Civil Society Under Duress

Assessing the Impact of Political, Financial, and Governance Pressures on CSOs

Authors: Shana Cohen, Juliette Lartigau, and Tiarnán McDonough

August 2024

tasc
Think-tank for action on social change

The Rowan Trust

TASC - Think-tank for Action on Social Change
28 Merrion Square North
Dublin 2
D02 AW80
Ireland
Tel: +353 1 616 9050
E-mail: contact@tasc.ie
Website: www.tasc.ie
Twitter: @TASCblog

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

pobal
government supporting communities

Table of Contents

About TASC

TASC is an independent think-tank whose mission is to address inequality and sustain democracy by translating analysis into action. TASC's Constitution presents its main objectives as: Promoting education for the public benefit; Encouraging a more participative and inclusive society; Promoting and publishing research for public benefit.

About The Rowan Trust

The Rowan Trust is an independent foundation fighting for social justice with communities who have been pushed to the margins - Grounded in social justice and equality, The Rowan Trust's mission is to be a committed and creative funder who partners with organisations, social movements and people to use our combined resources in the fight for equality.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This report investigates the pressures civil society organisations (CSOs) are experiencing today in Ireland, and how these pressures have affected their operations and services. The report analyses the complex social, po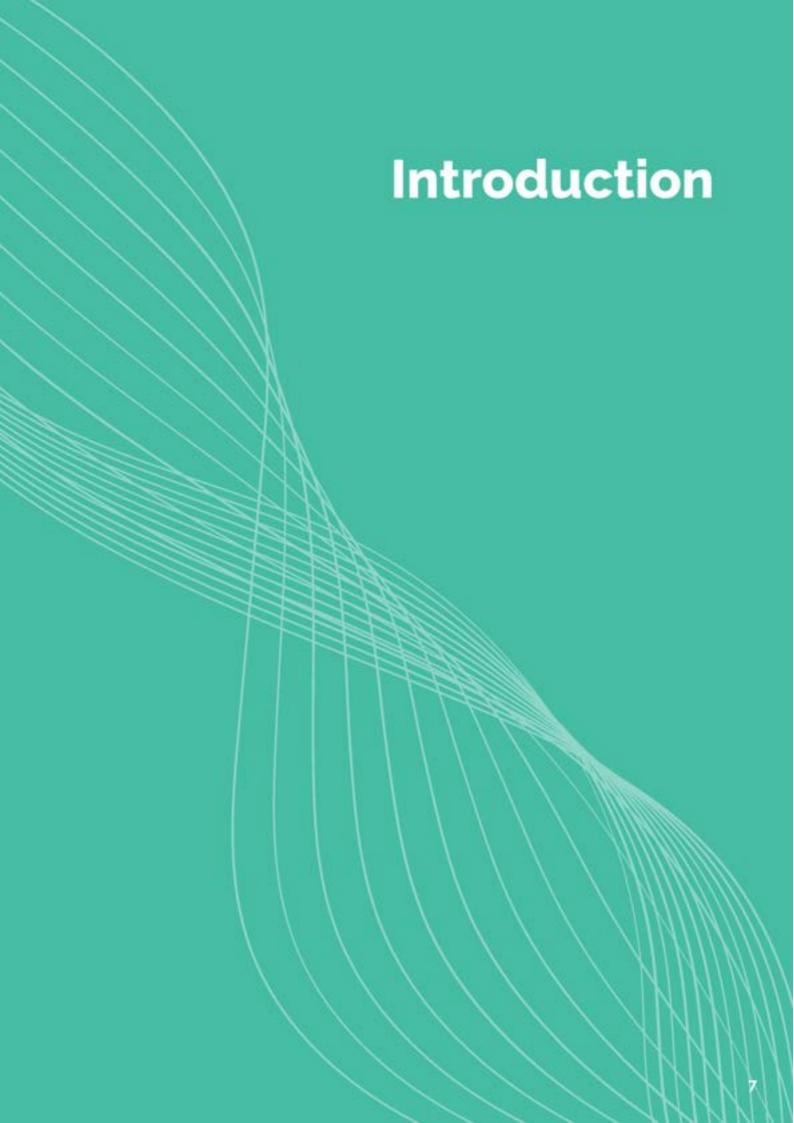litical and economic position of CSOs, which simultaneously express aspirations for a progressive Irish society while creating and sustaining the social infrastructure that enables the fulfilment of these aspirations. The internal pressures these dual responsibilities place on civil society organisations are exacerbated by funding constraints, governance requirements, and staffing shortages; growing demand for services due to housing shortages, the cost-of-living crisis, and other factors; and criticism from politicians and harassment by far-right activists. The consequence is that civil society has become more vulnerable, undermining its capacity to encourage and protect democratic engagement in Ireland and reduce the inequalities undermining confidence in the political process. This report examines this vulnerability and its consequences, and offers recommendations for how CSOs, the government, and funding bodies can respond.

More specifically, the report analyses how rising demand and expanded governance and quality regulations, combined with often insufficient resources, have affected organisational ability not just to respond to targeted harassment but also to address the issues that may be influencing the appeal of far-right politics, such as perceptions of declining community solidarity and access to housing and services like healthcare. The report therefore explores how the double relationship of CSOs to the far right - as potential ideological targets and as actors addressing at least some of the factors that influence the appeal of far-right politics -, means that they are in a singular position to offer an alternative conception and practice of social solidarity and social infrastructure.

The recommendations in this report focus heavily on enabling constructive collaboration and partnerships within civil society and between civil society and the state. However, this collaboration is intended not just to create an ecosystem of support to address social problems like poverty or homelessness, but also to reinforce the intersection and integration of platforms for building social solidarity and enabling an individual and collective experience of belonging. The collaboration should underscore the vital contribution civil society makes to sustaining democracy. Greater state support for CSO advocacy and services would in turn strengthen the position of CSOs, as mentioned above, as representatives of social groups often alienated from politics and policymaking.

The recommendations specifically fall into eight categories: funding; governance; involving civil society more in the entire process of policymaking; more flexibility around advocacy restrictions for recipients of state funding; facilitating and encouraging political participation at a local and national level; creating safer spaces for organisations to engage online and in-person; expanding interaction between policymakers and citizens and residents of Ireland in collaboration with civil society; adopting a community-wide and inter-government approach to service delivery, including those services aimed at supporting minority groups, whether based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexuality, gender, or legal status in Ireland; and refocusing narratives and policy agendas away from integration toward neighbourhood building based on mapping factors that influence quality of life. The intended impact of pursuing these recommendations would be to approach needs holistically on the ground and in the public sector; foregrounding the connection between 'sense of belonging', community development, life opportunities, and quality of life; and generating greater public trust, especially in areas of high disadvantage, in the policymaking and political process.

Introduction

Introduction

Civil society organisations in Ireland face increasing pressures from a number of sources: funding, governance, demand on services, complexity of social problems, staffing shortages and turnover, and individual politicians and political parties. These parties, though still small, are explicitly critical of government funding for CSOs not delivering 'essential' services. The political party Independent Ireland has committed to streamlining the sector and cutting funding for 'non-essential' NGO activities, e.g. those not working in housing, health, and support for those affected most by the cost of living.

Formal far right representation in politics remains minimal in Ireland. Out of 949 councillors in total, 5 local councillors representing far right parties or running as independents were elected in June 2024. However, some of the far right's core arguments, especially regarding migration, have become more prominent in political discourse over the past few years, and particularly the past few months. Most notably, established political parties and politicians are now sharing concerns about the level of migration and number of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland. [1] The repeated protests, for example in Coolock, Dublin, against the placement of asylum seekers in their area, have corresponded with the politicisation at a national and local level of the issue. [2]

Changes in rhetoric and policy proposals have mirrored wider changes in public sentiment as well. Snapshot, an Irish Times monthly survey of public sentiment saw concern over immigration rise from 6% in July 2023 to 24% in January 2024. Housing, which had remained the top concern of the survey since its launch in July 2023 fell to second place at 19% in January 2024. By May 2024, or before the June 7 European and local elections, migration was the most significant issue for survey respondents (n=1000<), at 29%, housing was 19%, or 10 percentage points behind, and the HSE and healthcare were far behind, at 4%. A RedC survey in June 2024 found that almost a third of Irish voters believed in conspiracy theories typically propagated by the far right globally (e.g., the Great Replacement Theory) and 72% felt that the government was not managing immigration policy well and should place far stricter limits on the numbers of migrants entering the country [3]. The majority of respondents wanted migrants to adapt to the Irish 'way of life'.

At the same time, the two No votes in the March 2024 referendums on constitutional references to relationships and care and delays in the proposed reform of existing hate speech legislation have both reflected and contributed to the rising confidence and visibility of socially conservative politics. The new hate speech legislation would respond to current difficulties in prosecuting someone for racist or discriminatory remarks or as a factor in criminal behaviour. The recommended text has been criticised for not defining 'hatred' and 'gender' sufficiently, echoing criticisms concerning the vagueness of the suggested replacement language in the referendums. After the rejection of the two referendums, politicians and pundits have more openly called for abandoning the hate speech legislation altogether or starting over because of alleged bias [4].

More pointedly, the failure of the two referendums to alter the text [5] in the Constitution concerning marriage and the role of the mother within the home have called into question the dominance of progressive values in Ireland. Politicians like Aontú leader Peadar Tóibin, who campaigned against the two referendums, have criticised the nebulousness of the proposed language and the specific removal of the word 'mother' from the Constitution. After the vote, Tóibin argued that politicians perceived a widespread public embrace of progressive values because they had conflated economics with culture. He claimed that "sometimes in this country, I think we have neoliberalism dressed up in progressive clothes." He added:

> Sometimes people are just reduced to economic units … and you know what, when you boil down life, it is the relationships that we have with each other are the most important things we have. Mothers make an individual, unique contribution to society and that is really not recognised by a lot of the political establishment at the moment. It is given no financial value at all, and I actually think we should be able to recognise that, and we should be able to offer some kind of practical supports for mothers in the home and outside the home as well. [6]

Statements like this are complicated for CSOs because, despite professing potentially distinctive social and cultural values from a political party like Toibin's Aontú, they would share his call for practical, namely financial and childcare, support for parents, especially single mothers. CSOs would even share the concern of far-right parties and political activists, including those directly attacking them, that young people should be able to buy a home, and not be forced to live with their parents. The distinction is that a party like the Irish People's Party blames migrants for the inaccessibility of housing, and the broader influence of 'extremist NGOs' on government policy, namely adopting an open border position and prioritising 'globalism' over national interests [7].

While this report discusses how political parties and activists, especially those from the 'far right', have questioned and even attempted to undermine the activities of CSOs, it also evokes a larger question about the role of CSOs both in providing material and emotional support, as mentioned above, and representing inclusive, socially progressive values. The report does not examine who the far right is in Ireland or investigate how political messaging like reducing the number of migrants allowed into Ireland and the amount they receive in benefits has become mainstreamed. Other researchers and CSOs have done or are doing this work (e.g. the work of the Insitute of Strategic Dialogue [8], STOPFARRIGHT, and the Hope and Courage Collective). [9] Instead, the report focuses on how CSOs increasingly must defend their work against criticism and harassment, deliver their services while managing scarce resources now used as well to counter this harassment, and contribute to and pursue a vision of a progressive society where they and their beneficiaries would be able to lead fulfilling lives.

The use of the term 'progressive' in this report is based on the self-representation of organisations, not political debate. For instance, BelongTo, the national organisation for LGBTQ+ young people, lists its values as 'courageous', 'inclusive and diverse', 'trustworthy', 'rooted in experience', 'welcoming', and 'strategic' [10].

Progressive political values are expectedly policy-oriented, in that they argue for equity and social justice, an end to violence and conflict, economic transformation to reduce carbon emissions, and protection of minority and women's rights [11]. An opposing or critical political response would be that these objectives reduce individual freedoms, denigrate individual achievements in favour of collective grievance, and reduce the scope and possibility of debate within an increasingly monitored and politicised discourse concerning race, religion, gender, and inequality [12].

This report instead concentrates on the complex social, political and economic position of CSOs, which simultaneously express aspirations for a progressive Irish society while creating and sustaining the social infrastructure that enables the fulfilment of these aspirations. The internal pressures these dual responsibilities place on civil society organisations are exacerbated by funding constraints, governance requirements, and staffing shortages; growing demand for services due to housing shortages, the cost-of-living crisis, and other factors; as well as criticism from politicians and harassment by far-right activists. The consequence is that civil society has become more vulnerable, undermining its capacity to encourage and protect democratic engagement in Ireland and reduce the inequalities undermining confidence in the political process. This report examines this vulnerability and its consequences, and offers recommendations for how CSOs, the government, and funding bodies can respond.

More specifically, the report analyses how rising demand and expanded governance and quality regulations, combined with often insufficient resources, have affected organisational ability not just to respond to targeted harassment but also to address the issues that may be influencing the appeal of far-right politics, such as perceptions of declining community solidarity and access to housing and services like healthcare. Areas categoriszed as 'Disadvantaged' or 'Very Disadvantaged' in the Pobal Deprivation Index, such as Ballymun B, where the Pobal Deprivation Index is –23.36, have become fertile ground for anti-migrant protests and far-right political parties. The councillors elected in Dublin, or even those who performed well, who ran on anti-immigration platforms represent constituencies (e.g., Ballymun-Finglas or Palmerstown) that would fall into categories of 'disadvantaged', 'very disadvantaged', or 'extremely disadvantaged'.

The double relationship of CSOs with its critics - as political targets and as actors addressing at least some of the factors that influence the appeal of populist and far right politics, means that they are in a singular position to offer an alternative conception and practice of social solidarity and social infrastructure. The notion of social infrastructure used in the report borrows from the American sociologist Eric Klinenberg's book *Palaces for The People* (2018). He relies on a wide-reaching definition, where social infrastructure contains public institutions, like libraries, green spaces, community organisations, and local enterprises whose services bring people together, like cafes. (p. 16) He does condition this definition, however, by stating that "Few modern social infrastructures are natural" and "all social infrastructure requires investment, whether for development or upkeep, and when we fail to build and maintain it, the material foundations of our social and civil life erode." (p. 21) The need for continued investment is very relevant in the Irish context, where inadequate investment, especially in areas like youth and mental health services, has persisted since austerity measures imposed after the financial crash in 2007.

The report first briefly discusses how far right activists mobilize against civil society. The intent is to indicate, at least in part, the extent of harassment [13] faced by CSOs working in specific areas, sometimes in a more general context of political scepticism and antagonism. The harassment encompasses social media, protests, for instance, at libraries [14], and manipulation of complaint procedures and other means to undermine the sustainability and capacity of targeted organisations. The tactics of far-right activists have tested the morale and capacity of staff, who are facing similar pressures from funding and demand as organisations working in other areas.

The STOPFARRIGHT Project found in an online survey (during Covid) (Resisting the Far Right, Cannon et al 2022) of 'key CSO personnel working with affected populations' (p. 38) that CSOs were experiencing more harassment themselves than before and viewed the threat of the far right to Irish democracy as increasingly dangerous. Out of 42 organisations, the majority (29) of respondents rated the threat of the far right as 3 or 4, with 1 as no threat and 5 as an existential threat. (p. 44) Conducted during the pandemic, those staff interviewed were observing mobilisation of far-right activists based on anti-vax contestation and anger at lockdowns. Their activities were likewise attracting media attention and thus generating greater visibility for far-right politics, which benefited as well from a lack of trust in politics derived from slow progress on critical policy issues like housing.

One interviewee (6) for the STOPFARRIGHT Project blamed declining trust in the government on the "reproduction of ... inequality, economic despair, constant insecurity, [the] housing crisis, the homeless crisis, these are conditions that make fertile ground for the far right." Another (7) concurred, saying "I do think that economic hardship, is a contributor and it's probably more of an enabler as well in that it allows bad actors, to put them that way" and "they (FR) start pushing that narrative against migrants [that is] asylum seekers and so called fake economic migrants versus productive, economic migrants." (p. 48) The interviews were conducted during Covid, so before the acceleration in harassment and political resonance that became more apparent in 2023 onwards. The survey respondents believed the government was in large too tolerant of the far right and should become more restrictive in its policy of far-right language and arguments. (p. 51) However, the call was for greater education more than criminalisation. (p. 52-53)

A significant consequence of far-right harassment, combined with reliance on government funding, has influenced self-censorship, undermining advocacy efforts and willingness to critique policy. The research for this report indicated this trend, as have other studies on the sector [15]. A board member at one organisation explained that "It makes me nervous to ask any of our staff to make any kind of statement or to have their name attached to any statement because of the wellbeing concerns for the individual involved." A chief executive described how staff had been 'heckled' at events, recorded without consent, and then had their remarks published in far-right media. Expectedly, this has caused "great upset for staff members ... [they are] just really trying to bully and intimidate ... paralyse people with fear of saying anything in public in case it's used against them or us. And there's huge fear amongst our team."

The executive added, "I think other teams working in this area, if they break us, ... will do the work that we're doing," which entails creating and protecting spaces for their service users. But the pressure to 'break' them, was "tough. It really is. It's really tough." A staff member at another organisation thought that the far right had become more mobilised over the past decade, asking questions about gender, but their visibility has become far greater and their demands far clearer.

She said that the organisation decided to keep their X/Twitter handle to ensure no one took it, but that currently they deliberately do not respond to any comments. She checks it only to ensure that no staff member is receiving death threats, "which is a pretty grim responsibility to have in any job." One executive said they deliberately ignore social media harassment, saying, "Our understanding is not to engage, and we generally don't." However, she added, "we also don't want legitimate people to be bullied ... we would say we put some time into trying to understand it and having some training. And I think there is a lot more we could do in that." At the same time, asking staff to respond to social media attacks can affect mental health, which also costs the organisation on a practical level (need to take leave, turnover, capacity to deliver services).

Beyond far-right activists targeting particular social groups, namely LGBTQ+ groups and migrants, the principal concerns raised in the research also included restrictions on utilising government funds for advocacy and diminishing capacity due to funding and compliance regulations alongside increasing demand for services. As mentioned above, staff cited lack of progress with policy issues like access to affordable housing and the availability of community-based services and local employment, and the views and emotions toward the state this lack of progress creates in communities. Residents have been left feeling disrespected and neglected by political elites and likewise, frustrated, angry, and alienated.

The report draws on interviews with representatives of civil society organisations affected directly by far-right activities and those responsible for services addressing the issues that may relate to the growing influence of far-right political arguments and mobilisation. The report also utilises data on the sector to analyse how funding, which has not kept pace with demand and inflation since the imposition of austerity measures, and the recent cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic have squeezed frontline service providers. The final section of the report offers recommendations for how to improve capacity and sustainability, and likewise contribute to the infrastructure and conception of community that advances a progressive vision of Irish society and supports the role of civil society within Irish democracy.

Civil Society Under Pressure

Civil Society Under Pressure

Worsening International Context

Pressure on civil society in Ireland parallels international trends, though Ireland remains one of the most open democracies in the world. Mirroring the findings of this report, the international organisation for civil society CIVICUS [16], which monitors civic space globally, stated in its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan (p. 6) that "The space for civil society to promote rights and pursue social justice has been historically contested. But presently, we're seeing a greater range of states attacking civil society, the rise of anti-rights groups and a sharpening of tactics of restriction, including online attacks and censorship" [17]. In its annual report on civic space, CIVICUS noted that as of 2023, almost 31% of the world's population lived in countries with closed civic space, a jump from 26% in 2018 (when CIVICUS started monitoring this space). In contrast, 2% of the global population, which includes Ireland, lived in countries where civic space is free and protected. Civil society in Europe more generally has experienced increasing obstruction to its activities; CIVICUS reports that 12 European countries have been downgraded in status regarding openness over the past six years.

Freedom House [18], in its *Freedom in the World 2024* [19] report, found that "Global freedom declined for the 18th consecutive year in 2023. The breadth and depth of the deterioration were extensive. Political rights and civil liberties were diminished in 52 countries, while only 21 countries made improvements." (p. 1) The deterioration was attributed to flawed elections and armed conflict, but also to attacks on the concept and practice of pluralism. The report explains that "The rejection of pluralism—the peaceful coexistence of people with different political ideas, religions, or ethnic identities—by authoritarian leaders and armed groups produced repression, violence, and a steep decline in overall freedom in 2023. These trends are creating an environment that is unfavourable to democracy just as the world enters a consequential year of elections" [20]. As a response, the report recommends building international coalitions and championing the values of diversity and dissent, which promote norms of democratic engagement that "can still reverse the long decline in global freedom" [21]. The recommendations of this report outlined in the final section of this report pursue the same direction, of coalition-building and promoting values and norms, in an Irish context, though with a particular focus on alleviating financial pressures on civil society, encouraging participation in politics and policymaking, and protecting spaces to express diverse viewpoints and identities, especially at a local level.

Similar to Ireland, the groups and rights targeted by authoritarian leaders and far right political parties and activists relate primarily to LGBTQ+ communities, migrants, and ethnic and religious minorities, especially Muslims and Jews [22]. In countries where democracy is under threat, public institutions, like the judicial system, which are designed to protect individual rights, are being deliberately undermined or simply becoming weaker through lack of confidence and trust. The Freedom House Report attributes declining freedom in Europe in 2023 largely to "worsening government dysfunction, including growing concerns about official corruption and a lack of transparency." (p. 28) Other issues, noted by CIVICUS but also EU institutions and the Council of Europe, are arrests, prosecution, and intimidation of environmental and political activists, as well as NGOs helping refugees and asylum seekers.

The Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, in a 2023 report [23], cites "a constant deterioration in the working environment of human rights defenders and civil society organisations in a growing number of European countries. Today, because of the surge and multiplication of major and overlapping crises, the situation of human rights defenders in Europe has worsened even further." (p. 3) The report also warns about diminishing rights for LGBTQ+ individuals and migrants and ethnic minorities, as well as climate activists and women and children (p. 7), and underscores "an alarming rise in the anti-gender agenda, LGBTI+ phobia, xenophobia and racism spreading across Europe, fuelled by nationalist, populist and extreme right wing political forces and groups, ultraconservative religious groups and some unscrupulous media" [24]. The consequence has been "an increasing number of attacks, threats, prosecutions, imprisonment, judicial harassment, stigmatisation, marginalisation, deprivation of access to public decision-making process and other measures preventing legitimate activities against human rights defenders active in those areas" [25].

As discussed in the country examples elaborated upon below, criminalisation of humanitarian assistance for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants has become more commonplace, as it complements policies aimed at deterring migrants from attempting to come to Europe. Both criminalisation and government policies, whether intentional or not, have enabled anti-migrant, even xenophobic, rhetoric to become more visible, which can threaten the safety and security of activists and NGO staff. The Council of Europe report laments that "the work of human rights defenders and all others who demonstrate solidarity, including commercial and fishing boat crews, healthcare and social workers, volunteers and even ordinary citizens, is increasingly framed – including by public officials – as a threat to public order and national security" [26]. Even legal actions, such as medical care, are demonised [27] because they involve supporting a population negatively portrayed by both the government and far right political parties, both of whom are arguably utilising the issue to generate political capital.

Pressure on minority groups and institutions and rights have in turn implications for civic space. CIVICUS points out that while Europe and Central Asia "has been the region with the largest proportion of people living in places where they can enjoy freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression", this proportion has shrunk from about 58% in 2019 living in countries classified as 'open' and 'narrowed' and 20% in 'open' to 10% in 2023 living in 'open' countries and about 54% living in countries that are 'obstructed', 'repressed' or 'closed'. CIVICUS stresses that "previously stable and established democracies with strong institutions have also experienced a trend of declining civic space." (p. 8) At the same time, it should be said, both CIVICUS and Freedom House categorise Europe as largely freer than other parts of the world. They both affirm Europe's leadership in protecting LGBTQ+ people's rights and notably, the efforts of Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland to reverse the deterioration of rights that occurred while the Law and Justice Party was in power (2015-2023).

Pushing Compliance and Discouraging Specific Activities: EU and National Government Legislation on Civil Society in Europe

The EU

Coming from the EU level, recent restrictions emanating from an increased focus on transparency in funding sources, management and use, may contribute to greater strain on NGO capacity, resembling trends in Ireland over the past few years because of compliance regulations, as discussed below.

'Qatargate', where the NGO Fight Impunity was accused in 2022 of taking money from Qatar and potentially Morocco and Mauritania to lobby MEPs in the S&D Group, sparking debate within the European Parliament about NGO governance and financing [28]. The result in the last European Parliament, driven by the EPP Group, which was (and still is) the largest within the European Parliament, was to tighten control over governance and transparency in financing. In a statement, the EPP Group MEP Markus Pieper, who drafted the Parliamentary report on NGO governance [29], said upon its adoption by the European Parliament in January 2024 [30] that "Any organisation that receives funding from the European Union must disclose how they use those funds. This requirement must be extended to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), whose funding has so far has only been subject to limited scrutiny." In another statement, Pieper argued that "When NGOs try to influence legislation in the Parliament and at the same time receive money from the Commission, the minimum that must be done is to make it transparent. With [the Budgetary Committee] Report, we have sent a clear signal that more transparency is needed to prevent future bribery scandals." The Report also calls for greater transparency regarding meetings with MEPs and their staff, as well as representatives of other EU bodies.

The intended outcome of the Report is that EU-funded NGOs must publicly disclose in detail their funding sources, going beyond monitoring of just EU funding, which has been the practice until now. The change is intended to allow the European Commission to assess how EU funds are being re-distributed within organisations and their use by NGOs. The Report states:

> the analysis of the framework surrounding the implementation of the EU budget by NGOs reveals major shortcomings in terms of public transparency and accountability. Since only the funds directly awarded to NGOs are subject to monitoring and reporting by the Commission, the EU funds reallocated in the form of sub-granting, sub-contracting or shared within a consortium are difficult to track and are not published on public websites such as the FTS. As a result, control mechanisms aimed at ensuring that EU funds are used effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with the EU's objectives, policies and financial rules are made difficult to implement, if not ineffective.

Though the justification of the change is to ensure that NGO activities adhere to the values of the EU, from funding origin to final recipient, the burden on NGOs [31] to deliver transparency may be, as it is in Ireland, underestimated or not addressed sufficiently. Pieper compares NGO transparency with the requirements on business lobbies yet does not acknowledge their substantially larger resources. In fact, civil society groups have claimed that the legislation will obscure the much more significant influence business lobbies have on EU law [32]. Even before the publication of the December 2023 Committee Report and its adoption, the 2023 European Civic Forum co-Presidents warned MEPs not to over-scrutinise NGO finances out of fear of 'foreign influence' and ignore the contribution of civil society to addressing the factors weakening or threatening democracy in the EU. They wrote in a February 2023 article that "The ongoing European Parliament corruption scandal is being used by some to launch a witch-hunt against civil society and NGOs. This is only fuelling the already worrying crackdown on critical voices that hold governments to account." Instead, they pushed the EU to prioritise "internal democratic resilience" by protection CSOs and civic freedoms [33].

Not Just Ireland: France, the UK, and Greece

Specific governmental tactics to obstruct civic space and hinder civil society organisations in their work can vary, but they tend to concentrate across national contexts on supressing protests; normalising rhetoric attacking the particular social groups that CSOs help and represent; decreasing funding relative to inflation and cost of living while encouraging competition between organisations for the funding; expanding regulations and compliance procedures that CSOs must follow to retain their legal status; and restricting the ability for CSOs to engage in advocacy. Analysis of new legislation and funding allocation in three European countries shows how trends in Ireland are occurring elsewhere, suggesting that regardless of the degree of 'openness', CSOs across Europe are facing similar challenges.

In France, which holds a 'narrowed' status according to the CIVICUS Monitor, NGOs have accused the government of appropriating anti-migrant, anti-Islam rhetoric, which undermines their own capacity to defend the rights of migrants and Muslim citizens [34], and of blaming NGOs for facilitating the passage of migrants across the Mediterranean [35]. NGOs have also criticised the government for the use of force during protests, limiting ability to protest, and criminalising some forms of protests themselves [36], and of forcing organisations to close or reduce their activities by withdrawing funding. Moreover, the police and the far right have demonstrated aligned agendas, with consistent support from the far right for police officers under investigation [37]. The French organisation L.A. Coalition [38], which was founded in 2019 to counter government repression of civil society in France, has documented an overall decline in funding since the financial crisis for civil society organisations and an increase in competition between organisations through project-based calls, which have privileged the more professionalised organisations and pushed organisations toward greater short-term planning [39].

Similar to Ireland, organisations in France, under the Sapin II law [40] (enacted in 2017), must report contacts with decision makers and on advocacy expenditure and activities if this is a regular part (meeting with decision makers more than 10 times a year) of their work. Politicians have also used control over public funds and other powers to threaten the operations and even the closure of organisations [41]. A law enabling the government to dissolve an organisation came into effect in 2012[42][43], and Gérald Darmanin (then Minister of Interior, from President Macron's political party *Renaissance*) ordered the dissolution of the environmental movement *Les Soulèvements de la Terre*, which was then reversed by decision of the Conseil d'État in November 2023 [44]. Overall, since the declaration of a State of Emergency in 2015, the public authorities have more power in France and certain individual and public liberties have become more restricted [45]. Moreover, in part to reinforce secularism and confront radicalised Muslim groups, since 2022 [46], civil society organisations have had to openly declare their commitment to the Republic and its values in order to be recognised by the State [47], receive state funding, and to work with young people doing their civil service. Civil society organisations have in turn warned that the law can be abused in order to limit the right to association [48]. Even though the unexpected legislative elections of late June did not result in the anticipated results, organisations feared a far-right majority in the Parliament. [49] Indeed, questions around the freedom of association and the right to protest were central to their concerns, as CSOs feared losing funding or even dissolution [50].

The restrictions on civil society within the UK overlap with those in France and in Ireland. The austerity measures implemented after the 2007-08 financial crisis hurt smaller and local organisations [51], while enabling larger organisations and private companies to become more dominant, as they could secure "governmentally-funded contracts" [52] more easily. Budget cuts to local government and the elimination of regional bodies have meant that they can no longer assist small organisations struggling to survive. As in France and in Ireland, regulations have become tighter, forcing organisations to use scarce resources to ensure compliance.

Greece has experienced one of the most severe deteriorations of civic freedoms, moving from "narrowed" to "obstructed" in 2022 [53] at the same time far-right groups [54] like Golden Dawn have become more prominent. These groups have engaged in their own charitable activities, like soup kitchens, but for Greek citizens only. Organisations supporting migrants have been harassed [55] or, like Refugee Support Aegean, struggled even to register as an association. As in the UK, the financial crisis led to a decrease in funding and an increase in competition between organisations, with larger, more well-established organisations benefitting because of their capacity and potential reluctance to criticise policy decisions [56]. As in other countries, Greece introduced new compliance legislation (Law 4873/2021), which set up a database and public registry for CSOs [57]. This law also encouraged private donations, leading critics to warn it would limit civic freedom and disadvantage smaller and new CSOs [58]. Another new law targeted organisations assisting migrants (Law 4825/2021) by introducing new registration requirements, and new criminal charges, for NGOs involved in search and rescue activities for migrants crossing the Mediterranean [59].

The recent European elections in Greece marked the lowest turnout ever recorded in the country (41.39%) [60]. The far-right parties received almost 16% of the votes, while the governing New Democracy lost 10% of its registered electorate in just a year, receiving 28.31% of the votes (versus 33.12% in 2019) [61]. At the same time, the current government is openly hostile to NGOs, especially those working in support of migrants. Their language resembles that of the far right, referencing national security [62]. The pressure on the European Union to introduce a common response to immigration in Europe (i.e. New Pact on Migration and Asylum) may pose an even greater challenge to the already beleaguered CSOs active on Europe's borders.

Regulating Governance in Ireland

In Ireland, governance regulations have become far stricter since the passage of the 2009 Charities Act, which was intended to "provide for the better regulation of charitable organisations" and likewise, established the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA). The CRA's responsibilities include increasing 'public trust and confidence in the management and administration of charitable trusts and charitable organisations'; promoting 'compliance by charity trustees with their duties in the control and management of charitable trusts and charitable organisations', 'understanding of the requirement that charitable purposes confer a public benefit', and 'the effective use of the property of charitable trusts or charitable organisations', and ensuring 'the accountability of charitable organisations to donors and beneficiaries of charitable gifts, and the public. The CRA is notably also responsible for the charity registry and compliance with the provisions of the Act, which allows it to investigate charities suspected of non-compliance. The CRA publishes data on the sector and supports charities in achieving better governance through the dissemination of information and advice. The CRA reports to the government but is independent [63].

The pressure to ensure better governance amongst charities reflects wider public demand for greater confidence in charity use of funds. Amárach Research found in a 2022 survey that "80% of adults now feel trust and confidence in a charity is very important when deciding to donate, a significant increase since the benchmark level of 65%" [64]. Negative factors influencing trust include "Lack of transparency regarding how funding is used, perceptions of high salaries of executive staff and negative media coverage" [65]. Smaller, local charities are more likely to garner trust, whereas national and international charities are trusted the least. Inversely, the survey found that almost 4 in 10 adults "are very concerned that regulation is not having any effect" and that "greater transparency would help improve regulation of the sector." Scandals in the use of funds, especially among prominent charities, may affect the call for tougher consequences for non-compliance [66].

The report, which was commissioned by the CRA, concluded that

> Trust and confidence have become more important when deciding to support a charity for the first time and there has been a rise in the proportion of adults who will research a charity before they commit to supporting it. Individual charities need to ensure they meet these increasing public expectations through greater transparency and accountability and by demonstrating the impact they are making while the Regulator could provide greater evidence of compliance and enforcement [67].

Compliance across charities could not be a hundred percent guaranteed but more widely accessible information about compliance could reassure the public about charity operations. The specific obligations for charities include submitting an annual report [68] every twelve months. The report itself must document activities over the past twelve months, who it has helped, how it has raised and spent funds; and importantly, total foreign income, expenditure and transfers and relevant country information.

Recognising that some charities, especially small ones, may find the current regulations too burdensome. Minister of State for Rural and Community Development, Joe O'Brien, committed to amending the legislation [69]. The amendments, from 2024 legislation, are intended to strengthen the powers of the regulator to intervene in case of ineffective management and 'ease the administrative burden on smaller charities'. The new legislation requires an application to change the Constitution and purpose of the organisation [70], outlines rules for charity trustees and activities considered to be charitable work, including the advancement of human rights, and raises the threshold for requiring a statement of accounts to above €250,000 p/a income.

When published in 2023, proposed amendments to the legislation were met with both praise and concern. In a 2022 joint statement, the Wheel, Charities Institute Ireland, and Mason Hayes & Curran welcomed the recognition of human rights as a charitable purpose and lifting the audit threshold to €250,000. At the same time, the statement criticised the extension of "significant additional powers of direction and sanction to the Charities Regulator," especially "disproportionate power to de-register charities for a range of minor non-compliances," "insufficiently strong appeals processes and insufficient recognition of potential reputational damage to charities occurring prior to any finding of fact during an investigation," increased responsibility for volunteer trustees, the cost of compliance, and gaps and anomalies in the Charities Act of 2009 that cause difficulties for charities [71].

As in other European countries, lobbying by charities has also become more highly regulated. As with governance, documenting lobbying increases transparency, and thus public trust in charitable activities. At the same time, though, aggressive enforcement of regulations can, perhaps inadvertently, inhibit charities from pursuing their core mission or expressing their views on relevant policy. In Ireland, the Lobbying Act of 2015 requires anyone lobbying to register and submit any lobbying activity to the Register of Lobbying as well as a statement if there was no lobbying (Art. 12(3)). The Lobbying Information (Art. 12(4)(5)) should include who met with whom, the subject and aims, and other relevant information. Lobbying itself can encompass not just meetings but also emails, phone calls, meetings, and casual conversations and any non-compliance will incur a fine or prosecution (Arts. 18-21).

Critics of the regulations, especially regarding lobbying, have argued that government legislation should distinguish charities from political organisations and recognise, through financial support and legislation, the role they play in instigating social change and addressing needs. The Irish Council of Civil Liberties (ICCL) has commented that "a community group set up to oppose, for example, the building of an oil refinery, could find themselves brought to court for seeking donations above a certain amount, but the company building the refinery can spend as much as it wants to influence the government"[72]. In their statement, the law firm Mason Hayes and Curran has questioned the intrusive monitoring of proposed amendments to a charity's constitution and the subsequent punishment of failure to obtain the consent of the Regulator for the constitutional change. They concluded that "Trust is a huge part of life in the charity sector. If a charity is removed from the Register of Charities, this will impact on the level of trust the public has in that charity." The law firm also recommends that legislation define more precisely terminology like 'operate', which relates to the requirement to register as a charity, and 'advertising' and concludes that "quite a bit of further work is needed on the Bill to ensure that regulation continues to be proportionate, fair and therefore implemented without hesitation."

How the Far Right Targets Civil Society in Ireland: Harassment, Intimidation and Manipulation of Legislation

How the Far-Right Targets Civil Society in Ireland: Harassment, Intimidation and Manipulation of Legislation

Far-right harassment can assume multiple forms, from violent assault to online and verbal harassment and onsite protests at institutions like libraries. Posters from the Irish People's Party during the local elections explicitly criticised the influence of NGOs, asking how they 'captured government policy and the media narrative'. The arson incidents and other attacks against suspected or projected accommodation centres for refugees [73] have targeted charities, such as the homeless charity Streetlink Homeless Support [74]. Online harassment has occurred through different platforms. The harassment can target charities directly and their service users. For instance, a study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2023) found anti-migrant TikTok videos explicitly targeting migrants or making unverified claims of migrants' committing sexual violence against women and children to be amassing views, some to more than a million [75]. Similar to counterparts in the US [76], protestors have also targeted libraries, especially in relation to the availability of LGBTQ+ reading material and hosting events that may relate to LGBTQ+ rights and identity [77]. The protests have consisted of hoisting illegal banners onto buildings and filming staff, as well as surrounding the buildings.

The City Library in Cork faced rolling protests and shut down repeatedly in 2023. In its survey, the STOPFARRIGHT project found that the overwhelming majority of respondents (23 out of 28) had noticed an increase in far-right attacks over the last five years. (p. 67) Amongst these attacks were online harassment (100% reported this), verbal harassment (75%), physical harassment or threats (50%), and vandalism (39.3%). (p. 66) Other forms of attacks included stalking, threats to associates or friends and family, correspondence to third parties to deliberately undermine the organisation, and threatening letters. (p. 68) Notably, at the time of the survey, most CSOs did not have an anti-far right strategy, though the majority had attended training, provided support to victims, established policies against trolling and other forms of online harassment, and participated in anti-far right demonstrations. (p. 70) CSOs have since then, as discussed here, become more pro-active as the rhetoric and arguably political influence of far-right politics becomes more mainstream.

In the research for this report, tactics targeting charities have included online harassment and phone calls; formal complaints to the Charity Regulator concerning organisation governance, which requires an organisational response and thus resources; and complaints at locations where charity-run events are advertised, for instance, to support LGBTQ+ youth. Activists may use a combination of tactics and, critically, persist in their harassment, forcing or pressuring charities to self-limit their online and physical presence. For example, one organisation had not experienced intimidation around events, but they had stopped advertising events on social media because to do so would attract disruption. The director cited as an example an event at one regional library to support LGBTQ+ young people. The event had proceeded without problems for a year, but an online discussion drew attention to the event, and for the three subsequent months, there had been consistent disruption. She explained that at first, "nobody cared. And then they started to talk about it online. And now it's been disrupted each time." In their training sessions for health and social care workers, staff noted that far-right narratives, especially anti-trans language, had begun to filter through.

Several of the directors of organisations involved in the research noted that the far right had become much more aggressive and consistent in its intimidation of targeted groups over the last few years. A director commented, "I suppose the activities and tactics of the far right have become, I suppose, something that we think about almost on a daily basis . . . it's like night and day. 18 months ago [it] wasn't like that." Another stated that it was harder to do work now than when she started 16 years ago in the area: "We're just having to be extra careful all the time in relation to what we put out there." In the past, "there was definitely homophobia, kind of that low-level hum. There were people not understanding why same sex couples would want the same rights and protections and respect and equality of other couples and not understanding that we have families and even some disgust at the extreme end." The current situation was different, she stressed, saying, "I've never, bar one or two occasions, you know, I've never experienced anything like, not this kind of sustained kind of attack." The same executive had decided to withdraw from at least one social media platform, saying, "We've made that decision for self-care and self-preservation of our staff in the organisation. And we're just having to be, you know, extra careful all the time in relation to what we put out there."

An organisation advocating for a Yes vote in the March 2024 referendums, before the referendums took place, reported that harassment had not just escalated but had expanded thematically to anti-migrant sentiment. The director explained that "We always have had people disagreeing [because of our work]. And, you know, some dads may feel disenfranchised, [and] we do get a bit of the 'single mothers having children for, you know, houses,'" which she associated with traditional conservatism, not the far right. But now the complaints had extended to complaining about migrants with multiple wives and using transphobic language, with a call to 'defund the NGOs' who support a Yes vote. She concluded, "so yeah, we'd be happy to see normal conservatives at this point, rather than the others."

Another, also involved in the referendums' campaigns, stated that in the run-up to the votes, "Our comms officer said that she is trying to block the ones [posts] she can clearly see are bots. And some are not, some are people. And so, when we go in now, we could get 50 interactions on Twitter since the last time, we didn't normally [before], we would have had five." The content of the posts also differed from before. She noted that, "What we're getting now, which is new, is definitely the same themes of migration, polygamy, Muhammad and his five wives if you vote yes, defund the NGOs." She added that the tactics were becoming more sophisticated in their outreach: "There are some people with some smart ideas using for example, the protests outside of refugee centres, accommodation centres, with women, with young women with prams, and they have children, or they're using women as spokespeople. That's new I think, and it can be quite powerful. I think it has potential, I guess, to potentially lead people down somewhere." At the same time, this executive, like others, did not know how the messages to specific groups, like single parents, versus those posted on social media to them, were being disseminated. She said, "I don't know how they're reaching them. I mean, there's a lot of online spaces, a lot for single parents, and we're definitely not in them."

Tactics thus seemed to consist of targeted messaging online or perhaps in WhatsApp or other groups and public comments directed at civil society and politicians aimed at pressuring them through intimidation. The result was a "reluctance to go public," as one interviewee put it, from fear of "being bullied online . . . Now, we always had bullying, but it was amplified way more [in the runup to the referendum], the volume is massive. People are going further in terms of getting personal, you know." For her, the substance of the comments did not really matter, stressing that, "whether it's underneath a Twitter post, whether it's to a woman politician, whether it's in their tiniest bullying, it's really, really bullying, and that's the difference." The volume and the implicit intent of posts were effective in provoking anxiety, demoralisation, and concern for safety amongst staff, which had subsequent implications for service users.

A director expressed her concern about the sustained nature of attacks, saying "I'm worried about it. Yeah, we constantly feel under attack, especially in the last few months, it's really been dialled up." She referred to an upcoming project and remarked that "we've been getting it in the neck, online, in print media, we've had threats via email, we've had to have the Guards involved to act [and] add security measures to the building and protocols for staff to stay safe." One positive result of the harassment, however, has been greater unity amongst organisations. The director of a national organisation remarked that "if there is a silver lining from what happened, it's a recognition that we need to work together more to recognise the strengths of different organisations." He cited union-backed events and statements criticising anti-migrant protests as an example, noting that the union organised demonstration after the riots was "really effective ... Even for half an hour. Lots of different backgrounds coming together." The unity pushes back against intimidation and threats, creating an alternative narrative and social space.

Complaints to the Charities Regulator represented another effective means of undermining organisational capacity and focus. Several organisations cited cases of being reported to the Charities Regulator to undermine capacity and, ultimately, their mission. The director of one organisation noted that "every time when we talk about reform of the equality legislation in terms of making stronger protection for trans people, the immediate reaction is we're going to report you to the Charities Regulator. That's a very real threat, because you look at any organisation, no matter how well run, and you'll find some issue that, you know, they haven't done right, because it is volunteers who are trustees, and they do always find something wrong, that hasn't been kind of covered". An interviewee relayed how the far-right manipulated legislation: "We've had multiple complaints made by them [the far right] to various different agencies, about us." She then elaborated on how these complaints require substantial staff time:

> They take up a lot of time dealing with all those agencies and providing them with all the information that they need, and they request and require, which we're absolutely happy to do. But it's really, it's vexatious. And it's time wasting and distraction, just trying to distract us from our work, all the stuff that they used in the playbook in the UK and the US before to try and wear down advocates and activists and burn us out and make us feel like 'oh, this isn't worth it' or, you know, doubt ourselves or paralyse us with fear about saying anything in peace. You know, it gets misconstrued and reproduced somewhere out of context. There's a lot of that going on at the moment.

She also reinforced how much time staff had to devote to responding to the far right. She said, "my staff, my senior management team, my comms team, they spend so much time either dealing with stuff online, dealing with press queries, funding agencies getting in touch with us about freedom of information requests, parliamentary questions coming in, and people needing information from us, just general queries coming in. It's taking up a lot of our time, a lot of our time."

Fortunately, she stressed, her board had been proactive about governance. She noted that "our board decided to invest heavily in that a number of years ago before all this really heated up. So, we're lucky in that we have staff on our team who focus on that kind of stuff. But all the same, you know, when additional letters come in, in between having to do your returns, that takes up time, you know, putting lists of documents together and replying and, making sure everything's ready to go and yet that takes up more time as well."

She acknowledged that for smaller organisations, complaints about governance could be a 'successful tactic':

> If you keep small organisations really busy with constant complaints or inquiries, and they're having to deal with that all the time, they can never get to work that they were set up to do or it's significantly reduced, and that will burn people out because nobody wants to be doing that, you know, 50% of the time, 75% of the time, 90% of the time. You get into this line of work because you want to make a difference, make a path have a positive impact in your community, your country, the world, whatever. Not to be constantly dealing with vexatious stuff, you know, that's feels like it's a huge drain on resources. And yeah, it's just a pain in the neck.

The director of one organisation echoed this sentiment, or that existing charity regulations could offer an effective mechanism for undermining a charity's work and even survival. She explained that:

> [T]he kind of the techniques the far right use is if you're an organisation, an NGO or a charity, they'll then try and target you from a regulatory point of view. So, they make a complaint about you to the Charities Regulator, or CIPA, or whatever. And again, it then turns into a different battle of, you know, the CRA will then come and do an inquiry and look into all your funding everything you ever did and have a look at everything. Yeah, and could very easily shut you down.

She recommended that the government clarify charity rights and improve information and advice services, especially for smaller charities. She stressed that "there's a huge gap, I think, in information advice about how a community group living in the north inner city or wherever, respond to a complaint, you know, an inquiry from the Charities Regulator." This government support is necessary because, as she put it, "the far right to me are extraordinarily well organised, well financed and well-resourced and know what buttons to tick to kind of where the vulnerabilities are. So, and now, so it's kind of about advice, information, if need be [legal] representation." She then added that the legal aid system does not provide representation for community groups and is not obliged to offer legal advice. In fact, legal aid focuses primarily on family law, not equality legislation or other areas relevant to charities serving marginalised populations. It should be said that no one interviewed questioned the validity or need for good governance, just its potential to be manipulated to undermine the organisation's mission and capacity.

How Civil Society Organisations Have Responded

How Civil Society Organisations Have Responded

Limit Online and Public Presence

Organisations have responded to harassment by withdrawing from social media, monitoring far more closely their external communications, and being in close contact with other organisations and staff around the country. Staff at one youth organisation said that "the phone rings a lot." People call to say that "something is happening in my community, doing a lot of stuff to boards, or we get invited to team meetings to give a particular presentation around this issue." They highlighted a need for more skills in responding and indeed, another organisation spoke of hiring consultants with specific expertise in responding to the far right. One interviewee stressed that "the dynamics within the community have really shifted, and that whole Overton window of what's acceptable discourse within youth services has shifted dramatically, where youth workers are reporting that far right talking points are much more normalised." On the other hand, the anticipation of backlash or criticism can lead to more rigorous preparation for communications. A staff member remarked that, "In one sense, that could maybe be a good thing, because it makes it a little bit more rigorous. It makes you ensure that anything you're putting out is watertight, [that] it's fact based, it's evidence based, it can add in an additional layer of complexity." At the same time, though, the 'chill factor' on communications is undeniable.

The same staff member explained that communications materials were now more robust and highlighted values more. Returning to capacity issues, the difficulty was that only two staff worked for the organisation in communications. If their work protected the organisation but it required more time-consuming research and reflection, then sustaining quality staff in communications had become more vital to the organisation's survival and a greater risk. The staff member explained that we must ensure "we have the ability to moderate [but] the challenges are we only have two communication staff. So actually, doing that in practice, over time, if there's an increase could get a little bit more difficult, and just increases risk from, you know, ... media platforms." In addition, as a government-funded organisation, the use of staff for communications "does feed into this kind of anti-NGO narrative." However, they commented that "in a way, it's a good thing, because it makes you more conscious of how you're actually using your resources. And, and the perception of that as well. And identifying risks." In short, pressure on communications could both push staff to become more conscientious and the board to acknowledge its importance but it could, as the staff member noted, "be quite time consuming as well, and, and distracts you from your day to day."

A few interviewees spoke of the personal implications of having to assess the risks of engaging in social media and attending events. One described how a far-right activist found out where she was going to speak and tweeted a threatening message. She notified the conference organisers, who withdrew her name from the public advertisement for the event. She was also careful when participating in book launches, as she found that people were tracking the launch locations through the comments they posted online. She was understandably anxious at the time, explaining that it "was something that really kind of freaked me out at the time, because that was something that my all my family and friends were going to be asked, never mind fellow journalists and stuff like that." She asked the publisher not to advertise the events, to make sure that "nothing was kind of advertised publicly." Organisations that are overtly countering the far right must be even more careful about sending out invitations and sharing a location. As this individual put it, they need to "ensure that they're not infiltrated by people with nefarious agendas, you know."

Protect Resources

One tactic to weaken CSOs, especially those advocating for targeted groups, has, as discussed above, been to file a complaint to the Charities Regulator or other bodies. As a lawyer interviewed put it, "they [the far right] make a complaint about you to the Charities Regulator, or CIPA, or whatever. And again, it then turns into a different battle of, you know, the CRA will then come and do an inquiry and look into all your funding, everything you ever did, and have a look at everything, and could very easily shut you down." She believed that "The far right, to me, are extremely well organised, well financed and well-resourced and know what buttons to tick to kind of where the vulnerabilities are." She went further, arguing that the CRA had become "a tool of the far right," a "very effective tool . . . a very paperback based exercise." Moreover, she explained, "If you're a very small charity, you can fall foul of the guidelines very quickly. It's very hard to get trustees to come on board an NGO and take responsibility. It's very onerous the level of responsibility work it will put on the trustees of an NGO. It's a good way to weaken the NGO or civil society, to over legislate for them."

The impact of this tactic, combined with online and physical harassment and protests, has become not just to self-censor to reduce the risk of harassment but also to become more cautious and deliberative about use of resources, which are needed for service provision and for protecting the organisation from present and future threats. This lawyer felt that over-regulation, and reliance on government funding, had exacerbated self-censorship and cautiousness, stating "An awful lot of the NGO sector is delivering state services on the cheap. So, to then have it completely overregulated is just another kind of layer on top of it, like understand that you're delivering the service, and now you're going to shut up about it." The consequences of the shift in resource use to protect organisations from the far right from resources used for actual services and service users is still not well understood but the suggestion from the research is that the 'layer' of regulation and hostility and potential for abuse have required significant time commitments amongst both board members and staff.

The chair of the board of another organisation related that they had been pursuing charity registration for over a year, and that the process had required substantial effort. Their experience revealed the challenges multiple pressures from the far right, funding, government regulations, and service user needs they were now facing. Speaking first about compliance, the Chair of the Board stated that the organisation would respond to the Charities Regulator requests within several days, and the Regulator would then contact them again in a few months. The Chair noted that "a lot of our time is going into responding to complaints about a lack of compliance, and that we are actively working to improve." They also believed that

> we're being held to a higher standard than most organisations as a result of- result of that rise in the far right . . . And we're, in terms of the do, we have to make sure that every I is dotted and every T is crossed, because it feels like they have like, I don't know, like, I don't think they have like staff, but they definitely have like obsessed people, basically, who kind of troll through all of our submissions, and make sure that everything is 100% done.

Scarce resources meant that compliance competed with services. As a colleague of the Chair explained:

> [W]e're not particularly well funded. And we probably don't have the resources to be able to deliver what the community needs plus, have everything 100% all the time, we think that's not just unique to us. I think it's unique to all kind of small NGOs who have like a small staff. But we definitely feel the pressure to kind of prioritisze that [compliance]. And even if it means getting less actual work done for the next while, like to prioritise that so that we're not kind of, I don't know, letting those easy wins for the far right, where they can say, 'oh, we didn't submit this on time'. Because they might say we didn't submit this on time, but they ignore that it's actually a huge percentage of charities that don't get stuff filed on time because most charities actually are underfunded, or they're too busy doing the actual work. You know, but I think we have that spotlight on us, we definitely feel that we have that spotlight on us.

The spotlight on compliance, as well as potential harassment, have both had implications for funding applications. The Chair commented that they now 'built in' to applications any resources needed to respond to a 'negative media backlash', with implications for the material they share as well. They said, "it's not about trying to even share the story... [it's] actually how do you deal with the negative media that we're going to get about us. But that money could have gone towards young people being [involved in activities]." Moreover, the organisation now needed to pay for security costs for events in case of protests, despite the fact, as their colleague put it, "that's all money that we could have spent [elsewhere] that we just have to [spend on security]." The Chair emphasised "this would be unthinkable about five years ago; it would be unthinkable that we didn't have to put in money to combat the far right into our budget."

Beyond the financial expense for security and the time spent on monitoring social media, staff at the organisation now needed a detailed media response plan, as well as professional communications support, which engendered its own costs. The staff member said that in the past, the policy if a journalist called would be to "answer the phone, answer their questions, be nice, polite and friendly. If they're looking to speak to the CEO, give them the CEO's email address." Now, she elaborated, "we can't behave that way. If a journalist calls, we immediately have to say, give me your email. What's this in relation to? We'll get back to you if we can." The CEO examines the question and then may pass it on to the board, where members with communications expertise can consider them. The Chair lamented this necessary strategy, which was based both on lack of staff capacity and the new risks of media attention. They said that the board is "setting time answering journalists' questions, which is slightly ludicrous in terms of in terms of capacity and where we have to spend it." The colleague chimed in, "we don't have enough money to have a full time post for the level of experience that will be required to successfully combat the kind of far right . . . we can't afford that person, we can afford a junior person, which would have been okay, maybe five years ago, but now we have to bring on like an agency with that money instead, and get as much support as we can that way." In other words, they had to seek expensive professional advice, as well as rely on board members, to substitute for lack of funding for a full-time position and staff capacity more generally, on top of security costs and time dedicated to compliance. As both interviewees indicated, the expenditure and discussion devoted to these issues could deplete the resources needed to support the community they served.

Consider New Narratives and Methods of Community Engagement

As suggested above, CSO staff encounter in their own members or service users the same anxiety and disapproval about issues like migration that politicians have expressed, even if these views are not articulated in the same way. The Rural Independent Group TD Carol Nolan argued in December 2023 that Ireland has "put out the welcome mat to those fleeing here, but increasingly this nation has become a doormat for others to trample on, with no regard for our laws and our security. Just look at the thousands that have arrived, having destroyed their documentation" [78]. Politicians raising concerns about migrants have pushed back against accusations of racism, decrying attempts to associate their statements with far-right rhetoric and racism as a way to dismiss the reservations and fears of their constituents. In a Dail exchange with then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in January 2024, the Independent TD Marian Harkin accused him of not listening to the "real concerns that I hear from people," when he criticised her linkage between the murder of Aisling Murphy and the anxiety residents expressed about single male asylum seekers being placed in their area.

Though Harkin's connection between the murder of Aisling Murphy and the placement of single men within a community was ill-judged and could, regardless of her protestations, be construed as prejudiced, her defence of her constituents' concerns perhaps deserved more attention. Her claims evoke questions regarding how citizens communicate with policymakers, their mechanisms for advocacy, and their access to services and support. In the research for this report, staff at community organisations did note that female residents felt uncomfortable living next to a large population of single men, regardless of their nationality. Their fears could be completely unfounded, but they needed a platform from which to express them.

The same staff stressed that the perception of being ignored and dismissed provides an opportunity for recruitment for the far right. The frustration and alienation service users may convey, as well as comments that might be construed as anti-migrant or even offensive, influences how organisations engage with them, as well as with their wider communities. Though this engagement remains particular to each organisation, it emerged as a consistent theme in the interviews, namely that organisations were developing skills to respond to questions and even local protests about migrants and other issues, and to discuss the far right. One of the interviewees commented that far right activists had banalised the term 'far right', enough so that it has come to mean very little. Even so, the term is allegedly detested by far-right activists as well as those sharing some of their views, for example, regarding the number of migrants and asylum seekers coming to Ireland. She remarked that "the far-right hates being called far right. They have essentially weaponised the term far right to say, oh, anyone who's against anything is far right. And I do remember there being a point where I was kind of like, they've kind of made that term mean nothing." She added, "They're good at doing this. They're kind of good at taking terms and kind of just twisting them enough," but also stressing, "But I don't think that that's a reason not to use that that term."

She also faulted the media for normalising far right activities, for instance, calling protests at libraries 'direct action', which she regarded as inaccurate, and avoiding use of the term 'far right' itself by replacing it with 'ethnonationalist' or similar concepts.

Interviewees recognised the need for another narrative, distinct from the language of the far right but resonant in communities where they may hold appeal. This narrative could have been developing over time or emerge as an immediate response to growing far right activity in the area. One interviewee argued that "the best thing I can think of there is I suppose an effort across civil society to try to take back the narrative, because I feel like, constantly, what is happening is that were responding to what the far right are saying, instead of telling our own side of the story, right?" For him, CSOs too often use the same language as the far right in an effort to dispute their claims:

> [CSOs are] kind of consistently pushing back against misinformation by repeating the misinformation. Do you know what I mean? Saying there's no problem with unvetted migrant men, I'm kind of repeating the talking point as far right, as, as an effort to try and push back. And that's kind of natural. I feel like people always think that you need to kind of, you know, push back against this stuff in that way. But maybe there needs to be a bigger effort to instead just change the narrative and say, make it a more positive story. You know what I mean, tell the stories that you need to tell. Because people do respond to positive stories . . . there's a legitimate fear that people are being kind of roped into far-right ideologies, and we need an effort to try and stop that. But I think that people will respond to an alternative if it's there as well. And so maybe we need more of a kind of cross organisational engagement on how to construct counter narratives that are really effective against the far right.

The interviewee called for government to develop an alternative narrative to that of the far right, stressing that "there needs to be a lot more bravery in government with, you know, telling the social media platforms whose headquarters are minutes down the road from us that they have to do something." Another interviewee remarked that CSOs are "really struggling with how to respond and feel that sense . . . of saying, we don't use this language around here, or they don't want to shut down conversations." He also wanted more guidance for how to listen to concerns but at the same time, engage differently with communities. For him, CSOs are "really, really looking for leadership around the practice piece. Because there's a recognition that it's a deep conversation that needs to be had in communities ... there's a new dynamic at play in communities."

Several interviewees spoke of how they respond to negative comments about migrants and mobilisation to protest alleged settlement of refugees and asylum seekers in the local area. One trainer described how a teacher had told him "The foreigners come to Ireland, and they're here to take our jobs. And they're here to be racist towards Irish people, they should be grateful that they were here in the first place. It doesn't matter how long they've been here; it doesn't matter how many generations they've been here, they will never be Irish."

He commented that remarks like this shocked him when he first started his job, saying, "I wasn't really sure how to do it. I wasn't sure if I should just challenge it or push it back." He then decided to start a conversation.

> [by] actually asking why you believe the things up here. Okay, why don't you think that? And then they're like, they usually can't explain it. The way it is. So, I introduced like analytical tools, we do like a tree of needs. We break, we really dig deep and break it down. So, you know, why do you think foreigners are coming here? And taking your jobs? And then we look at statistics, and Google right now and [I say] 'tell me, hhere's this coming from?' And they can't find any evidence or belief it's just like, 'that's just the way it is. That's just the way it is'. So, what I do now is I introduce and social justice framework, like the quadrant of oppression, to help them understand their place in the wider society and why things are the way they are.

He focused on social justice to counter the narratives of the far right, stressing how the far right manipulates the problems individuals are facing in their lives:

> The far right is really clever. In that all they do is really speak to different narratives, the creativity, craft narratives around people's struggles. It's the same way religious organisations do it when people are vulnerable, when people are in economic precarity. Because you can speak to people and say, 'oh, this is why you're feeling where you are. This is your enemy. This is the person coming for you. This is who he is. This is who is to blame for your current situation.'

In short, the counter-narrative alleges that by pursuing a politics of ethnonationalism and heteronormativity, the far-right can blame migrants and civil liberties rather than respond to the complicated wider policy issues. In contrast, CSOs directly addressing access to health and social services, housing, and other issues build social networks within local areas, generate trust, and convey values like social justice and public accountability. This approach has already demonstrated a positive impact. In research for a previous report on young people from disadvantaged areas and democracy, young adults repeatedly cited local youth services as the one organisation they trusted, in contrast to the state and policymakers [79]. Youth workers shared their values, of fairness, meritocracy, honesty, and integrity, unlike politicians, who were seen as elitist and self-interested.

Some organisations prefer not to pursue a counter narrative, contending that ignoring the far right was a more effective response. Others believed that CSOs had a long way to go to reduce the appeal of far-right politics. A staff member remarked, "we constantly talk about poverty issues, and social inclusion, [BUT] we haven't managed to find something useful to say to an identified group of parents who may be leaning towards the far right, but hasn't emerged as a group that we can either engage with, or within a broader platform where we can say something useful." This effort was in turn undermined by all the other obstacles and pressures CSOs now encounter.

Funding and Demand: Dual Challenges for Frontline Service Providers

Funding and Demand: Dual Challenges for Frontline Service Providers

Reliance on the State for Funding

The pressures described above, such as harassment online and in person, threats of complaints concerning governance, and the evident skill of far-right activists (a few of whom now are political representatives or future candidates), have occurred within the context of a more challenging funding environment and greater, often more complex, demand. As in other countries, like the UK, Irish community and voluntary organisations face the challenge of funding not keeping pace with inflation and demand. Even before the pandemic, which negatively affected funding while generating greater demand for services [80], Pratt and Popplewell (2013) contended that "The multiple crises that have hit Europe in recent years have brought many formal and established civil society organisations to a crossroads. Across Europe, many organisations have experienced a profound and sustained funding crisis. While this primarily results from cuts to state funding, declining consumer income and rising unemployment have also put pressure on funds generated from individual and corporate donors." (p. 725) Organisations in turn have had to cut programmes and staff and tolerate longer waiting lists.

The government is the largest funder of charities in Ireland [81], and its funding is administered either through service agreements or grants. According to The Wheel, there are almost 12,000 registered charities in Ireland and an additional 20,000+ organisations within the nonprofit sector. Amárach Research, in a 2023 report for the Charities Regulator, put this figure at 11,511 registered charities as of May 2023. [82] The sector boasts an annual turnover of €19billion and employs over 281,000 staff. Registered charities are run by more than 76,000 volunteer trustees and supported by over 500,000 other volunteers. Over half of registered charities operate on an income of less than €250,000, the majority of which on an income of less than €50,000. A significant number of charities have no paid staff [83].

According to the report *Giving Ireland 2023*, published by the fundraising agency 2into3 in partnership with Community Foundation Ireland, Quilter Cheviot, and Ecclesiastical, the sector had a gross turnover of €18b in 2021, with a total €1.63billion of this amount fundraised. The gross turnover had increased by 5% since 2020 but fundraising income had fallen by 9%. (p. 8) A random sample analysis across more than 1000 organisations indicated that 63% of their funding came from the public sector, 10% was fundraised, and 21% was earned.

Another 6% came from investment and other sources. (p. 10) However, subsectors like health, social services, local development, and housing revealed far greater dependence on statutory funding than the other subsectors, for instance, arts and media or education and research. Health received 73% of its funding from the state; social services, 75%; and local development and housing, 88%. In contrast, arts and media received 39% of their funding from the state, and education and research, 57%. (p. 11) Subsectors like international aid and advocacy and politics also depended largely on state funding.

As in other countries, and noted above, the public sector in Ireland increasingly commissions services from charities and private providers, which can require submitting applications in a competitive tendering process. Different agencies may follow distinctive commissioning frameworks, just as the amount of funding available and types of services commissioned differ. In 2023, funding from DRCD totalled €19.8 million in funding, including €6.7 million for the (core funding) Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO), and represented an additional €1.5 million in comparison to 2022 funding allocations. [84] DRCD also provided €52.39 million for the Community Services Programme (CSP), which funds 420 organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model.

Statutory funding amounts reflect the proportion of frontline services delivered by organisations in the charity sector (Sections 38, 39, 56, and 10). For example, HSE funding to Sections 38 and 39 organisations rose between 2017 and 2023 from 23% of its health and social care budget to 25%. [85] Looking at just one area of this funding, Section 38 and 39 organisations have both played a central role in the delivery of disability services. In 2019, almost 70% of services were provided by voluntary organisations funded under Section 38 or Section 39. Similarly, figures reported in 2020 show that close to 70% of the disability budget went to Sections 38 and 39 organisations, with a further 8% allocated to private providers. Section 38 organisations were allocated €890m in 2020 compared to €606m for Section 39s. Just under 80% of residential places were provided by Section 38 and 39 organisations. [86]

Despite overall budget increases in health and other relevant areas to the community and voluntary sector, like housing, the funding has not kept pace with staffing pressures and the level of demand. In The Wheel's 2024 Budget response, Brian Harvey wrote, "Voluntary and community organisations receive more funding through the health budget than any other ... The health budget for 2024 is €22bn, compared to €20.9bn in 2023, with the Health Service Executive (HSE) budget rising from €13.25bn (2023) to €14.12bn (2024), so this is predictive of the level of increase which should be expected for voluntary and community organisations working in health and social care. What was missing from the budget though were measures to address the long-standing pay and conditions issues for those working in §39 voluntary organisations." (p.5)

Commissioning has increased in general since 2014, following EU regulations ensuring national procurement rules should strive for 'best value for money' and existing practice within other OECD countries [87]. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Plan 2014-16, recognising the need for economising resources, stressed the need to move from a grant model to an outcomes-based one, which would have subsequent impacts on how services are designed and delivered [88].

Tusla's 2016 report on commissioning cites Cozens (2007) Taxonomy of Commissioning, which describes commissioning as a series of activities: 'Strategic needs assessment, area profiling, market mapping, commissioning strategy, commissioning framework, provider identification and development, tactical procurement and call-off arrangements, workforce planning, quality monitoring and review, managing decommissioning and market failure, and collecting evidence of better outcomes and unmet needs.' (p. 12) Regardless of specific framework characteristics, common principles in commissioning include "basing all decisions on outcomes, using commissioning process to decommission services that are not effective, taking account of value for money, providing information to enable performance management, and requiring participation of people inside the commissioning organisation as well as partner agencies, current and future providers" [89]. In essence, the commissioning agency should manage a transparent and effective procurement process, whereby selected charities deliver the appropriate services to meet needs, offer the best 'price' for what they are delivering, and provide evidence as to their achievement of targets.

The dependence of areas like social services on statutory funding, often through commissioning and a competitive tendering process, means that organisations are vulnerable to policy decisions and the views of policymakers and civil servants. They are obligated to consistently seek resources from the state to address the very problems that drive far right opposition to its policies. At the same time, charities, as discussed below, have been unable to compete with the public sector regarding salaries, benefits, and job security.

Gaps in EU and Non-State Funding

EU funding is accessible to organisations, but sometimes depends on match funding and laborious applications. Emma Murtagh, speaking to the Oireachtas as a representative of The Wheel, recommended introducing an EU match funding scheme for CSOs. She noted that "Community and voluntary organisations do not typically aim to accumulate surpluses and are actually discouraged from maintaining reserves, with the expectation being that every euro should go directly into services. This puts them at a distinct disadvantage compared with their publicly funded counterparts and it usually means they are effectively excluded from participating in these programmes." This exclusion could have long-term effects on innovation, as EU applications can often lead to other EU funding opportunities that can help sustain and scale-up pilot initiatives. In this vein, she also recommended setting up a scale-up fund to take advantage of EU-funded initiatives. She stated, "As Ireland transitions from being a net beneficiary to a net contributor to the EU budget, fully capitalising on EU funding opportunities becomes even more vital. It helps communicate the value of the EU in communities throughout Ireland and enables our sector to participate in cutting edge policy and practice innovation. It is also crucial for empowering our community sector to play its role in delivering on both national and EU policy objectives" [90].

Based on its analysis of 1,037 organisations in 2021, or 5% of registered organisations that year, *Giving Ireland* found that the majority worked in education, health, and social services. Income increased for 61% of organisations in that year. Yet, fundraised income contributed a minor amount to overall income for subsectors relevant to this report, for instance 4% for advocacy, law, and politics, 6% for social services, 11% for health, and 9% for education and research (p. 22). In general, giving represented less than 1% of Irish Gross National Income (GNI). Per capita giving was €324, and the cost to fundraise for each Euro was €0.22. Though the data was collected during Covid, it shows that philanthropy in Ireland has yet to have a significant impact on organisational finances, which in turn affects reliance on the state and project funding sources (e.g., the EU).

Rising Demand for Charity Services

Funding to support innovation is just one gap in resources. The demand for charity services has risen while funding pressures have undermined organisational ability to retain staff. Turnover rates have accelerated in the community and voluntary sector over the past few years. Data from The Wheel indicates almost a doubling of turnover rates between 2016 and 2021. This period preceded the recent staffing crisis provoked in part by public sector pay rises without comparable additional funding to the charity sector to ensure its competitiveness in attracting applicants and retaining staff [91]
.

From the interviews, as well as political analyses more generally, access to housing has been the most important factor in driving the appeal of far-right politics. However, the lack of access is occurring within a context of greater economic insecurity influenced in turn by rising inflation and the cost of living, and wages failing to keep pace with housing and other costs. Politicians and activists focused on immigration policies and championing Irish nationalism cite all of the issues listed above in their appeals for support.

An analyst of the far right commented that, "I think that what's happened over the past couple of years has created this kind of perfect storm." For her, "the far right has been growing in this country for, you know, a number of years at this point. And there's really been no effort to kind of stop them from growing." Inadequate policy responses to growing problems have meant that "you couple [a growing far right] with complete and utter disaster of a housing crisis that is just continuing to get worse, and a lack of services in like, all these issues . . . . I mean, the lack of services and areas and the lack of houses are very, very real issues."

She concluded:

The influence of the far right is really working to weaponise those very real issues, you know what I mean? So, you'll see protests around the country, people are saying, well, we're not racist, we're not anti-immigrant. But there's been 500 people landed into this town where 1,000 people live, we have one doctor and so the way to push back against that is to kind of solve those real root problems that are affecting people's lives on a daily basis. . ... I was just chatting to someone - they have had a huge number of people that have been placed in that town, and their services have been absolutely depleted in the past few years. And you kind of get it that people are like, you can't just continue to add people into this town without providing the services on top of that, you know, what I mean? So, I think that if it wasn't for those very real issues, I don't think the far right would have as much influence as they have.

The evidence of this unmet need is not just in political disaffection, however, but also the very tangible waiting lists for health services and social housing, charity support services, homelessness figures, and risk of poverty rates, as well as poverty rates themselves and related indicators, such as food poverty.

A representative from a national charity stated that calls to the organisation have risen by almost 50% since 2020, primarily due to effects of the increased cost of living. She explained, "the big cuts to community development, like during austerity - we're feeling the effects of that. Because there was so much community level, ground up kind of supports and services there that were pretty much decimated." She argued for investment in community development and community services rather than focus explicitly on 'integration', as the lack of this investment had influenced loneliness, a diminished sense of belonging, and alienation from politics and distance from policymakers, which was exacerbated by long waiting lists, division between private and public health services, as well as other trends. The chief executive of a frontline charity shared this sentiment, linking housing to political discontent and the attraction of 'non-establishment' politicians and activism. He remarked, "It sounds simplistic, but I think that it's [housing] always going to be a ball and chain around things. It's always going to allow for discontent. It makes our protection of refugees harder. It inhibits any accommodation progress in this area . . .. if there's no progress there, there will be certainly no progress [with refugee accommodation]."

The Daughters of Charity referred in its 2021 Impact Report to the growing complexity of needs across different age groups. Acknowledging the impact of Covid, the organisation mentioned higher needs among children under 5 years old, especially relating to speech and language issues, longer waiting lists for assessments, and higher rates of child protection concerns. Amongst 16–21-year-olds, staff noticed an increase in 'fear and anxiety', which influenced sustained engagement, as well as more evidence of mental health issues and trauma. Older service users manifested increasing frailty and cognitive decline, as well as depression, and after lockdowns ended and community services returned to in-person, some individuals were not able to remain at home. (p. 10-11)

Data on homelessness, poverty, and access to services all point to an expanding challenge for the state and civil society. Government spending on housing increased 9% between the 2023 and 2024 budgets, but, as Brian Harvey pointed out in his 2024 budget analysis, for this spending to be effective, it must be invested in effective mechanisms that reduce homelessness and lead to more available housing for low-income households (p. 5) [92]. He noted that local authority housing construction had built less homes than voluntary organisations in 2022 (Ibid) and that the government continued to depend on investment in private housing to meet demand. At the same time, homelessness increased between July 2023 and March 2024 by approximately a thousand, or from 12,847 [93] to 13,866 [94]. The Department of Housing reported that of the 9719 adults in local authority managed emergency accommodation the last week of March 2024, 62% were male and 38% female and the overwhelming majority were in Dublin. Almost half were between the ages of 25-44 and the majority, except in Dublin, where the figure was about half, were Irish citizens. During the same week, there were almost 2000 families in emergency accommodation, over half of which were single parent families. Within the 1,981 families, 3310 were adults and 4147 were children [95]. The number of children has now surpassed 4000 consistently since December 2023.

Unsurprisingly, these figures correspond with an increasing risk of poverty. The 2023 Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) stated that 10.6% of people were at risk of poverty in 2023, 13.6% were at risk of poverty when adjusted for inflation and 13% would have been at risk of poverty without cost-of-living measures supported by the government. Except for the percentage of people at risk of poverty, which represented a decline of 2%, the other two figures represented an increase of 1% and 5% respectively since 2022 [96]. They also correspond with growing demand for mental health and other forms of support services offered by frontline charities, who are often confronting a staffing crisis and overstretched funds, as well as the difficulties posed by annual or three-year funding cycles. The insurance provider VHI announced a 28% increase in people under age 30 accessing private mental health services between 2019 and 2022 [97] while the national charity for youth mental health support, Jigsaw, offered its highest number of appointments in 2022 (36,360). The charity's CEO, Dr Joseph Duffy, stated that "The current levels of funding, received from the HSE and the public, are simply not enough to maintain existing levels of service, let alone support expansion into new areas or new locations." [98]

Youth service organisations in North Inner-City Dublin, where the November 2023 riots took place, face similar rises in demand and complexity of need. For example, Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) and Swan Youth Services are both based in Northeast Inner-City Dublin (NEIC). The area is characterised by specific pockets of deprivation and disadvantage, for instance, relatively low levels of education, and in some parts of the area, migrants constitute more than half of the population. The overall population has increased over the past decade, as has the incidence of crime, drug dealing, and racism [99].

In the research, one staff member at an organisation in North Dublin reported anecdotally a higher incidence of suicides and anti-social behaviour in the area. The local councillor Janet Horner, interviewed for The Journal (December 7, 2023) [100] after the riots, called for a "multi-agency and cross-community approach" with "political buy-in, proper resourcing and a real programme of action" that reflects community aspirations and concerns rather than a 'top-down' agenda. She condemned a culture of racism propagated on social media and an assessment of youth, community and mental health services. Criticising the instability and inadequacy of funding, as well as their funding, she lamented the onerous application processes for funding, "eroding their crucial time to work on their mission instead of filling in funding applications and reports."

Community organisations in other inner city areas in Dublin have noted the same trends. In a 2019 report, South Inner City Community Development Association spoke of the tensions between the 'Old Liberties' and the 'New Liberties', which reflects investment in hotels and student accommodation, as well as new businesses. The report describes a situation similar to other areas of inner-city Dublin, where the population is growing rapidly without consideration for community services and spaces, potentially undermining the potential for community building and development. The report lists as possible threats "an upsurge in property prices (which will make home ownership and home rental unaffordable for many people); an absence of focus and prioritisation on community facilities, youth services, creative/cultural spaces, playgrounds, parks and sporting facilities; and the lack of 'joined-up thinking' between key organisations in the public/statutory, private/business and community/voluntary sectors." (p. 43) The report mentions that "Accessible quality green space is provided at a rate of 0.7 square metres per person in The Liberties which is a stark contrast to an average of 49 square metres/person for the wider DCC area" [101] and that much greater investment in community services, like drug treatment and rehabilitation, is needed. (p. 33)

A TASC report evaluating the Healthy Communities Project (2023) found similar perceptions of degradation or absence of infrastructure and loss of community, both with implications for quality of life. These findings highlight the growing need for a robust community and voluntary sector that can address the underlying causes of disaffection and weakened social cohesion that currently enable the growing strength of far-right discourses. One resident interviewed lamented that

The community is ... changing a lot. Back then everybody knew everybody. And I know things have changed. Now people park their cars every day outside your work to go to work. They park outside your door. You say good morning and they don't even look at you. ... At one time I could sit outside my door and 15 people would stop and talk to you ... you don't get that now. ... You miss it, them days. They're not that long ago. I find the community has changed a lot. Like, I'd say hello to anybody. Even if I'm in the hospital, waiting to go in, I sit beside someone and I talk to anybody. The phones have a lot to do with it as well, people are just stuck to their phones. I find the community has changed a lot. ... I just think people need to start talking more. A lot of people don't talk. ... We need more of these supports, to get out where people live, so we can get to know other people.

Another resident criticised leaving buildings and space empty in the area, as the buildings could host activities and services that would bring people together, enabling interaction and a greater sense of solidarity. They referred to a school building, saying "Think of how many children went to school there. There's a lot of classrooms and there's 40-odd kids in each classroom. So each room could be used for something different. [...] It's a shame to leave a building just because it's a great building. ... And the Convent [is closed]. ... That's a shame, another great building going to waste." They noted that these buildings were close to each other, and that another had been renovated, closed for Covid, and then never opened again. The destruction of council flats followed a similar theme, as they have been replaced with private apartments and houses, which "took the community apart." The resident said, "When you lived in the flats, your front door was always left open. ... You just walked in and out of everybody's [flat]. I lived on the first floor, the kids would come in and just throw in their jacket away and their boots there. You'd just throw them in anyone's house and you knew you'd get them back" [102].

Recommendations

Recommendations

A 2023 report by the Co-op in NEIC called for more constructive collaboration and partnership amongst organisations and between the community, local development and voluntary sector (CLD&V sector) and the state to eliminate poverty. The report evokes "a complex ecosystem necessitating collaboration and partnership therein if common goals are to be achieved and progressively realised," adding, "Collaboration and partnership are no easy feats given the multiplicity of organisations, structures and institutions, the ever-evolving nature of the challenges and context in which they operate and the effort and leadership that is required for efficacy." (p. 1) Government funding, however, complicates collaboration and partnership because, as discussed above, the tendering process leads to competition and absorbs capacity alongside governance. The report argues at length for a reconsideration of the impact of current funding structures on staffing and services:

Competitive tendering creates an environment afflicted with instability and insecurity with staff of LDCs forced into a position whereby they must not only reapply for their jobs but compete for them. Organisations are forced to justify their existence at the end of each arbitrarily imposed funding cycle. This indicates an obliviousness to the hybrid ecosystem and the impact such policies have on its stability and effectiveness. Furthermore, it disregards the tireless work of LDC staff in providing for the evolving needs of people and grappling with community cohesion in the context of the poly-crises we face, composed of but not limited to the pandemic, endemic poverty, the cost-of-living crisis, the housing crisis, the climate crisis, the influx of refugees, and the rise of the far right. They are at the forefront of the issues that are plaguing our society and while the state declares its ostensible appreciation of this, the tendering process evinces disingenuousness. While we do not doubt the dedication of our colleagues in government departments, statutory agencies and local authorities in the fight against poverty, they are part of a process which destabilises this goal through the evident inequitable treatment of their 'partners' in this mission. The inequality sown into the relationship as a consequence of tendering begets severance between the state and the CLD&V sector. This is clearly not conducive to collaboration nor to partnership. A destabilised ecosystem risks becoming a failed ecosystem. (p. 2-3)

A policy researcher at a national organisation interviewed for this report echoed these sentiments, saying that current funding arrangements undermined ability to represent and advocate for vulnerable groups: "the old social partnership model [had] more funding for policy and advocacy work by community and voluntary organisations. And that's pretty much frozen or has been eroded. So there definitely is a gap there in terms of funding to ensure organisations can reflect and represent marginalised groups more effectively." She also stressed the necessity of collaborative policymaking, remarking, "I think from a policymaking point of view, the community and voluntary sector have been outsiders. I think there's a need for kind of collaborative policymaking process from the outset, not having a consultation after the policy decisions have been made to check off the box. Because if you include community and voluntary organisations, from the outset, as part of that process, and real dialogue and in push, there's more ownership than over policy from the sector as well." This kind of collaboration could have implications for addressing issues like anti-migrant protests, as it would allow for "talking about the importance of immigration for societies and economies and breaking down some of those barriers and having discussions about investment in services and communities without pointing the finger."

Returning to the reference to social infrastructure at the beginning of the report, the recommendations listed below focus heavily on enabling constructive collaboration and partnerships within civil society and between civil society and the state. However, this collaboration is intended not just to create an ecosystem of support to address social problems like poverty or homelessness, but also to reinforce the intersection and integration of platforms for building social solidarity and enabling an individual and collective experience of belonging. This aim explicitly shies away from representing an 'anti-far right' position. Legislating for hate speech and intolerance are necessary [103], but do not represent the entirety of what the government should do or civil society priorities. Finally, the collaboration should underscore the vital contribution civil society makes to sustaining democracy. Greater state support for CSO advocacy and services would in turn strengthen the position of CSOs, as mentioned above, as representatives of social groups often alienated from politics and policymaking.

The recommendations fall into eight categories: funding; governance; involving civil society more in the entire process of policymaking; more flexibility around advocacy restrictions for recipients of state funding; facilitating and encouraging political participation at a local and national level; creating safer spaces for organisations to engage online and in-person; expanding interaction between policymakers and citizens and residents of Ireland in collaboration with civil society; adopting a community-wide and inter-government approach to service delivery, including those services aimed at supporting minority groups, whether based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexuality, gender, or legal status in Ireland; and refocusing narratives and policy agendas away from integration toward neighbourhood building based on mapping factors that influence quality of life. The intended impact of pursuing these recommendations would be to approach needs holistically on the ground and in the public sector; foregrounding the connection between 'sense of belonging', community development, life opportunities, and quality of life; and generating greater public trust, especially in areas of high disadvantage, in the policymaking and political process.

Funding

1. Increase multi-year funding to small, medium, and large organisations that acknowledges overheads, staffing, governance, and service costs in line with inflation

Charities have consistently raised multi-year funding as a necessity for financial stability and organisational planning. In an Oireachtas debate on March 5, 2024, Minister for Rural and Community Development Joe O'Brien reiterated his department's commitment to a sustainable funding model for the sector but argued that government represented only one funding source. He noted that 420 organisations have received five-year multi-annual funding contracts and the increase in organisations receiving funding under the SSNO scheme administered by Pobal [104]. At the same time, interviews for the research and other studies [105] indicate continued need to shift to multi-year contracts with the state for specific projects, as well as core costs. Without multi-year contracts, organisations could find they rely heavily on annual funding to retain project staff and are often not able to ensure employment and the continuation of services, undermining the stability of services and affecting negatively service users. A board member for a small organisation commented that an "issue coming from government funding, say [a department] gives us project funding, we have to apply every year for any project. That's so useless, because you can't continue to grow and develop schemes that work if you're getting new project funding every year for brand new things, and none of it is core funding."

2. Fund governance costs directly, especially for small charities, and legal fees, especially for charities vulnerable to harassment and manipulation of charity regulations

The cost of governance and responding to complaints required resources already stretched because of insufficient funding. Governance costs have been added in general to charity operations, without added compensation in grants or other funding arrangements. St Vincent de Paul, one of the country's largest charities, spent 11% of its annual budget on governance, support, management, and administration in 2022. [106] The training and administrative resources required to ensure compliance will most likely only continue to grow so the government should make available grants to cover costs in an effort to support compliance and protect organisations, especially the smaller charities. In a Charities Regulator Report [107] on smaller charities (2023), respondents across organisational income categories (up to €50K through to greater than €500K) generally affirmed that compliance has helped with public trust and not represented a significant hindrance, though the percentages are more divided between hindrance and no obvious hindrance in relation to paperwork and compliance with the Charities Governance Code. (pp. 30-31) However, smaller charities were less likely to file their annual reports on time, or ten months after the end of their financial year (e.g., October if the financial year ends in December). Charities with an income of less than €10,000 were the least likely to file by the end of October, versus charities with an income over a million were the most likely. (p. 22)

In conjunction with this support, the government should provide access to funding for legal assistance for charities with relatively limited resources when they are experiencing harassment from far-right activists, including complaints about governance, so they are not left to absorb legal costs because they are political targets. Bad faith actors manipulating charity regulations can deplete organisational resources and the government should investigate both how to stop this practice and the level of resources organisations require to protect themselves.

3. Streamline processes for compliance to reduce the administrative burden on charitable organisations faced with requests by bad faith actors

The weaponisation of compliance procedures by bad-faith actors is successful in part due to the onerous burden they already place on organisations, particularly small organisations with limited resources. In addition to providing additional resources and support to charities faced with this type of attempt to undermine their activities, the government should do more to streamline and reduce the burden of compliance.

A first step would be recognising how oversight is being increasingly deployed in a way that undermines rather than safeguards charities' ability to offer much-needed public benefit and service provision.

This should be a consideration in the current move to revise legislation regulating charitable organisations, exploring how the legislative and administrative environment has evolved in response to the 2023 Amendments to Parliament's Rules of Procedure, including exploring how Ireland can demonstrate compliance with these standards without passing the burden fully onto small charities. One approach could be a more thorough exploration of complaints by the regulator to determine whether they could be seen as vexatious. In their current complaints policy, the CRA reserves 'the right not to engage with a person or group on concerns which it regards as vexatious'. [108] However, it is clear from our research that vexatious complaints are being addressed to organisations, and revised legislation could do more to empower the CRA to take a more active role in vetting complaints.

4. Provide dedicated funding to organisations who support the charitable sector to build capacity through knowledge-sharing, including developing resources such as training packages in how to respond to far-right activism

The speed with which the far right have emerged in Ireland has caught many organisations off guard. Particularly for smaller organisations and those whose area of focus lacks a previously obvious connection with targets of far-right activism, part of the challenge they face is knowing how to develop appropriate strategic policy responses and resources for staff, in particular training.

Directly funding centralised resource development for organisations of various sizes would enable the sector to develop toolkits from emerging good practices. Some of this work has already been undertaken, with existing resources and approaches established by organisations experienced in frontline work against far-right movements. For example, guides developed by Community Work Ireland [109] and the Hope and Courage Collective [110] to help organisations understand the tactics used by the far right. They provide practical guides for both organisations and local community responses with advice on countering disinformation, shifting narratives from far-right to progressive framings, building community resilience, and dealing with far-right disruption at events.

While there is a clear overlap between this type of guidance and our recommendation, there remains a gap for the creation of resources tailored to charities to enable them to craft holistic policy response including dealing with potentially vexatious complaints to regulators, conducting risk assessments for social media and events, and organisational strategies to protect frontline staff from targeted threatening behaviour. This would consolidate learning from different specialisms within the sector, including the types of resources listed above.

Dedicated funding for this type of knowledge-sharing approach would be of particular benefit to smaller organisations with stretched capacity, enabling them to better protect resources from being drained by having to develop their response from scratch. One advantage of this approach would be that it would encourage a more robust sector-wide coordinated approach, strengthening a united front against efforts by the far right to undermine the public benefits provided by the charitable sector.

5. Allow public funding to be used for advocacy, especially to represent marginalised communities, when this advocacy is deemed critical for securing improvements in access to services, wellbeing, and civic engagement

In an interview, the chief executive of an organisation representing minority groups called for legislating for formal pathways to political representation for minorities, so that their concerns would be voiced and respected within a political setting. All the interviews with staff working for organisations representing minority populations stressed the need to be able to advocate for their rights in a public fashion, without fear of harassment but also of questions about compliance and use of public funds. One interviewee, a long-time activist, wanted legislation governing charities to "be broad enough to allow advocacy and a definition of a kind of human rights that actually allows the work we need to do," rather than inhibiting this work. While not diminishing the importance of scrutiny, funding should recognise explicitly the value of civil society and its role in achieving greater equality, and thus allow civil society organisations to engage in the activities necessary to fulfil this role. Funding should thus provide the flexibility and consistency to protect organisations and legislation to allow this funding to be used for representation.

A recent report published by the ICCL (funded by the Rowan Trust) entitled That's Not Your Role found in a survey conducted with civil society organisations in 2023 that "almost 40% of organisations are of the view that their funding has been put at risk because of advocacy they engaged in." (p. 5) The survey responses suggested a "worrying picture of the state of freedoms of expression and association, and the right to unfettered public participation for the community and voluntary sector in Ireland. The findings also point to an inherent tension between the roles of the community and voluntary sector as service providers and as advocates for causes and communities." (Ibid) Amongst respondents, 37% (n=105) had curtailed advocacy, campaigning or communication based on fear of losing funding and 38% (n=103) had felt their funding was at risk because of commentary, campaigning or advocacy that they had engaged in. (p. 13) A large majority (82%) of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement "The government would prefer if we engage in no advocacy and only in service delivery." (p.14)

6. Provide better communication on policy development and collaborate more directly on policymaking

The same ICCL report found that "78% of respondents have been involved in a stakeholder consultation of some sort," but that "organisations find it difficult to keep track of policy developments." (p.13) Inversely, civil servants and public sector staff may not be aware of civil society services. A board member for one organisation wanted "a base level awareness across the public sector ..., especially if you're taking a call," in order for staff to provide accurate information relevant to the individual and their specific needs.

The ICCL report notes that experience of discussing policy varied between departments and agencies and that a slim majority (52%) believed that their input was not valued by the state in policy formation. (p. 14) This finding was confirmed in the research. One policy analyst at a large organisation who was interviewed said, "I think from a policymaking point of view, the community and voluntary sector have been outsiders." She stated:

> there's a need for a kind of collaborative policymaking process from the outset, or not having a consultation after the policy decisions have been made to check off the box. Because if you include community and voluntary organisations, from the outset, as part of that process, and in real dialogue, there's more ownership then over policy from the sector as well, because we, the community voluntary sector are also a massive provider of services. So there definitely needs to be more open dialogue and coherent structures for policy and implementation and development.

The CEO of a national social service provider echoed this sentiment, saying, "It would be very helpful, I think, for the State to engage with civil society on this issue [anti- poverty and social inclusion]. And for them to acknowledge we're also taking the brunt [...] But I do think they could resource us and have conversations with us more about it." Interviewees from this research did not want to be involved at later stages of policymaking but rather to be engaged from the outset to ensure policies addressed issues in an effective, often holistic way. The 2023 National Civic Forum highlighted examples of co-design [111] but the interviewees wanted deeper and more sustained dialogue across policy.

7. Establish an independent agency, similar to the Combat Poverty agency dismantled after the financial crisis, which adopts a holistic understanding of inequality and its social, political, cultural, and economic impacts

The Agency was cited as a trusted source of data and policy analysis. Its contemporary reiteration would work with civil society to address the factors that cause both economic insecurity and stifle life opportunities and provoke political disaffection. Moreover, it would be responsible for developing a vision of Irish society in five, ten, and thirty years to guide policy and provide an alternative to political divisive narratives. Critically, it would highlight, as noted above, the fundamental role of civil society in addressing social problems and inputting into policy, reinforcing again its significance to a healthy democracy, where the government listens and responds to multiple voices.

8. Increase funding for consortiums, especially across different areas of intervention and support

Following on from the previous recommendation, this agency or a likeminded initiative would have the ability to bring together charities and other civil society organisations from a range of areas of work, diminishing any 'silo' effect caused not just by focus of interest but also relations with different government agencies. This effort would also alleviate the pressure on organisations targeted by the far right to find solutions in turn for countering the far right. As one chief executive put it, "the government expects us to deal with it." Another chief executive agreed, criticising "the silo-ing of the different groups," and calling for "a coming together among the different communities." She added, "That had been the theory behind equality legislation – that groups have come together – but I do think there needs to be a coalition against the far right."

9. Increase funding for youth services, community centres and community hubs, both to ensure that services, especially for minority groups, are available at a local level and to promote collective action and a stronger sense of 'place', which counter the narrow agenda of the far right

Youth services appeared important across interviews and in other TASC research (2024). A chief executive said, "I do think just for the North Inner City, there needs to be huge investment in services for youth and community development. The community needs to be resourced and empowered to be political activists for themselves." A few interviewees emphasised the importance of investing in services for single mothers, a particular target for the far right. A chief executive of a national charity wanted "a plan to support one parent families specifically." However, he recounted, "we bang our heads on the wall with that for years, but the government does not like to prioritise one parent families."

10. Invest in the mapping of communities across Ireland that encompasses data on all factors influencing quality of life and social solidarity/isolation and use this data to inform civil society activities and narratives

This data would include access to transport; commuting times for residents; availability of healthy, affordable food; quality of social housing as well as availability; green spaces and their maintenance; variety and availability of community-based activities; sports and leisure activities; residents associations; and local employment characteristics, as well as more general demographic and economic data and voting registration and participation rates (if available). The data could be used to inform policy and for local advocacy, as well as deeper understanding of social, economic, and political trends in the area.

11. Protect organisations, social activists, and politicians from intimidation and harassment through regulation and provision of safe online and physical spaces

The chair of the board cited a few times in this report wanted to "hold the media and some of the organisations to account and to prevent the spread of really fake news." Legislation regulating hate speech, online content, and physical harassment of politicians and particular CSOs represent fundamental actions for any Irish government to prevent the potential of an activist minority limiting the freedoms of a quieter majority. In the meantime, the government should invest in potential portals and physical spaces deliberately protected from potential harassment and, inversely, designed to support vulnerable groups.

12. Encourage politicians to engage more regularly with constituents at a local level in meetings facilitated by civil society
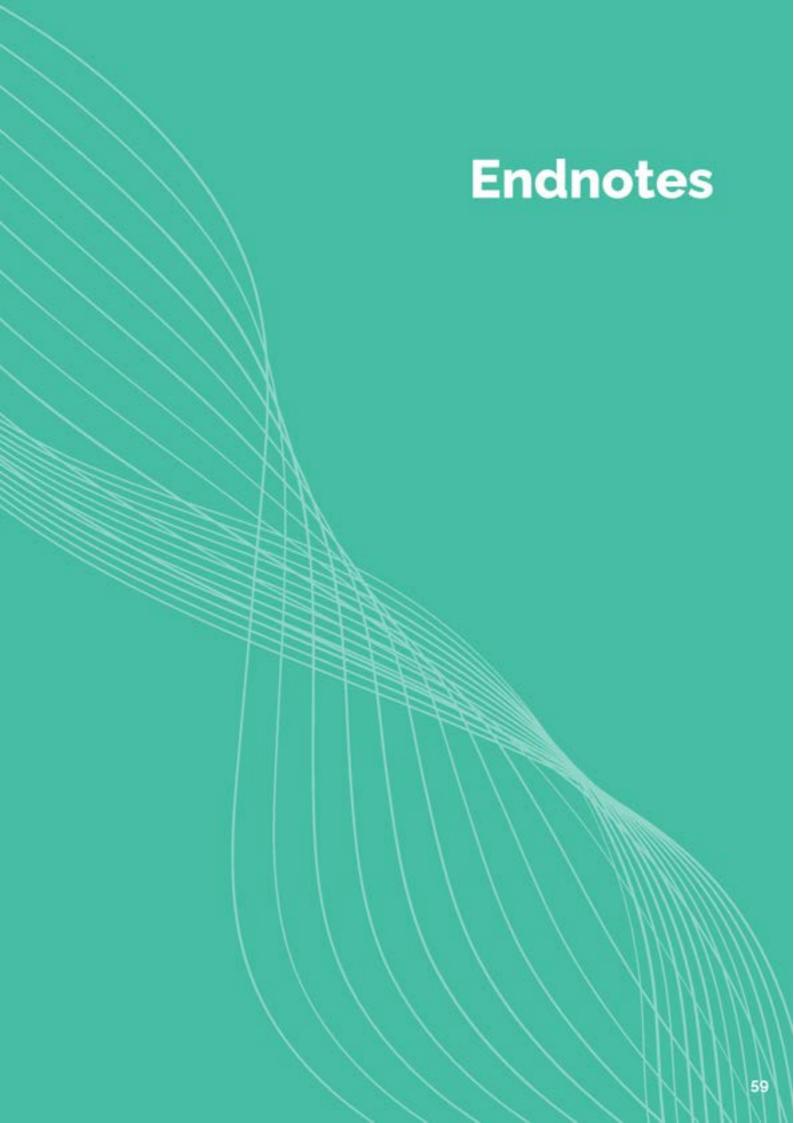
One interviewee emphasised the need for better political education in general, through social media, podcasts, and other means. A chief executive of an organisation representing a minority group wanted politicians to be more forthcoming about visiting people in their homes, about coming to them. This is difficult because of the potential for hostility, but there could also be town hall venues organised by local CSOs with strict rules regarding behaviour. The point was that politicians were consistently viewed as too distant and the involvement of CSOs may enable not just better communication and interaction but more confidence in being heard. Incorporating voter registration as part of this process may attract politicians' engagement and increase, in turn, residents' confidence in expressing community-level concerns to political representatives.

13. Invest in a state-led discussion of what constitutes a healthy democracy and how Ireland can strengthen democratic institutions and interest in participating in democracy, including voting and civic engagement

Potentially the most important contribution political parties, the government and other bodies can make to supporting civil society is to underscore its contribution to sustaining democracy. This is often lost in the pressure to deliver services and restrictions on advocacy. This narrative could be developed within Oireachtas and by individual political parties, as well as within civil society itself. The emphasis would thus be less explicitly focused on services, and more on how civil society provides an independent reflection on the consequences of policy and it offers knowledge of how policymaking can become more effective in addressing social problems. As Larry Diamond put it in a 2004 speech in Baghdad, "The first and most basic role of civil society is to limit and control the power of the state." [112] He was referring to Iraq emerging from a dictatorial, highly repressive regime, but some of his comments could refer to any national context – civil society represents an opportunity to generate new forms of solidarity, hold the state accountable but also further its policy objectives, disseminate values of respect and compromise, encourage citizen engagement, and understand better the principles and rights inherent in a democracy. Without protecting civil society's capacity to do all of these things, the Irish government risks further erosion of trust in politics and democracy itself as a system that benefits all citizens, not just a select few.

Endnotes

Endnotes

[1] The appropriation of far right political arguments has become widespread internationally. Jan-Werner Mueller, citing the prominent scholar of the far right Cas Mudde, writes that "conservative and center-right politicians are increasingly likely to 'mainstream to the far right'. They have proved willing to enter coalitions with populist, far-right parties or – less obviously – to ape such parties' rhetoric, thereby legitimating far-right policy positions and perspectives on political challenges like migration." Mueller adds, referring specifically to France, "After the wall that previously held back the far-right has been breached, it cannot easily be rebuilt. Voters who regard themselves as respectably bourgeois and once would have shied away from the positions of Le Pen and racist firebrand Eric Zemmour have now been given tacit permission by centre-right elites to go down that path and see where is leads. Will we be surprised that they have accepted the invitation? As far-right leaders themselves often ask: Why vote for the copy when you can get the more 'authentic' original?"

[2] https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/social-affairs/2024/07/23/sinn-fein-pledges-new-migration-system-in-significent-policy-shift/

[3] https://www.thejournal.ie/conspiracy-theories-polling-survey-6451524-Jul2024/

[4] Raleigh, D. (2024) "Government must 'stop playing to woke gallery', says O'Dea". Breakingnews.ie. 11 March.

[5] Article 41 (1.1,3,1,2,1,2,2), now remaining, within the Constitution states: "The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law;" "The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack;"Article 41.2.1" "In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved;" and "The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home." In "Referendums on Family and Care". The Electoral Commission website.

[6] Kenny, E. (2024) "Peadar tobin: 'Referendum was a marketing ploy by the Government". NewsTalk. 10 March.

[7] The Irish People. Home page.

[8] Gallagher, A., C. O'Connor, F. Visser (2023) "Uisce Faoi Thalamh: An Investigation Into the Online Mis- and Disinformation Ecosystem in Ireland". Report 1 of 3 Summary report. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. https://www.isdglobal.org/?s=ireland

[9] Hope and Courage Collective (2023) "Greater than fear: A community based response to tackling hate and extremism". Report. Hope and Courage Collective.

[10] https://www.belongto.org/

[11] "The Progressive Promise". The Congressional Progressive Caucus website.

[12] "The Three Big Differences Between Conservatives and Progressives". The Heritage Foundation website.

[13] Gallagher, A., C. O'Connor, F. Visser (2023) "Uisce Faoi Thalamh: An Investigation Into the Online Mis- and Disinformation Ecosystem in Ireland". Report 1 of 3 Summary report. Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

|14| Fitzgerald, C. (2023) "Explainer: Why are protesters targeting Ireland's libraries?". The Journal, 8 August.

|15| Harrassement leading to self-censorship: Khan, S. (2024) "Threats to Social Cohesion And Democratic Resilience: A new Strategic Approach". Report. The Khan Review, p. 9.
Government funding leading to self-censorship: Brooks, E. (2022) "Civil Society in 2022: Under Pressure". Liberties, 15 February.

|16| "In Numbers: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Civic Space Dynamics". Report Home Page. CIVICUS Monitor.

|17| CIVICUS (2022) "CIVICUS Strategic Plan 2022-2027". Strategic Plan. CIVICUS.

|18| "Global freedom". Freedom House website.

|19| Freedom House (2024) "Freedom in the World 2024: The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict". Report. Freedom House.

|20| Ibid.

|21| Ibid.

|22| The Freedom House report lists four types of repression characteristic of declining political freedom (p. 31): "[A]ttacks against LGBT+ people's rights, violence against migrants, rising rates of organised crime that threatened democratic institutions, and attacks on religious freedom, including acts of antisemitism and Islamophobia. Each of these trends should be met with strong international condemnation, financial assistance to support victims and activists, and sanctions as appropriate." Examples of these forms of repression include laws penalising same-sex relations and criminalising advocacy in Africa (e.g., Ghana), Russia, and Turkey, while endorsing heterosexuality and the conventional family structure, and deportation of migrants and refugees, often forcefully and potentially violently, in countries like Lebanon, Pakistan, and Tunisia, as well as Cyprus and Germany; (p. 30) Civicus Monitor (p. 13) offers a comparable analysis, stating, "The repression of civic freedoms have been particularly acute for LGBTQI+ people, organisations and initiatives for LGBTQI+ rights. This is a global phenomenon but particularly an issue in Africa."

|23| Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2023), "Human Rights Defenders in the Council of Europe Area in Times of Crisis". Report of a Round-table. Council of Europe.

|24| Ibid.

|25| Ibid.

|26| Ibid.

|27| The report was based on a round table held in Dublin in October 2022 and states that "Participants of the round-table shared their concerns that in many Council of Europe member states there is a clear pattern of misuse or deliberate misinterpretation of the existing national legal frameworks in order to outlaw human rights activism, acts of solidarity and humanitarian assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. This includes legitimate activities such as the rescue of refugees and migrants at sea and on land, the provision of shelter, food, water and medical assistance as well as reporting on and advocating against summary returns ("pushbacks"), violence and other abuse at borders and in detention or reception centres. In many Council of Europe member states, including Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Switzerland, as well as in the Russian Federation, the domestic legal framework or its implementation can lead to the misrepresentation of such actions as criminal activity."

[28] Mathiesen, K., J. Barigazzi (2022) "Inside Fight Impunity, the Brussels NGO at the heart of the Qatar corruption scandal". Politico, 20 December.

[29] Committee on Budgetary Control (2023) "Draft Report on the transparency of non-governmental organisations funded from the EU budget". Draft Report. European Parliament.

[30] Committee on Budgetary Control (2023) "Report on the transparency and accountability of non-governmental organisations funded from the EU budget". Report. European Parliament.

[31] The Report proposes "the adoption of a NGO Regulation setting up minimum requirements for NGOs across the EU (definition, access to funding, disclosure of sources of financing, independence from political influence and non-European interference, etc.) would provide a more sound budgetary control framework, allowing the NGOs to deliver their positive achievements with the outmost transparency and accountability."

[32] "The EU Transparency Register: Who, What and How". Lykke Advice, 4 April 2023.

[33] Bollini, R., J.M. Roiran (2023) "The EU is right, we must defend democracy. But 'foreign interference' is not the biggest threat". Euronews, 28 Feburary.

[34] Jeannerod, B. and J.C. Samouiller (2023) "Alerte aux restrictions de l'espace de la société civile en France". Human Rights Watch, 4 May.

[35] For example, in response to the In 2018, President Macron accused the humanitarian assistance boat, Lifeline, of enabling the smuggling of migrants across the Mediterranean from Libya, which Lifeline denied In Berdah, A. (2018) "Lifeline: Macron accuse l'ONG de "faire le jeu des passeurs". Figaro, 28 June.

[36] Delfini, A. (2024) "La criminalisation du militantisme écologiste: de Bure à Alternatiba". Webinar, 10 January.

[37] Bourgeois, M.P. (2023) ""Un Policier n'a rien à faire en prison": L'extrême droite salue les propos du patron de la police". BFMTV, 24 July.

[38] "Qui sommes-nous?". L.A. Coalition website.

[39] L'Observatoire des libertés associatives (2020) "Une Citoyenneté Reprimée". Report. L.A. Coalition, p. 10.

[40] LOI n°2016-1691 du 9 décembre 2016 relative à la transparence, à la lutte contre la corruption et à la modernisation de la vie économique (1).

[41] The French organisation Ligue des droits de l'Homme (LDH) criticised in 2023 the use of force by the French police against protestors against the mega basins (Carter, B. (2023) "Megabasins: solution or "insane" response to drought?". Euronews, 9 June), and the Minister of Interior, Gérald Darmanin, threatened to withdraw its funding, which amounted to €550,000 in 2021, compared to €928,000 from membership fees, donations and legacies. The result was a surge in donations for the organisation, which received €30,000 in 24 hours from donations. Soto, H. (2023) "Après les menaces de Gérald Darmanin, la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme récolte 30 000 euros en vingt-quatre heures". Libération, 7 April; Le Mouvement Associatif (2023) "Alertes sur les libertés associatives". Open Letter to the Prime Minister, 10 November.

[42] Article L212-1 National Security Code modified by article 16 LOI n°2021-1109 du 24 août 2021.

[43] Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France (CCIF) was dissolved in December 2020 (Gérald Damarmin as minister of Interior). It was approved by the Conseil d'Etat in September 2021 on the grounds that the CCIF propagated hate and discrimination by criticising public policies on discriminatory grounds, leading to the radicalisation of discriminated victims and pushing them towards disregarding republican laws.43 "Soulèvement de la Terre, GALE? Alvarium, CRI: le Conseil d'État précise les critères justifiant la dissolution d'une association ou d'un groupement". Décision de Justice, 9 November 2023; CIVICUS (2022) "Les associations ripostent à l'entrée en vigueur de la Loi sur le séparatisme". CIVICUS, 24 May.

[44] Cholez, L.A. (2023) "La dissolution des Soulèvements de la Terre définitivement annulée". *Reporterre*, 9 November.

[45] "European Civic Forum response to the 2022 European Commission stakeholder consultation on rule of law in the European Union: France by Ligue des Droits de l'Homme". Response to the stakeholder consultation. European Civic Forum, p. 3.

[46] Ibid, p. 8.

[47] "Association agréée: Qu'est-ce que c'est?". Helloasso blog website.

[48] Le mouvement associatif (2022) "Contrat d'engagement républicain: le désaccord des associations". Communiqué de presse, 3 January.

[49] Ruello, A. (2024) " Législatives 2024 : la grande inquiétude des associations d'insertion face à une possible victoire du RN" Les Échos, 4 July.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Harris, M. (2017) "UK Civil Society: Changes and Challenges in the Age of New Public Governance and the Marketized Welfare State". Nonprofit Policy Forum, 8(4): 351-368. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2017-0017

[52] Harris, M. (2017) "UK Civil Society: Changes and Challenges in the Age of New Public Governance and the Marketized Welfare State". Nonprofit Policy Forum, 8(4): 351-368. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2017-0017

[53] Civic Space (2023) "Fighting for Democratic Empowerement and Resilience". Report. European Civic Forum and Civic Space Watch, p. 171.

[54] Patazidou, M. (2013) "Treading new ground: a changing moment for citizen action in Greece" In "SPECIALISSUE: Civil societies at crossroads: eruptions, initiatives, and evolution in citizen activism". Development in Practice, 23(5/6): 601-796, p. 727.

[55] Civic Space (2023) "Fighting for Democratic Empowerement and Resilience". Report. European Civic Forum and Civic Space Watch, p. 178.

[56] Patazidou, M. (2013) "Treading new ground: a changing moment for citizen action in Greece" In "SPECIALISSUE: Civil societies at crossroads: eruptions, initiatives, and evolution in citizen activism". Development in Practice, 23(5/6): 601-796, p. 725.

[57] Kasapi, Z.A. (2022) "Legal environment and space of civil society organisations in supporting fundamental rights and the rule of law: Greece". Country Report. Centre for European Constitutional Law and European Agency for Fundamental Rights, p. 6.

[58] HIGGS (2021), "Joint statement of 303 organisations on the new bill on CSOs". Κοινή Δήλωση 303 Οργανώσεωνγια το νέο Νομοσχέδιο της ΚτΠ, 23 November.

[59] Kasapi, Z.A. (2022) "Legal environment and space of civil society organisations in supporting fundamental rights and the rule of law: Greece". Country Report. Centre for European Constitutional Law and European Agency for Fundamental Rights, p. 5.

[60] Eleftheriadis, P. (2024) "From the wreckage, a ray of hope for Greek politics" Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 17 June.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Charities Act 2009, sections 12 to 38.

[64] Amárach Research (2023) "Irish Attitudes towards the Charity Regulator". Report. Charities Regulator and Amárach Research, p. 5.

[65] Ibid, p. 6.

[66] Ibid, p.7.

[67] Ibid, p. 24.

[68] "Annual Report - how to submit". Charities Regulator website.

[69] Charities (Amendment) Bill 2023 (Amendment to the Charities Act 2009).

[70] https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2024/act/21/enacted/en/print.html

[71] The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland (2022) "Submission on the Charities (Amendment) Bill 2022". Collaborative Submission. The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland with legal input from Mason Hayes & Curran LLP.

[72] ICCL (2022) "Government neglects to fix problematic law on charity/NGO sector". Irish Council for Civil Liberties, 30 March.

[73] Just several examples - "Extremely disturbing" - Arson attack on Ballincollig building earmarked for refugee accommodation". Nasc website.; MacNamee. G. (2024) "Gardai ring of steel in Dublin as opposing marches bring city standstill" Extra.ie, 6 February.
; Hosford, P. and S. Murray (2023) "Threats, violence and swastika flags. What's happened to Ireland of the welcomes?" Irish Examiner, 5 February.

[74] Reid, S. (2023) "Homeless charity in Ireland targeted with abuse after helping refugees". Euronews, 17 May.

[75] ISD (2023) "Migrants and asylum seekers in Ireland at risk as a result of trending TikTok videos". Institute for Strategic Dialogue blog, 9 February.

[76] Higgins, M. (2022) "The right in the US has a new bogeyman: libraries". The Guardian, 27 July.

[77] Foxe, K. (2023) "Cork City Library 'reluctancy' made decision to close due to protest". Breakingnews.ie, 4 October; Fitzgerald, C. (2023) "Explainer: Why are protesters targeting Ireland's librairies?". The Journal, 8 August; McGlynn, M. and E. English (2023) "Cork Library closes after protesters mount banner across entrance without permission". Irish Examiner, 29 July.

[78] Molony, S. (2023) "'A horrible little man' - bitter row breaks out in Dáil over immigration policies". Irish Independent, 6 December.

[79] FEPS and TASC (2024) "How young people facing disadvantage view democracy in Europe". Report. FEPS and TASC.

[80] "Charities say securing funding is the most serious challenge they have faced since the start of the pandemic". Press release. Charities Regulator website (5 May 2021).

[81] "About the sector". The Wheel website.

[82] Amárach Research (2023) "Irish Charity Survey 2022". Report. Amárach Research.

[83] The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland (2023) "Briefing paper to the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands in response to the Charities (Amendment) Bill 2023 (the "Bill")". Briefing paper. The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland with legal input from Mason Hayes & Curran LLP.

[84] "Dáil Éireann Debate, Wednesday, 4 October 2023; Charitable and Voluntary Organisations". Houses of the Oireachtas website.

[85] The Wheel and TASC (2023) "The Future of Public Service Delivery by the Community & Voluntary Sector". Report. The Wheel and TASC, p. 12.

[86] Collins D., T. Featherstone and P. Moran (2021) "Social Care for People with Disabilities: Trends in Expenditureand Delivery of Services". Spending Review 2021. Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, p. 10.

[87] Ó'Riordáin, S. (2016) "Commissioning Human, Social and Community Services". Submission. Community Work Ireland for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

[88] Shaw, A. and J. Canavan (2016) "Commissioning in Ireland: Exploring the Landscape for Child and Family Services". Literature Review. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, the National University of Ireland, Galway.

[89] Ibid.

[90] "Joint Committee on European Union Affairs debate, Wednesday, 18 Oct 2023: Unlocking EU funding: Discussion". Houses of the Oireachtas website.

[91] The Wheel and TASC (2023) "The Future of Public Service Delivery by the Community & Voluntary Sector". Report. The Wheel and TASC, p. 21.

[92] https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2023-10/Brian%20Harvey%20Analysis%202024.pdf

[93] Ibid.

[94] "Homelessness in Ireland". Peter McVerry Trust website.

[95] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024) "Monthly Homelessness Report: March 2024". Report. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

[96] CSO statistical publication (2023) "Survey on income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2023". Central Statistics Office, 7 March.

[97] Ó Broin, C. (2023) "Significant increase' in demand for mental health services following pandemic - Vhi". Irish Independent, 13 October.

[98] "Jigsaw calls for more funds for youth mental health". Jigsaw website, 25 July 2023.

[99] Census 2016 in LYCS (2023) "Strategic plan 2023-2027". Strategy Statement. Lourdes Youth and Community Services.

[100] Horner, J. (2023) "Local councillor: Dublin's inner city needs hard work, not political games". The Journal, 7 December.

[101] Dublin City Council (2015), "The Liberties greening Strategy". Report. Dublin City Council. In SICCDA (2019) "Community profile and needs assessment of the Liberties and surrounding areas". Report. South inner City community Development Association, p. 27.

[102] TASC (2023) "Healthy Communities Project: Impact Evaluation Report". Final Report. Health and Wellbeing Division of the HSE and the Co-op, p. 89.

[103] Cannon, B., R. King, J. Munnelly, et al. (2022) "Resisting the Far Right: Civil Society for Countering the Far Right in Ireland". Report. Maynooth University and Crosscare Migrant Project, p. 11: "Most respondents found present state policy to the FR closer to tolerant than intolerant. When asked what level of tolerance the state should show to the FR, respondents expressed a preference for a much greater level of intolerance. In interviews, many respondents felt that intolerant speech in particular should not be tolerated by the state, while recognising that strict limitations on freedom of speech and expression could potentially cause adverse effects to civil liberties. They recommended education and dialogue to prevent hateful and exclusive attitudes, and evaluation and analysis of the conditions or reasoning behind individuals being attracted to far right ideas.

Moreover, they stressed the need for the state to act pro-actively, rather than reactively, to FR activity, such as strategies to build awareness of and resistance to such activity, especially through socio-cultural education and by addressing inequalities and hardships in Irish society which contribute to the rise of the FR. Despite this, respondents did see some improvements in the Irish state's policy on the FR, mostly in improved policing of hate crimes, increased cooperation between Gardai and CSOs on FR activities, and of anti-vaccination and anti-public health demonstrations during the Covid 19 pandemic. Respondents also made some specific policy recommendations that the state could assume, particularly with regard to increased monitoring of FR groups, limitations on hate speech and FR street demonstrations, strengthening civil society to resist FR narratives and organising, strengthened powers of surveillance of FR online activity and increased restrictions on Social Media (SM) company facilitation of such activity etc."

[104] "Minister O'Brien announces funding of €20.! million for the community and voluntary sector". Press release. Department of Rural Community Development, 3 June 2022; "Minister Joe O'Brian announces increased funding for 400 community organisations". Pobal, 15 December 2023. TASC receives funding under this scheme.

[105] The Wheel and TASC (2023) "The Future of Public Service Delivery by the Community & Voluntary Sector". Report. The Wheel and TASC, p. 6.

[106] "Income and Expended". Society of Saint Vincent de Paul website.

[107] Charities Regulator (2023) "An overview of Ireland's smaller charities". Report. Charities Regulator.
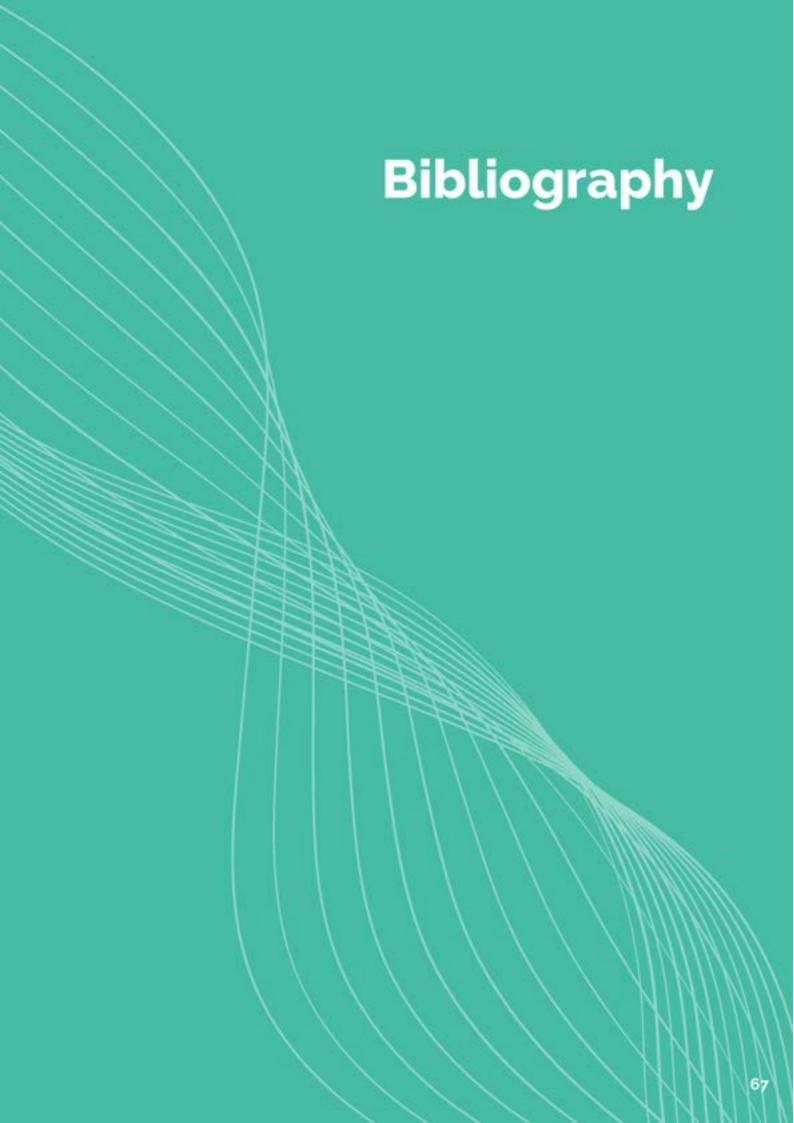
[108] Charities Regulator. 2022. "Concerns Policy Date Corporate Policy and Procedures." https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/5cdfzidx/concerns-policy.pdf.

[109] A Guide to Understanding and Responding to the Far Right. (n.d.). [online] Dublin: Community Work Ireland. Available at: https://www.cwi.ie/25471-2/.

[110] Hope and Courage Collective. "Guides." Accessed August 9, 2024. https://hopeandcourage.ie/category/guides/.

[111] National Civic Forum for Dialogue with the Community & Voluntary Sector 15th November 2023. See as well the DRCD 2019-24 for building sustainable and inclusive communities: https://assets.gov.ie/26890/ff380490589a4f9ab9cd9bb3f53b5493.pdf.

[112] https://diamond-democracy.stanford.edu/speaking/speeches/what-civil-society-can-do-develop-democracy.

Bibliography

Bibliography

Amárach Research (2023) "Irish Charity Survey 2022". Report. Amárach Research.

Berdah, A. (2018) "Lifeline: Macron accuse l'ONG de "faire le jeu des passeurs". *Figaro*, 28 June.

Bollini, R., J.M. Roiran (2023) "The EU is right, we must defend democracy. But 'foreign interference' is not the biggest threat". *Euronews*, 28 Feburary.

Bourgeois, M.P. (2023) "'Un Policier n'a rien à faire en prison": L'extrême droite salue les propos du patron de la police". *BFMTV*, 24 July.

Brooks, E. (2022) "Civil Society in 2022: Under Pressure". *Liberties*, 15 February.

Cannon, B., R. King, J. Munnelly, et al. (2022) "Resisting the Far Right: Civil Society for Countering the Far Right in Ireland". Report. Maynooth University and Crosscare Migrant Project.

Carter, B. (2023) "Megabasins: solution or "insane" response to drought?". *Euronews*. 9 June.

Charities Act 2009.

Charities (Amendment) Bill 2023 (Amendment to the Charities Act 2009).

Charities Regulator (2023) "An overview of Ireland's smaller charities". Report. Charities Regulator.

Civic Space (2023) "Fighting for Democratic Empowerement and Resilience". Report. European Civic Forum and Civic Space Watch.

CIVICUS (2022) "CIVICUS Strategic Plan 2022-2027". Strategic Plan. *CIVICUS*.

CIVICUS (2022) "Les associations ripostent à l'entrée en vigueur de la Loi sur le séparatisme". *CIVICUS*, 24 May.

Collins D., T. Featherstone and P. Moran (2021) "Social Care for People with Disabilities: Trends in Expenditure and Delivery of Services". Spending Review 2021. Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service.

Committee on Budgetary Control (2023) "Draft Report on the transparency of non-governmental organisations funded from the EU budget". Draft Report. European Parliament.

Committee on Budgetary Control (2023) "Report on the transparency and accountability of non-governmental organisations funded from the EU budget". Report. European Parliament.

CSO statistical publication (2023) "Survey on income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2023". Central Statistics Office, 7 March.

"Dáil Éireann Debate, Wednesday, 4 October 2023: Charitable and Volontary Organisations". Houses of the Oireachtas website.

Delfini, A. (2024) "La criminalisation du militantisme écologiste: de Bure à Alternatiba". Webinar, 10 January.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024) "Monthly Homelessness Report: March 2024". Report. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Eleftheriadis, P. (2024) "From the wreckage, a ray of hope for Greek politics". *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, 17 June.

FEPS and TASC (2024) "How young people facing disadvantage view democracy in Europe". Report. FEPS and TASC.

Fitzgerald, C. (2023) "Explainer: Why are protesters targeting Ireland's librairies?". *The Journal*, 8 August.

Foxe, K. (2023) "Cork City Library 'reluctancy' made decision to close due to protest". Breakingnews.ie, 4 October.

Freedom House (2024) "Freedom in the World 2024: The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict". Report. Freedom House.

Gallagher, A., C. O'Connor, F. Visser (2023) "Uisce Faoi Thalamh: An Investigation Into the Online Mis- and Disinformation Ecosystem in Ireland". Report 1 of 3 Summary report. Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

Harris, M. (2017) "UK Civil Society: Changes and Challenges in the Age of New Public Governance and the Marketized Welfare State". *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 8(4): 351-368. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2017-0017

Higgins, M. (2022) "The right in the US has a new bogeyman: libraries". The Guardian, 27 July.

HIGGS (2021) "Joint statement of 303 organisations on the new bill on CSOs". *Κοινή Δήλωση 303 Οργανώσεων για το νέο Νομοσχέδιο της ΚτΠ*. 23 November.

Hope and Courage Collective (2023) "Greater than fear: A community based response to tackling hate and extremism". Report. Hope and Courage Collective.

Horner, J. (2023) "Local councillor: Dublin's inner city needs hard work, not political games". The Journal, 7 December.

Hosford, P. and S. Murray (2023) "Threats, violence and swastika flags. What's happened to Ireland of the welcomes?" *Irish Examiner*, 5 February.

ICCL (2022) "Government neglects to fix problematic law on charity/NGO sector". Irish Council for Civil Liberties, 30 March.

ISD (2023) "Migrants and asylum seekers in Ireland at risk as a result of trending TikTok videos". Institute for Strategic Dialogue blog, 9 February.

"Joint Committee on European Union Affairs debate, Wednesday, 18 Oct 2023: Unlocking EU funding: Discussion". Houses of the Oireachtas website.

Kasapi, Z.A. (2022) "Legal environment and space of civil society organisations in supporting fundamental rights and the rule of law: Greece". Country Report. Centre for European Constitutional Law and European Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Khan, S. (2024) "Threats to Social Cohesion And Democratic Resilience: A new Strategic Approach". Report. The Khan Review.

Klinenberg, E. (2018) *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructures Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (New York: Crown).

L'Observatoire des libertés associatives (2020) "Une Citoyenneté Reprimée". Report. L.A. Coalition.

Le Mouvement Associatif (2023) "Alertes sur les libertés associatives". Open Letter to the Prime Minister, 10 November.

Le Mouvement Associatif (2022) "Contrat d'engagement républicain: le désaccord des associations". Communiqué de presse, 3 January.

LYCS (2023) "Strategic plan 2023-2027". Strategy Statement. Lourdes Youth and Community Services.

McGlynn, M. and E. English (2023) "Cork Library closes after protesters mount banner across entrance without permission". *Irish Examiner*, 29 July.

MacNamee, G. (2024) "Gardai ring of steel in Dublin as opposing marches bring city standstill". *Extra.ie*, 6 February.

Mathiesen, K., J. Barigazzi (2022) "Inside Fight Impunity, the Brussels NGO at the heart of the Qatar corruption scandal". *Politico*, 20 December.

"Minister Joe O'Brian announces increased funding for 400 community organisations". Pobal, 15 December 2023.

"Minister O'Brien announces funding of €20.8 million for the community and voluntary sector". Press release. Department of Rrual Community Development, 3 June 2022.

Molony, S. (2023) "'A horrible little man' - bitter row breaks out in Dáil over immigration policies". *Irish Independent*, 6 December.

Ó Broin, C. (2023) "'Significant increase' in demand for mental health services following pandemic - Vhi". *Irish Independent*, 13 October.

Ó'Riordáin, S. (2016) "Commissioning Human, Social and Community Services". Submission. Community Work Ireland for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2023) "Human Rights Defenders in the Council of Europe Area in Times of Crisis". Report of a Round-table. Council of Europe.

Patazidou, M. (2013) "Treading new ground: a changing moment for citizen action in Greece" In "SPECIAL ISSUE: Civil societies at crossroads: eruptions, initiatives, and evolution in citizen activism". *Development in Practice*, 23(5/6): 601-796.

Raleigh, D. (2024) "Government must 'stop playing to woke gallery', says O'Dea". *Breakingnews.ie*, 11 March.

Reid, S. (2023) "Homeless charity in Ireland targeted with abuse after helping refugees". *Euronews*, 17 May.

Ruello, A. (2024) "Législatives 2024 : la grande inquiétude des associations d'insertion face à une possible victoire du RN". *Les Échos*, 4 July.

Shaw, A. and J. Canavan (2016) "Commissioning in Ireland: Exploring the Landscape for Child and Family Services". Literature Review. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, the National University of Ireland, Galway.

SICCDA (2019) "Community profile and needs assessment of the Liberties and surrounding areas". Report. South inner City community Development Association.

TASC (2023) "Healthy Communities Project: Impact Evaluation Report". Final Report. Health and Wellbeing Division of the HSE and the Co-op.

The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland (2023) "Briefing paper to the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands in response to the Charities (Amendment) Bill 2023 (the "Bill")". Briefing paper. The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland with legal input from Mason Hayes & Curran LLP.

The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland (2022) "Submission on the Charities (Amendment) Bill 2022". Collaborative Submission. The Wheel and Charities Institute Ireland with legal input from Mason Hayes & Curran LLP.

The Wheel and TASC (2023) "The Future of Public Service Delivery by the Community & Voluntary Sector". Report. The Wheel and TASC.

tasc
Think-tank for action on social change

The Rowan Trust

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

pobal
government supporting communities

Civil Society Under Duress:
Assessing the Impact of Political, Financial, and Governance Pressures on CSOs