City-Social-Enterprise-Awards-%E2%80%93-Impact-Report.pdf>

2.2.4 Socio-Economic / Social Enterprise Development Context



Dr Deiric O'Broin, Head of Social Enterprise, Dublin City University and NorDubCo

'I get to live my dream job' was how Deiric O'Broin introduced himself, saying that he was lucky to work with Dublin City Council and the Social Enterprise Committee over the past five years and that the packed chamber was proof of how great things can grow from small seeds in a relatively short space of time.

Dr O'Broin stated that there is a leadership question for the sector as a whole or the broader social economy about building the social economy in Ireland, particularly in Dublin and the role of social enterprise as system change leaders and where to go from here. His presentation examined three macro-factors around what has worked in driving the development of the social economy in other small countries in the EU and in the western world.

He put forward the idea of a supportive or enabling policy framework. Remembering an

Irish Social Enterprise Network event five years ago addressing what a supportive public policy framework would look like, Dr O'Broin believes that, 'We now have what would be considered a very good public policy framework for the social economy in Ireland'.

He praised the good work by the Department of Rural and Community Development on the policy framework, 'They've done an amazing job in a relatively short space of time and have turned around something that is both very complex and complicated that goes across a number of Government areas and governance tiers between local, regional and national'.

The next factor he cited was engaged public agencies, using the summit as evidence of the support by Dublin City Council he described them as 'a leader that has broken ground in this area'. He noted that there has been a cascade effect across parts of Ireland, particularly driven by local authorities regarding social economy development and while acknowledging the challenges, he cautioned against losing sight of what has been accomplished to date.

He recapped on the 'eye-opener' of what has been achieved in a short space of time through the policy and public agency support, not just by Dublin City Council but also by his own institution (Dublin City University) where there is a head of social enterprise function and the beginnings of a much more coordinated approach to social enterprise. He also touched on the other public higher education institutes in the north and south of the country that are operating together under a Social Economy Research Network of Ireland, which has gratefully received support from Chris Gordon of the Irish Social Enterprise Network. Dr O'Broin stated that many academics with very different perspectives, are now beginning to collaborate around the social economy research agenda and commented that:

'We don't just think about social enterprise or social entrepreneurs, we're interested in the UN concept of the social and solidarity economy and the more European concept of the social economy'.

He remarked that there are a variety of activities to support organisations that are happening within public institutions as well as local authorities and attributed it to the leadership of the Department of Rural and Community Development in facilitating that public institutional change. Proceeding to the 'meat of it', what Dr O'Broin has seen in other small countries that have built their social economy is the idea of a sectoral accord or that the components of the broad social economy have a clear idea of what they want or at least a shared understanding of the path they wish to follow.

The first thing he wished to say about the social economy in Ireland is that it is: Irish, European, and unusual in a number of important ways. Unlike many other countries, the broad social economy has very little understanding of itself. Mentioning an event in the Rediscovery Centre in early September with a number of European speakers, including one from the Social Economy Europe Organisation, the conversation revealed that most European social economy networks have older siblings of the movement (e.g. the credit union and cooperative movements) as drivers of the social economy and social enterprise development. Dr O'Broin elaborated that this hasn't happened in Ireland and while unusual, it can be addressed but has ramifications for how we go forward.

When it comes to shared leadership, he explained that historically it has been limited. This is an issue for the social enterprise sector, cooperatives, and the credit unions as there is very little interaction in a sustained, engaged manner. He hoped that this would be addressed in the coming years. He cited the famous social thinker Eric Olin Right, who advocated building the global social economy and suggested that if you look at some of the most successful national or regional social economies, what they've done is to analyse the economic structure of their area (be it locality, region or country). They've identified the gaps between mainstream delivery (it's not about demand efficient or supply surplus but the spaces in the capitalist system to deliver services) and tried to fill these. Quebec was given as one of most interesting examples of the sustained development of the provincial social economy by identifying those gaps or 'interstitial spaces'. Dr O'Broin explained that the point Eric Olin Right was trying to make is: 'it's about analysis, you need to work with people that are in the analysis business'. From his perspective coming from a public university, the challenge is to work with social enterprises to help analyse the economy and the gaps to see how social enterprise leaders can fill these. He continued, 'It's not necessarily about gap identification from the enterprise sense but understanding the broader economy and how we can move from there'.

He highlighted the dynamics of the social economy in how it can grow, fall, expand, and contract, with some whole sectors disappearing and collapsing because the world has moved on. He reflected on his first social enterprise board appointment in 1992 in a sector that no longer exists. Dr O'Broin believes, 'In the last year or two, there has been significant change and momentum towards a better understanding of where we want to be and where social enterprises can actually succeed and flourish.'

There is a tendency among a number of my colleagues to speak of a 'golden age' in Ireland, the strong social banking system of the 20s and early 30s characterised by the Raiffeisen banks. They were driven out due to the lack of a supportive policy framework and a struggling post-independence State that had an orthodox economic view dominating policymaking. He said that these financial cooperatives found it very difficult to succeed and it wasn't until the 50s that this changed. In conclusion, he stated:

'I don't think we're going back to the halcyon days of the 30s, but I do think we live in extremely exciting times where we may see ourselves at the next social enterprise summit in five years' time when the Dublin regional social economy will be transformed'.

2.2.5 Northern Ireland Context



Colin Jess, Director, Social Enterprise Northern Ireland

Colin Jess expressed gratitude for the invitation to speak and began by setting out how he would focus his contribution on the background of Social Enterprise Northern Ireland (SENI), details about its activities and some recent statistics to demonstrate the growth of the sector.

He explained that SENI was the first winner of the Social Economy Work Programme (issued by the Department of the Economy in 2012), having held it ever since through two tenders. It is a membership organisation aimed at (i) raising awareness of the sector across political parties as well as the public, private and educational sectors, and (ii) developing relationships, stakeholders and networks through forums to ensure that people outside the sector understand it and support its members. He remarked that there has been quite a lot of growth despite the lack of Government in Northern Ireland.

Mr Jess provided an overview of activities that they are involved in through a set of slides (see Appendix C). Firstly, he introduced the Social Economy Policy Group as a group comprising a representative from each of the Departments in Northern Ireland (e.g. Health, Justice, Finance, Education) as well as the Probation Board. He said that presenting to this group every six months to give updates on the sector provided a great opportunity to profile the organisation's activities.

Regarding the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland, he confirmed that his organisation had met with the Department of Rural and Community Development before its publication and that a very important relationship has developed between them. 'I'm a great believer that we can work together going forward irrespective of what happens over the next couple of weeks as we'll still be doing what we do and we can learn from each other.'

He spoke about how SENI responds to political consultations by attending for example: a recent DUP meeting (at which SENI strongly asserted the need for social economy to be further recognised in Northern Ireland), a Sinn Féin round table meeting and all five political conferences so as to show no political bias. He emphasised the importance of relationships with Permanent Secretaries and the particularly good one they have with the Permanent Secretary of Education and Economy. He highlighted Sue Grey the Permanent Secretary for Finance as a great supporter of social enterprise and SENI who in the past brought the cabinet office from London to meet them and provide updates on social value legislation for England and Wales. He portrayed her as, 'A breath of fresh air who has picked up social enterprise, put it under her arm and run with it'.

Speaking about the dormant accounts that were approved for release in Northern Ireland in 2008 but 'turned into a political football between a couple of parties', Ms Grey got the process going and the organisation is now talking to its members about how they want the funds to be released. On the topic of social value and procurement legislation, Mr Jess said that while Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK without a Social Value Act, he believes that directives can be put in place to make progress.

In terms of interaction with the educational sector, he highlighted the strong relationships with Ulster University and Queens University, with one of the student research papers by the latter's Science Shop due for publication in the next few weeks. He also referenced a programme with Belfast Metropolitan College and highlighted a speed-dating event held by the College recently which was attended by SENI members interested in taking on a volunteer and resulted in 64 students spending a half-day once a week learning about social enterprise through on-the-ground experience as well as through textbooks. Mr Jess described the thorough understanding of social enterprise held by millennials in particular as a more socially responsible cohort than older age groups.

Engagement through British Council meetings has fostered excellent relationships internationally with South-East Asia, notably Malaysia, Cambodia, Hong Kong and the Philippines. 'Northern Ireland is developing a reputation in those parts as being an area where social enterprise has helped to deliver post-conflict resolution'. He touched on a visit by people from the Philippines last year, where they visited SENI member social enterprises that are at the coalface of bringing people together from both sides of the community.

'Northern Ireland is developing a reputation in those parts as being an area where social enterprise has helped to deliver post-conflict resolution'

Mr Jess explained that they had 129 people at an awards evening competing in 12 different categories in 2015, this year they had 470 people which he attributed to the increased growth of the sector and private and public sector engagement. His background in banking pre-2016 has benefitted him with many contacts who are keen to work with SENI and SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body) which has involved SENI with best practice trips to Dublin in June and Scotland in August.

Defining WISE in the Northern Ireland context as women in social enterprise and after pushing for women to be recognised, he said that the NatWest WISE100 nominations saw seven or eight female nominees this year compared to just one last year, again highlighting sectoral growth.

'With a contribution of £625 million, we think we're a reasonable contributor to the Northern Ireland economy and we need to be listened to.'

To provide further context and information about the sector in Northern Ireland, Mr Jess presented comparative figures from a 2013 PWC report (including: social enterprises, voluntary and community sector) and a 2018 version (including: social enterprises alone) to show the growth in organisations, employees, turnover (of almost £1 billion) and economic contribution. 'With a contribution of £625 million, we think we're a reasonable contributor to the Northern Ireland economy and we need to be listened to.'

Looking at how established social enterprises are, as opposed to being 'new kids on the block', Mr Jess revealed that 33% are of 21 or more years old and include credit unions and cooperatives. When it comes to the subsectors, the largest is education [32%] while the challenge remains to grow areas like retail [14%] by getting into supply chains of the public and private sector. He noted that the percentages in the slide do not add up to 100 because social enterprises don't necessarily belong to just one area. Regarding the profitability of social enterprise in Northern Ireland, 75% were profitable, 12% broke even and 13% made a loss (During the 2017-2018 Financial Year). Research into the age of leadership of social enterprises, showed that over 70% are led by those between 45 and 64 years old while 2% are aged 16 to 24 years old. This will be a future focus and will be among the reasons for working with Belfast Metropolitan College and Queen's University.

This year, Amy Clint was appointed as a young ambassador for SENI. She runs Books by Stellas¹¹ a social enterprise that creates books for children with autism and their families. While her parents received various literature concerning her autistic brother, the lack of material for siblings and classmates prompted her to write books about what the condition means for them. For each book she sells (at £4.99), she donates one to a primary school in Northern Ireland. Mr Jess told the chamber that by the end of their recent awards evening, a person had bought the 200 remaining books that allowed Amy to stock every school library, endorsing the belief in her mission and impact.

Mr Jess pointed out that 43% of social enterprises in Northern Ireland are led by women compared to 41% in the UK and 61% in Scotland. This is a topic that Queen's University is conducting research on and is an area, 'as an organisation, we're proud to say that we're helping to lead the way.'

He then highlighted what social enterprises do and outlined the wide-ranging scope, from creating employment and addressing financial exclusion to providing affordable housing. Regarding the size of social enterprises, at 61%, the large majority have a staff of one to ten which shows the significance of their impact. The challenge for SENI is to help these organisations grow, create more jobs and employ more people.

He described the barriers to social enterprise such as access to finance and the reduction in Government and EU funding. He commented on how organisations are doing remarkably well in the absence of Government support in Northern Ireland. Among the enablers of social enterprise are business and strategic planning, for example, how can we help them be more business focused and strategic and how can we assist with their marketing, tendering or procurement skills to enable them to grow.

Mr Jess concluded with a series of recommendations from the report, including:

- Gaining clarity around the definition of social enterprise (Similar to other jurisdictions such as South East Asia)
- Supporting business skills to assist with increasing income from trade; and
- Supporting young people to consider social enterprise as a career of choice and not something that they fall into when everything else fails.

¹¹ Books By Stellas <https://booksbystellas.com/>



2.3 Section 2: Social Enterprise Ecosystem

CLlr Racheal Batten explained that this second section of the summit focuses on: people, social enterprises and organisations that are actively delivering on the ground and enabling social enterprise development as well key elements of the social enterprise ecosystem.

2.3.1 Accelerators



John Evoy, Social Enterprise Development Manager, Social Innovation Fund Ireland

[John Evoy highlighted how accelerators such as SIFI can provide support]

John Evoy explained that Social Innovation Fund Ireland (SIFI) is similar to a version of what Karel Vanderpoorten spoke about earlier as it is a type of match fund. It sources funds from corporates that is matched by the National Government (Department of Rural and Community Development). The fund then identifies the best, most scalable and innovative social enterprises in Ireland and invests in them with cash as well as other non-financial supports.

He introduced IPB Insurance, a mutual insurance company that insures Local Authorities and other state agencies, as the main corporate funder that has closely aligned values. SIFI has had a total fund of €1.6 million over the past two years and Mr Evoy was delighted to announce that IPB has just committed to another two year contract.

He explained that the main model is to invest cash grants and non-financial supports in social enterprises, referring to Colin Jess' list as closely aligned to what SIFI understands social enterprises need to develop further.

With short programme timeframes of typically six months, he said SIFI cannot deliver all the necessary supports within that period but rather can give the participating social enterprises three or four of those supports as solid building blocks to enable them to continue growing or make them 'investment ready'.

He highlighted building blocks that SIFI provides, beginning with impact understanding and measurement among social enterprises. SIFI helps social enterprises develop a clear understanding of the impact that they are trying to deliver to society or the environment and an develop an understandable and accessible way of measuring that, which Mr Evoy acknowledged is very difficult.

Another block is a thorough review of the business model or strategic plan to ensure sustainability and growth followed by pitching and story-telling. 'Life is a pitch after all so we try to support the social enterprises to get really good at consistently telling their story to customers, funders or Government agencies. It's a challenge because social enterprises are complex and trying to do a lot of things so it's hard to do this in a clear, succinct way.'

'Life is a pitch after all so we try to support social enterprises to get really good at consistently telling their story to customers, funders or Government agencies'

Evidence of the model's success is shown through the fact that SIFI invested €400,000 into social enterprises during 2018 and proceeded to invest a further €975,000 in that cohort of social enterprises, 'making them viable for future investments'. 'That's just from us and I'm sure a lot of these social enterprises will continue to receive further investment from other sources, something that we would support.'

According to Mr Evoy, the other challenge is one of scale and although scaling and replicating is not for every social enterprise, when they do start to grow they need a different set of supports. He recognised that growth capital can be hard to access so this is an area that SIFI lends it support to.

In advance of facilitating a session on scale at the World Forum the following week, and as someone involved within the sector for a few years, listening to the progress being discussed in the chamber, Mr Evoy concluded: 'Ireland has now got so much to offer other countries in terms of what we've learnt. The social enterprise sector has been around for a long time but the momentum that's gathered in the last few years is phenomenal and it's nice to be able to tell that story.'

2.3.2 Supports



Maggie Clune, Training Services & Social Enterprise Manager, PACE / The Mugshot

[Maggie Clune provided an overview of how policy and supports can help social enterprises develop]

Maggie Clune introduced the social mission of PACE as working with people who are coming out of prison or under a probation order to get them back into employment (it is well documented that those with a criminal record struggle to get employment). While the organisation traditionally focused on training, she said that feedback from clients informed them that irrespective of the training, this cohort still couldn't get jobs.

They therefore realised that they needed to start creating jobs through an appropriate model such as a social enterprise. Ms Clune explained that they established a social enterprise in 2014, at a time when there was no one department looking after policy to help them get off the ground.

'Social enterprise was like the bold child, nobody wanted to mind it for too long'. The lack of policy created ambiguity and fear and she admitted that PACE was very fearful all the time, which wasn't a way to try and grow an enterprise.

In the early years, it was the advice of a few key people on how to set themselves up that made all the difference as it was difficult to find any straight answers to practical questions. For example: how would working as a business impact on the benefits of those working under Community Employment Programme (CE) schemes? Were there VAT implications for reaching a certain threshold and what would the subsequent impact on the charity status be? The board was reluctant to make money or profit due to the ambiguity but then how could the enterprise grow?

The first sign of a meaningful policy was through the Department of Justice and Equality: A New Way Forward – Social Enterprise Strategy 2017-2019¹², which validated all the work being done by PACE. Ms Clune said that the strategy was extremely welcome and central to it was its implementation by Siobhán Cafferty [Social Enterprise Project Manager, Department of Justice and Equality]. This strategy helped with the goal of progression by getting people into the social enterprise, training them, updating their CVs and putting them into a paid working environment to build confidence and self-esteem in order to attain a standard mainstream job.

She firmly believes that the new National Social Enterprise Policy is pivotal in removing ambiguity for organisations like hers, which might not have gone down the road of social enterprise as it was too unclear and that a lot of good things will come out of it. 'I think the three policy objectives are fantastic, it's pretty basic stuff and very doable and there should be absolutely no reason for not implementing it. Going forward if the strategy is implemented, it will definitely help us grow in this sector.'

¹² A New Way Forward – Social Enterprise Strategy 2017-2019
http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Social_Enterprise_Strategy_2017-2019

In terms of supports to create jobs, she noted that her organisation was very lucky to be recipients of Community Services Programme¹³ (CSP) funding and was working with ‘brilliant people’ in Pobal. She also commended the Plato Social Enterprise Programme of the Economic Development Office (Dublin City Council) which provided learning, advice and networking opportunities.

She explained that PACE operates the social enterprise called The Mugshot which is a coffee cart and thanked Inner City Enterprise for backing the idea. Dublin City Council is one of the organisation’s biggest supporters and biggest customers in equal measure. The Council has put them in touch with the local community development officers, spread the word among community groups, promoted the product and promoted their organisation as a good quality and service organisation. Ms Clune concluded:

‘The best support that anyone can give a social enterprise is to use their services and buy their products because at the end of the day that’s what’s going to help us create work.’

2.3.3 Procurement



Ingrid McElroy, Community Benefit Programme Manager National Paediatric Hospital Development Board, National Children's Hospital

[Ingrid McElroy shared various insights on how social enterprises could respond to tendering opportunities]

Ingrid McElroy began by explaining that the new National Children’s Hospital will be one of the finest children’s hospitals in the world and is being built in an area of the city where more than half of the electoral divisions are classified as disadvantaged. Recognising this from the start back in 2014, the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board and Children’s Health Ireland examined how to embed the principles of social value and social sustainability into both the construction and operation of the hospital.

She introduced the wide-ranging and ambitious community development programme that was developed in partnership with statutory agencies and community interests including Dublin City Council. The programme is based on four themes:

1. Maximise employment and training opportunities
2. Support local business, particularly small and social enterprise
3. Raise aspirations through education
4. Build on community health and well-being.

¹³ Community Services Programme <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-services-programme-csp/>

She acknowledged that the requirements of construction and healthcare are two areas that are probably particularly difficult for the social enterprise sector to break into in terms of the scale, specialization and in the case of the hospital: the centralised nature of government procurement and associated limitations of HSE frameworks. 'However, where there's a will there's a way and we're very proud to be one of the first state agencies to utilise reserved contracts for social enterprises.'

'However, where there's a will there's a way and we're very proud to be one of the first state agencies to utilise reserved contracts for social enterprises.'

So far this has resulted in contract wins by the F2 Centre in Rialto for office cleaning, the Arch Café for in-house catering, and We Make Good and PALLS Limerick collaboratively for the design and fabrication of special bespoke frames to display the artwork of children attending the new paediatric outpatient and urgent care centre in CHI Connolly (that opened in July). It is hoped to replicate this in the new urgent care centre in Tallaght and the new Children's Hospital at St James.

She recounted that the clinical staff of Children's Health Ireland collaborated with the social enterprise STEAM (based in Cork) to co-develop a very exciting and innovative healthcare science education programme for primary school students. This was recently piloted in St James' National School and Canal Way in Basin Lane, Dublin 8. While this was all good news, she admitted that most of these contracts were very small and explained that the vast majority of opportunities would probably be for social enterprises.

'What's important is the potential leverage it can give a social enterprise. For example, the F2 Centre has gone on to win two more contracts on foot of gaining the contract with us so it's always important to think about the springboard effect and using this as a way of getting another tender.'

She advised people within the social enterprise space to strongly consider collaboration, particularly regarding public procurement. She was delighted to witness summit participants networking and discussing collaboration at the exhibition downstairs and highlighted how forming partnerships or consortia so that a number of small organisations can bid together is a potential way to gain contracts.

Ms McElroy felt it was also worth reflecting on the number of social enterprises operating in similar fields, e.g. catering or woodwork, that are often geographically close by. She said that it would be lovely if people could pool together and complement each other's services, using the example of one person building a door, one making the hinges, and one painting it. The vast majority of items and goods required by a hospital are highly specialised or of a very large scale so she encouraged thinking outside the box when trying to come up with business ideas.

'Rather than thinking about the hospital's services and needs, think about what might be of interest to our staff, children, families, visitors or even the supply chain. Where things are outsourced, like cleaning or catering contracts, you can think about how you might supply something to those subcontractors.'

While the issue of social mission is vital, she told participants that it was equally important not to forget that you are viewed as a business and you need to be able to deliver what was procured in terms of quality, efficiency and cost. She cautioned enterprises not to bid for contracts they were not in a position to deliver on, reminding everyone that deadlines are not elastic.

Despite this, she advised social enterprises not to be afraid to bid as it is simpler than you think and there are various supports to help. She said that there was no need to wait for a tender, but rather make a call to people like herself. For example, while something might not work in a hospital setting, it might work in a nursing home later on, and that call will have put the social enterprise on her radar so she can make that connection in due course should the need arise.



Kathleen McCann, Employment and Training Coordinator, Grangegorman Development Agency

[Kathleen McCann spoke about the community benefit work to date regarding the Grangegorman Development Agency and how social enterprises could fit into that work]

Kathleen McCann began by stating that it was great to be involved in what was beginning to feel like part of a movement around social enterprise and that they are happy to be part of that in whatever way possible. She explained that she is representing the Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) which is a national flagship project on economic and social renewal in Dublin's North inner city, an area of significant disadvantage.

The project involves a huge 73 acre site where a single campus for the former DIT, now TU Dublin will be built and residential mental health facilities and community care for the HSE are being built. She reminded the chamber that this has been a site of psychiatric care since 1815. There is a new Educate Together primary school for the local community to access and use and

ultimately this is a new open quarter and the project is 'stitching this whole area back into the city'.

The Grangegorman Labour and Learning Forum (interagency group) was established a decade ago and comprises statutory, community and voluntary organisations working in the area to leverage maximum benefit from the development for the people living in the area. She listed TU Dublin, the HSE, CDETB, Intreo, Dublin City Council (in many guises), Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Dublin North West Area Partnership, North-West Inner City Network and local schools as members. The key aims are to ensure that employment, education, training, business, enterprise and other opportunities from the project will benefit and improve the quality of life for those surrounding communities.

'We encourage and facilitate effective interagency cooperation and collaboration which has been very important for our successes. We identify gaps and seek to broker solutions, looking to mainstream initiatives where possible by getting things started and handing them over to willing hands'.

She highlighted their strong focus on employment which is progressed through the Grangegorman Employment Charter. This requires percentages and targets of new hires to be comprise people living in Dublin 7, 1 and surrounding areas and is written as a clause in tender documents and included as part of the evaluation.

When the Charter was launched in 2012, national unemployment on the live register was about 16% but it was much higher in the Grangegorman area where youth unemployment was over 30%. While unemployment has come down over the years, Ms McCann believes that there is a key role for social enterprises to create employment opportunities for those 5% that continue to be distanced from the labour market. She cited Maggie Clune's social enterprise as a very good example of that.

She explained that they have also been active around the apprenticeship piece and referred to the 'broken pipeline' from a number of years ago when young people had difficulty accessing employers and how movement by a number of players got apprenticeship back on track. The agency was involved in developing and partnering with the TU Dublin Access to Apprenticeship Programme and developing opportunities for young people to take part in apprenticeships with Grangegorman contractors as part of its efforts to raise the profile of apprenticeship opportunities.

Most of the agency's education and training has been labour market based but not exclusively, naming work with Age Friendly activities, Intergenerational Learning, and the ABC area-based childhood anti-poverty project. For business and enterprise, she mentioned a subgroup of the Labour and Learning Forum that includes organisations like the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Inner City Enterprise (ICE), Innovate Dublin, and the Smithfield and Stoneybatter Business Association (of which Ms McCann is a proud member). The agency has also organised a number of networking events to engage with local business associations in areas characterised by very small or microbusinesses.

In trying to 'dip a toe into social enterprise waters', she confirmed that the agency is looking at opportunities on the demand side. She referenced the GDA and construction phase that may well go on for most of the next decade and TU Dublin and the HSE as the major stakeholders in the operational phase of the development.

On the supply side, she spoke about looking at supports for capacity building in the wider environment and a possible interagency approach that has worked for them as exemplified by the ABC project and the Labour and Learning Forum. She highlighted some possibilities around reserved contracts (mentioned by Ingrid McElroy), subcontracting by bigger contractors and buddying, and supports from TU Dublin by academic staff and students working with social enterprises.

She talked about the many challenges including the public procurement process and the presence of public-private partnerships on these developments. Referencing the agency's own public-private partnership with a facilities management company (due to run for 25 years), she suggested exploring the opportunities for social enterprise within this. She alluded to the creation of TU Dublin that extended into Blanchardstown and Tallaght which in turn creates other challenges around the contracting piece when it is being done across the whole organisation.

Ms McCann finished by inviting all present to the next Grangegorman Business Breakfast which will focus on Social Enterprise and provide an opportunity for social enterprises to get to know each other. The event is being held as part of Dublin City Council's Start-up Week in St Laurence's Church, TU Dublin on October 22nd from 8 a.m.

2.3.4 Marketing



Philip Isard, Project and Office Manager, Quality Matters

[Philip Isard provided insights on addressing social enterprise branding, marketing and promotion and the challenges involved]

On behalf of Quality Matters, Philip Isard set out to address the challenges of branding, promotion and contracting and also to explain its' We Make Good project.

Holding up a 'beautiful, handmade, wooden chopping board', he said that it was designed and made by Cairde Enterprise¹⁴ or PALLS Limerick, a group of people that had contact with the criminal justice system, and was one of the products sold by We Make Good.

We Make Good is Ireland's first collective social enterprise brand which operates under an umbrella of 16 WISE organisations that are working together to share their expertise, challenges and to develop a collective response.

He reiterated the meaning of WISE as work integrated social enterprises namely organisations working with people from disadvantaged groups to help them enter the labour market and find sustainable, full employment for their skills.

'We do this by supporting a group of WISE organisations to develop products in collaboration with Irish designers, to market and advertise those products so they can enter the hands of consumers in Ireland, to secure and promote Business to Business (B2B) contracts, and to support growth and advocate for the development of the WISE sector'.

The 16 different partners working with We Make Good, work with people including travellers, migrants, people in contact with the criminal justice system and people with disabilities. 'They're extremely effective at working with people from these difficult backgrounds and helping them get employment. We share a common vision: to gradually and hopefully improve the opportunities that exist for these people in Ireland.'

Mr Isard highlighted three key challenges:

1. Businesses don't really understand social enterprises and don't believe that they can create or produce the same quality product as they do, this is something that needs to be 'knocked on the head'
2. WISE organisations don't have the resources to afford the level of sales, marketing and brand expertise they need (as mentioned by Karel Vanderpoorten and William Parnell); and
3. WISE organisations that do have strong business models see a role and opportunity for increased state subsidisation.

¹⁴ Cairde Enterprises <https://www.palls.ie/social-enterprise-2>

The first solution he introduced (that was mentioned by Ingrid McElroy) was the partnership between We Make Good and Cairde Enterprises in making the beautiful frames for the National Children's Hospital. Identifying the manufacturers as the same individuals as for the cutting board, he described it as an 'exceptional jump' from designing and producing boards to incredibly technical, large format frames that will be showcased in the hospital. He gave his appreciation to the hospital for the support, while saying how it illustrated the growth that can happen at an individual or local level to deliver high quality products that are on time and that tell an important social story.

Believing that organisations have to embrace their strengths, Mr Isard pointed to the effectiveness of working with these disadvantaged individuals but also to the help required with the challenges around their expertise, be it design, photography, technical production, prototyping, sourcing, or public relations. We Make Good is proposing a collective approach to allow them to be freed up to do the work that they are there to do, and collectively, find ways to support this group of organisations in these areas. 'We don't need to reinvent the wheel but rather provide supports that respond to the challenges they have in the most resource effective way for them.'

A second solution outlined was a collective brand of the 16 social enterprises from across the country. He likened this to the Wild Atlantic Way and potentially the Buy Social campaign as wonderful examples of people from lots of different organisations operating under a single identity. We Make Good has tried extremely hard to manage product quality and quality control, 'We want to avoid a scenario where a poor quality product operating under a single identity creates a negative reputation, so quality for us is a top tier issue'.

Thirdly was the topic of strong business models, characteristic of the social enterprises his organisation works with. He referenced Colin Jess' mentioning of the desire to have more social enterprises in the retail space as these are organisations that rely on trade. In this regard, he perceives an important role for state subsidisation to help those organisations deliver training and support disadvantaged individuals so that they can enter the labour market and find full-time, meaningful employment for their skills.

Mr Isard concluded by saying it has been almost a year since We Make Good opened a pop-up shop in Smithfield and he invited all present to the launch of its new store on Fade Street, Dublin 1 on October 24th. 'With a range of products from over 16 social enterprises, we'd love for you to buy something but most importantly we'd love you to see that each of these social enterprises is delivering something that is extremely high quality and tells a significant story about growth here in Ireland, so we want you to share in that story too.'

2.3.5 Training



Rachel Collier, CEO and Co-Founder, Young Social Innovators

[Rachel Collier spoke about how Young Social Innovators is designing and delivering training and other supports to enable the next generation of social entrepreneurs / innovators at a local and national level in Ireland]

Rachel Collier opened by saying, 'If you want to build capacity for the social economy, education must play a major role in that'. Since 2001, Young Social Innovators (YSI) has been designing and implementing programmes in the second level education system for young people to engage in social innovation and entrepreneurship.

'If you want to build capacity for the social economy, education must play a major role in that'

Currently there are around 15,000 teenagers involved in social innovation and entrepreneurship in the schools YSI works with. She highlighted the importance of the social aspect of innovation and entrepreneurship to 'Generation Z' (current 16 to 21 year olds). Quoting recent research¹⁵ which they conducted with Amárach Research, she revealed that 40% of Generation Z selected 'making a difference in the world' as an indicator of success in life above other considerations such as having a house, money, job or loving relationship (which one might imagine to be the case). 26% (mostly males) expressed a desire to set up their own businesses. 'These statistics combined illustrate that this is a generation that is really ready to build a social economy like no other generation before them.'

'These statistics combined illustrate that this is a generation that is really ready to build a social economy like no other generation before them.'

She explained that when in schools, 'we build capacity amongst educators and help them to facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship'. Although about 5% of our teenage population is engaged in social innovation, Ms Collier believes that while this is good, it is not good enough and wants more young people involved. 'If you want a culture of sport, you invest in sport. You need to invest in social innovation and

entrepreneurial learning and practice. The pedagogy works well and there is high engagement of schools but we need it to be systematic and throughout the country'.

She highlighted YSI's most recent project, assisted by Dublin City Council, which considers how to focus on an area and build social innovation and entrepreneurship capacity among its young population. To this end, she suggested clustering schools, building capacity among educators and helping them to introduce programmes to their junior and senior cycle students and support them to develop their innovations, entrepreneurship and their social enterprises. She affirmed that teenagers are well able to set up profitable social enterprises and advocated to 'let them in even if they're under 18'.

¹⁵ Gen Z Index https://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie/images/uploads/inner/content/Gen_Z_Index_Part_2.pdf

In conjunction with Dublin City Council, YSI is assigning a regional officer in social innovation to engage schools in Dublin city and build from there. She maintains, 'Education alone cannot achieve this, so as well as the schools, it's about looking outwards to the community and building the necessary networks from the business community, local government, civic society, education and academia'.

According to Ms Collier, the skills in social innovation are very like business skills in social enterprises as they are all the same skills that are being built up. Projects developed by students include a publishing house of young people (akin to the books that Colin Jess previously mentioned), country area mapping, a film festival, water conservation, various apps (e.g. to determine soil composition) and solar panel installation mechanisms.

'It's really important to concentrate attention on teenagers, to give them the opportunities and mechanisms, and to create new ways in education that will engage them.'

To help progress this, YSI is setting up a new Social Innovation and Learning Lab in DCU to share learning and conduct facilitation with young people. Ms Collier explained that there is a new generation emerging which represents a very strong pipeline coming from the teenage population into third level and beyond to build social enterprises. As an example, she explained how three YSI alumni have gone on to develop social enterprises and innovation with Enactus Ireland and win awards in California (whom she was glad to see in the room). This demonstrates that, 'Investing in young people in local communities really does produce a new kind of economy and outlook'. She concluded with special thanks to Dublin City Council and the Department of Rural and Community Development for supporting YSI.



Larry O'Neill, Chair of the ILDN Social Economy Working Group & CEO South Dublin County Partnership

[Larry O'Neill spoke about how the ILDN and Local Development Companies / Partnerships are working to provide training and support for social enterprise development at a local level]

Larry O'Neill stated that he was 'invigorated and energised' by the summit contributions and commented that 'it was great to hear about the policy side from the top table'. He said that the Northern Ireland description of social economy would mirror what is happening in the south bar one factor – that 40% of the social economy projects in the South are involved in childcare due to the lack of a State support. He explained that in the UK, there are a lot of Sure Start programmes built into schools. The populations in the community childcare sector have therefore come together to provide a much-needed service to allow females in the main to go back into the labour force.

In regard to training and supports, Mr O'Neill introduced Dublin West Childcare (now called Start Brite¹⁶) that had five childcare units operating as separate legal companies in disadvantaged areas of south county Dublin, three of which were in danger of closing. It brought the five together and 'cut to shreds' the overhead costs of running childcare. The important point he said, was that there was a societal impact and it was no mistake that this is in the first part of the social enterprise definition. He noted that there are now five CEOs and that one of the drivers of bringing them together was Emily Smart, his colleague in the South Dublin County Partnership. While this significant piece of work was an example of what could be done, it also addressed a major issue for social economy projects, that of governance.

'We cannot get Directors onto boards or take responsibility and is it any wonder given the 67 pieces of legislation, in addition to the rules and regulations we have governing childcare alone? Who would sign up to a community board like that?' We have to offer training and mentoring on the governance side, with the latter requiring hand-holding for a long period of time. 'A mentor is there as someone they can trust and rely on to put them on solid ground in a world there they're trying to build stuff on sand.' He reiterated the crucial importance of getting governance correct.

'A mentor is there as someone they can trust and rely on to put them on solid ground in a world there they're trying to build stuff on sand.'

The Clondalkin Community Recycling Initiative (CCRI) was near to closing down before the South Dublin County Partnership got involved. Following a name change and rebrand to Recycle IT¹⁷, 'a fantastic step forward', Mr O'Neill was proud to report that it now offers the last door-to-door collection of white goods in Europe. With organised collections, there is also an environmental impact as it avoids the indiscriminate dumping of these goods (fridges, washing machines, cookers, etc.) in Dublin city and adjoining counties. He confirmed that CCRI employs nearly 20 people, most of whom would not have gotten employment if not for the social economy. 'Again, we're seeing the societal impact in two ways'. Finally he spoke about the superb success in saving end-of-life materials from going to the dump through the Recreate project¹⁸, a partnership with Early Childhood Ireland that took two years to deliver from start to door-opening. He highlighted its huge educational and recreational value as well as its employment of those that may not have found jobs otherwise.

Referring to all three projects Mr O'Neill asserted, 'We can safely say that they've got the governance right'. Touching on his experience of having to wind down companies in an orderly and legal manner, he affirmed that without proper governance, projects will collapse which is a tragedy for all those involved if it is due to this rather than natural progression. He directed a message to the Department of Rural and Community Development officials present, saying how he was delighted to be participating in such a historic place and how great it was to have a senior minister in charge of social economy for the first time (reflecting on a time six years ago when it was no one person's responsibility). While appreciating the fact that there is a policy, with the Department behind it, he said that there needed to be something developed for 'fledglings' or new start-ups in lots of cases.

While welcoming the implementation group, he regretted that none of the ILDN operators on the ground, the 40 practitioners or 50 companies in the network are part of the group. He urged the State,

¹⁶ Start Brite <https://www.startbright.ie/>

¹⁷ Recycle IT <https://www.recycleit.ie/>

¹⁸ Recreate Ireland <https://recreate.ie/>

Government and funding bodies to take the ILDN operators seriously given how far they have come without support, attributing this to their sheer will and energy. He emphasised the opportunity to take on board what these people are saying because they are in the know. With due respect to Karel Vanderpoorten and Deiric O’Broin who are familiar with the framework and academic sides respectively, he stressed the importance of looking at how that impacts the people on the ground.



Maria Flanagan, Community Partner Lead, An Cosán Virtual Community College

[Maria Flanagan explained how An Cosán is designing and delivering training support to enable social enterprise development at a local level and contributing to networking, clustering and activation of new social enterprises]

Maria Flanagan said she was humbled to be in the room with so many peers and ‘amazing social enterprises’ and gladdened to see so many women represented which is indicative of a strong movement forward. She introduced An Cosán Virtual Community College as a unique social enterprise rooted in the extraordinary dream of two visionary women, Dr Ann Louise Gilligan and Dr Katherine Zappone (Minister for Children). The community-based education project began in 1986 in Tallaght West to support the local community through learning, leadership and enterprise. It has now become a national social enterprise through the virtual community college and is serving similar

communities that struggle with inequality and the injustice of poverty across Ireland. In relation to trends, Ms Flanagan stated that social enterprises are experiencing a current period of rapid expansion, dramatic transformation and increased importance thanks to the developing ecosystem of social innovation and social enterprise and the launch of the first social enterprise policy this year.

These developments, she said, prompt the important question of how to open social enterprise opportunities to those in marginalised and underserved communities and promote sustainable community development?

She proceeded to outline several challenges regularly met by learners and community partners. There is agreement that social enterprise supports and higher education provision are most likely to reach those with higher capacity. The groups supported by An Cosán are those most excluded from education and living on the margins of society, e.g. early school leavers; long-term unemployed; and people exiting homelessness, poverty, drug addiction or living in direct provision. ‘They’re normally seen and assumed as the beneficiaries of social enterprise. However, we know that many of the learners and organisations we work with are active citizens, leaders or volunteers in their communities and with the right supports, they have the capacity to create or work in local social enterprises. We therefore need to change our assumptions.’ She continued, ‘Just as we know that your postcode shouldn’t determine your level of education, yet it does.’ A HEA report shows the stark differences that exist regarding participation in higher level education, as 99% of young adults in Dublin 6 progress

to third level education, as low as 15% do so in Dublin 15. Furthermore, this can drop as low as two or three percent if you were to go to micro-levels.

In order to properly address the challenges of individuals from underserved communities, Ms Flanagan believes that a generic approach to training and education will not work and will have limited results. Limited or lack of access to resources such as finance, transport, childcare or information technology infrastructure (laptop or wifi) often blocks or limits participation in education. She also spoke about confidence as ‘an invisible barrier’ limiting beliefs that can hold people back. Finally, it is acknowledged that without access to social capital, individuals find it really difficult to connect to society, the economy and institutions.

She brought up the opportunities afforded by innovation and technology, ‘With the right tools and supports, ordinary people can do extraordinary things’. She spoke about how providing an accessible model and structured framework, sharing awareness of the range of available supports, bringing together local resources and facilities, and introducing people to networks of support can have a transformative impact on individuals, their families and their communities.

‘With the right tools and supports, ordinary people can do extraordinary things’

‘The An Cosán model reflects all that is best in 21st century teaching and learning on a number of fronts’:

- It provides a holistic, learner-centred, reflective, inclusive, collaborative and partnership model
- It delivers programmes through an innovative blended learning model that combines face-to-face workshops and weekly online sessions while learners engage in extensive peer-to-peer learning through online discussions, group work activities, case studies, practical examples and personal reflections
- It opens a window to examine case studies and share best practices at global, national and local levels
- It gives an opportunity for learners to analyse and discuss social enterprise development and reflect on their own experiences
- In an era of rapid digitalisation, it develops an individual’s soft and digital skill competencies, encourages personal development, growth and builds confidence
- It offers an innovative pathway from foundation level right through to accredited higher level education at Level 6 and 7 and provides continuous professional development for people who work in the sector
- It builds collaborative peer-to-peer learning opportunities, provides important mentorship and support and offers a way of building networks and social capital, thereby empowering communities.

To date, An Cosán has worked with communities in delivering social enterprise training in Mayo, Donegal, Derry, and Waterford with the support of local development companies as well as in Dublin with the support of Dublin City Council.

Admitting that An Cosán cannot do this on its own, she introduced Carlow IT as a collaborative partner that support and accredit all of its programmes. Belief in a bottom up approach means that it works with community partners on a national level to support learners who share a similar ethos. By way of a multi-stakeholder approach to social enterprise and community development, she remarked that the ‘clustering’ mentioned by Karel Vanderpoorten can have really strong results when all the stakeholders work together to build a positive outcome for learners and communities.

Ms Flanagan spoke of the need to avoid a two-tier system in education that leaves those farthest behind even further behind. ‘To do this, we need to reimagine traditional education styles and embrace the opportunity presented by technology and invest in community education.’ She also suggested the need to foster and promote a collective partnership and model to support social enterprise development. Finally, she said, ‘We must actively listen to those that we support, putting communities at the front of innovating their own solutions – nothing about us without us – and we must think of the people who are not in the room.’

DRAFT

