



Stronger Charities.
Stronger Communities.

National Implementation Plan for the SDGs 2022-2024 and

June 2022

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About The Wheel

The Wheel is Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises. We are the representative body for this vibrant and diverse sector and, together with our members, we shape and promote conditions in which people and their communities thrive. We passionately believe that community and voluntary action improves and enriches communities and society.

Our simple but ambitious mission is to make Ireland a fair and just place for all by strengthening the capacity and capability of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises to play their part. We do this by representing these organisations, supporting these organisations to do their work, and promoting the importance of the voluntarism and community values that power these organisations.

The Wheel has 2,000 members and provides support services and representation on behalf of these members relating to matters that reflect their collective interests.

About the Charity, Community and Voluntary and Social Enterprise Sector

Independent, community-based, voluntary organisations have long played a key role in supporting and advocating with and for people and communities in Ireland. Indeed it is often through the initiative and advocacy of self-organising communities that many community, health and social care services have been initiated.

Community and voluntary organisations are involved in every community in the country, providing health and social supports, services and advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities, older people, young people, children, people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, and people at every stage of the lifecycle. Over the two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the extent to which we rely on the community and voluntary sector, especially in difficult times.

These organisations played a key part in sustaining communities during the crisis, demonstrating their core role as part of Ireland's public service infrastructure. They restructured services to deliver remotely, responded to the need for socially-distanced and safe provision, cut costs, redirected resources to priority areas and designed new service responses targeted at meeting emergent need.

The community and voluntary sector constitutes a significant social economy within the broader economy. It comprises almost 35,000 community, voluntary and charitable organisations, involves over 86,481 volunteer directors and trustees, directly employs 165,000 people, and manages income of €14.2bn per year. These organisations raise over half of this income (more than €8.3bn) themselves, majorly subsidising the cost of public services in Ireland. Indecon Economic Consultants (in a report published by the Charities Regulator in 2018) estimate that the total direct, indirect, and induced value of the work of Ireland's charities exceed €24bn per annum and supports 289,000 employees.

Focus of this Submission

The Wheel welcomes the publication of the draft National Implementation Plan for the SDGs 2022-2024 and the opportunity to feed into the public consultation. The need for urgent action to achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the SDGs is clear and all of society has a role in its achievement.

Charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises provide essential services and support advocacy work in every part of Ireland. Services and supports include health and disability, social care, education, housing, poverty relief, protecting biodiversity and tackling climate change, the arts, and sport, as well as international development. The sector is the unseen force powering our communities, driving positive social change, and supporting voice, while providing vitally important supports and services.

As active members of the domestic, anti-poverty and equality pillar of Coalition 2030, we have fed into Coalition 2030's submission to the public consultation and fully support all their recommendations. This submission will primarily focus on chapters 6 & 7 of the draft National Implementation Plan.

Recommendations

(Specific recommendations are highlighted in bold)

We welcome the establishment of an SDG Forum Committee to redesign the National SDG Stakeholder Forum format. The Stakeholder Forum is a key mechanism for engaging all the stakeholder groups. However, we were disappointed by the short notice given for the first Stakeholder Forum in Q2.

Publish terms of reference for the SDG Forum Committee, including criteria for participation.

Following the establishment of the SDG Forum Committee, publish the schedule of National Stakeholder Forums for the life of the National Implementation Plan.

Ensure representation at the National Stakeholder Forum of senior officials from all relevant Government departments and Local Authority representatives.

We welcome the commitment to develop new, and strengthen existing partnerships with civil society and communities and with key sectors and groups.

We acknowledge the recognition in the plan (section 7.2.2) of the essential role that community and voluntary organisations must play in the achievement of the SDGs. Furthermore, we welcome reference to Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities as a key policy for driving community engagement. However, there are no concrete actions proposed in the National Implementation Plan to monitor achievement of the SDG actions in the 5 year strategy and hold DRCDC to account for their implementation.

Include concrete actions to hold the Department of Rural and Community Development accountable for ensuring that the SDG actions outlined under objective 8 within the 5 year strategy are achieved.

We welcome the recognition that PPNs have huge importance in terms of integrating the SDGs into the work of the community and voluntary sector and specific actions set out to achieve this. However, given that we are already in year three of the decade of action, the timeframe for implementation of these actions is not urgent enough.

Develop relevant supports for PPNs to integrate the SDGs into their work by Q3 2023.

We welcome the strategic commitment to localisation of the SDGs and, specifically, community engagement as a key mechanism for achieving this.

Funding mechanisms need to be put in place to support community and voluntary organisations to take SDG action, including awareness-raising and education within communities.

Development plans have already been developed in many LA areas that will be in place until 2028, with only minimum reference to the SDGs, so these will need to be revised to ensure that they are consistent with the ambition of the National Implementation Plan.

Provide clear guidance and training to Local Authority staff and elected representatives on integrating meaningful, urgent SDG actions into county level and local area development plans.

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