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Policy Context for Social Enterprise's in Ireland

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Why a National Social Enterprise Policy?

- Recognised policy gap – Ministerial commitment to address
- Action Plan for Rural Development, Action 99: *"Develop and publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise which will encompass the full range of activity in this sector"*
- Department of Rural and Community Development given clear policy responsibility
- Purpose of Research Report - to underpin a Policy and Implementation Plan
- The project launched in August 2017 and a Steering Group was established – cross departments and sector

Research – Methodology

- Desk information sources include Forfás, ILDN Report, GECES, OECD, comparisons with other jurisdictions, EU (200+ initiatives and official documents recognising the importance and contribution of social enterprises); mapping exercise, Scotland, and many others...
- Ten stakeholder types were identified:
 - Social enterprises
 - Government Departments
 - social funding organisations
 - promoters
 - representative bodies
 - academic/educational bodies
 - public bodies
 - European Union
 - support bodies international peers

Research Report: Conclusions

The Research Report underpinning the National Social Enterprise Policy has:

- Demonstrated the importance of collaboration between DRCD and the Social Enterprise Sector
- Drawn conclusions across a range of areas. These conclusions relate to areas of work that were identified over the course of the research as important to realising the potential of the Social Enterprise Sector.
- The conclusions fall within 3 areas for implementation. These are:
 1. Developing Social Enterprise
 2. Enabling Social Enterprise
 3. Creating Market Opportunities

Report: Vision for the Sector

**Revitalising Local
Communities**

**Innovation, Drive and
Entrepreneurship**

Governance, Leadership Capability

**Democratic and
Inclusive**

Growth

Clear Identity

Improving Lives

Part of Education

Local Services

Partnership with Government

Comparisons with Other Jurisdictions

- University College Cork (UCC) undertook a research study in 2017 “Developing the social enterprise sector in Ireland: a comparative perspective”
- To provide an insight into the different models of social enterprise that exist and the differentiated supports pursued in other jurisdictions
- Scotland
- Italy
- Canada, and,
- Denmark

Overall Learning

- There is **no simple formula** for the development of a vibrant and successful social enterprise sector, context is all
- Even important factors (such as legal recognition, funding) are not sufficient; they are just components of an **overall eco-system**
- There must also be a strong impetus from the **bottom up**, a demonstrable need for which the social enterprise model provides the best solution
- It is a **long-term process**, that it involves an element of trial and (sometimes) error
- But there are **certain common factors** which seem to be associated with the creation of a successful and vibrant SE sector
- These factors are both **exogenous** (i.e. associated with the legal, policy and funding environment) and **endogenous** (i.e. internal to the social enterprise sector itself and how it organises, manages and promotes

What next

- The pending policy is something that the sector has been advocating on for a long time
- This represents an opportunity to realise the potential of social enterprise.
- April 2019 Minister and DRCD have launched a public consultation on the draft policy.
- The sector needs to respond and create a distinct single voice
- There is scope for the policy to be more ambitious for S/Es
- This policy is the opportunity to clearly distinguish social enterprises from community and voluntary bodies and a social enterprise-specific roadmap could be drafted to suit the needs of the social enterprise sector.
- The policy timeframe is 2019-2022