



SE-NEWS

A Newsletter for Social Enterprises in Ireland

Issue 1 - April 2021

WELCOME



Welcome to the first edition of **SE-NEWS**, a newsletter for social enterprises in Ireland, brought to you by the **Department of Rural and Community Development**.

Our aim is to share information and news of interest to social enterprises throughout Ireland, to help build and strengthen the Social Enterprise community and to share case studies and examples of good practice.

In this edition, we bring you news of the Dormant Accounts funded **COVID-19 Social Enterprise Regeneration Programme**, which will help Social Enterprises to recover from the impact of the pandemic. There is news of a new '**Partnering with Social Enterprise**' Award at the Chambers Ireland Sustainable Business Awards and an announcement of a joint initiative between the **Department of Rural and Community Development and Foróige**. We also bring news of Ireland's signing of the **Toledo Declaration**, an important milestone for Social Enterprise in Ireland.

To highlight the fantastic work of social enterprises and the diversity of sectors in which they operate, we will provide regular case studies through our 'Focus on SE' section. **Vantastic** is featured today.

We look forward to providing you with a regular newsletter; if you would like to suggest news to be included please email us at senews@drccd.gov.ie

Heather Humphreys T.D.

Minister for Rural and Community Development

NOTICE BOARD

For information and a [list of supports](#) available to social enterprise see the [Social Enterprise webpage on Gov.ie](#).

Contact us to add to this list!

The **#EUSES summit** will be an opportunity to discuss how social economy can help reshape the economy post-COVID by promoting inclusive sustainable economic models for the green and digital transition within Europe. With more than **80 stakeholder sessions** and approximately **300 participating organisations** from across Europe, #EUSES will be a unique experience.

[Check out the Programme](#)
[Register Now for Free](#)

The **European Commission** has published the report of the '[Study on the impact of the SBI and its follow-up actions](#)'.

A consultation on the **forthcoming EU Action Plan for Social Economy** is underway until 22 April – Click [here](#) to have your say!

GECES announced the **European Social Innovation Competition** is now open. Each year the competition addresses a different issue facing Europe. The 2021 edition is: **SKILLS FOR TOMORROW – Shaping a green and digital future**. Registration is now open **until 12 May**. You can refer to the official competition website: <https://eusic.challenges.org/> and the GROW

Competition webpage:

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/innovation/social/competition_en

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€800K DAF FUNDED REGENERATION PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ANNOUNCED



Minister Humphreys announced the **COVID-19 Social Enterprise Regeneration Programme** which will help Social Enterprises to recover from the

impact of COVID-19. Across Ireland throughout the pandemic, Social Enterprises have made an important contribution in areas such as mental health, social inclusion and the circular economy.

This programme, which is funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund, will provide free training and mentoring to social enterprise managers, directors and staff across the country.

It will place a particular focus on strategic planning, digital innovation, capacity building and governance and will also assist social enterprises to strengthen their operations, and to repurpose or diversify their trading income.

Further details of the programme are [available here](#).

IRELAND ONE OF 19 EU COUNTRIES TO SIGN UP TO THE “TOLEDO DECLARATION”

On 4th December 2020, Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD announced that Ireland has signed the ‘Toledo Declaration on the Social and Solidarity Economy’.

The Declaration is a recognition and a commitment to strengthening the decisive role that Social Enterprises can play as EU member states emerge from the health, economic, and social crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Signing the Declaration Minister Humphreys said “Ireland’s signature of the Toledo Declaration is a further articulation of Ireland’s firm commitment to Social Enterprise. The past few months have brought into sharp focus the critical role of social enterprises to Irish society, demonstrated by their responses to the challenges of COVID-19.”

“Our Social Enterprises put their communities in which they serve to the forefront and showed an incredible ability to adapt and innovate for the benefit of society. It is important that we support Social Enterprises to ensure that our economic and social recovery is a sustainable one that leaves no one behind.”

It was signed at a high-level meeting, organised by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy. The event was attended by representatives from EU member states, as well as by Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Ángel Gurría, Secretary-General of the OECD, and Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organisation.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CATEGORY ADDED TO CHAMBERS IRELAND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS IMPACT AWARDS

A new **Partnering with Social Enterprise** category has been added to **Chambers Ireland Sustainable Business Impact Awards**. DRCD will support this award.

The Chamber Awards seek to recognise the outstanding work of the Chamber network around the country. This category awards excellence in working with a partner social enterprise.

Businesses can partner with a social enterprise in a number of different ways, for example: including social enterprises in their supply chain, provision of work experience and/or employment to social enterprise clients, engaging in an awareness campaign with the partner social enterprise, or providing operational and skills sharing which will support the social enterprise’s work.

This category is about business engaging through collaborative means to increase the impact of Social Enterprise. [Click here](#) for more info.

NEW SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODULE WITHIN FORÓIGE’S NETWORK FOR TEACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP (NFTE) PROGRAMME

Foróige, supported by DRCD, has included a new [Social Enterprise module](#) within the **Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)** Programme.

DRCD has provided €30,000 to support the roll-out of the initiative. The new module, will be primarily taught in DEIS schools. The project is in line with a number of commitments in the National Social Enterprise Policy seeking to develop social enterprise in Ireland.

DRCD is working to include social enterprise modules in all levels of education and training, and this module supports social enterprise initiation for young people.

Focus on SE



Vantastic is a great example of a social enterprise that works primarily to improve the lives of people. Their core objective is to achieve a social impact through the provision of Accessible Transport Services to enable their members to participate in broader community activities and to have an independent lifestyle.



Vantastic originated from the total lack of accessible transport in the 1990s and the Centre for Independent Living Dublin's efforts to establish a transport division. Vantastic, as an independent company limited by

guarantee with its own board of directors, was registered in 2000.

Vantastic operates as a social enterprise: a business for the public good where any surpluses are reinvested into achieving their social objective to provide flexible, customer-focused, fully accessible and affordable transport services for their members - people with disabilities, older people with mobility impairments and Not for Profit Organisations. Today, Vantastic employs 66 staff, has a fleet of 65 adapted vehicles (50 minibuses & 15 rental cars) and operates services seven days a week.

A decade ago, more than 90% of Vantastic's funding came from government grants, but today, only 40% does. Vantastic's primary source of income comes from its trading activities. They have in the region of 200 organisational and around 9,000 individual members who pay subsidised fares for the transport services that they use. Vantastic has also won various contracts on the open market to deliver specialised transport for people with mobility problems.

They bid for 'requests for tender' on the government's eTenders procurement website, on a full cost recovery plus profit basis. Factors such as holding a Road Transport Operator Licence, having properly qualified and Garda-vetted drivers, and being compliant with the Charities Governance Code, have helped in this regard. Vantastic has also developed several joint partnerships,

especially with local government, to deliver discounted local services for older people.

Vantastic has two core accessible transports services, an Accessible Minibus service and a Wheelchair Accessible Rental Car service.

Their Minibus service provides a group travel service and individual door-to-door transport and specialist routes for shopping, health care, and leisure. It mainly services the Dublin and North Wicklow area. Their Car Rental service recognises a requirement for an independent transport solution other than owning your own car that allows people with mobility difficulties to have their own nominated volunteer driver and enjoy the freedom and flexibility to go when and where they want.



In response to the Level 5 restrictions, the Vantastic Minibus services were redeployed across the full Dublin area from regular five-day-a-week service to

seven-day-a-week service provision to facilitate essential staff transport (2,181 trips), meals on wheels (4,953 meal delivered) and COVID-19 specialist delivery services (such as PPE).

As vaccines have become available, they have allocated Minibus services to provide vital transport for people with disabilities and those over 85 to facilitate their attendance for vaccines. In addition to operating their on the road services throughout the pandemic, the Vantastic Customer Service Team initiated calls to the regular members to check on their wellbeing, offer assistance and assure them that the service continued to operate when they required trips.

VANTASTIC CONTACT DETAILS

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If you would like your social enterprise to feature in a future edition of SE-News, please contact senews@drcd.ie for an application form and mention 'Focus on SE Application' in the subject line.