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NATIONAL DATA

GREEN SKILLS AT NATIONAL LEVEL: IRELAND

● National definition of green economy

Ireland defines the 'green economy' as "to encompass the wide range of goods and services that fall within the scope of environmental and natural-resource use, management and protection." This falls in line with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) definition of the environmental goods and services sector. Key sub-sectors identified are:

- Renewable energies
- Eco-building and construction materials
- Water/wastewater treatment
- Waste management
- Environmental services and other green technologies.

● How are green skills / green jobs / green economy promoted and protected at national level?

Nation and EU policies and strategies are supported through government agencies and organisations, such as; Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Irish Water, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Enterprise Ireland, Local Development Companies and Local Authorities. Supports can be in the form of providing information sessions with expert consultants, for example, The Climate Toolkit 4 Business, programmes to support communities and businesses through transitions, for example, the Sustainable Energy Communities, or through grant aid for example, the Green Transition Fund.

● Legal framework and policies

The Irish approach revolves around the subsectors outlined above with individual policies and action plans for each sub sector in place. Strategies that have been developed include;

- *The Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 – 2023*
- *Water Services Policy Statement 2018 – 2025*
- *Policy Statement on the facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland December 2021*
- *National Policy Statement on the Bio economy February 2018,*
- *The Food Wise 2025 strategy,*
- *A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2020-2025,*
- *Climate Action Plan 2021*
- *Ireland's Action plan to the EU Green Deal.*

● What are jobs/occupations with high degree of participation in the green economy?

In Ireland the approach to the green economy has been to integrate opportunities across all sectors of the wider economy. This has created a change in labour demands across many sectors.

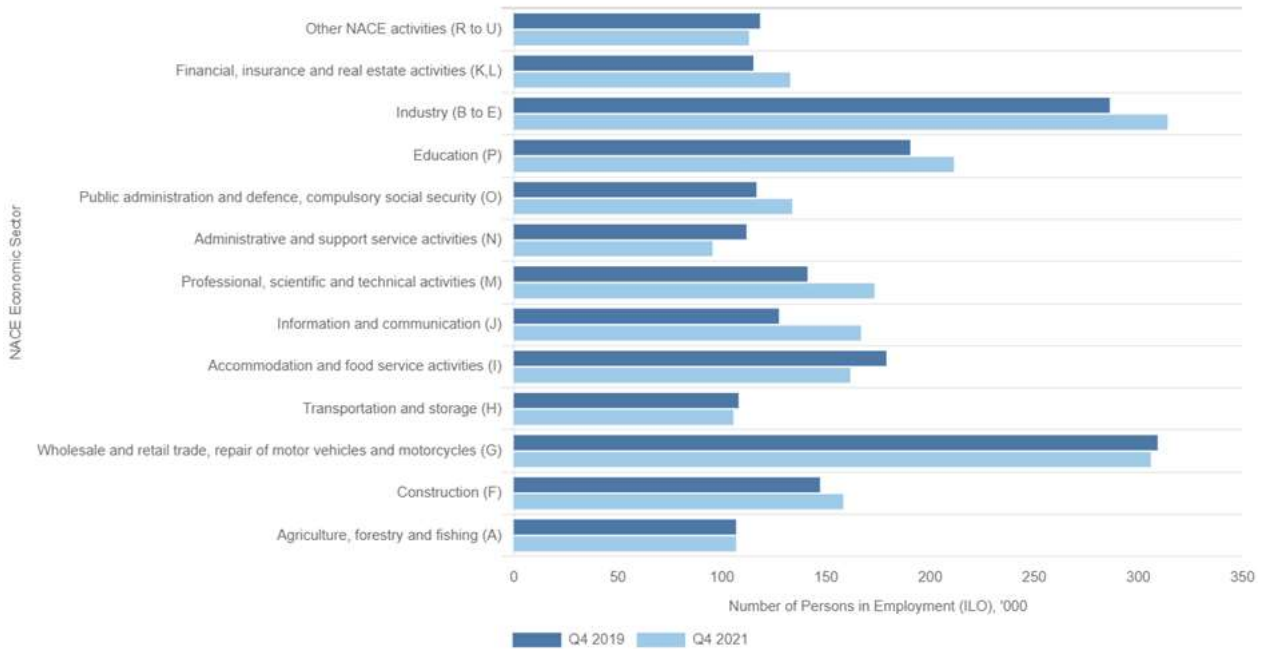
Ireland's Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, in a recent address advised;

"Achieving these goals will require changes across all sectors of our society and economy, involving collaborative effort by Government, business, communities, and individuals to implement new and ambitious policies, technological innovations, systems and infrastructures." (Speech by the Taoiseach Micheál Martin T.D (Teachta Dála). Dublin Climate Summit, 2022).



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A 2022 survey and analysis of sector employment in Ireland between 2019 and 2021 indicated the following changes:



Persons aged 15 - 89 years in employment classified by NACE Rev. 2 Economic Sector, Quarter 4 2019 and Quarter 4 2021.

While no specific 'green' occupations or jobs were identified, the increase of certain employment sectors in Ireland may potentially be linked to the growth in sectors directly working within the green economy fields, such as Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, and Information and Communication.



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- Statistics of green economy at national level



The central statistical office released an assessment of Ireland's Environment Goods and Services Sector in 2019 which it defines to be an analysis of the Green Economy.

(Environment Goods and Services Sector 2019 - CSO (Central Statistics Office) - Central Statistics Office", 2019)

The Irish Government Climate Action Plan 2021 indicates that the green economy will provide high quality opportunities for employment in Ireland. The Industrial Development Agency (IDA) will campaign for businesses to invest in technologies which will assist in the countries decarbonisation and will also work in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to provide grant aid and supports for industry to reduce emissions. (Climate Action Plan, 2021 Securing Our Future", 2021)

A Skillsnet report on the 'Talent for Ireland's Green Economy 2022', found that sectors in the green economy such as manufacturing, energy, construction and resource logistics face barriers with regards to a gap in skill sets within the workforce. (Talent for Ireland's Green Economy, 2022)

The transition towards the economy evolving and integrating into a green economy has generated skills needs across all sectors and the government has introduced many toolkits and strategies to support sectors in transitioning towards a greener economy, for example, The Climate Toolkit 4 Business.

- What are the trends in this field at national level?

In 2021, Ireland announced the Climate Action Plan in response to the Climate Act 2021, which legally committed Ireland to achieving the target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with a target of a 51% reduction by 2030. The plan lays out a percentage target that each sector must achieve by the 2030 deadline:

- Electricity: 62-81%



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- Transport: 42-50%
- Buildings: 44-56%
- Industry/Enterprise: 29-41%
- Agriculture: 22-30% reduction
- Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF): 37-58%

(Climate Action Plan, 2021 Securing Our Future", 2021)

The government will support the required transition through a €165 billion National Development Plan. The green economy is projected to grow with the increase of projects such as retrofitting, sustainable agriculture, the increase implementation of renewable energies and clean transport. (Climate Action Plan, 2021 Securing Our Future", 2021)

● **What does the community development officer* mean at national level?**

Community Development Officers work within Local Development Companies. The Irish Local Development Network defines Local Development Companies as “multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver community and rural development, labour market activation, social inclusion, climate action and social enterprise services. (“Local Development Companies”, 2022)

DIGITAL SKILLS AT NATIONAL LEVEL: IRELAND

● **National definition of digital skills**

In Ireland there is no specific ‘national’ definition of digital skills. ‘Digital skills’ is used as a broad term referring to the diverse range of aptitudes and abilities needed to engage and work with all aspects of information communication technology and related applications within work, personal and social lives.

Ireland focuses on meeting skills requirements and integration across all aspects of society across (i) high level digital skills; (ii) digital skills for the labour market and (iii) digital skills for society.

Development of digital engagement is seen as ‘of fundamental importance to the skills and competencies people need to secure, retain and flourish in employment and the ongoing development of a workforce which can adapt successfully to the digital revolution.’ (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022).

● **How are digital skills promoted and protected at national level?**

Ireland has a multi-pronged approach to combat the digital divide that incorporates all levels of digital skills development across society, incorporating education, workplace and community through design and development of national, regional and local education and training initiatives.

Digital Skills are promoted across all sectors of the economy from early years education right up to Higher Education initiatives. Promotion and development of digital skills within in the education framework incorporates Teacher training initiatives to match demand.

While development of digital skills across society is fundamental to inclusion, education and training, Ireland’s target for infrastructure to support digital connectivity is one of the most ambitious in the EU. The target aims to ensure that all Irish households and businesses will be covered by a Gigabit network service no later than 2028, with all populated areas covered by 5G by no later than 2030.

Ireland’s Digital Connectivity Strategy, documented in *Harnessing the Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework 2022*, involves joining up of national networks via libraries, Broadband Connection Points, Connected Hubs and development of regional innovation hubs networks enabled through full delivery of Ireland’s National Broadband Plan (NBP) and robust Cyber Security capacity.



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● Legal framework and policies

The Digital Ireland Framework outlines Ireland's national digital strategy to drive and enable the digital transition across Irish economy and society. Key policies and strategies include and are not limited to:

- *The National Employment Strategy – Pathways to Work 2021-2025* (Department of Social Protection, 2021)
- *Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland's Future* (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2021)
- *AI: Here for Good A National Artificial Intelligence Strategy for Ireland* (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, 2021)
- *Transforming Business through Talent – Statement of Strategy 2021-2025*
- *Making Remote Work – National Remote Work Strategy* (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021)
- *The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs Statement of Activity 2020* (National Skills Council, 2021)
- *STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026* (Department of Education, 2019)
- *Technology Skills 2022: Ireland's Third ICT (Information and Communications Technology) Action Plan* (Department of Education and Skills, 2019)
- *Future FET: Transforming Learning - The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy* (SOLAS, 2020)
- *Ireland's National Marine Planning Framework 2021 & Maritime Area Planning Act* (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2021)
- *Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022)
- *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy* (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2022)
- *National Research and Innovation Strategy 2021-2027 Consultation Paper* (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2021)
- *The Digital Connectivity Strategy for Ireland – Draft paper* (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2022)
- *National Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2024* (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2019)
- *Towards a National Digital Framework for Irish Higher Education* (All Aboard, 2015)
- *Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2021)
- *National Development Plan 2021-2030* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2021)

● What are jobs/occupations with high degree of participation in digitalisation?

According to the European Investment Bank (EIB), Ireland has held a strong position of 6th in the EU digital index DESI with a small proportion of foreign owned multinationals being highly digitalised and the traditional, indigenous SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprise) being slower on the uptake highlighting a need to accelerate and enhance digital adaptation right across Irish businesses to address the competitiveness and productivity gap between digitally enabled firms and businesses with a low level of digital maturity.

However, the EIB have also identified that the Irish economy is dominated by SMEs that need to be placed at the core of the digital transformation strategy, considering their relevance to the Irish economy, with 99.8% of active businesses and 70% of the workforce employed in non-digital sectors such as services, construction and manufacturing.

Skills provision across Early Childhood, the School System, Further Education and Training (FET), Higher Education (HE) and Lifelong Learning and the Technical University sector is embedding digital skills at all levels to ensure a responsive future economy and society.

Jobs and occupations with a high degree of participation in digitalization include:

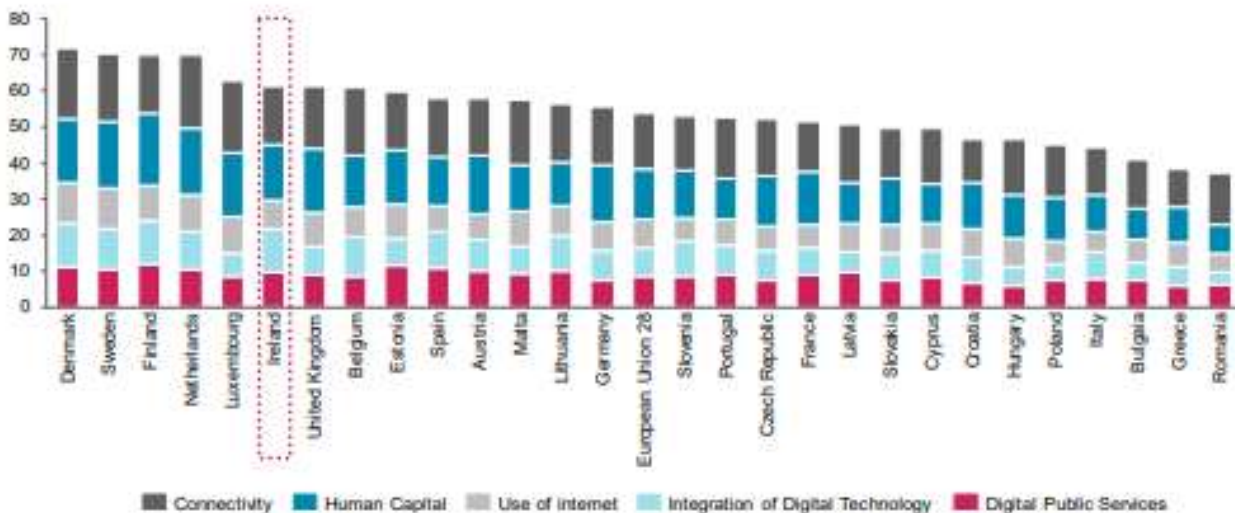
- Research & Innovation
- Local Development Companies



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- Managerial and leadership positions
• Public service leadership – Digital Government Services, eHealth, Schools, Data Governance – eGovernment
• Marketing & Promotion
• Software development
• Website development
• Business Development (public and private) to include SME's as well as MNCs
• Online Platform Economy
• Climate Action
• Market Expansion and diversification
• Engineering and Design
• Employment and training opportunities relating to all aspects of digital skills in the following areas: AI (Artificial Intelligence), Connected Hubs, Cyber Security, National Broadband Plan.
• Statistics of digitalisation at national level.

Figure 1: Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2018 ranking (p.8) (European Investment Bank, 2019)





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Table 1: Businesses adopting technologies for e-business. (p.7) (European Investment Bank, 2019)

	31% of Irish businesses used Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software in 2017 to capture, store and make available to other business functions information about its clients for marketing purposes, versus an EU average of 32%
	Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) was used by 28% of businesses in Ireland in 2017 versus 34% in Europe (ranking Ireland 21st out of the EU28)
	12% of Irish businesses reported that they shared information electronically using Supply Chain Management (SCM), versus an EU28 average of 18%
	11% of Irish enterprises used Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technologies, versus an EU average of 12%. The most common reason for using RFID was for person identification or access control; few companies used it as part of the production and service delivery process and for product identification after the production process

It is important to acknowledge an acceleration in adoption of Digital skills and technologies as a result of Covid-19 while ensuring to address the digital divide. (Department of Education, 2022) (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022)

● What are the trends in this field at national level?

Recent years have amplified the power of digital in building individual, community and business resilience with a distinct move towards incorporation of digital skills at all levels across all work and society areas with a strong focus on transferable skills.

Overall, the pandemic is estimated to have accelerated existing trends in remote work worldwide, e-commerce and automation as well as exacerbated labour mobility. These trends, however, have not affected citizens and enterprises in the same manner. Research suggest that the positive development has been strongly skewed towards high-paid white-collar employment.

Changes have identified a competitiveness and productivity gap between digitally enabled people and businesses with those with low levels of digital skills and maturity that must be addressed.

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has identified 5 common themes required for skills development in Ireland.

1. The need to align education and training provision with industry's requirements.
2. The need for standardised work placements, internship/traineeship/apprenticeship opportunities.
3. The need to identify clear career paths within sectors and to clearly communicate and promote career opportunities, through engagement with school guidance counsellors.
4. The need to provide upskilling and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for employees.
5. The need to ensure the workforce has strong transversal (comms skills, literacy, digital skills) skills is key in enabling people to gain and maintain employment for enterprise. (National Skills Council, 2021)

EU DATA



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● Relevant EU policies

The European approach is based on three main pillars to ensure that Europe seizes the opportunity and gives its citizens, businesses, and governments control over the digital transformation.

Pillar 1: Technology that works for the people

The EU's digital strategy will:

- invest in digital skills for all Europeans
- protect people from cyber threats (hacking, ransomware, identity theft)
- ensure Artificial Intelligence is developed in ways that respect people's rights and earn their trust
- accelerate the roll-out of ultra-fast broadband for homes, schools and hospitals throughout the EU
- expand Europe's super-computing capacity to develop innovative solutions for medicine, transport and the environment

Pillar 2: A fair and competitive digital economy

The EU's digital strategy will:

- enable a vibrant community of innovative and fast-growing start-ups and small businesses to access finance and to expand
- strengthen the responsibility of online platforms by proposing a Digital Services Act
- and clarifying rules for online services make sure that EU rules are fit for the digital economy
- ensure fair competition of all companies in Europe
- increase access to high-quality data while ensuring that personal and sensitive data is safeguarded

Pillar 3: An open, democratic and sustainable society

The EU's digital strategy will:

- use technology to help Europe become climate-neutral by 2050
- reduce the digital sector's carbon emissions
- give citizens more control and protection of their data
- create a "European health data space" to foster targeted research, diagnosis and treatment
- fight disinformation online and foster diverse and reliable media content

On 9 March 2021, the European Commission presented a vision and avenues for Europe's digital transformation by 2030. The Commission proposed a Digital Compass for the EU's digital decade that evolves around four key points including (i) Skills; (ii) Infrastructure; (iii) Government and (iv) Business.

The Commission proposal to establish the 2030 Policy Programme 'Path to the Digital Decade' to empower Member States to make collective progress in the shaping of their digital transformation. was adopted on 15 September 2021. It sets out common digital targets the EU is expected to reach by 2030. Targets include:

- (i) **Skills**
 - ICT Specialists: 20 million + gender convergence
 - Basic Digital Skills: min 80% of population
- (ii) **Secure and sustainable digital infrastructures**
 - Connectivity: Gigabit for everyone, 5G everywhere
 - Innovative Semiconductors: double EU share in global production
 - Data - Edge & Cloud: 10,000 climate-neutral highly secure edge nodes
 - Computing: first computer with quantum acceleration
- (iii) **Digital transformation of businesses**
 - Tech up-take: 75% of EU companies using Cloud/AI/Big Data
 - Innovators: grow scale-ups & finance to double EU Unicorns
 - Late adopters: more than 90% of SMEs reach at least a basic level of digital intensity
- (iv) **Digitalisation of public services**



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- Key Public Services: 100% online
- e-Health: 100% of citizens having access to medical records
- Digital Identity: 80% of citizens using digital ID

A Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, proposed by the Commission on 26 January 2022, complements the targets (“what”) with a shared reference framework (“why and how”) that aims to guide policy makers and private actors in shaping the Digital Decade according to European values, and the rights and freedoms enshrined in the EU’s legal framework.

GOOD PRACTICES

Slí Eile, Burton Park, Churchtown, Mallow, Co. Cork.

Slí Eile translated from the Irish language means ‘another way’ and was established in 2004, by Joan Hamilton, to provide an alternative recovery option for those with mental health difficulties who might otherwise have to spend time in psychiatric hospital. Situated in Burton House, Churchtown, within the Ballyhoura Development region, it is the only organisation of its kind in Ireland providing this type of service. Using a holistic approach that intertwines emotional, social, physical, spiritual and psychological support through lived experience and connection with food and the natural environment.

Residents spend a period of 6 to 18 months in a residential community in which support is available from both professional staff and from peers. Through daily support, practical working of the land to grow wholesome, organic produced in a sustainable manner, as well as opportunities to work in the bakery, provides an opportunity for a fresh start in a safe, nurturing environment. The food produced is used to feed residents and staff alike with surplus going for sale in the weekly market. Residents and staff are committed to sustainable production, the benefits of working the land, team work and the benefits of producing and eating wholesome, organic and sustainable food towards holistic, therapeutic personal development and healing.

The organisation enables people with mental health challenges to recover and rebuild their lives using three key strategies:

1. Supported Community Living

The goal is to develop a unique Slí Eile community, aftercare and family support service to enable tenants’ recovery from mental illness so they can move forward in their lives with hope, confidence and independence.

2. Real-world Social Enterprises

The goal is to grow Slí Eile’s real-life commercial enterprises to support tenants’ recovery journey with a focus on learning, well-being and biodiversity to create positive social, economic and community impacts.

3. Personal Progression planning

Participants are encouraged to think about the kind of life they hope for at the end of their journey with Slí Eile and are supported through the ‘C-Me’ personal progression framework, one-to-one, key- worker coaching and peer learning to set goals and actions. Personal progression is a key cornerstone of the recovery journey and participation is fundamental to the immeasurable benefits that flow from enhanced self-regard and social recognition.

Funded by Social Enterprise activities (organic farm produce and bakery) and the Saturday Market, open to wider community. Slí Eile Housing Association CLG (COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE) is also funded through tenant rents, fundraising activities, public donations and the Health Service Executive. The organisation occasionally benefits from the support of corporate sponsors and avails of grants and funding for voluntary organisations and charities.



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[RDS Rural Social Impact Winner 2022 - Sli Eile Farm, Co. Cork.](#)

Slí Eile Farm, Burton Park, Churchtown, Mallow, Co. Cork
<https://www.slieile.ie/programme/supported-community-living/>

Community Power

Friars Court, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

Community power is Ireland's first community owned renewable energy supplier and grew from Ireland's first community owned windfarm in Templeberry, county Tipperary. The company objective is to work with more communities to develop more community owned renewable energy supplies.

The first turbine as part of this project has been operating since 2012 at the foothills of Slieve Feilim, and currently owns two turbines generating 15 GWh of energy a year.

The company operates under three components:

- “ 1. As a catalyse, part fund and project manage community owned, renewable energy facilities such as solar, wind, hydro and biomass.
- 2. Selling electricity to communities and the wider market.
- 3. Providing a meaningful ownership structure for communities and individuals in the renewable energy sector – to ensure that the surplus revenue generated stays in the communities, thereby buttressing the local circular economy.”
(Our Story - Community Power, 2022)

The company offers communities a Renewable Electricity Circular Economy Model, with responsible control over the generation, production, distribution, consumption and ownership over the projects.

The contracts offered to customers by Community Power have no early termination clause, which means customers are free to leave whenever they wish without penalty. Community power provides communities with optional PPA's (power purchase agreements), so they can sell their excess electricity, thereby improving their revenue stream from their power plants.



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The state has guaranteed that successful Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) projects, will have presold electricity output at a fixed price for upwards of fifteen years. This devalues the risk for communities and makes the venture more likely to get financial backing from banking providers before construction takes part.

The company outlines a code of practice document for vulnerable customers. This provides extra support to customers who may be vulnerable to disconnection during the winter months for non-payment of bills. If registered to the Special Services Register Community Power will notify the ESB network to be registered on the industry register and have outlined a customer would not be disconnected during the winter months for non-payment of bills.

Community Power supports communities to produce local and renewable energy solutions. They then buy renewable power that is owned by communities, co-operatives or citizens, and sell that electricity to customers. Ireland is unique as it allows medium sized generation to trade on the Integrated Single Electricity Market (Community Power, 2022).

Contact Details:

Address: 2nd Floor, Friars Court, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, E45KN59
Phone: 067 56005
Email: info@communitypower.ie
Website: <https://communitypower.ie/>

ConnectedHubs

Enterprise Ireland in 2021 published a guide, 'Designing a workplace for the future'. The aim of this publication was to offer support and guidance for employers to explore opportunities of future working environments, including hybrid and remote working models. Moving towards this new working environment the growth of the National Hub Network is integral as it allows workers to carry out works close to their homes with excellent amenities. *National Hub Network: Bringing Irish workplaces into a new era, 2022.*

ConnectedHubs.ie was launched in May 2021, and aims to simplify and standardise the process of sourcing a suitable space for work. This can vary from booking spaces, desks, offices and events in hubs for a day, a week, a month, a year or longer.

ConnectedHubs currently offers 278 coworking hubs, 4824 desks and 374 meeting rooms. (ConnectedHubs, 2022)

ConnectedHubs.ie is operated by The National Hub Network, this government of Ireland initiative is a database that allows hubs to come together under one regulatory body of remote working hubs. ConnectedHubs.ie highlights keys features and provides benefits to hub owners, customers, local communities and the wider economy. Each hub is responsible for bookings and space availability settings, creating opportunities for local employment.

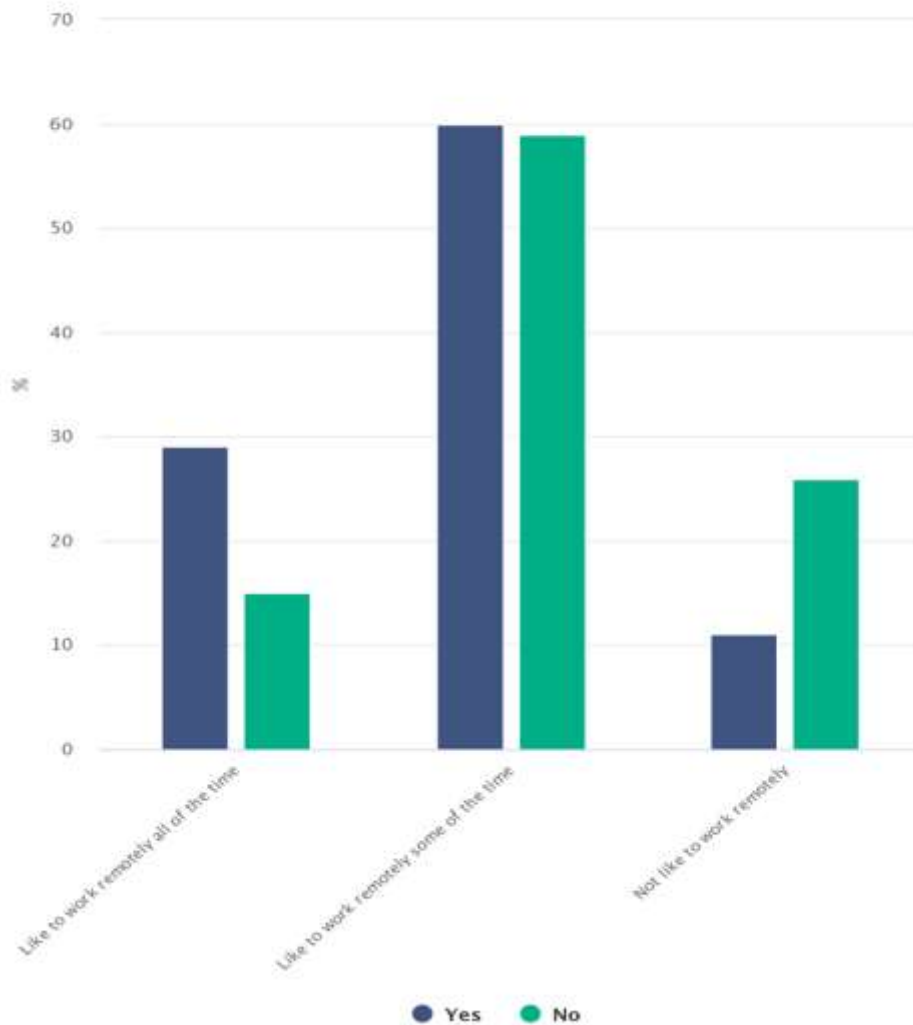
Prior to the 2020 Covid -19 pandemic, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation conducted a research paper on Remote Work in Ireland Future Jobs 2019. The research highlighting the need to improve infrastructure, the lack of departmental ownership and policy, and some negative impacts on employees and employers. The research also found that remote working presented opportunities for the future work force; "Flexible working solutions, such as remote work, are becoming a priority from a range of perspectives, from sustainability and positive environmental impacts, to increasing participation amongst women, older people and people with disabilities. This is reflected in the current Government approach as evidenced in Future Jobs Ireland and the Climate Action Plan. Due to increased digitalisation and the rising accessibility of innovative technology, flexible working options such as remote work are a visible feature of the Irish workforce and, increasingly, an expectation from employees." (*Remote Work in Ireland Future Jobs 2019*, pg. 12, 2019).

In November 2021 the Central Statistics Office found, that 65% of the work force were working remotely all or some of the time. (*Working Remotely - CSO - Central Statistics Office, 2021*)



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Figure 2.1 Future remote work intentions by whether respondent has worked remotely at any point since the pandemic, November 2021



Source: CSO Ireland

Central Statistics Office, 2021

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment have since released a document National Remote Work Strategy in January 2021. The developing strategy has been built to focus on three pillars, the working environment, remote working infrastructure and policy and guidance framework. The study found not only gaps but identified the need for certain supports, but also confirmed state backing, “The State is committed to increasing remote work adoption in Ireland through removing barriers, developing infrastructure, providing guidance, raising awareness and leading by example in this area.” (*Making Remote Work National Remote Work Strategy*, pg11, 2021). This has led to support in many forms, including; funding for hubs to develop suitable environments; *Connected Hubs Fund*, investigating wellbeing in relation to remote working for example the right to log off, and identified clear steps that need to be taken to develop the sector, including the development of The National Hub Network which has created a network, standard and support system for all remote work hubs across Ireland.

ConnectedHubs have released many guidance documents on how communities or property owners can develop into a remote working hub. The document poses important questions for any potential hubs, highlighting the importance of



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having a business plan and assessing the sustainability of day to day running costs but it also provides information on the resources the ConnectedHubs provide such as the booking service and management model ("Guidance for the Development of Hubs and Remote Working Facilities", 2021).

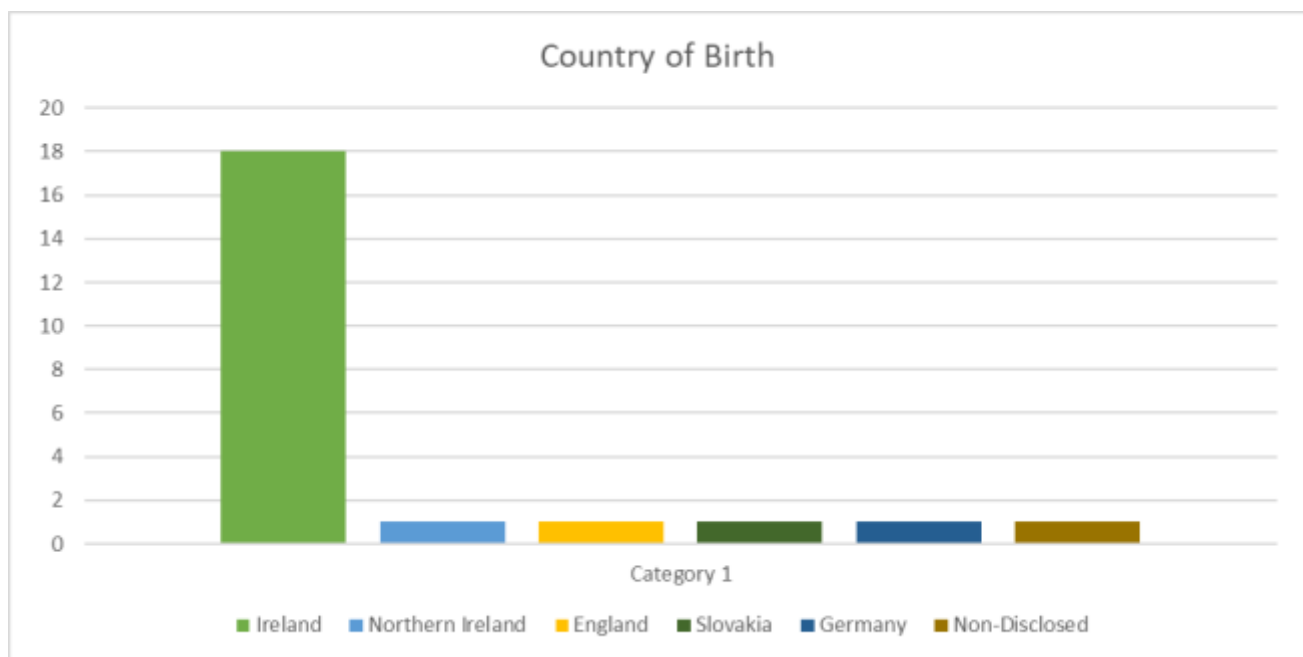
IRELAND INTERVIEW' ANALYSIS

1. Demographics

23 individuals, from a range of work areas relating to Community Development, were interviewed for the Work based Learning Survey. Country of birth is primarily Ireland with 18 born in Ireland, 1 in Northern Ireland, 1 in England, 1 in Slovakia, 1 in Germany and the remainder chose not to disclose their country of birth.

Figure1: Country of Birth

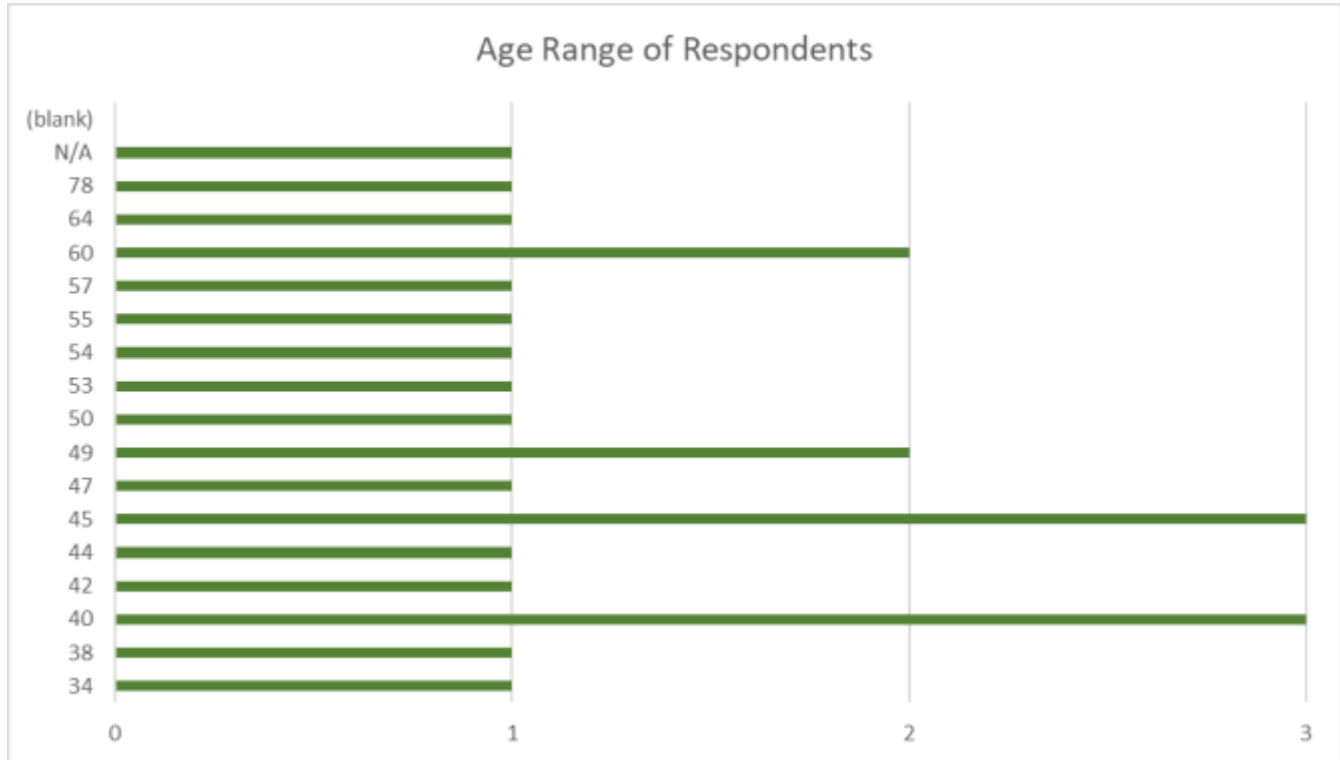
The age range of respondents is between 34 and 78 years of age with the median age of 49 years.





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Figure 2: Age Range



Respondents length of service in their current role, is varied and ranges from 6 months to 20 years with a median of 7.9 years. Many duties include management of programmes, project and personnel, oversight, financial planning and governance, strategic planning, networking, funding applications as well as broad based community development and support.

Types of organisations represented include further and higher education, social enterprise, research and consultancy and not-for-profit organisations with strong links to community development.

2. Subject knowledge

When asked do define the term green jobs, interviewees replied with terms other related terms. Energy was mentioned by 43% of respondents, sustainability was mentioned by 35% of respondents, biodiversity and environmental management were mentioned 30% by respondents, and tackling emissions, managing resource opportunities and the Just Transition being mentioned by 26% of the respondent. Interviewees highlighted that it is also about embedding green aspects to current and future roles.

A number of interviewees highlighted that in a Rural Community Development Space, capacity building, awareness raising, and information provision will need to be an element of "Green Jobs" particularly with disadvantaged individuals and low-income communities. This can also provide opportunities, especially for people looking for a different career path or for long term unemployed to engage with a new and growing sector, and to contribute to its growth. Many of these opportunities are set to arrive from the government's introduction of different strategies such as the circular Economy strategy and the Climate Action Plan 2021.

Knowledge of employment opportunities provided by the green sector leads to an increased awareness of the change that is needed towards infrastructure and resource management, even at a local level, and looking at current practices



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and how these can be delivered in a more sustainably and in a more efficient manner. Part of this change would require the development of green skills within communities and sharing knowledge within the green space.

Technical skills were highlighted by the participants with examples such as solar panel installation, construction of A rated home, sustainable planning and water waste management. Technical skills are vital for the participation of communities undertaking projects within the green economy. Day to day and behavioural knowledge was also highlighted to engage with communities. Skills such as energy efficiency in the home, learning how to manage green spaces locally, education on food life cycles and build a capacity within communities to look at their own spaces and the opportunities they present. The delivery of both technical skills and day to day behaviours need strategic planning when being delivered to communities and need to build towards something, whether this be something as simple as a local biodiversity horticultural award or building capacity in the community to tackle larger infrastructure solutions or initiatives.

For community development officers it is vital that constant upskilling of knowledge is developed and encouraged both within community led organisations and within communities. Relating larger strategies and knowledge, and supporting communities within these roles, particularly in disadvantaged target groups and low-income communities, promoting a "knowledge around what is meant by green in the work that you do." The role should also command a leader perspective when it comes to taking green actions in the workplace and around the communities the officer works in. Questions raised by respondents included 'how can I achieve my targets in a more sustainable way? Can I work from home to reduce my carbon footprint? Do I need to print this information?'

The need to integrate more digitalised skills and practices both from a work aspect and in general society was supported by the interviewees, with one participant advising, "Digital Skills are on a spectrum, at a very basic level are needed to communicate on a day-to-day basis, can be compared to general literacy and digital fluency is required in most sectors of life in current climate." Without some basic digital literacy or skills an individual would be in danger of being left behind or suffer some form of social isolation. The digital sector also can create a community that transitions to every age group once you have the skills to use it, not only in direct communication but also in areas such as advertisement and business development. The dependence on infrastructure to support digitalization poses as a threat, especially in rural areas where digital infrastructure is poor or non-existent. This inhibits the growth of rural communities to engage in the many benefits digital resources have to offer and often can influence the migration towards urban living.

The need for developing and changing infrastructure is also vital for the establishment of the green economy in rural areas. Emissions limitations are being imposed by the Government on certain sectors such as agriculture and energy generation to transition the sectors to be more resource efficient or to change practices to be more sustainable. While this has lost certain employment such as turf cutting and harvesting, it has created new opportunities in the sectors, especially in renewable energies, developing new infrastructures, agriculture, eco-tourism etc. The goal is to analyse the current economy with a perspective in transitioning towards a greener perspective, while still maintaining and improving employment and livelihoods.

For a green economy to be sustainable, people need to learn about their resources, where products have come from and how new innovations and systems like the bio economy and circular economy will impact the way things are done in the future. This also needs to be achieved through all socio-economic levels, with supports being provided to the most vulnerable, creating local employment and improved standards of living. Building the development's goals, and creating positive opportunities and develop frameworks that allow a bottom-up approach.

Participants found that within a working environment, a knowledge of green and skills and digital skills would be required. This ranges from a changing economy, with a greener focus, green skills have become a commodity to have within their workforce, whether it be from assessing the companies carbon footprint to more technical requirements such as producing constraint reports, completing life cycle analysis of materials or assessing transport sustainability. These skills can also help in spreading the knowledge, if you have a knowledge or skill set in green topics such as reducing energy usage, you can use digital skills to reach a wider audience and spread the knowledge.



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The decisions that some companies made around developing working from home policies or initiatives, is another support that has been impacted by the green and digital environments as it has reduced the carbon footprint of commuters dramatically but also allowed for upskilling in digital skills. This particularly has impacted rural communities as it has allowed a workforce to stay local and encouraged them to shop in local shops and use local services.

In the workspace it is then about looking at behaviour of day-to-day practice. This may entail investigating work-based modules on sustainability, looking at the digital tools available to employees and if they are user friendly to encourage efficiency and creating a dialogue between employees on how a business can be more sustainable.

In community development work a lot of focus is required to keep up to date with current funding streams, and policy documents. Looking at how to break them down, identifying gaps in the communities; if they require a talk, training or putting guides online.

Soft skill engagement has been identified by the interviews as key when engaging with communities on topics such as the just transition and digital skills. Empathy and communication skills were identified by one participant as a tool to be able to “relate to the perspective of the communities you are working with.” Rural communities face many challenges such as rural isolation, aging populations, and lack of infrastructure. Other skills such as facilitator skills to support communities in developing their own capacity in a grassroot approach and using networking and conflict resolution skills to support local groups to engage with opportunities that support and develop their own communities. One participant identified that digitalization should not substitute the need for human contact in addressing future development and building trust both within communities and with community development officers needs to be a mixture of in person interaction and developing a digitalisation capacity.

3. Job specific

A number of core work responsibilities were identified, across a broad spectrum of potential employment areas, for the role of community development officer, combining specific and transferrable skills, to include the following: Communication, inter-personal, intra-personal, team work, innovation, facilitation, approachable, problem solving, advocacy, animation, advanced digital skills, digital marketing and promotion, knowledge and understanding of core concepts, dissemination, discerning, creativity.

A strong knowledge of the organisations digital mechanisms, combined with a broad range of skill sets, to enable the worker to carry out day to day reporting, recording, dissemination, animation and communication, both internally and externally, are outlined below.

An ability to effectively utilize digital marketing and promotion platforms to animate, engage and communicate to a diverse audience, in an inclusive and accessible manner. Clear messaging, using simple language and accessible platforms is core to engagement and buy-in from local communities and individuals. Employees must be capable of diversifying communication and delivery mechanisms to provide local access to information, education, training and lifelong learning while recognising the need for blended delivery i.e., digital and face-to-face, has been clearly identified by the interview responses.

While there has been an accelerated movement towards digital, as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, a broad base of communication tools needs to be utilized to reach and engage with individuals and communities living in isolated, difficult to reach areas where access to broadband, digital devices and digital skills can prove a huge barrier to engagement. “*Strong engagement and facilitation will secure community buy-in and use of a variety of engagement methodologies will help to build knowledge and understanding of green principals*”. On the ground, door-to-door, local engagement is a core factor in community development towards building engagement, relationships and trust. An ability to break down and translate ‘high-brow’ policy documents and initiatives into simple and accessible language is key to inclusion, capacity building and just transition.



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It is important to start small with achievable projects, 'small wins should be utilized and celebrated to create buy-in and build confidence thus creating space and willingness for participation in larger projects. Showcasing positive initiatives, networking with other communities and building capacity of individuals and communities, have been identified as key factors in sustainable development. Initiatives like Grow Your Own Food, Community Composting, Citizen Science are practical, inclusive initiatives that build understanding, connectivity and knowledge around the Green space at a local level. Initiatives like these can lead to identification of further training, upskilling and knowledge and awareness raising, that can be delivered locally. Each initiative can be designed and delivered to address the needs identified by individuals and communities. Of utmost importance in community led development is to listen and ask what the individual and or community needs? *"Harness the value and wisdom, that already exists in the community, particularly from older members of the community"*

Promotion of Green/greening is a mainstream element of most organisations marketing and promotion strategies. Sustainable and Green initiatives must be embedded across the organisation, and all work areas, embracing a culture of 'green', to make sustainable change and provide positive examples for individuals and communities to follow. A collaborative approach to raising awareness of the impact of personal choice regarding travel, energy consumption and resource allocation will have a knock-on effect on personal and community choices. Simple things like turning off lights and computers, sharing transport, where practical and use of energy usage apps to show the savings, can secure buy-in and provide a stepping stone to larger initiatives

Constant and rapid advances in digital mechanisms and green initiatives require employees to engage in ongoing training and upskilling, to act as a medium for information and skills transfer, to build capacity of individuals and groups. Networking with key actors, in the community development space, is key to ensuring accessible, understandable information is provided and delivered to include all members of society.

The following tools for digital communication, commonly identified across respondents, are displayed below. A key point to note is provision of devices and training to access the tools listed below – use of device loan schemes for training, identification of funds to support provision of digital devices and access to digital services – to mitigate against disadvantages associated with lack of access and skills.

Figure 1: Tools for Digital Communication





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4. Country specific approach

When interviewees were asked about Ireland's approach to the green economy one participant replied, "The green agenda is built into everything that is happening at the moment around supporting the transition into the green economy".

The interviewees had a broad knowledge of different directives, policies, laws, action plans, programmes and funding associated with the green economy. Below some of the response's interviewees provided:

EU Green Deal	Sustainable Energy Communities
Green Agenda	Sustainable Energy Communities
Climate Action	National Digital Policy
Climate Act	National Just Transition Fund
Circular Economy Plan	National Waste Prevention Programme 2005
Waste Action Plan	National Tourism Policy
Water Framework Directive	National Social Enterprise Plan
CAP Reform 2023	GLAS
Housing for All Policy	Rural Future
Food Vision for 2030	National Broadband plan

Some of the participants highlighted Ireland's lack of delivery in the past, with tariffs being implemented on previous emission targets that Ireland failed to meet. However, a recent sense of enthusiasm with the Climate Act, signing into law Ireland's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050 and the introduction of strategic plans such as the Circular Economy Plan and the Climate Action Plan lay out key steps every sector can take towards transitioning into a green economy.

Aspects of improvement were also highlighted by the interviewees particularly in education on key skills and the need for additional supports in rural areas to prevent rural migration. One participant commented, "Ireland is trapped between needing large economic growth and needing to transition into the green economy."

It was recognised that a lot of the steps Ireland are currently making are in line with EU legislation and the government adopts and tailors plans to implement at a national level.

Some participants felt that there is a disconnect between large scale sector transitions and how this can present opportunities for communities and the general population. Accessibility to information and education of the different changes and new skillsets to communities should be a key focus of the transition in moving forward. Cross departmental cooperation was highlighted in some instances to be disjointed but has also presented some opportunities in developing programme or organisation approaches. One participant gave the example of local development companies, the board members are often made up of representatives from different organisations and sectors which have a invested interest in the area, such as Coillte, who could have a forestry industry or the Irish Farmers Association (IFA), this allows the board to have a broader skillset and knowledge base that would inform the company. The interviewee commented that there is a real opportunity to use and implement this model at a national level. Other cooperation's such as between local authorises and communities, or cross departmental cooperation with industry for the implementation of programmes such as the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021 to 2025 or the 2022 Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme were also identified.



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The responsibility of the transition falling on different departments and organisations has caused a disengagement and a disjointed approach to support and information as no one organisation has access to all the resources or supports available. When asked on what sector of the government deals with the green economy, jobs and skills the participants advised that eight different departments were responsible and nine semi state structures. When asked on other entities, the participants replied with twenty-eight organisations that work as part of the green economy. In relation to supports participants identified grant aid as the dominant support provided to foster green skills. However, the grant aid has been predominately for domestic and small business use only, especially with technical installations such as retrofitting homes or converting to renewable energy. Some other sources of grant aid were mentioned from local development companies, Enterprise Ireland and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. However, a gap of educational support, and support on how to streamline access to funding for communities who may not have the capacity, was also identified. Organisational support from companies such as the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, The Education Training Board, Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and third level institutes were highlighted but support for a strategic rollout plan to engage with communities and build capacity within each community is required.

When asked about their knowledge on other EU projects, participants showed a broad knowledge of the Erasmus initiative being involved in projects related to green skills. Interreg Europe, Interreg Northwest Europe and Horizon 2020 with specific focus on climate action, energy and water quality.

Testimonials

The interviewees highlighted in the final question the need for engagement, to make people aware of the climate crisis and reflect inwards on perceptions of resources and the ways resources are used them but also looked at the responsibility the role of a community development officer brings when communicating with communities. When it comes to serious topics like fuel deficiencies, climate crisis, extinction of certain industries such as fossil fuel production, the larger communities can often disengage from the conversation. This can be for a variety of reasons from a lack of knowledge to participate, from fear, anger, anxiety at the impending changes that need to occur.

Participants identified that the key is to build a strong knowledge base in communities and to centralise information. "People want assurances, support and need to trust that you have a knowledge of what you are supporting them in." They may require tailoring supports to people's needs. Some groups and individuals may need a stringer support due to factors of rural isolation, lack of supportive infrastructure or being part of a disadvantaged community. It is important that community development work aims to bring the most disadvantaged and provide essential support in building their capacity and understanding.

It is vital that community development officers build capacity to look at a just transition, and support both communities and individuals to realise the potential and support them through the challenges. An awareness of community ownership in engaging with the opportunity the green transition was highlighted by one participant, that the government can provide guidance and supports but that communities engaging with these supports would also be required. This engagement can start with something as small as arranging a community group to take responsibility over green spaces, engaging with the process of food production, investigating the possibility of creating a community digital hub, etc. This engagement can benefit communities in many distinct aspects such as job creation, increased engagement with stake holders, nutritional education, wider community engagement, energy efficiency and many more.

From a national level, infrastructural improvements are required for supporting engagement, particularly with the transition towards a digitally fluent society. "If you want to keep people in small rural communities, you're going to have to expect the same level of service provided within reason of the digital service you'd expect in a city." Digital skills were identified as a key skill since the Covid 19 pandemic there has been a rapid increase of digital skills. This digitalisation has provided a great tool in a multiprong approach of reaching wider community engagement, in partnership with in person contact. Although many benefits of digitalisation have been accepted one [participant highlighted, "It is crucial that it does not substitute for human contact as this can increase isolation and negatively impact connectivity."



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In building relationships with communities and supporting them to achieve goals towards developing a green economy and transitioning towards a more digitalised society, the role of soft skills was emphasised as a key tool for any community development officer. One interviewee highlighted, "You can have all the technical knowledge in all of these areas but ultimately it is about bringing the communities, the businesses, and the people we support with us."



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