



European
Social
Charter

Charte
Sociale
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EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

8th National Report on the implementation of
the European Social Charter

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

(Articles 13, 14, 23 and 30
for the period
01/01/2008 – 31/12/2011)

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20 November 2012

CYCLE 2013

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social and medical assistance, the Parties undertake:

1. to ensure that any person who is without adequate resources and who is unable to secure such resources either by his own efforts or from other sources, in particular by benefits under a social security scheme, be granted adequate assistance, and, in case of sickness, the care necessitated by his condition;
2. to ensure that persons receiving such assistance shall not, for that reason, suffer from a diminution of their political or social rights;
3. to provide that everyone may receive by appropriate public or private services such advice and personal help as may be required to prevent, to remove, or to alleviate personal or family want;
4. to apply the provisions referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this article on an equal footing with their nationals to nationals of other Parties lawfully within their territories, in accordance with their obligations under the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance, signed at Paris on 11 December 1953.

Appendix to Article 13§4

Governments not Parties to the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance may ratify the Charter in respect of this paragraph provided that they grant to nationals of other Parties a treatment which is in conformity with the provisions of the said convention.

Scope of the provisions as interpreted by the ECSR

Paragraph 1: Social assistance – adequate benefits must be payable to “any person” on the sole ground that he/she is in need. To be adequate the assistance should enable any person to meet his/her basic needs, i.e. the level of the benefits should not fall below the poverty threshold. Medical assistance - everyone who lacks adequate resources must be able to obtain free of charge “in the event of sickness the care necessitated by his condition”
The right to assistance must constitute an individual right laid down in law and be supported by an effective right of appeal to an independent body.

Paragraph 2: Persons receiving assistance must not suffer as a result any diminution of their political or social rights. Any discrimination against persons receiving assistance that might result from an express provision must be eradicated.

Paragraph 3: Provision of appropriate public or private services such as advice and personal help to persons without adequate resources, as may be required to prevent, to remove, or to alleviate personal or family want.

Paragraph 4: Emergency social and medical assistance for everyone lawfully or unlawfully present (but not resident) in the territory. States party are required to provide for those concerned to cope with an immediate state of need (accommodation, food, emergency care and clothing).

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social and medical assistance, the Parties undertake:

1. to ensure that any person who is without adequate resources and who is unable to secure such resources either by his own efforts or from other sources, in particular by benefits under a social security scheme, be granted adequate assistance, and, in case of sickness, the care necessitated by his condition;

Article 13§1

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, in particular: evidence that the level of social assistance is adequate, i.e. the assistance should enable any person to meet his/her basic needs and the level of the benefits should not fall below the poverty threshold. Information must therefore be provided on basic benefits, additional benefits and on the poverty threshold in the country, defined as 50% of the median equivalised income and calculated on the basis of the poverty risk threshold value published by Eurostat

Updated Situation:-

The reply given in the previous report continues to apply.

The updated tables are as follows:

<u>Social Assistance Payments –</u>	<u>Weekly Rates</u>	<u>Weekly Rates</u>	<u>Weekly Rates</u>	<u>Weekly Rates</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
	€	€	€	€	
Jobseeker's Allowance					
Pre-retirement Allowance					
Disability Allowance	2008	2009	2010	2011	%
Farm Assist					
Supplementary Welfare Allowance					
Personal Rate	197.80	204.30	196.00	188.00	-5%
Increase for qualified adult	131.30	135.60	130.10	124.80	-5%

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

State Pension (Non-Contributory)	2008	2009	2010	2011	0%
Personal Rate	212.00	219.00	219.00	219.00	3%
Increase for qualified adult	132.20	144.70	144.70	144.70	9%
Blind Person's Pension:	2008	2009	2010	2011	0%
Personal Rate	197.80	204.30	196.00	188.00	-5%
Increase for qualified adult	131.30	135.96	130.10	124.80	-5%
Widow(er)'s (Non-Contributory) Pension, and One Parent Family Payment	2008	2009	2010	2011	0%
Personal Rate	197.80	204.30	196.00	188.00	-5%
Guardian's Payment(Non-contributory)	2008	2009	2010	2011	0%
	170.00	176.50	169.00	161.00	-5%
Carer's Allowance:	2008	2009	2010	2011	0%
One Caree	214.00	220.50	212.00	204.00	-5%
More than one Caree	321.00	330.75	318.00	306.00	-5%
Respite Care Grant (Per Caree) annually	1700.00	1700.00	1700.00	1700.00	0%

Committee Comments on Last Report - 2007 Sixth Report

Paragraph 1 - Adequate assistance for every person in need

The Committee takes note of the information contained in the report submitted by Ireland.

Types of benefits and eligibility criteria

The Committee notes that there have been no changes to the types of benefits and eligibility criteria.

Level of assistance

To assess the level of assistance during the reference period, the Committee takes account of the following information:

- basic benefit: the personal rate amounted to €185,80 per week in 2007. According to MISSOC the basic minimum allowance paid to a single person amounted to € 805.

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- medical assistance: persons in receipt of allowances are usually entitled to full range of medical services on the basis of their low income.
- poverty threshold, defined as 50% of median equivalised income and as calculated on the basis of the Eurostat at-risk-of-poverty threshold value: estimated at €923 in 2007.

In the light of the above data, the Committee considers that the level of social assistance is adequate.

Right of appeal and legal aid

The Committee notes that there have been no changes to the situation which was previously found to be in conformity with the Charter.

Personal scope

Social assistance

In its previous conclusion (Conclusions XVIII-1) the Committee asked how the habitual residence condition (HRC) was applied in practice and what was the number of foreign nationals who had been refused social assistance on the ground that they do not satisfy this condition. It also asked about the situation of those persons who had left Ireland and had then returned. In this connection it notes from the report that when a claim for a payment subject to the habitual residence condition (HRC) is received, it is initially vetted to see if the condition is obviously satisfied or if there is need for particular investigation of this aspect. According to the report, in 2006 between 91% and 99% of cases satisfied HRC without the need for particular investigation. The most significant groups of disallowances included EU nationals claiming jobseeker's allowance who had no previous employment in Ireland and no arrangements made for employment on arrival here, Romanian and Bulgarian nationals who had no work permit and no clear means of being self-supporting. As regards returning migrants, each case is decided on its own merits in accordance with the circumstances of the person on their return from abroad. The Committee considers that Ireland satisfies the requirements of the Charter as concerns the granting of social assistance to legally resident foreign nationals.

Medical assistance

The Committee notes from the report that entitlement to health services in Ireland is primarily based on residency and means. Any person, regardless of nationality, who is accepted by the Health Service Executive (HSE) as being 'ordinarily resident' in Ireland is entitled to either full eligibility (Category 1, i.e. medical card holders) or limited eligibility (Category 2) for health services. The Committee understands that Regional Health Boards have a discretion to provide medical treatment to those who do not qualify as 'ordinarily resident'. **The Committee reiterates its question on how the Regional Health Boards exercise their powers in practice, whether guidance exists on this matter and whether any data exists as to the number of cases where medical assistance has been refused on the basis of a failure to satisfy the requirement to be ordinarily resident.** The Committee also understands that urgent medical care will be provided to persons who are not ordinarily resident. **The Committee asks for more information the nature and extent of medical care which is granted in such cases.**

The Committee notes that the Department of Health and Children has commenced work on a new legislative framework to provide for clear statutory provision on

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eligibility for and entitlement to health and personal social services. The purpose of the review is to clarify and simplify eligibility and entitlement to health and personal social services within the broad parameters of the existing system and to reflect developments in service delivery and technology that have occurred since the Health Act 1970. **The Committee wishes to be informed about the developments concerning this new legislative framework.**

Conclusion

Pending receipt of the information requested, the Committee concludes that the situation in Ireland is in conformity with Article 13§1 of the Revised Charter.

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social and medical assistance, the Parties undertake:

2. to ensure that persons receiving such assistance shall not, for that reason, suffer from a diminution of their political or social rights;

Article 13§2

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.

Updated Situation:-

The receipt of social assistance does not diminish political or social rights in any way.

Committee Comments on Last Report - 2007 Sixth Report

Paragraph 2 - Non-discrimination in the exercise of social and political rights

The Committee takes note of the information contained in the report submitted by Ireland.

The report states that the receipt of social assistance does not diminish political or social rights in any way. The Committee notes that in its last conclusion it found the situation to be in conformity with Article 13§2.

Conclusion

The Committee concludes that the situation in Ireland is in conformity with Article 13§2 of the Revised Charter.

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social and medical assistance, the Parties undertake:

3. to provide that everyone may receive by appropriate public or private services such advice and personal help as may be required to prevent, to remove, or to alleviate personal or family want;

Article 13§3

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.

Updated Situation:-

There have been no changes or developments since the last report.

Committee Comments on Last Report - 2007 Sixth Report

Paragraph 3 - Prevention, abolition or alleviation of need

The Committee takes note of the information contained in the report submitted by Ireland.

According to the report the central information services unit of the Department of Social and Family Affairs maintains the provision of information leaflets and engages with the Citizens Information Board regarding its distribution of information. All local and branch offices of the Department of Social and Family Affairs have an information role.

Conclusion

The Committee concludes that the situation in Ireland is in conformity with Article 13§3 of the Revised Charter.

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social and medical assistance, the Parties undertake

4. to apply the provisions referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this article on an equal footing with their nationals to nationals of other Parties lawfully within their territories, in accordance with their obligations under the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance, signed at Paris on 11 December 1953.

Appendix to Article 13§4

Governments not Parties to the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance may ratify the Charter in respect of this paragraph provided that they grant to nationals of other Parties a treatment which is in conformity with the provisions of the said convention.

Article 13§4

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information, if appropriate.

Updated Situation:-

Irish legislation relating to social assistance schemes does not contain any nationality conditions, and applies equally to nationals and non-nationals.

Committee Comments on Last Report - 2007 Sixth Report

Paragraph 4 - Specific emergency assistance for non-residents

The Committee takes note of the information contained in the report submitted by Ireland.

In its previous conclusion (Conclusions XVIII-1) the Committee asked whether the introduction of a habitual residence condition could preclude the granting of emergency social and medical assistance to legally present foreigners and whether such assistance was granted to unlawfully present persons as well. In this connection it notes from the report that exceptional needs payments and urgent needs payments under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (provided for in Sections 201 and 202 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act of 2005) are specifically exempted from the habitual residence condition. Both types of payments are also available to persons unlawfully present. The Committee considers that it appears that Irish law provides for a legally recognised right to the satisfaction of basic human material need in situations of emergency. **The Committee asks what is the nature and extent of social and medical assistance provided in such circumstances.**

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

Conclusion

Pending receipt of the information requested, the Committee concludes that the situation in Ireland is in conformity with Article 13§4 of the Revised Charter.

Exceptional Needs Payments

The payments would be for items such as special clothing in the case of a person who has a serious illness, bedding or cooking utensils for someone setting up a home for the first time, costs in relation to funerals, visiting relatives in hospital or prison etc.

Practice in relation to assistance with fuel bills is set out in the Code of Practice (SW94) agreed between the Departments officials administering the SWA scheme and the electricity and gas energy supply companies.

As ENPs are there to assist people with **once-off** exceptional expenditure the rates vary depending on the type of assistance required.

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to benefit from social welfare services, the Parties undertake:

1. to promote or provide services which, by using methods of social work, would contribute to the welfare and development of both individuals and groups in the community, and to their adjustment to the social environment;
2. to encourage the participation of individuals and voluntary or other organisations in the establishment and maintenance of such services.

Information to be submitted

Article 14§1

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information to demonstrate the effective access to social services (beneficiaries in total and per category of social welfare services, number and geographical distribution of services, staff number and qualifications).

Scope of the provisions as interpreted by the ECSR

Paragraph 1: A network of social services to help people to reach or maintain well-being and to overcome any problems of social adjustment must exist. Social services include in particular counselling, advice, rehabilitation and other forms of support from social workers, home help services (assistance in the running of the home, personal hygiene, social support, delivery of meals), residential care, and social emergency care (shelters). Under Article 14§1 it is reviewed the overall organisation and functioning of social services.

Access to social services should be guaranteed to those who lack personal capabilities and means to cope, in particular the vulnerable groups and individuals who have a social

Article 13 – The Right to Social and Medical Assistance

problem. Groups which are vulnerable – children, the family, the elderly, people with disabilities, young people with problems, young offenders, refugees, the homeless, alcohol and drug abusers, victims of domestic violence and former prisoners – should be able to avail themselves of social services in practice.

Effective and equal access to social services implies:

- an individual right of access to counselling and advice from social services;
- the protection of rights of the client, including the availability of remedies;
- services should be provided free of charge for persons lacking adequate financial resources and may be provided subject to fees for the others;
- the geographical distribution of these services shall be sufficiently wide;
- social services must have resources matching their responsibilities and the changing needs of users.

Article 14 – The Right To Benefit From Social Welfare Services

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to benefit from social welfare services, the Parties undertake:

1. to promote or provide services which, by using methods of social work, would contribute to the welfare and development of both individuals and groups in the community, and to their adjustment to the social environment;
2. to encourage the participation of individuals and voluntary or other organisations in the establishment and maintenance of such services.

Information to be submitted

Article 14§1

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information to demonstrate the effective access to social services (beneficiaries in total and per category of social welfare services, number and geographical distribution of services, staff number and qualifications).

Scope of the provisions as interpreted by the ECSR

Paragraph 1: A network of social services to help people to reach or maintain well-being and to overcome any problems of social adjustment must exist. Social services include in particular counselling, advice, rehabilitation and other forms of support from social workers, home help services (assistance in the running of the home, personal hygiene, social support, delivery of meals), residential care, and social emergency care (shelters). Under Article 14§1 it is reviewed the overall organisation and functioning of social services.

Access to social services should be guaranteed to those who lack personal capabilities and means to cope, in particular the vulnerable groups and individuals who have a social problem. Groups which are vulnerable – children, the family, the elderly, people with disabilities, young people with problems, young offenders, refugees, the homeless, alcohol and drug abusers, victims of domestic violence and former prisoners – should be able to avail themselves of social services in practice.

Effective and equal access to social services implies:

- an individual right of access to counselling and advice from social services;
- the protection of rights of the client, including the availability of remedies;
- services should be provided free of charge for persons lacking adequate financial resources and may be provided subject to fees for the others;
- the geographical distribution of these services shall be sufficiently wide;
- social services must have resources matching their responsibilities and the changing needs of users.

Article 14 – The Right To Benefit From Social Welfare Services

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to benefit from social welfare services, the Parties undertake:

1. to promote or provide services which, by using methods of social work, would contribute to the welfare and development of both individuals and groups in the community, and to their adjustment to the social environment;

Updated Situation :-

In response to this Article we make reference to the Department of Social Protection's National Action Plan referred to in Article 30, and make note of the fact that the main functions of this article now lie with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, due to restructuring of department functions in 2007.

Committee Comments on Last Report - 2007 Sixth Report

Article 14 - The right to benefit from social welfare services

Paragraph 1 - Provision or promotion of social welfare services

The Committee takes note of the information contained in the report submitted by Ireland.

Organisation of the social services

The report describes the various social services for disabled persons, elderly persons and families. The services referred to include, in particular, information and advice on social assistance, within the meaning of Article 13§3 of the Revised Charter, mediation, rehabilitation, domiciliary support, day care, care in specialist establishments. **The Committee asks for information on specific services for children and young persons.**

Under legislation passed in 2001, an agency was specially set up in 2003 to co-ordinate all the action programmes of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which has overall responsibility for social welfare services.

Effective and equal access

The Committee again asks for updated details on the fees for services.

Quality of services

The Committee asks for information on mechanisms for monitoring the activities of voluntary organisations. It also asks for information in the next report on the enactment of the new Charities Bill to regulate the activities of charities mentioned in the report and what it contains.

According to the report, the Department of Social and Family Affairs has a total of 58 local and 69 branch offices across Ireland. There are no statistics on the total number of staff of all the social welfare services.

The Committee asks for information in the next report on total annual spending on social services.

Conclusion

Pending receipt of the information requested, the Committee defers its conclusion.

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right of elderly persons to social protection, the Parties undertake to adopt or encourage, either directly or in co-operation with public or private organisations, appropriate measures designed in particular:

Article 14 – The Right To Benefit From Social Welfare Services

- to enable elderly persons to remain full members of society for as long as possible, by means of:
 - a. adequate resources enabling them to lead a decent life and play an active part in public, social and cultural life;
 - b. provision of information about services and facilities available for elderly persons and their opportunities to make use of them;
- to enable elderly persons to choose their life-style freely and to lead independent lives in their familiar surroundings for as long as they wish and are able, by means of:
 - a. provision of housing suited to their needs and their state of health or of adequate support for adapting their housing;
 - b. the health care and the services necessitated by their state;
- to guarantee elderly persons living in institutions appropriate support, while respecting their privacy, and participation in decisions concerning living conditions in the institution.

Appendix to Article 23, paragraph 1

For the purpose of the application of this paragraph, the term “for as long as possible” refers to the elderly person’s physical, psychological and intellectual capacities.

Information to be submitted

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information on measures taken to ensure that elderly persons have access to adequate benefits in cash or in kind; on the level of public expenditure for social protection and services for the elderly; on the accessibility of measures and the number of elderly people benefiting from them; on the number of places available in institutions for elderly persons; on the number of elderly living in such institutions, and on whether a shortage of places is reported.

Scope of the provision as interpreted by the ECSR

To enable elderly persons to remain full members of society for as long as possible, pensions and other State benefits must be sufficient to lead a ‘decent life’. Pensions must be index-linked¹, and they will be compared with average wage levels and the overall cost of living to assess national situations.

Elderly persons should be provided information about services and facilities available to them (the extent and cost of home help services, community based services, specialised day care provision, etc.).

The needs of elderly persons must be taken into account in national or local housing policies. National policies should help elderly persons to remain in their own homes for as long as possible through the provision of sheltered/supported housing and assistance for the adaptation of their homes.

Health care programmes and services for the elderly, necessitated by their state, must exist (in particular domiciliary nursing/health care services).

¹ Taking into account inflation and the purchasing power of the pension benefit.

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Elderly persons living in institutions should be guaranteed the right to appropriate care and services, the right to privacy, to personal dignity, and to participate in decisions concerning living conditions in their institution. There should be a sufficient supply of institutional facilities for elderly persons.

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right of elderly persons to social protection, the Parties undertake to adopt or encourage, either directly or in co-operation with public or private organisations, appropriate measures designed in particular:

- to enable elderly persons to remain full members of society for as long as possible, by means of:
 - a. adequate resources enabling them to lead a decent life and play an active part in public, social and cultural life;
 - b. provision of information about services and facilities available for elderly persons and their opportunities to make use of them;

Updated Situation :-

In addition to social insurance schemes for old age (see Report on Article 12), the Department of Social Protection administers non-contributory pensions for persons over 66. In the period under review, these pensions were payable to all residents, regardless of nationality, who satisfied the conditions as to age and means and habitual residence.

A person may switch from contributory old age pension (or from receipt of a qualified adult increase thereon) to the non-contributory pension if the non-contributory entitlement is higher.

The means assessment includes income and assets, but the assessment of assets does not include the value of the place of residence. The first €30 does not affect the rate of pension, which is reduced thereafter in steps of €2.50 weekly. The rates of pension between 2008 and 2011 were as follows:

Non-Contributory Pension Rates	2008 €	2009 €	2010 €	2011
Personal rate (maximum)	212.00	219.00	219.00	219.00
Minimum rate	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00
Maximum increase for qualified adult (under 66 years – personal rate is payable to each of a couple over 66)	131.30	135.60	130.10	124.80
Increase for qualified child	24.00	26.00	29.80	29.80
Increase over 80 years of age	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Increase where living alone	7.70	7.70	7.70	7.70

For further information please see:

<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/SW116/Documents/sw116.pdf>

The Social Welfare Law Reform and Pensions Act 2006 provided for the merging of all non-contributory payments over pension age into a single age pension, renamed the State Pension (non-contributory).

Article 14 – The Right To Benefit From Social Welfare Services

Various amendments to the means test were introduced both in the above 2006 Act and in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2007, in each case improving the rate of entitlement to persons with low means. A specific **earnings** disregard of €200 per week for the State Pension (Non-contributory) was introduced so that income from employment can be earned without losing pension entitlements.

A range of non-statutory schemes (commonly known as “Free Schemes”) are administered by the Department of Social Protection. These include:

Free travel – which is a universal scheme for all resident persons over 66 years of age, and persons in receipt of certain disability payments. The transport companies (including national rail, provincial buses, city buses, and some private bus operators) receive an annual payment from the Department in respect of free travel provided to persons holding a “travel pass”. The restriction on “rush hour” travel on city buses has been removed.

Fuel Allowance – during the period under review for this report the up to date information on fuel allowance is as follow; a supplement of €20.00 per week is paid to recipients of specified benefits, including social insurance and assistance old age pensions, paid during 32 weeks from September 2011 to May 2012, to offset the additional cost of heating in the winter.

***Free Electricity (or gas) Allowance** – the fixed charges on electricity accounts, plus a standard amount of usage, is free to recipients of specified benefits. If a person does not have electricity, a comparable concession is allowed on gas expenses.

***Free Telephone Allowance** – covers the cost of line rental plus a certain amount of call-charges in each billing period.

***Free Television licence** – covers the annual licence fee for a colour television set.

*The last 3 of these (collectively known as household benefits) are payable in respect of all persons who are over 70 years of age or, subject to certain conditions, persons under 70 who are in receipt of specified payments.

For further information, please see:

<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/SW40/Documents/sw40.pdf> (Free travel)

<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/SW107/Documents/sw107.pdf> (Household Benefits)

The total expenditure by the Department of Social Protection, in relation to services for the elderly, from 2007 to 2011 was:

Payment Type	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% Increase of
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Article 14 – The Right To Benefit From Social Welfare Services

	€millions					Payments 2007 to 2011
Social Insurance						
State Pension (Contributory)	2755	3118	3368	3452	3623	32%
State Pension (Transition)	79	92	105	108	132	67%
Social Assistance						
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	920	973	1000	976	972	6%
Total Payment	3754	4183	4473	4536	4727	26%

* Note In our previous report 3,879m was quoted for the 2007 figure, this included 125m paid for pre-retirement allowance- this has been reclassified as a working age income support.

The total number of people paid by the Department of Social Protection, in relation to services for the elderly, from 2007 to 2011 was:

Payment Type	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% Increase of Recipients 2007 to 2011
	Recipients					
Social Insurance						
State Pension (Contributory)	237599	250117	265102	280419	296995	25%
State Pension (Transition)	5851	7242	8378	10206	12110	107%
Social Assistance						
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	97726	97784	97798	97179	96749	Minus 1%
Total Recipients per year	341176	355143	371278	387804	405854	19%

All information quoted in the two tables above were obtained from DSP annual reports for the pertinent year <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/annstats/Pages/index.aspx>.

Article 23 – The Right Of Elderly Persons To Social Protection

Committee Comments on Last Report - 2007 Sixth Report

Article 23 - The right of elderly persons to social protection

The Committee takes note of the information contained in the report submitted by Country.

Legislative framework

The Committee recalls that the focus of Article 23 of the Revised Charter is on social protection of elderly persons outside the employment field. Questions of age discrimination in employment are primarily examined by the Committee under Articles 1§2 (non-discrimination in employment) and 24 (right to protection in cases of termination of employment).

As regards the protection of elderly persons from discrimination outside employment, the Committee recalls that Article 23 requires States Parties to combat age discrimination in a range of areas beyond employment, namely in access to goods, facilities and services. The European Older People's Platform and other sources point to the existence of pervasive age discrimination in many areas of society throughout Europe (health care, education, services such as insurance and banking products, participation in policy making/civil dialogue, allocation of resources and facilities) which leads the Committee to consider that an adequate legal framework is a fundamental measure to combat age discrimination in these areas.

The report provides no information on the question of age discrimination. The Committee notes that the Equal Status Act 2000¹ gives protection against discrimination in non-employment areas including education, provision of goods, services and accommodation and disposal of property. It prohibits discrimination on nine grounds, including age. The Committee finds that the scope of this Act is sufficiently wide for the purposes of Article 23, and should in principle provide adequate guarantees to protect elderly persons from discrimination outside employment. *It nevertheless requests further information on the implementation of this Act with respect to age discrimination, as well as on any other legislative or policy initiatives in this area.*

The Committee asks for information on the legal framework related to assisted decision making for the elderly, and, in particular, whether there are safeguards to prevent the arbitrary deprivation of autonomous decision making by elderly persons.

Adequate resources

The report states that non-contributory pensions are paid to all persons aged 66 and over, residents (regardless of their nationality) and who satisfy a means threshold and habitual residence test.

The means assessment includes income and assets, but the assessment of assets does not include the value of the place of residence.

The non-contributory pension rate in 2007 was €200 per week, plus up to €132 for a qualified adult and €22 for each dependent child. Additional increases: €7.70 a week is paid for a single pensioner aged 66 or older who lives alone, and €10 a week for a pensioner aged 80 or older.

The poverty threshold, defined as 50% of median equivalised income and as calculated on the basis of the Eurostat at-risk-of-poverty threshold value, was estimated at €923 per month in 2007 (the threshold defined on the basis of 40% of the median equivalised income was €738 per month). The Committee observes that the amount of the non-contributory pension stands between 40 % and 50 % of the median equivalised income. Bearing in mind that a number of supplements are available, the Committee considers that the level of this benefit is adequate.

Article 23 – The Right Of Elderly Persons To Social Protection

Elder abuse

The Committee recalls that elder abuse is defined in the Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse (2002) as 'a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person'. It can take various forms: physical, psychological or emotional, sexual, financial or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Network of the Prevention of Elder abuse (INPEA) have recognised the abuse of older people as a significant global problem. Hundred thousands of older people in Europe encounter a form of elder abuse each year. They are pressed to change their will, their bank account is plundered, they are pinched or beaten, called names, threatened and insulted and sometimes they are raped or sexually abused otherwise.

The Committee notes from the report that a National Implementation Group on Elder Abuse (EANIG) was established in 2003. The idea is to place questions of elder abuse in the wider context of health and social care services for older people. The Group is now operating under the auspices of the newly established office for older people. The Committee wishes to be kept informed on the implementation of policy in this area and its results, and on any legislative or other measures taken.

Services and facilities

The report refers to a Home Care Package Initiative, aimed at older people who need more assistance to continue living in the community. The package includes services of nurses, home care attendants, home helps and various therapists (including physiotherapists and occupational therapists). The packages are delivered through the Health Service Executive (HSE) (by voluntary groups, the private sector and the HSE itself). Significant additional funding has been provided in recent years to increase the community support services for older people. The Committee asks to be kept informed of the evaluation of the Home Care Package Initiative.

A range of non-statutory schemes (commonly known as "Free Schemes") are also available, and include: free travel for all resident persons over 66 years of age; a fuel, electricity or gas allowance for recipients of specified benefits; a telephone allowance and free television licence for all persons over 70 years of age (subject to certain conditions).

Housing

Government policy is to support older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. A person can apply for Local Authority Housing if in need of housing and unable to afford it from his/her resources. In assessing an application the Local Authority will consider any special circumstances including age. There is also a scheme under which voluntary housing bodies provide accommodation to meet special housing needs such as those of the elderly.

As regards the adaptation of homes, the Essential Repairs Grant scheme administered by the local authorities is directed primarily at providing grant aid to elderly people living in poor housing conditions. The scheme aims at improving those housing conditions sufficiently to enable the elderly to remain in their homes for their lifetime and preventing them from moving to a different area or being rehoused by the local authority. Other schemes for the provision of suitable heating systems in local authority rented dwellings are also available since 2004.

Health care

The report indicates that in the latest Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015, the Government and the Social Partners agreed to work together to develop an infrastructure of long-term care services. The Agreement also contains a commitment to develop a National Carers Strategy, focusing on supporting informal and family carers in the community. The

Article 23 – The Right Of Elderly Persons To Social Protection

Committee asks to be kept informed on whether the implementation of this Agreement has had a positive effect on geriatric long term care, and on how the National Carers Strategy is being developed.

The Committee recalls the importance of establishing health care programmes and services (in particular primary health care services) specifically aimed at the elderly, as well as guidelines on health care for elderly persons. In particular, there should be mental health programmes for persons with dementia and related illnesses, adequate palliative care services and special training for individuals caring for elderly persons. The Committee asks for information on these matters in the next report.

Institutional care

The report indicates that the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act was signed into law on 1 July 2009. The scheme is designed to remove financial hardship from many individuals and their families who, under the current system of subvention, have to sell or re-mortgage homes to pay for the cost of nursing home care. Support under this scheme is irrespective of whether the person is in a public, private or voluntary nursing home. **The Committee asks whether there are waiting lists for admission to nursing homes.**

Standards for nursing homes were previously set out in the 1993 Care and Welfare Regulations, and the HSE only inspected private nursing homes on the basis of these standards. A new set of standards for all nursing homes were approved in 2008. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has commenced the registration and inspection of both public and private residential care services since 1 July 2009. **The Committee asks how the HIQA is composed and recalls in this respect the importance of ensuring that any inspection system be independent (preferably an Ombudsman type institution).**

Conclusion

The Committee concludes that the situation in Ireland is in conformity with Article 23 of the Revised Charter.

Article 30 – Everyone has the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion, the Parties undertake:

- a. to take measures within the framework of an overall and co-ordinated approach to promote the effective access of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion or poverty, as well as their families, to, in particular, employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance;
- b. to review these measures with a view to their adaptation if necessary

Information to be submitted

- 1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.
- 2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.
- 3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information: on the nature and extent of poverty and social exclusion, including the number of persons or households who are socially excluded or live in poverty; and on the methodology followed or criteria used to measure poverty and social exclusion, bearing in mind that the Eurostat at-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers is used as a comparative value to assess national situations.

Scope of the provision as interpreted by the ECSR

States party shall adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach with the aim of reducing poverty and social exclusion.

The measures taken must promote and remove obstacles of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion and poverty, as well as their families, to access to fundamental social rights, in particular employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance.

The measures should strengthen access to social rights, improve the procedures and management of benefits and services, improve information about social rights and related benefits, combat psychological and socio-cultural obstacles to accessing rights.

As long as poverty and social exclusion persist, there should be an increase in the resources deployed to make social rights possible. Adequate resources should be allocated to attain the objectives of the strategy.

Measures adopted in the context of this Article should be reviewed and adapted to new situations. Social partners and civil society should participate in the formulation, evaluation and adaptation of measures.

Article 30 – Everyone has the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion

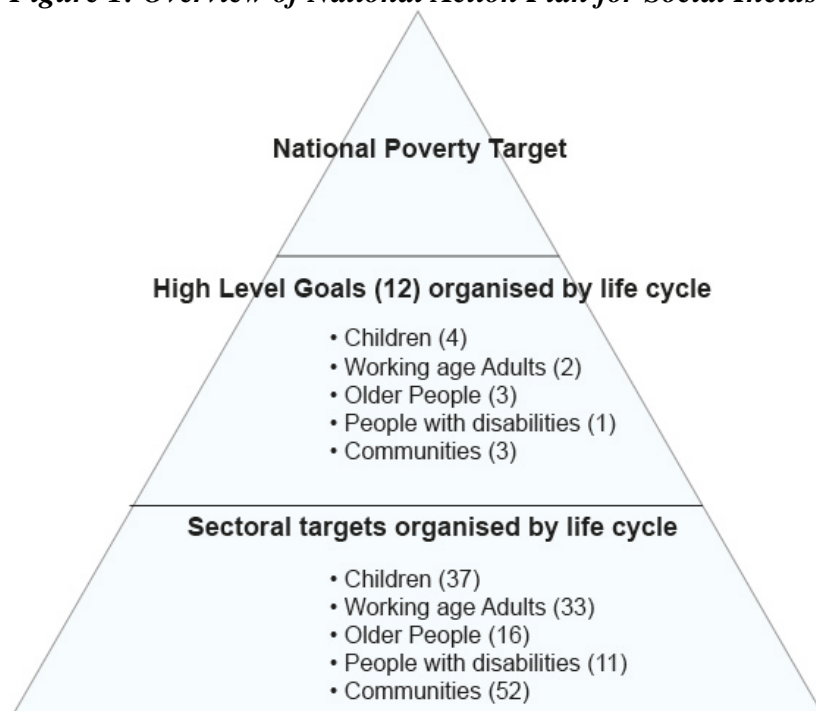
1) Please describe the general legal framework. Please specify the nature of, reasons for and extent of any reforms.

The *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 to 2016* was launched in February 2007. It sets out a wide ranging and comprehensive programme of action to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

2) Please indicate the measures taken (administrative arrangements, programmes, action plans, projects, etc.) to implement the legal framework.

The policy approach to meeting the poverty target is based on three inter-connecting themes of income support, activation and services. This is complemented by a lifecycle approach which places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery by assessing the risks facing him or her and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle. The lifecycle stages are children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities. There is also a chapter on communities.

Figure 1: Overview of National Action Plan for Social Inclusion



The plan provides a strategic framework to facilitate greater co-ordination and integration of structures across Government. It sets out a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme of action to assist those who continue to be socially excluded from the living standards and opportunities that the majority enjoy. The plan contains a series of high level goals and targets aimed at making a decisive impact on poverty. They focus on:

- Ensuring that children reach their full potential;
- Supporting working age people and people with disabilities, through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation;
- Providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living;

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- Building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

The original goal of the national action plan was to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating it by 2016, from a baseline rate of 7% in 2005. The Plan prioritises 12 high level goals and identifies some 150 targets across all policy areas, which are at the core of the strategic approach, aimed at making a decisive impact on poverty and building a more inclusive society over the coming years.

The Government has revised and enhanced the national social target for poverty reduction, following a comprehensive review of the target – see appendix for summary of revisions. A plan is being prepared by the Department of Social Protection for the implementation of these revised targets in consultation with relevant departments and stakeholders. This may have implications for monitoring and reporting on the national action plan.

Further details of the measures and progress on their implementation are available in the national action plan and annual social inclusion reports (the third report for the period 2009 to 2010 has recently been completed).

With the onset of the economic crisis, the Government prioritised the following:

- To protect the most vulnerable from the worst impact of the crisis;
- To reform income supports for children and people of working age;
- To strengthen activation policy to support people back into work.

Protect the most vulnerable

The Government continues to seek to minimise the impact of fiscal consolidation under the EU/IMF programme on vulnerable groups. In Budget 2012, the nominal value of welfare rates was maintained. The latest (2010) figures indicate that minimum welfare payments (including fuel allowance) are equivalent to 100% of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% line) and that the poverty reduction effect of social transfers remains at 60%, one of the highest in the EU.

Strengthen activation policy

Labour activation measures are critical in ensuring inclusive growth and providing developmental opportunities for the most vulnerable in our society. *Pathways to Work*, as outlined in Target 1 - Employment, provides for more regular and on-going engagement with people who are unemployed, in particular those who are long-term unemployed. The *National Employment and Entitlements Service* plays a central role in supporting active inclusion for the unemployed, providing an integrated service of income support, employment supports and community welfare service, in a one-stop-shop delivery model (as mentioned previously). Other targeted policies for welfare recipients include:

- the *Disability Activation Project*, to increase the capacity of people on disability/illness payments to participate in the labour market, based on a case management approach; and
- the *Partial Capacity Scheme*, which allows people in receipt of disability/illness payments to work on a limited basis and still receive welfare payments.

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Reform of income supports

The Department of Social Protection is developing implementation plans for major reform of child income support and of working age social assistance welfare schemes. A key objective of these reforms is to better support the transition from welfare to work. Measures in support of these reforms were implemented in Budget 2012.

Other initiatives

The Government published its strategy for affordable energy in 2011. The key features of the strategy are an area-based approach to the mitigation of energy poverty, greater access to energy efficiency measures, a better alignment of income supports and domestic energy efficiency and improved monitoring of energy poverty.

The Government published its strategy for financial inclusion in 2011. A pilot programme to promote access to basic bank accounts is underway in conjunction with the Irish banking sector.

Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the national action plan

A co-ordinated effort across all government departments, agencies and other stakeholders is required to ensure the goals of national action plan are achieved. The Department of Social Protection has overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the plan. This responsibility is carried out by the Social Inclusion Division and includes monitoring poverty trends based on the annual CSO *Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC)*, an annual progress report on the detailed actions in the plan and the report on the stakeholder's views articulated at the Annual Social Inclusion Forum. The Department also provides technical inputs on the basis of data, research and analysis to inform policy decision and is responsible for monitoring and reporting on poverty trends at national and European levels to inform anti-poverty and social inclusion policies and practice and to facilitate improved oversight of outcomes.

Cabinet Committee and Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion

There are regular meetings by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration² chaired by the Taoiseach, and the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion. The focus includes promoting a co-ordinated approach to the implementation of the national action plan, progressing monitoring strategies towards its long-term goals and the effectiveness of cross-departmental engagement on issues in the social policy sphere.

3) Please provide pertinent figures, statistics or any other relevant information: on the nature and extent of poverty and social exclusion, including the number of persons or households who are socially excluded or live in poverty; and on the methodology followed or criteria used to measure poverty and social exclusion, bearing in mind that the Eurostat at-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers is used as a comparative value to assess national situations.

The Irish Government has adopted the following official definition of poverty:

People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is

² The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration was replaced by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy in 2011.

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regarded as acceptable by Irish society. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.

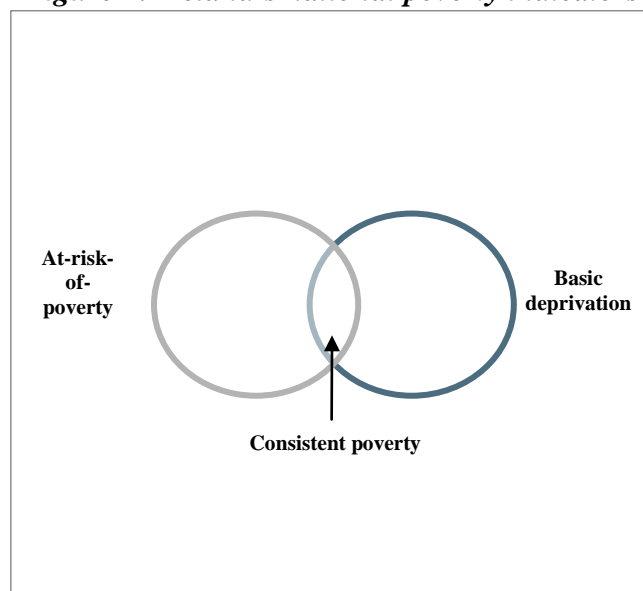
Source: *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*

Irish poverty indicators

Reflecting this definition, Ireland uses three national indicators of poverty (Figure 2):

- At-risk-of-poverty (also known as relative income poverty), using a threshold of 60 per cent of median equivalised income (national scale: 1, 0.66 and 0.33)
- Basic deprivation, defined as enforced lack of two or more items from 11 item index of necessities such as food, clothing, heating, as well as social activities
- Consistent poverty, a measure of multiple poverty combining at-risk-of-poverty and basic deprivation. This indicator is used to set the national poverty target. Consistent poverty is designed to identify the population which has the greatest needs in terms of both low income and lack of resources.³

Figure 2: Ireland's national poverty indicators



The indicators are measured using data from the annual Central Statistics Office *Survey on Income and Living Conditions*, which in turn is the basis for the EU *Statistics on Income and Living Conditions*, compiled by Eurostat.

National social target for poverty reduction

Ireland's national poverty target, originally set in 2007, was revised in 2012 as follows: to reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by

³ The consistent poverty indicator was developed by researchers at the Economic and Social Research Institute. The theoretical and methodological basis for the indicator is outlined in Nolan, B and Whelan, C (1996), *Resources, deprivation and poverty*, Oxford: Clarendon Press. The current version of the indicator was configured in 2006. See Maitre, B, Nolan, B and Whelan, C (2006) *Reconfiguring the measurement of deprivation and consistent poverty in Ireland*, Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.

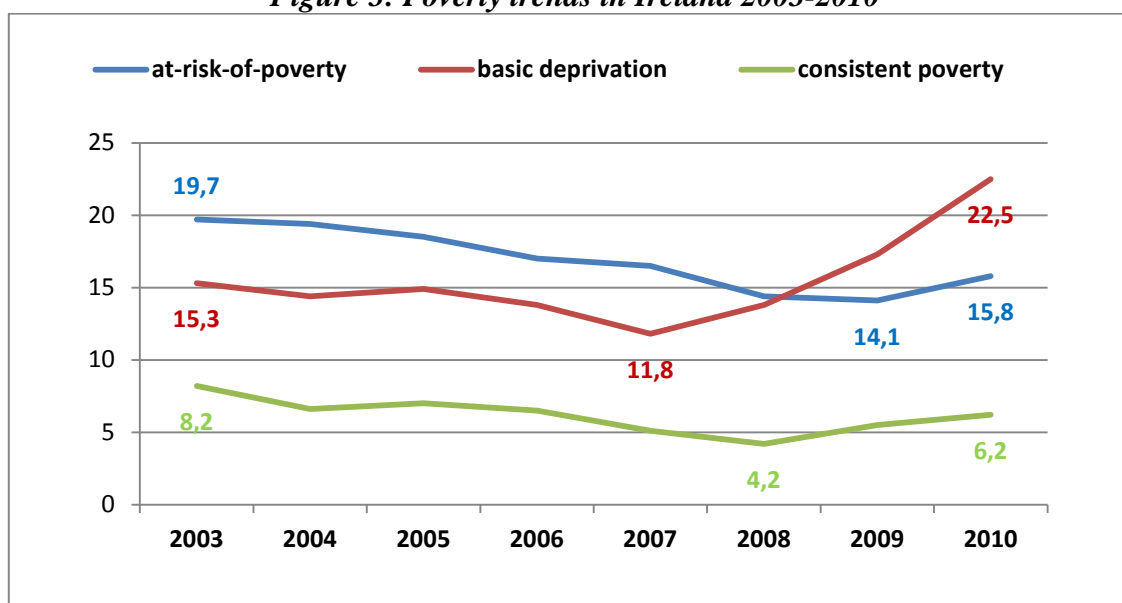
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2020, from the 2010 baseline of 6.2 per cent. The revised target retains the ambition of the original target, but is now to be achieved over a longer timeframe in line with the EU poverty target. The target was also renamed the ‘national social target for poverty reduction’. New sub-targets for children and jobless households are to be agreed. Ireland’s contribution to the EU poverty target is to lift at least 200,000 people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion.

Poverty trends in Ireland 2003-2010

Figure 3 presents poverty trends in Ireland 2003 to 2010 using the three national indicators. The data source is the Central Statistics Office *Survey on Income and Living Conditions*, which is the Irish component of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, coordinated by Eurostat.

Figure 3: Poverty trends in Ireland 2003-2010



Source: CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions

In the period 2003 to 2007-09, poverty fell by a significant amount using all three national indicators:

- at-risk-of-poverty fell from 19.7 per cent to 14 per cent
- basic deprivation reduced from 15.3 per cent to 11.8 per cent
- consistent poverty reduced from 8.2 per cent to 4.2 per cent

Since 2007/2008, poverty has worsened with the onset of the economic recession:

- at-risk-of-poverty increased from 14 to 15.8 per cent
- basic deprivation grew from 11.8 to 22.5 per cent
- consistent poverty increased from 4.2 to 6.2 per cent.

Despite this recent dis-improvement, poverty in Ireland is still below the levels pertaining in the early 2000s by between 2 and 4 percentage points on two of the three national indicators. However, the basic deprivation rate is above the 2003 baseline rate by 7 percentage points.

Impact of social transfers

This section examines the impact of social transfers on at-risk-of-poverty rates in Ireland in 2010. It is conventional to exclude pensions in the analysis since their role is not only to redistribute resources across income groups, but also between generations. This is especially

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relevant for children and working age people. The impact can be measured in terms of the percentage point reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty rate and the overall reduction in the baseline rate (i.e. the poverty reduction effect). The latter is useful for comparative purposes. The *poverty reduction effect of social transfers* is 60 per cent (excluding pensions). In percentage terms, the reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty rate is 24 percentage points (excluding pensions). Similar poverty reduction effects can be determined for three lifecycle groups (children; people of working age; and older people) – see table 1. For example, for *older people* the poverty reduction effect without pensions is lower at 49 per cent than the rate for the state.

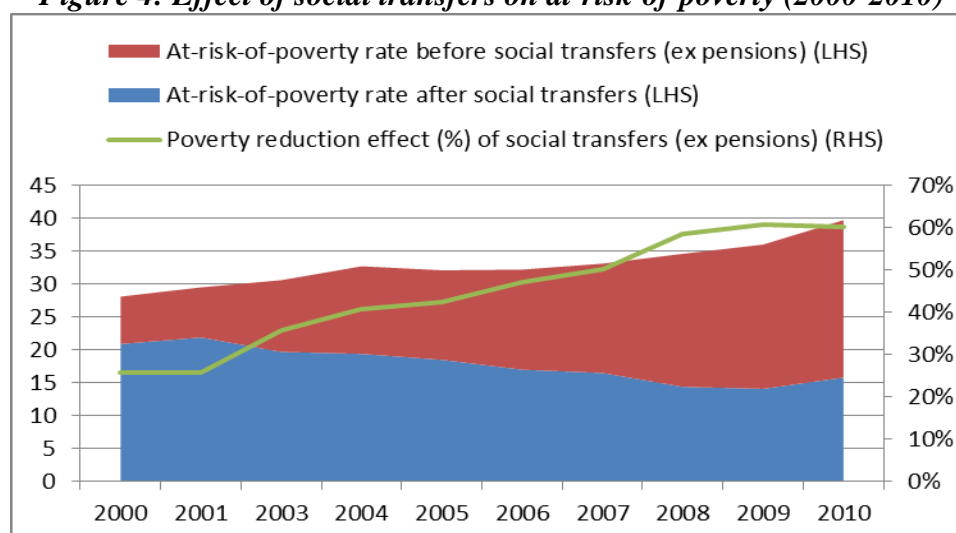
Table 1: Impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on at-risk-of-poverty rate, 2010

	ARP excluding STs	ARP including STs
State	39.7	15.8
Children	51.1	19.5
Working age	38.6	15.3
Older people	19.0	9.6

Source: CSO SILC 2010

Figure 4 shows a significant reduction in at-risk-of-poverty for Ireland between 2005 and 2010. This reflects the increased investment by Government in social protection/social transfers in the early to mid-2000s, and the continuation of much of this investment since the economic recession (though with reductions in rates in 2010 and 2011). The impact of this welfare investment is measured by the poverty reduction effect of social transfers (excluding pensions) which increased from 26 per cent in 2001 to 42 per cent in 2005 and to 60 per cent in 2010.

Figure 4: Effect of social transfers on at-risk-of-poverty (2000-2010)



Source: ESRI LIIS 2000-2001; CSO SILC 2003 – 2010

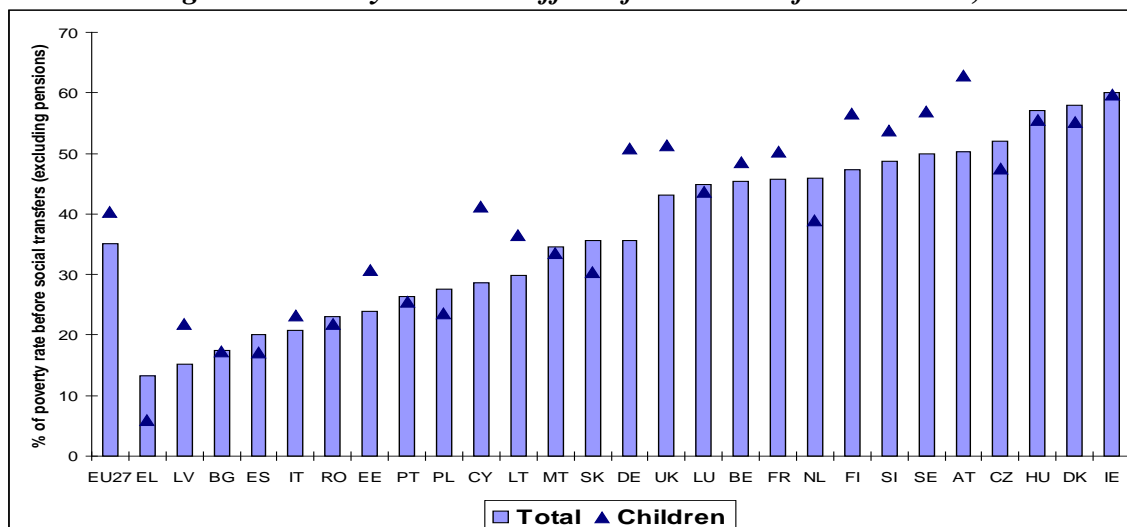
The poverty reduction effect of social transfers in Ireland is amongst the highest in the EU 27 – see figure 5. The increase in the poverty reduction effect over the period took place despite

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an increase in the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers. The challenge now is to retain this effect while reducing total welfare expenditure in a targeted manner.

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Figure 5: Poverty reduction effect of social transfers in EU 27, 2009

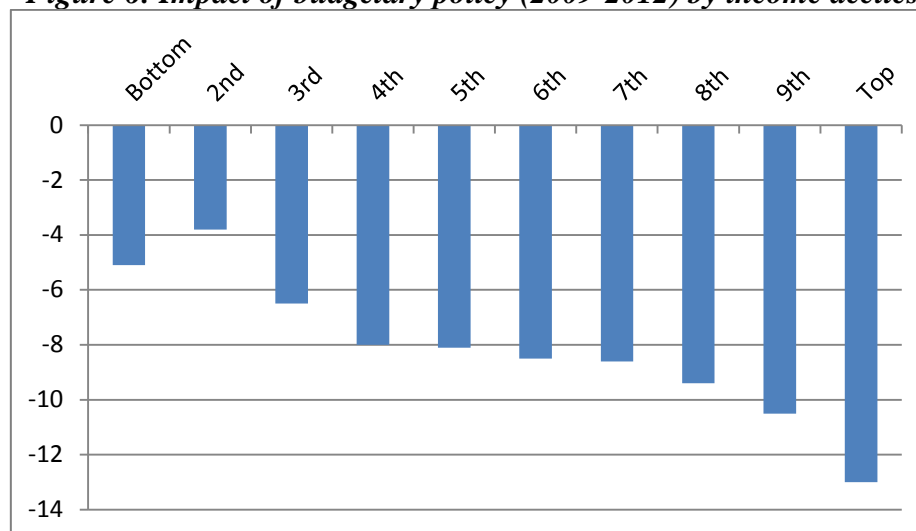


Source: Social Protection Committee (2011), *The social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy*; Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU; data from EU SILC 2009

Distributive impact of budgetary policy 2009-2012⁴

Ireland as is undergoing a period of fiscal consolidation as a result of the economic crisis. The impact of recent ‘austerity’ budgets is presented in Figure 6, as compared with a distributionally neutral policy which indexes both tax and welfare parameters with respect to the expected growth/decline in wages. The financial losses arising from budget policy are significant, though the overall distributional impact is progressive: those in the bottom income decile experienced a loss of 5.1 per cent, whereas those in the highest income decile saw a reduction of 13 per cent.

Figure 6: Impact of budgetary policy (2009-2012) by income deciles



⁴ Findings from Callan, T., Keane, C., Savage, M. and Walsh, J.R. (2012) ‘Distributive Impact of Tax, Welfare and Public Sector Pay Policies: 2009-2012’ in *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Winter 2011/Spring 2012*, Dublin: the Economic and Social Research Institute.

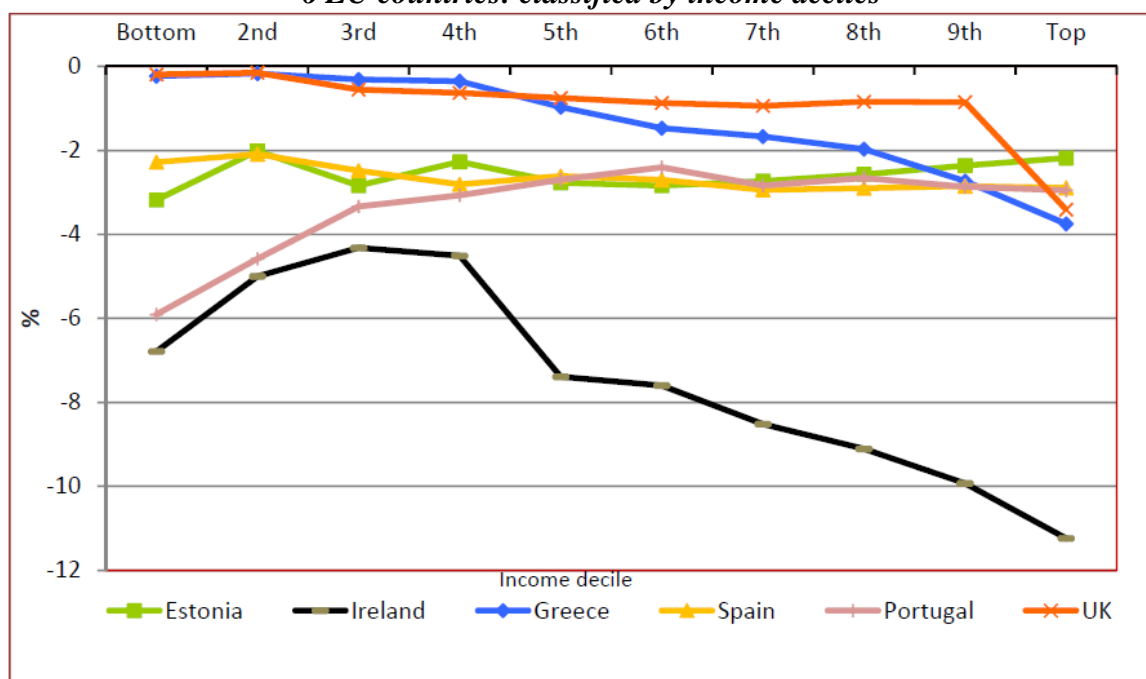
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Source: Callan et al (2012), *Distributional Impact of Tax, Welfare and Public Sector Pay Policies: 2009-2012*

European comparison

Recent research analyses the distributional impact of austerity measures in six EU countries.⁵ Figure 7 outlines the proportionate change in household disposable income due to the austerity measures in the six countries. The reduction is substantially higher in Ireland than the other five countries. The distributional impact is largely progressive. However, the lowest changes are experienced by those in deciles 2, 3, and 4 rather than the bottom decile. The report notes that older people, who are largely dependent on social welfare payments, were protected against cuts to their benefits. In fact, there was an increase in the State pension in 2009.

Figure 7: Percentage change in household disposable income due to austerity measures in 6 EU countries: classified by income deciles⁶



Notes: The austerity measures included here are limited to those that have a direct effect on household disposable income (changes to direct taxes, cash benefits and public sector pay). They do not include changes to employer or credited contributions. In addition, increases in indirect tax, cuts in public services and some minor tax-benefit changes (see text) are not included. Deciles are based on equivalised disposable income in the counterfactual (before austerity) scenario and constructed using the modified OECD equivalence scale to adjust incomes for household size.

Source: EUROMOD version F4.19 and SWITCH.

Source: Callan et al (2012), *Distributional Impact of Tax, Welfare and Public Sector Pay Policies: 2009-2012*

⁵ Findings referenced from Callan, T., Keane, C., Savage, M. and Walsh, J.R. (2012) 'Distributional Impact of Tax, Welfare and Public Sector Pay Policies: 2009-2012' in *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Winter 2011/Spring 2012*, Dublin: the Economic and Social Research Institute. The six countries analysed are UK, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Estonia and Ireland.

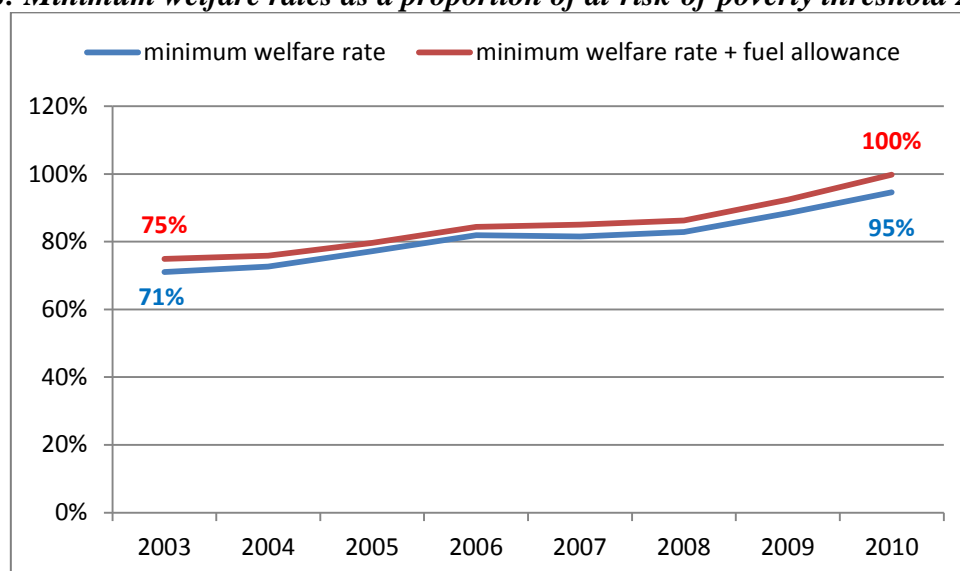
⁶ The period of analysis varies between countries, as follows: Ireland, the UK and Portugal 2009-2011; Spain 2010-2011; Estonia 2009 and Greece combined impact of austerity measures from March 2010 to May 2010.

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Minimum social welfare rates as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold

Figure 8 shows the minimum social welfare rate as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60 per cent of median income) for a single person in the period 2003 to 2010. A variation of the minimum rate includes the fuel allowance, which is a means tested household payment. It is not possible to express minimum welfare rates in comparison to the other national poverty indicators.

Figure 8: Minimum welfare rates as a proportion of at-risk-of-poverty threshold 2003-2010



Source: Social welfare statistics and CSO Survey on Income and Livings Conditions

Over the period 2003 to 2010, the minimum welfare rate as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold has increased from 71 per cent to 95 per cent. Including fuel allowance in the minimum welfare rate, it increased as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty from 75 per cent to 100 per cent. To illustrate this situation in 2010, the minimum welfare rate for a single person was €196 per week and the 60 per cent median equivalised threshold was €207.29 per week. The fuel allowance was worth the equivalent of €12.26 per week, giving a combined figure of €208.26.

The comparable figures for couples and families with children on minimum welfare rates are the same as those for a single person, as minimum welfare rates apply the same equivalence scales as are used in the official poverty statistics.

The improvement in the minimum welfare rate as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold is primarily due to increases in welfare rates and child benefit in the 2000s. However, in 2010, the minimum welfare rate was reduced to €196 per week and to €186 in 2011. There was no reduction in 2012. Data on the at-risk-of-poverty threshold for 2011 and 2012 are not available.

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Appendix: Revised National Social Target for Poverty Reduction

- The revised national poverty target is re-named as the ‘national social target for poverty reduction’,
- The revised national social target for poverty reduction is to reduce consistent poverty to 4 per cent by 2016 (interim target) and to 2 per cent or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2 per cent.
- Ireland’s contribution to the EU poverty target is to lift a minimum of 200,000 people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion⁷ by 2020 from the 2010 baseline.
- There will be a new national social target for the reduction of child poverty, to reduce the differential in the rate of consistent poverty between children and adults
- There will be a new national social target for the reduction of poverty in jobless households, to reduce the concentration of the population in consistent poverty in these households.
- There will be two additional indicators to monitor progress towards the revised target:
 - vulnerable to consistent poverty (the population experiencing basic deprivation and having an income between 60 and 70 per cent of the median)
 - ‘absolute poverty (individuals falling below an the 60 per cent median at-risk-of-poverty threshold anchored at 2010 values)
- The implementation of the revised target will be strengthened by
 - Incorporating poverty impact assessment as part of an integrated and strengthened social impact assessment;
 - producing an annual monitoring report on progress towards the target with input from stakeholders.

⁷ This EU measure combines the number of people who experience at-risk-of-poverty or severe material deprivation or low work intensity. This measure is the basis for the Europe 2020 poverty target. In cases where people experience more than one of these indicators, they are counted only once. The Irish version of this measure is the combination of at-risk-of-poverty and basic deprivation.