

National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

Draft for Public Consultation

Submission from Speedpak CLG

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Coolock, Dublin 17.

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SPEEDPAK GROUP
TRADING, TRAINING, TRANSFORMING.™



Introduction

Speedpak CLG, trading as Speedpak Group, Speedpak Contract Services and Shamrock Rosettes, is a social enterprise operating on Dublin's Northside. Founded 24 years ago by a collaboration between the local community, business and the State, we trade commercially to provide industry led work experience and training to transform the lives of long term unemployed people and those most distanced from the labour market through employment.

Speedpak Group was delighted to be represented by our CEO, John P. Murphy on the Research Steering Group established by Minister Michael Ring TD. to inform the development of a new National Policy and Implementation Roadmap for Social Enterprises in Ireland. The breadth and level of engagement with stakeholders and in particular practitioners like Speedpak, gave us great confidence in the consultation process from the very beginning.

We now welcome the opportunity to formally respond to the draft National Social Enterprise Policy.

In overall terms, the draft policy paper captures the core objectives that will create an enabling environment for a strong, social enterprise eco system to develop and flourish. This draft policy is well structured, clear and easy to read.

The following are some additional comments and observations in relation to the three policy objectives outlined in the draft paper.

Policy Objective 1: Building Awareness of Social Enterprise

The Department of Rural & Community Development should consider creating a National Social Enterprise awards scheme as part of the four year policy timeline. The awards, reflecting the breadth of social and economic impact, would raise public awareness and create a sense of identity for such enterprises. This would provide an opportunity to showcase how social enterprises deliver State services to communities and how they are an integral delivery mechanism for the State. It would also be an opportunity for the State to inform the public of the supports and schemes it provides across Departments. This would send out a real statement of intent by Government that social enterprises are valued. Due to its focus, it would be complimentary to other award schemes operated by stakeholders in the sector.

We agree there is a need to support social innovation and social enterprise start-ups through targeted programmes. While it is welcome that there are a growing number of funds (private, philanthropic and government) to support social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, we know from experience that many are through open competition and success is weighted in favour of scaling regionally or nationally. There is a gap in the market for

Start-up, Accelerator and Growth funds to support the vast majority of social enterprises that deliver products or services to their own communities and do not have the desire to scale or have products or services that can scale. These should be resourced and overseen by Government and available through appropriate State support agencies and organisations e.g. Local Enterprise Offices, Local Development Companies, Enterprise Ireland or outsourced to other organisations with experience in this area.

While it may be implicit, awareness raising and improving collaboration will require a budget and means to implement.

Policy Objective 2: Growing & Strengthening Social Enterprise

Different legal structures for social enterprises (for example Community Interest Companies in the UK), that could facilitate alternative or complimentary financing pipelines such as private equity or different stages in a social enterprises growth, should be considered. This has the potential to align social enterprise business models within mainstream business and communicate that message accordingly.

Access to public sector contracts presents an incredible opportunity for the Exchequer and social enterprises - particularly where contracts are ongoing and where it can be strongly argued that there is added social benefit to awarding to a social enterprise than would otherwise be the case. This has the potential to provide greater financial stability to social enterprises and savings to the State as an alternative to grants.

Policy Objective 3: Achieving Better Policy Alignment

From our experience, this is the most critical area to address. The following provides a good example and highlights contradictions that act as a barrier.

In a European context Speedpak would be classified as a Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE). We operate commercially to provide industry led work experience and training to long term unemployed people. To support how we deliver this social value we contract with Government to operate labour market programmes i.e. Community Employment (CE) and wage subsidy schemes as part of the social economy i.e. Community Services Programme (CSP). However, in its CE Procedures Manual (Section 1.2), the Dept. of Employment and Social Protection says "Projects must be non commercial". In our experience, generating income from commercial activities has been interpreted negatively by this Department resulting in actions that mitigate against us. However on the other hand, POBAL who administer CSP require those companies contracted to deliver these programmes to prove financial sustainability and demonstrate how they build profit and reserves that can be re-invested.

Both programmes in the example above are there to service the needs of long term unemployed people. Both are funded by Government Departments. Our social enterprise

vehicle, which is an important delivery mechanism for the State, is not being supported in a consistent way due to lack of policy alignment. Departments should also be mandated to ensure that they do align and future proof programmes against the new policy.

Conclusion

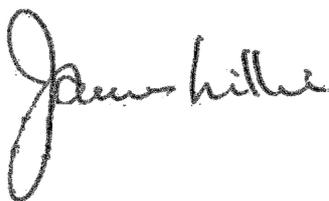
The Board of Speedpak CLG recognises that our success is based on the strength of our collaborations with the community, our commercial customers and our investors including the State, Philanthropy and Corporates through their CSR initiatives. Since our foundation we have employed over 1,150 previously long term unemployed people making a significant social impact to these individuals, their families and by extension our local communities.

This policy is both timely and necessary. Social enterprise requires its own identity and is distinct from both the C&V and business sector. It is also very welcome that Minister Michael Ring TD has established a Social Enterprise Unit within the Department of Rural and Community Development.

We welcome Partnership as a core principal in policy implementation and oversight and look forward to working with the Department's Social Enterprise Unit and other stakeholders to implement the policy. The process to date which has followed similar lines has shown how valuable this has been.

We congratulate the Minister and the Department for showing leadership in the development of social enterprise in Ireland and look forward to seeing the policy enacted by Government as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Lillis', written in a cursive style.

James Lillis

Chair,
Speedpak CLG.