

Caritas Cares Ireland Report November 2015

What this report is about

This report describes the main challenges related to poverty and social exclusion in Ireland. It presents official data, which it compares to the experience of Social Justice Ireland on the ground, and provides recommendations for policy makers to address these challenges.

About Social Justice Ireland

Social Justice Ireland provides independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies as a whole. The organisation works to improve the quality of public policy by influencing the public debate to ensure it focuses on the needs of people with experience of poverty as well as vulnerable groups. Thus, it focuses on national and international issues related to poverty, inequality, social exclusion, sustainability and the environment. Social Justice Ireland has more than 250 individual members and more than 110 member organisations that cover every county in Ireland; they vary in size, capacity and focus, as they address a wide range of policy issues that are of particular concern to specific target groups. Many of the member organisations also have national coverage.



Recent publications by Social Justice Ireland:

- [Reducing Obesity and Future Health Costs](#)
- [Response to the Spring Economic Statement](#)
- [Policy Briefing on Work, Jobs and Unemployment](#)
- [Towards a Just Society - Socio-Economic Review 2015](#)
- [Poverty and Inequality on the Rise - Just Social Models Needed as the Solution](#)
- [Ireland and the Europe 2020 Strategy: Employment, Education and Poverty](#)

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**Access to housing
and inclusive labour
markets are under
severe threat in
Ireland**

Ireland's main challenges related to poverty and social exclusion:

❖ **Young people are at highest risk**

Young people aged between 18 and 24 represent the group at highest risk of poverty and social exclusion. Numbers of people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and youth unemployment rates are exceptionally high while social benefits for young people have been reduced and are now more than 100 Euros below the poverty line.

❖ **Access to housing is one of the biggest and most worrying challenges**

The number of households becoming homeless, because their rent has increased, has been escalating steadily. This increase is related to the lack of supply of accommodation.

❖ **Long-term unemployed are affected by a skills mismatch in the labour market**

A significant share of people is currently excluded from the labour force due to their lack of skills required to take up the jobs that do become available.

❖ **The right to healthcare is becoming less accessible**

Budget cuts in the public health system have made the right to these services inaccessible, especially to those on low incomes.

Policy recommendations for the National Government:

Adequate income support:

1. Implement a basic income system.

Inclusive labour markets:

2. Develop a rural and regional employment and economic development strategy that includes incentives for job creation, as well as targeted training, and measures that facilitate access to child care services.

Access to quality services:

3. Take sustainable measures to increase the supply of affordable housing by investing in social housing; and ensuring there is an adequate supply of housing (social housing units and private housing units) to meet demand.
4. Introduce measures that facilitate access to health care services by increasing the capacities of public health care services; map a clear pathway to universal healthcare; and develop a public financing mechanism that ensures all patients have timely access to care and that primary care centres and social care services are rolled out nationally.

1. Poverty and social exclusion in Ireland: the reality behind the data

The problems of most concern in Ireland

- ❖ Access to housing
- ❖ Long-term unemployment
- ❖ Rural poverty

Access to housing

Ireland is in the midst of a serious housing crisis. Demand far exceeds supply, especially in the Greater Dublin area and, as a result, the cost of accommodation has risen steeply and is now far beyond the financial capacity of many. There are approximately 90,000 households currently on the waiting list for social housing. These households are not in a position to purchase a home. The number of households becoming homeless because their rent has increased has been escalating steadily. According to a recent study,¹ there is an annual difference between the Minimum Income Standard required for a household in private rented accommodation of 13,000 Euros compared to a household in local authority accommodation. The research also highlights the impact that the cost of housing has on the living standards of households.

Lewis (75) has lived alone at his current address for 15 years. He is a widower with two adult children who live outside of Dublin. Due to rising rents he is no longer able to remain at his current address. He has been on the housing waiting list since 2009 and has been refused rent allowance. He worked as a taxi driver until 2012 when illness stopped him from driving. He wants to stay in his home but can no longer manage to on his pension. 'I love where I live but I just can't afford to live here.' Worry over his living situation has put a strain on his mental health and he is in dire need of somewhere to live.

Testimony provided by ALONE, an organisational member of Social Justice Ireland. ALONE is a national charity that works with the 1-in-5 elderly people who are socially isolated, homeless, and living in poverty or crisis in Ireland.

Long-term unemployment

The recession has left Ireland with a deep long-term unemployment crisis. There are 272,000 fewer full-time jobs in Ireland today compared to 2007 (-15%). The number of people in part-time jobs is 55,700 higher than in 2007 (+14%). More than a quarter (115,500) of part-time workers is under-employed. 58% of the unemployed are long-term unemployed. The situation in Ireland is particularly difficult for those under 25 and over 55 who are seeking to return to employment. Not enough has been done by Government to ensure that those who are long-term unemployed are given access to appropriate re-skilling opportunities in order to enable them to take up the types of employment that may become available in the areas in which they

¹ Vincetian Partnership for Social Justice, 2014. [Housing Tenure and its Impact on the Cost of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. Working Paper.](#)

are based. In rural and regional Ireland the employment opportunities are far more limited than in urban areas.²

Rural poverty

Rural poverty is another problem facing Ireland today. Rural Ireland has an AROP (at risk of poverty) rate of 19.3%, over 4 percentage points higher than the national rate of 15.2%. The deprivation rate in rural Ireland is 31%, which is again higher than the national headline rate.³ It is worrying that the gap between rural Ireland and urban Ireland is widening. At the same time, the demographics of rural areas are changing, with a higher rate of older people who are more dependent on public services.

Groups at risk of poverty with the highest need for political action in Ireland

- ❖ Long-term unemployed
- ❖ Young people aged 18-24
- ❖ Lone parents
- ❖ People with a disability
- ❖ Children

Long-term unemployed

People who are unemployed, and in particular those who are long-term unemployed, face significant challenges. The basic social welfare payment for unemployed people has been reduced by 8% and is now almost 20 Euros per week below the poverty line. Long-term unemployment in Ireland is now considered structural in nature.⁴ Many of those who are long-term unemployed do not have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to take up the jobs that are currently being created.⁵

Young people aged 18-24

Young people aged 18-24 face barriers in terms of labour market participation due to high unemployment in Ireland. Ireland has a NEET rate of 19.5% (Eurostat 2014) and youth unemployment is still high at 21.8% (Eurostat 2014). Social welfare payments to young people aged 18-24 have been reduced by 51%.⁶ This means that basic social welfare payments to young people in Ireland are over 100 Euros below the poverty line for a single adult (60% median income).⁷

Lone parents

Lone parents face barriers in terms of re-joining the labour market, very high childcare costs, cuts to funding for public services and lack of social infrastructure to support early years' care and after school care. The cost of childcare as a percentage

² Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Policy Briefing on Work, Unemployment and Job Creation](#).

³ Central Statistics Office, 2015. [Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2013](#).

⁴ European Commission, 2015. [Staff Working Document - Country Report Ireland](#).

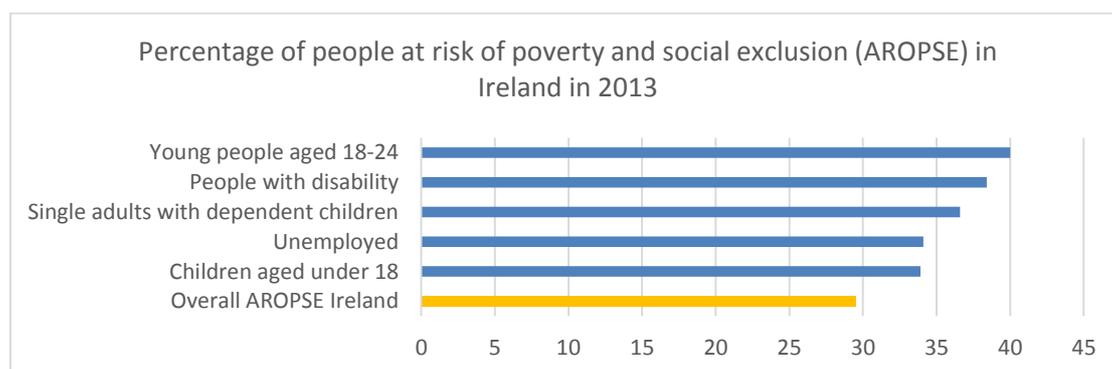
⁵ Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Towards a Just Society](#), p. 212.

⁶ Social Justice Ireland, 2014. [Budget 2015 Analysis and Critique](#), p. 11

⁷ Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Towards a Just Society, p.40](#).

of wages in Ireland is higher than in any other EU country.⁸ The EC has noted that only very limited progress has been made in this area which is why it has remained the subject of a country specific recommendation for Ireland in 2015. Cuts to funding for public services, social infrastructure and child support payments have pushed lone parents further into poverty. As high users of public services, they are disproportionately impacted by cuts to these services.⁹

People with a disability



Source: Eurostat

People with a disability face higher everyday living costs because of their disability. 13% of the population in Ireland have a disability.¹⁰ They are under-represented in the labour force, with a participation rate of 30%, less than half that of the population in general.¹¹ Since 2008, spending on disability services in Ireland has fallen by 9.4%. As high users of public services, people with a disability have been disproportionately impacted by cuts to public services and changes to medical cards and prescription charge thresholds introduced in recent years.¹²

Children

Direct income support for children was reduced by 21% in the period 2008-2014. A slight increase was allocated in 2015. In addition to this, families with children now face additional costs and charges in terms of school transport, school clothing and footwear, among others. One in three children in Ireland is now experiencing deprivation¹³ and 11.7% of children in Ireland live in consistent poverty.¹⁴

The challenges in achieving active inclusion in Ireland

- ❖ Adequate Income Support
- ❖ Inclusive labour markets
- ❖ Access to quality services

⁸European Commission, 2015. [Country Report Ireland](#)

⁹Social Justice Ireland, 2014. [Budget 2015 Analysis and Critique](#), p.10.

¹⁰Central Statistics Office, 2013. [Census Profile 8](#).

¹¹Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Policy Briefing on Work, Unemployment and Job Creation](#).

¹²Social Justice Ireland, 2014. [Budget 2015 Analysis and Critique](#).

¹³Central Statistics Office, 2015. [Survey on Income and Living Conditions \(SILC\) 2015](#).

¹⁴Central Statistics Office, 2015. [SILC 2015](#).

Adequate income support

In Ireland, minimum income schemes are accessible but with limitations as they are means-tested; furthermore, they can be considered inadequate in covering basic living needs. Ireland has a social protection system which is the main means of redistributing income. Without social transfers, 49.8% of the population would be at risk of poverty.¹⁵ This highlights the importance of social transfers in addressing income inequality in Ireland. What it also exposes is the underlying income inequality that is inherent within the Irish system. The basic social welfare payments

are means-tested, which can make it difficult for certain individuals (e.g. individuals who are self-employed) to access a full payment. Payments have not risen with inflation and, therefore, the buying power of people reliant on social welfare payments has been reduced. At present, the basic adult social welfare payment of 188 Euros per week is 20 Euros below the poverty line, which is 208.08 Euros for a single adult.¹⁶ Therefore, minimum income schemes in Ireland are considered to be inadequate in reducing poverty and social exclusion and in promoting social inclusion.

The Minimum Weekly Disposable Income Required to Avoid Poverty in 2015, by Household Types

Household containing	Weekly poverty line	Annual poverty line
1 adult	€208.08	€10,850
1 adult + 1 child	€276.75	€14,430
1 adult + 2 children	€345.41	€18,011
1 adult + 3 children	€414.08	€21,591
2 adults	€345.41	€18,011
2 adults + 1 child	€414.08	€21,591
2 adults + 2 children	€482.74	€25,172
2 adults + 3 children	€551.41	€28,752
3 adults	€482.74	€25,172

Source: Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Socio Economic Review 2015, p.40.](#)

Inclusive labour markets

The labour market in Ireland is not wholly inclusive. There are still many issues that will prevent Ireland from realising an inclusive labour market:

- (1) According to the latest OECD ([Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#)) [PIAAC results](#) (i.e. the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), 18% of Irish adults have a literacy level at or below level 1, 24% of Irish adults have a numeracy level at or below level 1 and 42% of Irish adults have difficulties in technology-rich environments. These groups of Irish adults need specialised education and training courses designed to improve their literacy, digital literacy and numeracy, as they are currently excluded from the labour force due to their lack of skills required to take up the jobs that are, or are becoming, available.
- (2) Precarious employment and sustained long-term unemployment are challenges that Ireland continues to face.

¹⁵ Central Statistics Office, 2015. [SILC 2015](#).

¹⁶ Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Towards a Just Society](#). p. 40.

- (3) Lack of access to childcare is a major challenge to achieving inclusive labour markets in Ireland. As the European Commission pointed out recently,¹⁷ Ireland has the highest childcare costs as a proportion of wages in the EU and a very under-developed infrastructure to deliver early childhood education and care. This acts as a barrier to women with children returning to or entering the labour force.
- (4) Only 30% of people with disabilities are participating in the labour force. Such a low participation rate is of significant cause for concern.

Access to quality services

In recent years, access to services has declined. Between 2008 and 2014, the budget for public expenditure was reduced by 66.4%, or 20.1 billion Euros. As a result those people who are most reliant on public services - those who are vulnerable - have had increasing difficulty in accessing public services. At the time of greatest need, charges were introduced for some public services, while more services were reduced. As a result of the budget adjustment and reduction in public expenditure between 2008 and 2014, staff levels have been reduced in areas such as health and education, and charges have been increased, for example, the prescription charge and school transport cost, while in other areas services have been reduced dramatically. As a result, those who are most reliant on these services have been disproportionately impacted by the reduction in public services available to them.¹⁸

Access to services is limited for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland

- ❖ Right to healthcare
- ❖ Right to housing

With regards to the problems related to not being able to realise the right to healthcare, it should be highlighted that approximately 4 billion Euros was cut from the healthcare system in Ireland between 2008 and 2014. This has resulted in less staff employed in the service, fewer hours being delivered in certain areas (e.g. home help hours) and reduced access to necessary services for certain groups. Combined with exceptionally long waiting times for public hospital treatment of up to 18 months,¹⁹ this has made access to healthcare more difficult for those who are on low incomes and reliant on public services.

Concerning limited access to the right to housing, it can be observed that, due to lack of available supply, the cost of accommodation is now far beyond the financial capacity of many people. There are currently 90,000 households waiting for social housing. In addition to this, 104,693 private residential mortgage accounts for principal dwellings in Ireland are in arrears, 9.8% of whom have been in arrears of more than 90 days. This will place additional pressure on an already overburdened

¹⁷ See footnote 8.

¹⁸ Social Justice Ireland, 2014. [Budget 2015 Analysis and Critique](#), pp.10-11.

¹⁹ Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Towards a Just Society](#), p. 172-186.

housing system which is almost solely reliant on the private sector for supply.²⁰ As a result, those on low incomes have difficulty accessing appropriate accommodation due to increased private rental costs.

2. How effective are Ireland's policies to fight poverty and social exclusion?

The Country Report for Ireland,²¹ published by the European Commission in February 2015, does not accurately and fully reflect the main problems and reality of poverty and social exclusion in the country. The report focuses mainly on the issues of finance, the macro-economy and structural imbalances. Ireland's sustained problem of poverty and social exclusion is not adequately addressed. The only reference to poverty is in relation to child poverty and low-work-intensity households. This ignores the problems faced by many others, especially those in rural Ireland. The problem of access to affordable housing is not referenced; instead the focus is on mortgage arrears and property prices. While structural long-term unemployment is identified as a problem in this report, the extent of the problem is not reflected in the subsequent Country Specific Recommendations. At the same time, the National Reform Programme²² published by the Government of Ireland does not adequately reflect or address these problems either.

In general, it can be said that the current policies implemented in Ireland do not address the problems related to poverty and social exclusion. Firstly, the current policies being implemented by Government have not addressed the described problem of social housing waiting lists. Although the publication of [Construction 2020](#) and the Government's commitment to social housing provision can be considered a positive development, the need for full resourcing and implementation of this policy has to be stressed. Secondly, considering that, at present, 58% of those who are unemployed are long-term unemployed in Ireland, current policies are inadequate to reach this group that requires targeted training in terms of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Moreover, training and education courses need to be accessible to those outside of urban areas. This training would need to be linked with employment opportunities that are likely to be available in these areas and tailored to meet the needs of those who are long-term unemployed.

Regarding policies implemented in recent years, it can be stated that these have been ineffective in addressing the problems of poverty and social exclusion. In the Social Inclusion Monitor 2013²³ the Department of Social Protection also acknowledges that no progress has been made towards the Europe 2020 targets, and that the number of children living in consistent poverty has increased, meaning that Ireland is further away from meeting its child poverty target than in the previous year.

²⁰Social Justice Ireland, 2015. [Towards a Just Society](#), p. 130-171.

²¹See footnote 8.

²²Government of Ireland, 2015. [National Reform Programme Ireland 2015](#).

²³Department of Social Protection, 2015. [Social Inclusion Monitor 2013](#), p.1.

What policies are needed to address poverty and social exclusion more effectively?

In Ireland, a tailored investment policy is required:

- (i) to meet the social housing needs of the 90,000 households on waiting lists;
- (ii) to ensure access to an infrastructure of quality and affordable childcare to enable lone parents to access employment;
- (iii) to target the up-skilling of the long-term unemployed, and focused on those most distant from the labour market and on ensuring they can access sustainable employment in their local area and region which pays a decent wage. This requires an integrated approach from employers, education boards, local education providers and employment services' offices.

In this context, the EU could support the Government of Ireland in addressing the problems of poverty and social exclusion more effectively, by ensuring flexibility regarding investment for infrastructural deficits in order to meet social need under the Stability and Growth Pact. Due to the current inflexibility of the macroeconomic rules, it is impossible for Ireland to invest on the scale required in order to ensure access to appropriate accommodation for citizens, or access to quality and affordable childcare. Without allowing flexibility, in terms of infrastructural investment to meet social needs, these problems will not be solved.

The impact of social protection system reforms

Social protection system reforms & modernisation in Ireland

- ❖ The reforms have focussed on budget cuts and some steps have been taken to partially reform some aspects of the social protection system.
- ❖ They are not contributing to reducing inequality in society and do not have the capacity to break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage.

Recent reforms of the social protection system have had a negative impact on poverty and social exclusion in Ireland.

Example of an ineffective policy or programme related to the active inclusion pillars of “adequate income support” and “inclusive labour markets”.

The recent reduction in the weekly jobseekers' allowance for young people aged 18-24 by 51% can be considered a policy measure with a negative impact on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion; this measure was implemented by the Department of Social Protection.

The use of EU funds in Ireland

- ❖ None of the proposals made by Social Justice Ireland, which were contained in a set of proposals submitted as part of an Irish network of NGOs/Civil Society organisations, were included in the programming documents for European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds in Ireland.
- ❖ The European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme in Ireland includes an active inclusion investment priority; however, the proposed measures are considered inadequate in reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Social Justice Ireland has been involved in the planning process of the ESI Funds 2014-2020 in Ireland as part of a network of Irish Civil Society Organisations (NGOs); however, none of the proposals was taken into account in the programming documents. Nevertheless, Social Justice Ireland is expected to be involved in the direct implementation of European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 through representation on a monitoring committee of the Operational Programme (OP) through to 2020.

In this programming period, Ireland has a European Social Fund OP that specifically addresses the challenges of poverty and social exclusion. This OP includes the investment priority on active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability. The planned measures include targeted training and activation to ensure those people who are unemployed are able to gain employment. However, these measures can be considered inadequate, as they are focused solely on activation, not on poverty and social exclusion. They do not address the problems of people with disabilities (who cannot access many of these activation programmes), children, people in a caring role or people who are unconnected to the labour market.

3. The response of Caritas: initiatives that have been effective when addressing poverty and social exclusion

The following initiatives run by Social Justice Ireland have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on the reduction of poverty in Ireland:

UNIVERSAL PENSION

<http://www.socialjustice.ie/content/publications/universal-pension-ireland-2013>

Project “A Universal Pension for Ireland”

Description

This research project promotes the implementation of a universal pension in Ireland

in order to ensure that the State is ready to meet demographic challenges in terms of income support.

Problem addressed

This project addresses a challenge related to the “income support” pillar of active inclusion with regards to the existing lack of pension coverage and inadequate pension coverage for a lot of the population aged 66 and over, in particular women, and the very low level of young people who currently have pension funds.

Results

Ireland could finance a universal pension for every person over 66 (subject only to a residency qualification) by simply reducing the current tax break for private pensions.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

<http://www.socialjustice.ie/content/civil-society-policy-home>

Project “Support for Public Participation Networks”

Description

Social Justice Ireland is rolling out a programme aimed at building the capacity of Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and their members in these areas. In addition, it will support Local Authorities and other State Agencies to maximize the benefits of community participation in policy development and decision making. Participants will gain knowledge and understanding of the policy landscape, plus the key actors and issues in a specific arena. These modules will each focus on a specific aspect of policy where there is substantial control at a local level. Some of the areas proposed for coverage include: housing, community development, economic development, rural development, planning, transport and infrastructure, the environment and sustainability, as well as social inclusion.

Problem addressed

This project addresses a challenge related to the “access to services” pillar of active inclusion with regards to the recommendation made by the Working [Group on Citizen Engagement in 2013](#) which reported to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. The group was asked to make recommendations that would improve and facilitate the input of citizens into decision-making at local government level. This would enable citizens to have a greater involvement in decision-making regarding the services required at a local level and their delivery. The Working Group proposed the establishment of Public Participation Networks (PPNs) in each Local Authority area. These networks are designed to promote public participation in local areas and to engage local people in the planning, design and delivery of services required in their local area.

Results

In 2015, all Local Authorities and PPNs have been approached, a tailored training and education package has been designed and is being delivered across the country to improve engagement with policy issues at local level. In particular, this relates to

well-being, employment opportunities, poverty and social exclusion and participation.

Innovative features & success factors

Social Justice Ireland is committed to the development of deliberative democracy structures and active citizenship, which will ensure that people and community organisations will have a genuine voice in shaping the decisions that affect them and contribute to local development and well-being.

4. Recommendations to address the described problems

Recommendation 1: Develop a rural and regional employment and economic development strategy that includes incentives for job creation as well as targeted training, and measures that facilitate access to child care services.

- **Problem addressed if implemented:** Rural and regional unemployment and poverty; skills mismatch in the labour market; structural obstacles that hamper the combination of income generation and child rearing activities for parents.
- **Governmental department that could lead this measure:** The [Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation](#) and the [Department of Public Expenditure and Reform](#).
- **Policy framework:** The EC Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (“inclusive labour markets” pillar), the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme 2014-2020, National Action Plan for Jobs, National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy.
- **How the European Commission could support this measure:** By providing tailored policy guidance (e.g. Country Report, Country Specific Recommendations etc.) that addresses the problems of rural poverty in Ireland.

Recommendation 3: Implement a basic income system.

- **Problem addressed if implemented:** Precarious employment, poverty and social exclusion. The present tax and social welfare systems should be integrated and reformed to make them more appropriate to the changing world of the [21st Century](#).²⁴ A basic income system is work- and employment-friendly; it eliminates poverty traps and unemployment traps, promotes equity and ensures that everyone receives at least the poverty-threshold level of income. Furthermore, it spreads the burden of taxation more equitably and treats men and women equally. It is simple and transparent, efficient in labour-market terms and rewards types of work in the social economy that the market economy often ignores, e.g. home duties, caring, etc. Moreover, it facilitates further education and training in the labour force and faces up to the changes in the global economy.

²⁴Van Parijs, P. 2005. [Basic Income: A Simple and Powerful Idea for the 21st Century](#)

- ➔ **Governmental department that could lead this measure:** The [Department of Finance](#) and the [Department of Social Protection](#) and the [Office of the Revenue Commissioner](#).
- ➔ **Policy framework:** The EC Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (“adequate income support” and “inclusive labour markets” pillars).
- ➔ **How the European Commission could support this measure:** By supporting further research and examination of these systems at a European level.

Recommendation 4: Take sustainable measures to increase the supply of affordable housing by investing in social housing and ensuring there is an adequate supply of housing (social housing units and private housing units) to meet demand.

- ➔ **Problem addressed if implemented:** Lack of supply of affordable housing.
- ➔ **Governmental department that could lead this measure:** The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Finance.
- ➔ **Policy framework:** The Construction 2020 Strategy, EC Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (“access to quality services” pillar).
- ➔ **How the European Commission could support this measure:** By providing flexibility regarding investment for infrastructural deficits in order to meet social needs under the Stability and Growth Pact, and tailored policy guidance (e.g. Country Report, Country Specific Recommendations) that address the problem of housing shortage and the lack of affordable housing in Ireland.

Recommendation 5: Introduce measures that facilitate access to health care services by increasing the capacities of public health care services; map a clear pathway to universal healthcare and develop a public financing mechanism that ensures all patients have timely access to care and that primary care centres and social care services are rolled out nationally.

- ➔ **Problem addressed if implemented:** Long waiting times at public health care services.
- ➔ **Governmental department that could lead this measure:** The [Department of Health](#) and the [Department of Social Protection](#).
- ➔ **Policy framework:** The EC Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (“access to quality services” pillar).
- ➔ **How the European Commission could support this measure:** By providing tailored policy guidance (e.g. Country Report, Country Specific Recommendations) that address the problem of limited access to health care.



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