

2018 Country Report for Ireland

Key points for EASPD members

I. Employment and Labour Market Policy

- Full-time employment increased by 7.1 % as people who had been working part-time are moving into full-time jobs.
- **Long-term unemployment remains a challenge.**

II. Education Policy

- In terms of basic skills, Ireland has continued to perform well, especially in reading, ranking high among EU countries.
- Public spending on education is progressively returning to its pre-crisis level.
- Ireland is continuously improving its performance and lowering early school leaving rates, but disparities remain at local level.
- Ireland also has an ambitious infrastructure investment plan for education at all levels.
- Future funding for higher education is on the agenda and a new higher education reform was tabled on 15 January 2018.
- There have also been important changes to the minimum qualifications required for staff in the sector and a reorganisation of the inspection system for pre-schools in order to encourage the full participation of children, including those with disabilities.
- Ireland ranked among the highest in the EU on tertiary educational attainment and has an ambitious national target for 2020.

III. Social Policy

- Healthcare shows significant room for improvement.
- Comparatively costly healthcare system, compounded by an ageing population, represent important challenges for the healthcare system.
- The shift towards universal healthcare is complicated by an unwieldy two-tier system.
- Long waiting lists for public health patients represent an immediate challenge for improving access to acute care. These are fuelled by capacity challenges and create demand in the private insurance market, which provides fast-track access to a range of treatments.



- Private insurance, in turn, plays a much bigger role in financing healthcare than in most other EU countries.
- An ambitious reform agenda to address quality and access to healthcare has been put forward.
- Ireland is the only western European country without universal primary care coverage.
- The employment rate of people with disabilities is one of the lowest in the EU.
- Since October 2015, the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities has steered efforts to improve the labour market attachment of people with disabilities and the Action Plan for Jobless Households is expected to support this.

IV. Anything else?

- Ireland is one of the most affected Member States by the UK's decision to leave the EU, given the nature of the all-island economy, Ireland's geographical position and the volume of trade between the two countries.
- Social protection systems do relatively well in reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion.
- The gender employment gap is also higher than the EU average.
- The inactivity of women due to caring responsibilities is among the highest in the EU.
- Accessibility to affordable, full-time and quality childcare remains difficult.

Additional Information

- European Commission: 2018 Country Report for [Ireland](#)
- EASPD [Activities on the European Semester](#)

For more information, please contact

Thomas Bignal
 EASPD Policy Officer
 T. +32 2 233 77 23
thomas.bignal@easpd.eu
www.easpd.eu

