



## Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme

### DRCD POSTDOCTORAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE 'IMPACT' FELLOWSHIP

#### THEME INFORMATION

##### 1. BACKGROUND

In partnership with the Irish Research Council, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) invites applications for a Social Enterprise Impact Fellowship.

Applicants who choose to apply for a strategic funding partner fellowship will also be considered for a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) was established in July 2017 to provide a renewed and consolidated focus on rural and community development in Ireland. The Department's Mission is "to promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland". In line with this Mission, a key objective of the Department is to develop a strong policy framework and provide a full range of appropriate supports to improve the capability of organisations that deliver services to individuals and communities, tackle social issues, and contribute to a fairer and more inclusive society. Social Enterprise comes within the policy remit of DRCD.

The [National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019 - 2022](#), launched on 18 July 2019, is the first such Policy for Ireland and it fulfils a commitment contained in the [Action Plan for Rural Development](#).

A Social Enterprise is an enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact. Like other businesses, social enterprises trade in goods or services on an ongoing basis, but any surpluses generated are re-invested into achieving social impact rather than maximising profit for their owners.

Social enterprises are part of the wider social economy and make a valuable contribution to the social and economic progress of Ireland through the creation of jobs and through the delivery of

a broad range of services in areas such as homecare, child care, employment activation, retail, hospitality and catering, environmental services, and social housing. They are innovative, entrepreneurial and are increasingly utilising new technologies and creative approaches to address social, societal or environmental challenges. In Ireland, social enterprises take many forms across a wide spectrum from local community-based enterprises to larger enterprises, some of which trade internationally. Despite efforts to map the sector, there is a lack of comprehensive and reliable data about the size, reach and, in particular, impact of social enterprise.

## **2. NATIONAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE POLICY FOR IRELAND 2019-2022**

The National Social Enterprise Policy is focused on three key Objectives:

1. Building Awareness of Social Enterprise,
2. Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise, and
3. Achieving Better Policy Alignment.

The Policy sets out a series of 26 commitments on the part of Government across these Objectives, for the development of social enterprise over the period 2019 to 2022. These include commitments to improve our understanding of the scale of social enterprise in Ireland, and to measure its impact:

- Policy Measure 6: Work with education and research bodies to further support the development of social enterprise;
- Policy Measure 23: Improve data collection relating to the extent of social enterprise in Ireland and the areas in which social enterprises operate;
- Policy Measure 24: Develop mechanisms to measure the social and economic impact of social enterprises across the full spectrum of social enterprise.

## **3. DRCD “IMPACT” FELLOWSHIP IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

There is limited empirical evidence and data about the scope, prevalence and contribution of social enterprises in Ireland. Nonetheless, a 2013 Forfás<sup>1</sup> report noted that social enterprise is a small but growing part of the enterprise base that has the potential to bring further job gains and deliver economic returns.

---

<sup>1</sup> Social Enterprise in Ireland: Sectoral Opportunities and Policy Issues, Forfás, 2013;  
<https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Forf%C3%A1s/Social-Enterprise-in-Ireland-Sectoral-Opportunities-and-Policy-Issues.pdf>

A key theme which emerged during the development of the Policy, was the need to establish a reliable evidence-base on social enterprise and to develop a robust framework to understand its social, environmental or economic impact. This is recognised internationally as a common concern across the OECD area. Establishing the size, reach and impact of social enterprise is essential to inform policy development in the years ahead.

The main purpose of the DRCD Impact Fellowship in Social Enterprise is to support pioneering research on Social Enterprise in Ireland as part of the Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme. Research is encouraged in particular towards developing a rigorous impact-measurement methodology for the spectrum of social enterprise in Ireland in light of the new National Social Enterprise Policy and international best practice. Research may also consider data collection, verification and reliability as part of establishing the broader evidence-base. This would enable a greater understanding of the prevalence of social enterprise in all of its forms in the Irish context. Whilst teaching duties should not be core to this fellowship, the Fellow may make an important contribution towards informing teaching and learning on social enterprise in the host institution, or more broadly. The Fellow would also be well-placed to stimulate knowledge sharing and policy engagement on social impact and so would be important components of the Postdoctoral Fellowship programme.

#### **4. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES**

Applicants to the GOIPD DRCD Fellowship are subject to the GOIPD 2020 Terms and Conditions available on our [website](#).

The successful applicant should hold a PhD in social enterprise, economics, sociology or geography. In exceptional and convincing cases, other disciplines may be considered.

Proposals should demonstrate direct linkages to the new National Social Enterprise Policy and international best practice. Given that the research is primarily concerned with developing an impact-measurement methodology for the Irish social enterprise ecosystem, candidates should demonstrate how the research will take into account the spectrum of social enterprise activity which exists in Ireland, e.g. circular economy, deficient demand, work integration, rural focus and so on.

Additionally, candidates should present their vision on how they might ensure wider engagement with research networks and policy-makers on questions relevant to impact-measurement for social enterprise in Ireland.

#### **Expected specific outputs**

Over the course of the fellowship the successful applicant would be expected to deliver the following, at a minimum:

1. Extensive international literature, policy and social impact methodology review
2. Gap analysis of further data/research required to assess the social and economic impacts of social enterprise in Ireland
3. Comprehensive Report proposing an Impact-measurement methodology for the spectrum of social enterprise in Ireland in light of the National Policy
4. Minimum of three peer-reviewed journal articles linked to the core focus of the research
5. Active engagement in knowledge-sharing and policy discourse on a national level on an ongoing basis including to relevant conferences, policy and stakeholder meetings.
6. Demonstrable engagement with national and international social impact-focussed research networks

The funded project must start on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 and must be completed in 24 months.