

**RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR SUBMISSION ON THE  
REFORM OF SEANAD ÉIREANN**

**FROM**

**THE DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND (DFI)**



**Advocate for the Voluntary Disability Sector  
Supporting organisations to enable people with disabilities**

**Disability Federation of Ireland  
Fumbally Court  
Fumbally Lane  
Dublin 8.  
Telephone: 01 4547978  
Fax: 01 4547981  
E-mail: [info@disability-federation.ie](mailto:info@disability-federation.ie)  
Web: [www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)**

**June 2003**

## Contents

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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b><u>Submission</u></b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>DFI Profile</b>  |           |
| <b>Introduction</b>   |           |
| <b>The Senate to Date</b>   |           |
| <b>Development of Irish Society</b>   |           |
| <b>Options Matrix for Senate Reform</b>   |           |
| <b>Participative and Representational<br/>    Democratic Approach</b>   |           |
| <b>Comment on Stated Matters: Composition &amp; Functions</b>   |           |
| <b><u>Supporting Materials</u></b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>History and Evolution of The Sector<br/>    Role of Voluntary Organisations<br/>    Within a Democracy</b>   |           |
| <b>Other Issues</b>   |           |
| <b><u>Appendix</u></b>  | <b>18</b> |
| <b>I Main Issues Raised In<br/>    'Painting Our Picture'</b>   |           |
| <b>li Supporting Voluntary Activity &amp; the<br/>    Relationship with the State</b>   |           |
| <b>lii Communication from the European<br/>    Commission Promoting the Role Of<br/>    Voluntary Organisations And<br/>    Foundations in Europe</b> |           |
| <b>Iv Some Sources On The Role Of<br/>    Voluntary Organisations within a Democratic State</b>   |           |

## **SUBMISSION**

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### **DFI PROFILE**

As the national representative voice of voluntary disability and disability related organisations in Ireland DFI welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the reform of Seanad Éireann. We would welcome further opportunities to engage in discussion on this matter.

Disability Federation Ireland (DFI) is the national support mechanism for voluntary organisations in Ireland, covering all areas of disability and disabling conditions (hidden, intellectual, mental health, physical, sensory and emotional disability). Currently DFI represents and supports over 150 voluntary disability organisations and groups of which 75 comprise its National Council, and 12 of which are Associate Members. Allied to this, it works with and supports over 200 organisations and groups around the country that have a significant and growing disability interest, mainly coming from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

DFI provides information, training and support, organisational and management development, research and policy development, advocacy, representation and networking to voluntary organisations which will enable them to deliver the best possible range of services to people with disabilities.

DFI also supports the broad voluntary disability sector through its representation on the disability strand within the community and voluntary pillar of the social partnership process as well as through a range of other fora and structures.

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is not the intention of this submission to be prescriptive but primarily to set out the case for the inclusion of the interests of the voluntary disability sector within a reformed Senate on the basis that we consider such a development to be in keeping with developing and deepening democratic participation.

### **THE SENATE TO DATE**

The current Senate has its legitimacy from the Constitution. It was envisaged to be a House which had the voices and expertise of a part of Irish life to complement that represented by universal suffrage through membership of the Dáil.

The establishment of vocational panels and the twin track approach to nominations namely by membership of the Oireachtas and the nominating bodies expresses very clearly that intention.

That intention has been frustrated in the way the Senate has been operated. We now have a Senate which continues to be dominated by party political concerns that are driven by the needs of the Dáil.

Apart from the University Panel the other panels operate in the same way that members of the Dáil operate, largely on party political lines. The net effect being to completely subvert the Senate's intended role. The manner in which Senators elected through the University panel operate is the consistent exception to this. This is not established through them having different views from the other members or that they all have similar views but rather it is the perspective which they bring to the work of the House. Some Senators appointed by the Taoiseach of the day have contributed in similar manner. Otherwise Senators are conscious of their electorate primarily the members of the relevant local authorities. That electorate is highly party political as well as comprising people who have an excellent knowledge of the workings of the PR system and so there is always a disciplined distribution of surplus votes at Senate elections. These facts drown out the richness of that other voice or perspective on matters which should be the hallmark of the Senate but which alas are experienced as the exception rather than the rule.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH SOCIETY**

We have set out elsewhere in this submission some developments in Irish society particularly over the past century with regard to the voluntary disability sector and its role within society. (See supporting materials).

We achieved independence in the early part of the last century and proceeded to govern through representative democracy. Our State has in that time developed and matured economically and socially. That is reflected in the growth of the voluntary sector. The time has come to have a twin track approach to democracy by giving a place at the heart of our national governance structures, the Oireachtas, to the participative elements of democracy side by side with representative democracy, the latter, as reflected through universal suffrage. The former to be accommodated through giving voluntary / non-governmental structures a forum, through a reformed Senate, to have their voices heard and considered.

It is not completely satisfactory to consider reform of the Senate in isolation from the role of the Dáil in particular as the Government has always considered it necessary to 'control' the Senate. While this continues to be the case the party political system may find it difficult to allow sufficient reform along the lines that we are indicating.

## **OPTIONS MATRIX FOR SENATE REFORM.**

Our Government through the Oireachtas must be in a position to make decisions. It may be useful to consider some, all or a combination of the following options in order to ensure that necessary and valuable reform can take place,

- Distinguishing the roles and functions of both Houses.
- Further developing interdependency and complementarity between both Houses.
- Moving away from a purely adversarial debating win/lose approach to how the Houses operate and the way that the Government and Opposition relate with each other.

Many members of both Houses have come from a background of voluntary and community activity and the increase in the number of independent candidates standing for the Dáil particularly in recent times may be an indication that people and groups do not have a more appropriate mechanism to participate in the work of the Oireachtas.

## **PARTICIPATIVE AND REPRESENTATIONAL DEMOCRATIC APPROACH**

In the early decades of the State there was a high level of involvement and interest in the work of the Oireachtas and that was often expressed through the passion which people brought to their party political affiliations as well as the high turnout to vote. Both have significantly declined. Cynicism and apathy is replacing that passion. Concurrently there has been a marked increase in people participating in voluntary democratic activity as I have set out by reference to the voluntary disability movement.

As the Oireachtas becomes more and more irrelevant and distant we are witnessing the growth and development of voluntary community based democratic participation as evidenced through the disability movement. In terms of the creation and sustainability of a highly participative democracy, as distinct from one which is electorally representative alone, we should view the Oireachtas as the meeting place for both strands of our democracy, the representative representing the general will of the people and the participative strand inviting the ongoing involvement of people, through the voluntary and non-governmental sector into democratic discourse and decision making structures.

To date the Senate has been seen as a platform for emerging party political hopefuls to launch a bid for the Dáil and alternatively as a safety net when not successful in Dáil elections or when someone chooses Senate over Dáil participation. A reformed Senate could still operate as a pre Dáil forum were it not to operate on a party political basis and similarly for people who have been members of the Dáil.

It is interesting to consider the often articulated views from members of local authorities that they exercise very little democratic decision making. At the same time they are the electorate for five of the six panels in the Senate and without prejudice to the intended reform programme relating to health structures, they control all health boards. This view seems to be at odds with the facts when not allowing for the further fact that in relation to the Senate and health board participation they operate along party political lines. The way the party political system operates in relation to the Senate has been dysfunctional and at odds with the original intention for its role.

### **COMMENT ON STATED MATTERS**

The request for submissions stated that the review provide that the sub-committee should have particular regard for stated matters relating to composition and function. I will now specifically address these and otherwise this submission has dealt with other issues which we consider of relevance.

### **COMPOSITION**

#### **The manner and basis of election of Seanad Éireann.**

The current panels to be reviewed to reflect changes since their establishment and in parallel with that there should be a system of electoral colleges along with nominating rights across the voluntary/non-governmental interests in the country. Nominating rights may entail involvement across organisations or sectors. No elected public representatives should comprise any electoral college.

#### **University representation either in its current or an amended form.**

As it stands it is outmoded. A small electorate, Trinity, returns 50% of the seats, a larger electorate, NUI, the remainder. Both Trinity and NUI are but part of the ever growing and developing third level sector.

Education at any level is an important service in society but it is one of many. What the Senate should reflect is democratic participation rather than any support service. At the same time the involvement of the university panel has consistently been the most impressive aspect of the Senate over the years. This is the only panel that is not elected by the local authority membership.

## **The nomination of Senators by An Taoiseach.**

As set out elsewhere in this submission the Taoiseach's nominees now reflect concerns around government control and they are also widely seen as being relevant to the Government's hopes and aspirations for the next General Election. On that basis they are not consistent with our vision for a reformed Senate.

## **The most appropriate basis for providing representation for emigrants and persons from Northern Ireland.**

This is an interesting and worthy suggestion as it is moving us beyond the spatial confines which we apply to the state when seen as exclusively territorial. While the Senate was not intended to be based on spatial constituencies like the Dáil it has largely operated that way as distinct from its panel constituencies. Moves in this area should not be done prior to reasserting the primacy of voluntary / non-governmental constituencies with their own electoral colleges. Spatially based constituencies have been the exclusive basis for democratic representation in Ireland to date. Through practice, (social partnership), and policy, (Supporting Voluntary Activity, (2000) (See Appendix II), Government has acknowledged that it needs the active support of the community to address the opportunities and challenges which are presented to our society. The creation of non spatial constituencies which focus around the work of the voluntary sector through the development of electoral colleges is now critical.

### FUNCTIONS

The role of Seanad Éireann:

- Passage of legislation.
- Enhanced parliamentary accountability and scrutiny.
- Review of public policy.
- European Union Affairs.

The Senate must participate in all these areas.

The overriding function is to ensure that diverse and broad voices and expertise come directly from sectors of the community that in a consistent and ongoing way experience the administration of Government decisions and policies. This to ensure that public policy, regardless of how experienced, operates in a functional and enabling way. Furthermore it would assist Government to deepen the commitment and participation of citizens to democratic government and assist in finding solutions to issues which have the maximum commitment of society to their implementation.

In relation to enhanced parliamentary accountability and scrutiny there is an obvious role for the Senate through focusing primarily on processes being adopted as distinct from the merits or otherwise of the decisions made by the Dáil.

Concerning review of public policy the Senate can here best focus on assisting government and the Dáil to ensure that there is maximum fit between the intention and the operation.

We don't see any particular reason why the Senate should specifically focus on European affairs as distinct from a whole range of other areas. With growing international interdependence across a wide range of policy areas the Senate will in any event have to reference EU and other international bodies, interests and developments.

## **CONCLUSION**

The strength of the directly elected Dáil is the representation of the broad will of the people. This needs to be complemented by a focus in the Senate on the ongoing voluntary participation of people through groups in civil society. This should happen through appropriately designed electoral colleges.

".....it is symptomatic of the lack of consensus regarding the place of, or need for, a Senate that, since 1922, no fewer than six commissions or Oireachtas committees have been set up to examine some aspect of the Senate." Morgan, David Gwynn Constitutional Law of Ireland. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (1990). Dublin.



## SUPPORTING MATERIALS

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### HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE SECTOR

We know of the involvement of voluntary organisations in the establishment of health, education and social endeavour since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these organisations were established by people, both lay and religious, that brought a motivation and ethos from their particular religious denomination or order. The direct influence and involvement of religious denominations and orders continues to the present day. Thankfully however, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen a major development with the establishment of voluntary lay / community organisations.

#### **Emergence of voluntary disability sector**

This sector has largely developed over the past 50 years through lay voluntary organisations. It is clear that the early emphasis was around vocational training (rehabilitation). This is understandable given the widespread incidence of T.B. and polio at the time and their widespread social and economic impact within the community. The Rehabilitation Institute (founded in 1949), currently the Rehab Group, was set up by survivors of tuberculosis to help them to reintegrate into society and focused on training for employment. CRC (1951) was established to provide aftercare treatment to people with poliomyelitis following its outbreaks in Dublin in the 40's and 50's. In 1949 the Polio Fellowship of Ireland was established to represent and support post-polio adults and children. The Cork Polio and General Aftercare Association was also founded around that time in response to polio outbreaks in Cork. It is interesting to note that it now operates as COPE in the intellectual disability sector. The National Association for Cerebral Palsy, currently Enable Ireland, was established in 1948 and it pioneered the establishment of special schools for children with Cerebral Palsy. These organisations operated around education, training and employment, for the most part, within a rehabilitation model given the predominance of tuberculosis and poliomyelitis. 1960 saw the establishment of the Irish Wheelchair Association which was complementary in that its focus was broadly around community participation. The Cheshire Foundation became active in Ireland in the 1960's having been established in the U.K. after the Second World War.

Prior to the establishment of National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) and National Association for Deaf People (NAD) there existed a well established service infrastructure operated by Catholic religious orders. In relation to deaf services, the Christian Brothers and the Vincentian and Dominican Orders had been active since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. St. Marys (Dominicans) 1848. St. Josephs (Christian Brothers) 1856 with the Vincentians providing chaplaincy services to both schools. The Daughters of

Charity of St. Vincent de Paul became active in this area in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The schools, St. Marys and St. Josephs, were not owned by the religious orders but by the Catholic Institute for the Deaf which was established by the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. NAD was established in 1963 by parents and others and it is significant in that it was a lay organisation.

NCBI was founded in 1931 and it was modelled largely on the U.K. experience. It is likely that its establishment 20 years ahead of other lay organisations owes much to its U.K influence and support for its establishment in Ireland.

Prior to the establishment of NCBI, three Catholic religious orders were well established in the area. The Irish Sisters of Charity founded St. Mary's School in Donnybrook 1857 and the Carmelite Brothers (the Order no longer exists) established a school in Clondalkin in 1851. The latter had moved to Drumcondra (St. Joseph's) by 1856. The Rosminian Order was invited to take over its operation in 1955.

The services of the religious orders were largely educational (schools) but they quickly, in many instances, became lifelong institutions with people coming in at an early age. These were effectively asylums where people who were deaf or blind found sanctuary from an unsupportive and hostile outside world. Similarly there was an institutional model for the mentally ill (lunatics) and mentally handicapped (imbeciles). The former being provided for in County Mental Hospitals which date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the latter primarily through religious orders or religiously motivated organisations commencing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Religious orders and other organisations with a strong religion / philanthropic ethos set up institutions commencing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to support people with intellectual disabilities (mentally handicapped), i.e. Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, St John of God Order, Brothers of Charity and Stewarts Hospital. We have seen a major development in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century of community based organisations to respond to the needs of this group. By this time they were established and run by families and friends of people with disabilities and operated right across the country. In Dublin St Michaels House was established in the mid 50s and the 60s saw the establishment of the Galway County Association for Mentally Handicapped Children and Western Care (Mayo).

What we were witnessing were people forming organisations as the preferred way to respond to unmet needs at a community and family level and to advocate for the many changes needed. Given the dominant role of the state through its county based mental hospital system going back centuries and the stigma associated with mental illness the development of voluntary organisations in that area has largely mushroomed in the past two decades. These organisations are now playing a vital and growing role in this area.

## **Development of specific condition / niche organisations**

When we move from the 50's we find, over the following four decades, a major parallel growth in the number of voluntary organisations in the physical and sensory sector, principally in the physical area, the great majority of which relate to specific conditions such as multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida and hydrocephalus and haemophilia in the '60's, kidney failure / disease and muscular dystrophy in the 70's, arthritis, epidermolysis bullosa, retinal degenerative diseases, friedreich's ataxia, brain injury, huntington's disease, motor neurone disease, raynaud's and scleroderma, neurofibromatosis and strokes in the 80's, polio and spinal injuries in the 90's. In the Inherited Disorders Association and the Neurological Alliance, both recently established, we are witnessing a further and significant development where a common theme or issue is identified on the experience of the earlier established organisations, mentioned above, which shows a capacity and willingness amongst the organisations to set up structures which heighten co-operation and co-ordination.

The pre 60's organisations were largely motivated to respond to the outbreaks of tuberculosis and poliomyelitis and their approach was way different and more socially focused than what had gone before then. Similarly their effectiveness in mobilising social consciousness and raising awareness around disability and how it should be responded to was significant in the later development of organisations which have largely focused around specific conditions. Equally we should acknowledge that by the 80's there had been significant economic and social development in Ireland which in itself further facilitated the active participation of people with disabilities and their families in the establishment of organisations. Prior to the 1950's with the notable exception of a few organisations were generally founded or "sponsored" by religious orders or denominations. Outside of that governance structure such services as existed came through the poor law system, county mental hospitals and county homes.

## **Characteristics of the emerging voluntary disability sector**

Ruddle and Mulvihill (1995) note that from the 70's on the character of voluntary organisations began to change and was from then marked by a focus on welfare rights and a growing number of community development and self help groups. Faughnan (1990) pointed to the continuing dominant role of the voluntary sector in providing particular services which goes beyond simply complementing or supplementing state provision.

A number of things are clear looking back on the development of the voluntary disability sector. Firstly a strengthening of the involvement of members of the community as distinct from an almost exclusive involvement of people and institutions with a "religious ethos" and secondly the growing participation of people with disabilities and their families not alone within organisations but

more significantly in their establishment. This is evident as far back as the late 40's and early 50's. Thirdly the vision and determination which is embodied in an organisation to meet an unmet need and provide better ways to respond to these needs. Finally, through building on the above, the organisations initiate change and influence society in general towards including those who were not simply on the margins but who were outcasts from society. These two elements of initiating change and influencing society happen in parallel at each period of development.

Organisations have had to change over the years not simply as a survival mechanism but more particularly in order to respond to changing needs and expectations. With the determined efforts to get statutory funding for services it will be interesting to see how organisations respond and change. Will they differentiate between direct service provision under contract to the Health Boards / agencies and other aspects of their organisations i.e. identifying needs, representing agencies, member / client group, capacity building, advocacy, etc? Will some become service delivery subcontractors while others have service contract work as a subsidiary or parallel function and others yet again choose to stay away from direct service delivery and focus on the representative, capacity building, change agent role?

All of the above is by way of setting out briefly the history of the sector which should help us to understand and position both the role and function of the disability movement as part of the voluntary sector and more particularly the central importance of finding ways to stretch that growing expertise, experience and strong involvement with the community and people and families who experience the effects of disability and disabling conditions. A sector such as this should not in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have representation or voice by proxy in important fora within Irish society such as the Seanad.

## **ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WITHIN A DEMOCRACY**

Article 40 of our Constitution “Bunracht na hEireann” acknowledges “the right of citizens to form associations and unions”. This is an acceptance that the input of people through groups is valued in terms of actions which they volunteer to take and in terms of their ideas and views. It further means that there is a relationship between the State and those who form associations (the voluntary sector).

The quality of the relationship is dependent on the attitude and views of both parties and it has not always been an easy or positive relationship. There have been, and still are, tensions between the voluntary and statutory sectors. In some ways that can be wholesome. It is often the frustration which is born from the lack of services, or appropriate services that has led to the creation of voluntary organisations in the disability area. It is a dominant feature of all voluntary groups that they represent either directly and / or through family / close contacts the needs of people in the community who are in a difficult situation, people who are marginalised through lack of services and / or stigma / fear within the community.

Organisations do not always survive or thrive, others change direction over the years as they see fit. While all this is going on new organisations enter the sector, some of whom are equally as critical of earlier voluntary organisations as they may be of state organisations.

To date all voluntary organisations existed in an environment which had not started to appreciate or articulate the structures, supports or environment which they needed to develop. Worse than that there was a view that such organisations “did good work” but not “good enough” to be treated as equal social partners. It is true that there has been a change in this regard with the inclusion of the community and voluntary sector as social partners. At the same time making a decision that a sector should not be excluded is not the same as understanding and valuing fully the contribution of that sector.

The voluntary sector is a vital part of civil society in Ireland. Given the growing disillusionment with politics it is vital that the voluntary element of the disability agenda be strengthened. The acceptance of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities report “A Strategy for Equality” (1996) provides compelling reasons as to why we should underpin the core values of the voluntary sector. A “Strategy for Equality” embraced the notion of treating people with disabilities equally within our society and underpinned that with recommendations which covered services and legislation.

“Painting our Picture, A Guide to the Disability Federation of Ireland Affiliated Organisations For People with Physical or Sensory Disabilities or with Mental Health Problems” (2000) published by DFI provides some generally useful information (See Appendix I). “The most commonly provided services are information, support and advocacy services. In total 52 organisations (92.8%) provide an information service and 50 (89.3%) provide a support service of

some kind while 47 organisations (83.9%) provide an advocacy service. Housing and education services are the least commonly provided. Some services e.g. medical / nursing / therapeutic or education, are not relevant to certain groups of service users and this may partially explain the low number of organisations involved in their provision. An additional issue may be the cost of these services – only large and well-funded organisations are in a position to employ professional medical, nursing, therapy or teaching staffs”. Clearly the vast majority of organisations see information and advocacy as very important services. For some organisations these may be the predominant activities of the organisation while for others they are part of a broader range of services.

Establishing voluntary organisations has been the chosen way over the centuries and all the more so in recent years for the needs and concerns of people with disabilities and their families to be addressed. Voluntary organisations provide a structure and mechanism under the protection of our constitution and legal system for people to promote issues and needs.

The contribution of voluntary organisations to Irish society has been recently highlighted (1998) by the Catholic Social Service Conference when it noted: “The State has always depended on the voluntary sector to operate social supports at local levels, to cater for the needs of particular groups and to do a whole range of activities which the State either could not or would not do.”

From a consideration of our organisations, we set out the following roles which voluntary organisations are currently providing.

- Providing services (direct provision and / or advocacy work).
- Innovating, designing and developing services and structures.
- Setting policies and priorities, planning and monitoring.
- Developing and maintaining an understanding of need and demand through representative structures and influencing media and government.
- Creating awareness and maintaining good public relations (including publicity and making links with key people, groups and agencies in the field).
- Mobilising local communities in support of the aims and objectives of the organisations.
- Supporting the democratic process.
- Fundraising (from a range of sources) towards core and essential services and significant added value through the input of volunteers.

- Flexibility in reacting to a complex and changing environment.
- Specialist staff recruitment and training leading to the provision of quality services.
- Development of a rich bank of knowledge and expertise.
- Extensive ongoing assessment of needs through regular consultation and research.
- Establishment, development and facilitation of self-help and support groups.

These activities go to the core of helping to define, from the basis of activity within the sector what the nature of the voluntary sector is: namely a proactive and positive element in society which is close to peoples' needs, most likely the first to articulate same and develop responses, it actively involves and challenges the community; it provides services, builds capacity, promotes advocacy and is generally a social mobilization agent.

The White Paper "Supporting Voluntary Activity" (2000) (See Appendix II) acknowledges the role that voluntary organisations play in areas such as active involvement of membership and complementing work of statutory agencies, and the need to address areas such as funding, consultation and partnership between the state and the sector. A direct role for the interests of the voluntary disability sector within the Seanad would be an important way to vindicate the intentions of Government policy in this area and bring a new and vibrant voice and perspective to the work of the Oireachtas.

Directorate-General XXIII of the European Commission had a number of interesting things to say in its "Communication from the Commission promoting the role of voluntary organisations and Foundations in Europe". Not surprisingly it acknowledged the sector's significant contribution to job creation and economic growth. It focused on the influence and achievement of voluntary organisations and on the political importance of the sector particularly around citizenship as set out in the communication. (See Appendix III).

It is useful to include other sources to further acknowledge the role of voluntary organisations within a democratic state. (See Appendix V) But before doing so, it is worth noting that other forms of state governance, the former soviet block and dictatorships, do not allow the formation of voluntary organisations. Leaving aside the issue of the right to form associations we might consider the life experiences of people with disabilities under such systems. Voluntary organisations are a necessary part of developing civil society.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

### **Policy Vacuum**

“Despite the importance of the activities of the voluntary sector and the role it has traditionally played in Irish society, there is no policy at national level within which its contribution may be located. There is no clear statement of principles which underlie the relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors in general. Neither is there agreement as to the relative spheres of competence and legitimacy or the balancing of functions between the voluntary and statutory sectors within the health area.” P. Faughnan “A Health Voluntary Sector: Rhetoric or Reality? In Reflections on Health Commemorating Fifty Years of the Department of Health 1947 – 1997 ed J. Robins DOH Dublin '97 (p-238). There does not exist any acknowledged infrastructure through which the voluntary sector can bring issues, expertise, insights etc into the centre of democratic discourse and decision making in the Oireachtas.

The publication of the White Paper “Supporting Voluntary Activity” (2000) has been a major step forward as has the recent action on foot of the review of the social partnership process relating to the community and voluntary pillar. In this regard DFI acknowledges that it has been invited into the community and voluntary pillar to represent the disability interest.

### **Position of Voluntary Organisations**

Voluntary organisations by their very nature occupy a difficult position. They attempt to bridge the gap between individuals and families within the community, and civil society with its governance structures. Within the disability sector there is the extra volatile ingredient of disability and its effects on the lives of people. Voluntary organisations strive to articulate and often also to respond to needs of individuals and families in society where all the apparatus of Government and civil society have otherwise failed. More often than not, the failure has been in realising the problem or issue that may need both a policy and action response. On this basis alone it is important that the sector achieves its own independent voice and contribution to the work of the Oireachtas through participation in the Seanad.

### **Growing Sector**

The sector has grown and evolved at an accelerated pace over the past two decades and there is no reason to believe that this will not continue. It is important that the growth of the sector be seen within the context of increased community participation rather than the perceived dysfunction of having too many organisations.



## **Voluntary versus volunteering**

Voluntary, as used to describe the sector, refers to the organisation rather than individual people and whether or not their time commitment is acknowledged through pay. We have tended to see people who volunteer in terms of service provision exclusively rather than in terms of being part of the organisation's decision making process. The remuneration of people is the opportunity cost of the individual's time. Given the rate of change in society more and more people have great demands on their time and so they have less time to give. This, in itself, is not to question commitment or motivation.

## **Role of funding in the voluntary / statutory relationship**

Traditionally funding, or more often the lack of it, has been at the centre of our relationship with the statutory sector. This has concentrated around resourcing for necessary service delivery. Resourcing of services, service planning, service contracting etc. are important issues but they should not define or circumscribe the nature of the relationship. Policy development supporting national governance and other issues should also form part of the relationship and that can be promoted more appropriately through membership of the Oireachtas.

## **Defining the sector**

There has been a tendency by the statutory sector to define or prescribe a role to the voluntary sector i.e. "voluntary service providers". While the most obvious mark of the sector has been its initiation of, and ongoing commitment to delivery of, services within an uncertain funding climate, it is a gross under-representation of the sector to see it only in terms of service provision. The sector has and continues to represent the growing or changing needs of people and their families, develops models of service delivery, inputs into social policy, mobilises community and political support and understanding etc.

The past has been marked by a misunderstanding of the roles which voluntary disability organisations play in society. Consequently the State has tended to see them exclusively as service providers. The sector is justifiably proud of, and jealously protects, its role in service delivery but the state must develop its relationship and partnership process by actively acknowledging and supporting the sector and all its roles.

## APPENDIX

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### Appendix I

#### Main issues raised in “Painting our Picture”

- Voluntary organisations both reflect and assist in shaping the current social climate.
- Voluntary representative organisations have legitimate roles in a democratic society.
- Service policy design and implementation must ensure quality, comprehensive and equitable national service provision and delivery.
- Voluntary organisations are sometimes the primary or key agencies in the development of certain types of services.
- Statutory funding of services provided by the voluntary sector is partial and often less than transparent in its operation.
- Many voluntary organisations have a close and direct relationship with their users.
- Some organisations are under considerable ongoing pressures, in relation to funding, to staffing, to quality assurance issues and to service maintenance and development.
- The scope for co-operation and co-ordination between voluntary agencies and between these agencies and the State is largely untested.

## Appendix II

### **SUPPORTING VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE**

'Supporting Voluntary Activity' (September 2000), The White Paper on a framework for supporting voluntary activity and for developing the relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector articulates very clearly that the role of the community and voluntary sector is a positive one, that goes to the heart of democratic participation:

*"This is a key point. The Government regards statutory support of the Community and Voluntary sector as having an importance to the well-being of our society that goes beyond utilitarian concerns to do with 'purchase' of services by this or that statutory agency. It has to do with the nature of the society we wish to foster – one which fosters active participation in its affairs by individuals, because such participation is vital to our democratic way of life. The Government's vision of society is also one which actively encourages people as individuals and as members of groups to look after their own needs – very often in partnership with statutory agencies – but without depending on the State to meet all need" (1.5)*

This quotation clearly states that the relationship is not simply about the 'purchase' of this or that service. In Chapter 2, 'Context and Background', 'Supporting Voluntary Activity' identifies the growth in voluntary social service organizations over recent decades in areas such as housing, childcare, services for people with disabilities and elderly people, and then it sets out what it describes as a key challenge:

*"A key challenge for the future of these groups is to harness their collective energy in order to maximize their impact, both at policy development level (i.e. in relation to welfare/health issues), and at the level of their individual client base." (2.41)*

Chapter 3, "Structures Underpinning the Relationship", states:

*"Civil society is greatly enriched when ordinary citizens come together in voluntary action, community involvement and self-help initiatives. The sector has a specific role in ensuring that the experiences and interests of marginalised communities and groups are articulated and are heard when decisions that affect them are being made" (3.13).*

Where better to do this than within the Oireachtas through a reformed Senate.

In the Foreword to 'Supporting Voluntary Activity', Dermot Ahern T.D., Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, stated:

*"In my personal view, the most significant impact the White Paper will have over the long-term will be that it is based on a strong philosophy of support for the Community and Voluntary sector as an essential requirement to the health of our society and our democracy."*

The White Paper, 'Supporting Voluntary Activity' is government policy setting out the broad value and role of the sector, a framework for supporting the sector and developing the relationship between the state and the sector.

## Appendix III

### **Communication from the European Commission promoting the role of voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe**

#### **Influence and achievements of voluntary organisations**

Historically it is difficult to overestimate this influence and achievement.

- origins of many of the services such as education, health and social services taken for granted today.
- contribution to political ideas and to the intellectual climate we now have “has been similarly immense”.
- vital role in the dissemination of scientific ideas and technological developments and provided forums for the exchange of thinking across the whole range of human concerns.
- lead the fight for the recognition of human rights and the dignity of the human person.
- many promote a spirit of solidarity on behalf of the less favoured; the sick or people with disabilities; the poor and the excluded; the aged and the young and between those who have jobs and those who do not; between men and women; between generations, between the more prosperous regions and the poor or struggling regions.
- important contribution to the fight against social exclusion, sexual exploitation of women and children as well as racism and xenophobia.
- played a major role in the mobilisation of public opinion in favour of development, promoted democracy and established links with the representatives of civil society in developing countries.

The contribution of voluntary organisations is present in every conceivable human interest and endeavour and remains essential, especially with the process of European integration.

“In this way voluntary organisations and foundations continue as they always have done not just to provide the seed bed or ‘gene pool’ from which future social and other policies may eventually grow, but also the political, social and intellectual climate in which change comes to be seen as desirable on the wider scale”.

### **Political importance - Citizenship**

- many people through membership of voluntary organisations and volunteering provide a vital means through which they can express their sense of citizenship

### **Political importance – promoting democracy**

- “Volunteering organisations and foundations foster a sense of solidarity and of citizenship and provide the essential underpinnings of our democracy”.
- “their contribution to the effectiveness with which democracy functions should not, however, be underestimated. Above all they will now play an essential part as intermediaries in the exchange of information and opinion between governments and citizens with the means with which they may critically examine government actions or proposals, and public authorities in their turn with expert advice, guidance on popular views, and essential feedback on the effects of their policies.
- “Voluntary organisations are important to the democratic process. It does not mean they could ever take on the role occupied by elected representatives.”

## Appendix IV

### SOME SOURCES ON THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WITHIN A DEMOCRATIC STATE

#### **The skills of citizenship**

“The excellence of the work of a democratic State depends largely on the quality of its citizens. Individuals do not become intelligent and public spirited citizens merely by keeping the law, paying rates and taxes, and recording their votes at elections. They require opportunities of insight into the lives of their fellows and into the practical work of group administration. This kind of insight is given by active participation in the work of voluntary associations and of public bodies alike: it is an expression of voluntary citizenship. The qualities of citizenship desirable in the democratic community of the future are far more likely to be developed by this kind of means than by methods of mass propaganda and deification of the State.”. Constance Braithwaite *The Voluntary Citizen; an Enquiry into the Place of Philanthropy in the Community* (London 1938) (p-78-80).

#### **Self governance**

“A voluntary organisation properly speaking is an organisation which, whether its workers are paid or unpaid, is initiated and governed by its own members without external control. Such a body may well undertake work on behalf of a statutory authority, but if it is to qualify as a voluntary organisation it is essential that it should select or co-operate in selecting what that work shall be and how it shall be done.” A.F.C. Bourdillon, *Introduction, Voluntary Social Services their Place in the Modern State* ed. A.F.C. Bourdillon (London 1945) (p-3).

#### **Political invention**

“It is clear that the State must in future do more things than it has attempted in the past. But it is equally clear, or should be equally clear, that room, opportunity and encouragement must be kept for Voluntary Action in seeking new ways of social advance. There is need for political invention to find new ways of fruitful co-operation between public authorities and voluntary agencies”. Lord Beveridge *Voluntary Action A Report on the Method of Social Advance* (London 1945) (p-8-10).

#### **Subsidiarity**

“Subsidiarity is an important principle which draws attention to the important role played in civil society both by voluntary organisations and by individuals who take initiatives in contributing to the voluntary sector; and to the need for such organisations and individuals to enjoy the freedom to take appropriate initiatives.”. Address by Archbishop D. Connell at the AGM of Mater Hospital 3/9/96.

## **Reflect and stimulate community spirit**

“The role of voluntary organisations is immensely important. They reflect and stimulate the community spirit and humanitarianism of very many people outside of the formal health services, and in doing so they make available considerable additional resources, both human and financial. They can also identify and meet needs quickly because of their closeness to the client-group which they serve; indeed, many services which are now provided or funded by the State were originally developed independently by such organisations.” The Commission on Health Funding Report 1989.