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Independent and Interdependent - Report

Sustaining a Strong and Vital Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland

Action is required to secure the independence of Ireland's charities.

The following report, titled *Independent and Interdependent: Sustaining a Strong and Vital Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland*, is based on structured conversations with 25 leaders in the community and voluntary sector.

[Download the full report.](#) [1]

Report Snapshot

The report identifies a number of factors that have the potential to undermine the ability of Ireland's 19,000 community and voluntary organisations to advocate effectively on behalf of the people they serve.

According to the report, one of the key factors undermining the independence of charities is their vulnerability to cuts in the Statutory funding they use to deliver essential social and public services.

More recently, new statutory service level agreements and grant agreements have been put in place that require that public funds cannot be used to support activity designed to 'obtain changes in the law or related government policies or to persuade people to adopt a particular view on a question of public policy' - to prevent advocacy activity in other words.

'Public and social services are increasingly delivered by community and voluntary organisations. But charities are more than service providers, they also provide a 'public' space where private citizens can participate in shaping public policy, and this advocacy role played by community and voluntary organisations is particularly important in underpinning participative democracy,' said Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel.

Mr Cooper added that there is a need for a clear policy from the State regarding its view of the role of the sector and its role in sustaining the sector:

'The election of a new government provides the ideal opportunity to implement such an agreement,' he said.

Background to the Report

The report was funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, social and scientific interests. Based in Lisbon with offices in London and Paris, the Foundation is in a privileged position to support national and transnational work tackling contemporary

issues.

Andrew Barnett, director of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, UK and Ireland, said:

?Across the Western world, public services are increasingly delivered by a diverse range of providers, and not just by the public sector. This is a positive trend but has created many new challenges and all the more so as organisations, previously reliant on government support, have been threatened ? perhaps to the point of their very existence ? by significant reductions in government investment. This is an international phenomenon and one that cannot be ignored in the context of looking at the future of civil society in Ireland and elsewhere.?

Download the Report

[Independent and Interdependent - Sustaining a Strong and Vital Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland: A Report.](#) [1] PDF, 1.68MB.

Further Information

Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel is available for interview regarding the content of this report. Please contact Gert Ackermann on 086 176 9287 or email gert@wheel.ie [2]

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