



**Diversity,
Equality &
Sustainability**

CORK'S SOCIAL
JUSTICE ALLIANCE



Pre Budget Submission 2023

Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA) is an alliance of eighteen diverse community and voluntary organisations in Cork city. We are Cork's social justice alliance and we work together to ensure Cork City is an inclusive and equitable place to call home.

The alliance is supported by the HSE Social Inclusion Services in Cork and works to address issues of disadvantage in Cork city and is also a collective voice on issues affecting the community and voluntary sector. The alliance was established in 2014 to work together across the nine equality grounds and a tenth ground of socio-economic status.

Our four key goals are as follows:

GOAL 1 Social Inclusion and Equality *To support and resource marginalised communities to amplify social exclusion and equality issues and to engage with local and national stakeholders aiming to achieve positive change.*

GOAL 2 Educational Disadvantage and Lifelong Learning *To support marginalised communities experiencing educational disadvantage so they can participate fully, engage with and progress through lifelong learning opportunities.*

GOAL 3 Employment and Social Enterprise *To engage with marginalised communities who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment services aiming to move individuals closer to the labour market and create social enterprise opportunities.*

GOAL 4 Interagency Working in the Community and Voluntary Sector *Raise awareness of the critical role of the community and voluntary sector in supporting marginalised communities, the importance of interagency working and the increasing challenges we face.*

For more information see CESCA's website www.cesca.ie

CESCA's mission as an alliance is to achieve social justice and equity for the communities we support and to champion the vital role of community and voluntary organisations in the city of Cork and where relevant regionally and nationally. This submission is based on our experience supporting communities on the margins of society and is underpinned by our values and goals as an Alliance.

We believe it is vital that the Government take urgent measures to begin to address issues of equality and sustainability in Budget 2023. In particular to:

- 1) Address poverty**
- 2) Address homelessness**
- 3) Ensure a sustainable community and voluntary sector**
- 4) Ensure a just transition on climate change measures for all of society.**

We acknowledge that longer term financial and policy planning is required to fully address some of the issues emerging for our communities. We are also acutely aware of the increasing financial pressures the Government and society at large is facing at this time. With the far-reaching impacts of the war in Ukraine, cost of living increases, remaining uncertainty from the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing concerns about the climate crisis, we are aware that Budget 2023 is one that will have many asks of it.

However, we believe that this makes it even more important that the most marginalised members of our society and those at the greatest risk of poverty are prioritised in this budget, to ensure that the current crisis being faced does not unduly fall to those who can least bear the burden.

Address Poverty

Recent figures suggest that 581,334 people in Ireland are living in poverty, of which 163,936 are children.¹ Social Justice Ireland have clearly outlined in their pre-budget submission that poverty increases at times when less priority is given to social welfare spending and also refer to the consequences that exist for all of society if poverty and its wider impacts are not addressed.²

Across CESCO organisations we have seen the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the communities we support, from impacts on mental health, isolation, financial impacts and we are now increasingly concerned about the impacts of the rising rates of the cost of living will have on the communities we support.

Our ask: Providing detailed financial analysis ahead of the budget is beyond the scope of this submission however we recognise the work of Social Justice Ireland in preparing detailed costings in this regard and support their Pre Budget-Submission, in particular their ***recommendations to increase core social welfare rates by €20 per week, to extend the Fuel Allowance to 32 weeks and to equalise Jobseekers' rates for under-25s , as a means of supporting those most at risk of poverty.***

Address Homelessness

Access to a home, is a significant issue in Cork city as it is across the country. Recent figures (July 2022)³ from the Simon Community in Cork tell us that **6,738 Households** are on the social housing waiting list in Cork, that there are **491 Adults** in homeless emergency accommodation in Cork and **145 Children** in homeless emergency accommodation in Cork and Kerry combined. The Simon Community do highlight that it is important to note that these figures only capture people in emergency accommodation and don't reflect the full scale of the homeless crisis. People rough sleeping, those in squats, parents and children in refuges, those in direct provision and hidden homelessness – people staying with family or friends on an insecure basis, often in over-crowded accommodation, because they have no-where else to stay – are not counted.

[Daft.ie's Rental Price Reports](#) show that average rent in Cork city has almost doubled in the last 7 years. During the same time period, the daily number of homes available to rent in Munster has

¹ Social Justice Ireland, Pre Budget Submission, P1 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-06/Budget%20Choices%202023%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf>

² Ibid, P4

³ Cork Simon Community, Homeless Watch, July 2022, <https://www.corksion.com/homeless-watch>

fallen from 1,000 in Q2, 2015 to just 167 in Q2, 2022. The latest Simon Communities Locked [Out of the Market Study \(June 2022\)](#) found that over three consecutive days in June 2022, on average only 30 homes were available to rent in Cork city centre and suburbs per day.

We also know that despite increases the Housing Assistance Payment is not sufficient to meet the needs of those living in Cork. The CSO's latest Survey on Income and Living Standards, 2021 finds that the 'at risk of poverty' rate for people renting with social housing supports, such as HAP, increases five-fold to almost 60% after rent is paid, making this the most at-risk of poverty housing category.

Our ask: *To begin to address some of these issues in Cork City and beyond we believe that the government must prioritise spending on social housing, housing first and homelessness prevention, and invest in wider services to support social housing. In particular we support the Simon Communities Pre-Budget submission calling for vital investments in the sector including the targeting of vacant homes for social housing use, investing in Homeless Prevention and increasing HAP tenancies overall.* ⁴

Support a strong and sustainable community and voluntary sector

The past fourteen years have seen significant cuts to the budgets of the community and voluntary sector. These funding challenges faced by the sector have not been resolved since 2008 and have been further exacerbated by the ongoing Covid- 19 pandemic coupled with rising costs of basic good and utilities and the arrival of thousands of refugees from Ukraine, requiring our support.

The sector has responded to these extra demands while also dealing with a loss of fundraising since the pandemic. We therefore believe it is vital that the Government resource our sector into the future and that it remains committed to the principle of providing multi-annual statutory funding as advocated for by Social Justice Ireland and others. We believe it is essential that the Government recognise and support the value the sector adds to society by increasing the level of funding allocated to the sector to meet increasing demand and costs.

Our ask: *We support the figure from Social Justice Ireland of a €30 million increase in funding to the sector this year.*

⁴ The Simon Communities of Ireland. The Cost of Challenging a Crisis: Tackling Homelessness <https://www.simon.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Simon-Communities-of-Ireland-Pre-Budget-Submission-2023.pdf>

Ensuring a just transition for all.

At CESCA we are coming together to ensure we are all doing what we can to respond to the climate crisis while also supporting marginalised communities through this process. We believe that a fundamental part of any climate action plan or just transition is the principle that no community or region is left behind in our efforts. The Climate Action Plan is an opportunity to work with all of society to transform the way we live our lives. However, investment is needed to support communities coming together with local initiatives that are meaningful to them and include lifelong learning opportunities that can support these changes.

At CESCA we recognise that sustainable change to address climate change can only come from local communities coming together to develop local initiatives that reflect the needs of their areas. We recognise and support initiatives such as that currently being piloted by Cork Environmental Forum; The [Community Climate Action Programme](#) which is initially supporting 10 community groups across Cork City to work out how each one can play a meaningful part locally to tackle the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

Our ask: *We encourage the Government to ringfence a portion of the funding being allocated to the Just Transition Fund in Budget 2023 (€152 million in 2022) for community groups and organisations to implement similar Community Climate Dialogue initiatives .*

Thank you for your consideration of our submission ahead of Budget 2023. We believe Budget 2023 provides an opportunity to ensure that our investment strategy supports the ambitions of the climate action plan, a just transition and can help build an inclusive and equitable society and economy.

CESCA is made up of:

