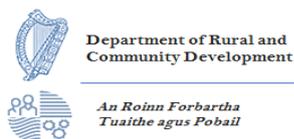


Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

2016 End of year report



**Social Inclusion &
Community Activation
Programme**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. The programme, which commenced on 1 April 2015, is funded and overseen by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)¹ and is co-funded by the European Social Fund, including a special allocation under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). The total programme budget in 2016 was €35.8 million. SICAP is delivered by 45 Programme Implementers (PIs) covering 50 Lots across the country and is led locally by Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs).

In 2016, SICAP supported 47,511 individuals on a one-to-one basis and 3,076 Local Community Groups (LCGs). These overall figures exceeded the programme targets by 4% and 10% respectively. The targets for the majority of indicators were met, with some significantly surpassed. The achievement was below target for two headline indicators, both of which measure progression to self-employment.

Local Community Groups (Goal 1)

- 3,076 Local Community Groups (LCGs) were supported under SICAP.
- Almost two thirds (64%) of the Local Community Groups supported by the programme worked to address the needs of specific geographical communities as well as issue based target groups. The majority of LCGs worked with people living in disadvantaged communities.
- PIs assisted 2,839 LCGs either in formation, development or progression and these groups in turn supported over 218,000 people. Three quarters of LCGs were assisted during the early stages of their development and 314 progressed along the community development matrix.
- 1,048 LCGs were supported to participate in local, regional or national decision-making structures and 263 were assisted to leverage additional funding, securing a total of €1.3 million.
- 241 social enterprises were assisted under SICAP and seven new social enterprises were established.

Profile of individuals

- In total, 47,511 individuals were supported under SICAP. As in 2015, 31% of these individuals lived in areas designated as being disadvantaged, very disadvantaged or extremely disadvantaged. Just under half of all beneficiaries (49%) were long-term unemployed and the highest educational achievement for 70% of individuals was Leaving Certificate or below.
- Men accounted for the majority of individuals accessing the programme (55%) and 53% of individuals were aged between 25 and 45. The main target group supported were the unemployed (78% of the caseload) and the second largest target group were people living in disadvantaged communities (31%). The new target group of low income workers/households, introduced in 2016, made up 12% of the caseload.
- Irish nationals made up 73% of the SICAP caseload, with Polish being the second most supported nationality (4%).

¹ The responsibility for SICAP was moved to Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) in June 2017. Previously responsibility for the programme was with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG).

- Compared to 2015, 5% more participants became aware of the programme through a government body, a state agency or other relevant organisation (45%). 26% of all individuals were referred to SICAP by Intreo/DSP, over twice as many as in 2015. One in five beneficiaries learnt about SICAP from their family or friends and 16% of individuals were referred to SICAP by an LCG – a decrease of 4% on 2015.

Goal 2: educational supports and outputs (individuals)

- In total, 22,427 individuals, including 4,517 young people (aged 15-24), received an educational support under Goal 2. A total of 16,770 individuals participated in Life Long Learning (LLL) courses, with almost half of the course placements (49%) being delivered directly and funded fully by SICAP Programme Implementers.
- 19% of course placements were on National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) accredited courses, with half of these placements being at Level 5, an increase of 12% on 2015. In comparison to 2015, 6% more course placements were on courses at Levels 1-5. The majority of course placements (74%²) were completed successfully. Almost three quarters of course placements (73%) were on courses in four education sectors: general programmes, health and welfare, personal development and education. The majority of Goal 2 course placements (58%) were of relatively low intensity, requiring individuals to attend between one and four hours a week. However, when compared with 2015 a small shift towards more intensive courses was observed.
- 4,089 beneficiaries received supports to remain in a LLL course and 262 were assisted to access community childcare.
- In total, 4,109 individuals progressed along the education continuum, 23% of whom were young people.

Goal 3: employment supports and outputs (individuals)

- A total of 30,206 individuals, including 4,051 young people (aged 15-24), received employment supports under Goal 3. The largest share of individuals availed of career advice supports and self-employment supports, 43% and 38% of Goal 3 caseload respectively.
- 9,924 individuals participated in labour market training under Goal 3, 87% of which was delivered by SICAP PIs or private providers. The majority of course placements (86%) were completed successfully. 18% of labour market training provided under Goal 3 were on accredited courses, a decrease of 8% on 2015. The course intensity for labour market training was higher than for Goal 2 course placements with the majority (65%) requiring attendance of more than five hours a week.
- A total of 2,208 individuals progressed into employment, with more people moving into full-time (61%) than part-time jobs (39%). The three occupation categories with the highest rates of progression were building and construction workers, sales occupations and health related workers. Compared to 2015, the average hourly rate of pay for those who progressed to employment decreased by eight cents to €10.83 in 2016.
- A total of 5,752 individuals progressed to self-employment, the vast majority of which (94%) set up as a sole trader with the most popular sector of activity being construction (23%). In total these businesses created 716 full-time and 119 part-time jobs. The majority of individuals who progressed into self-employment availed of Department of Social Protection (DSP) supports in the form of Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) or Short-Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA).

² It should be noted that the course outcome for 16% of course placements was not specified. The rate of unsuccessful completion and non-completion combined was just 4%.

- 15 individuals were supported into apprenticeships and 331 beneficiaries were placed on work experience or work placement programmes, such as Tús or the Community Employment (CE) scheme.

Non-caseload adults and children

- SICAP also provided supports to people who were not registered on the individual caseload. 55,890 children (under 18 years of age) received educational or developmental support under Goal 2, with the majority of supports (71%) being youth work and developmental supports. Additionally, 57,132 people participated in social, cultural and civic activities provided by LCGs. Also, 18,236 non-caseload adults and 3,782 children attended SICAP information events.

Structures and networks

- Programme Implementers engaged with 308 decision-making structures, a 21% decrease on 2015. The majority of these structures supported people living in disadvantaged communities. A total of 166 joint strategies or partnerships were established, most of which (47%) were put in place by SICAP PIs and education providers in order to meet the educational needs of SICAP target groups.
- In 2016, PIs recorded engagement with 19 Public Participation Networks (PPNs), compared to 33 in 2015.

Horizontal themes and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)

- PIs promoted an equality framework through the development and implementation of measures addressing discrimination against particular target groups, tackling gender inequality, targeting groups considered to be at risk, addressing isolated communities and introducing organisational measures. Actions and interventions promoting engagement, participation and empowerment of vulnerable groups were the main method of delivery of such measures. Other activities included bias proofing of PIs' policies, procedures and information tools, awareness training, removal of barriers to participation and application of equality and anti-discrimination principles to workings of their own organisations.
- Programme Implementers applied four types of approaches to engage with disadvantaged communities: supporting clients within their local communities, developing local skills and capacity, identifying local needs and targets, and empowering communities to achieve greater levels of participation.
- All Programme Implementers emphasised the importance of collaborative approaches in addressing the wide range of needs encountered in the delivery of SICAP and maximising value for beneficiaries. The extent, types, focus and levels of collaboration varied between PIs reflecting the local needs and circumstances.
- As part of YEI, SICAP supported 5,373 young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The supports provided included one-to-one sessions, group work, workshops, formal and informal educational activities, tester courses, information sessions, events, mentoring and guidance, and work experience placements. The most successful approach to work with this group was holistic in nature and one that simultaneously addressed core skills gaps and personal development issues. The most common outcome achieved for this group was improved employability and personal skills.

Supports provided

- In 2016, Pobal provided a range of supports to LCDCs and PIs involved in the implementation of SICAP. These included: 31 individual support visits with LCDCs, two national support events, eight regional support sessions for LCDCs and seven IRIS training events. Pobal answered 843 queries related to SICAP.
- LCDCs worked with PIs, DHPCLG and Pobal to reduce the level of underspend which had occurred in 2015. As a result, the overall level of underspend has been reduced nationally from 2.86% in 2015 to 0.36% in 2016. At the Lot level, the percentage of underspend was also reduced in 2016 with the highest recorded percentage of underspend being 3.2% compared to 11.7% in 2015.

Challenges

- In the second year of SICAP delivery, many challenges related to programme design and requirements identified by PIs in 2015 were addressed. The main challenges that remained were related to the registration process, the data requirements associated with it and the lack of funding supports for LCGs and enterprises operating for over one year.
- In their end of year reports, PIs highlighted a number of issues which they saw as impacting on the delivery of the programme, with the impact of JobPath being one of the key issues raised. Others included: ongoing changes to programme requirements, the lack of public transport and/or cost of transport, difficulty of engaging with NEETs, limited capacity and willingness of LCGs to engage in decision-making structures and PPNs, limited opportunities for progression to employment and self-employment in some parts of the country, and staff turnover in Programme Implementers' organisations.
- Many challenges identified by LCDCs were common with those reported by PIs. Those emphasised by LCDCs included limited flexibility across the three goals to allow the programme to adapt to changing local needs and inflexibility of IRIS for recording qualitative outcomes. Some LCDCs had difficulties in getting PIs to update information on the IRIS system, which limited their ability to assess progress in relation to targets and budgets. LCDCs dealing with more than one Lot noted the additional workload and challenges it posed on limited internal resources.

Programme developments

- SICAP added a new target group in early 2016 - low income workers/households.
- New Lot-specific targets were introduced in place of the requirement that 50% of individuals engaged under SICAP should live in disadvantaged areas. The new targets, based on the proportion of disadvantaged areas in each Lot, were more reflective of local circumstances.
- The wording of the 'children and families in disadvantaged areas' target group was changed to 'disadvantaged children and families' to encompass socially or economically disadvantaged people living outside disadvantaged areas.
- Pobal, after consultation with the Department, separated the SICAP annual planning and end of year reviewing processes in order to make the LCDCs' workloads more manageable and the planning timeframes were brought forward as a result.

Lessons

- PIs emphasised the importance of collaborative work in the delivery of the programme and saw it as a critical factor for the success of their initiatives. The collaboration took on different forms and focus, including referral of participants, sharing knowledge, expertise and skills, developing joint strategies and projects, co-funding projects and initiatives, identifying and addressing gaps in the provision of services.

- Supporting beneficiaries within their local communities and at times suitable to them as well as removal of barriers to participation, such as lack of transport or childcare, continued to be an important aspect of programme delivery.
- One of the most effective ways to engage with hard to reach adults was carrying out door-to-door outreach work and the organisation of events and other focused activities promoting SICAP and its supports.
- Pls noted that in 2016 a higher number of beneficiaries experienced multiple layers of disadvantage. An increasing number of participants were suffering from low levels of confidence and self-esteem, high levels of stress and other personal circumstances impacting on their ability to progress within the programme.
- Pls noted the importance of staff training and upskilling, especially in relation to IRIS, ESF audits and skills required when engaging with particular target groups or addressing their specific needs.
- In their end of year reports, LCDCs acknowledged that good working relationships and practices were established between council staff, LCDC members, subcommittees and the Pls. The amount of time spent on overseeing the implementation of SICAP in 2016 increased as did the engagement with Pls.
- A number of LCDCs felt that the subgroups and committees were enhanced by the inclusion of the LCDC chairperson and the chief officer as well as DSP, PPN and ETB representatives. It was recommended that membership of the groups should be reviewed regularly to ensure there is expertise across all programme goals.
- LCDCs noted that further resources are needed to support the LCDCs in their oversight and management role for the delivery SICAP.
- LCDCs also acknowledged that many of the issues and suggestions raised by LCDCs and Pls have been acted upon, resulting in refinements to the programme, such as changes in timelines for annual planning and end of year review processes.
- The supportive role of Pobal within the implementation of SICAP and the strong relationships between Pobal and the LCDCs staff and members were also acknowledged.

Conclusion

In 2016, SICAP was in its second year of delivery. The programme showed many signs of having bedded down with many LCDCs and Pls having established effective working relationships at a local level. The vast majority of targets were met and for some, such as the progression into employment, a significant increase on 2015 was achieved. The programme continued to support a similar proportion of people living in disadvantaged areas, who had lower levels of education attainment and who were long-term unemployed. SICAP assisted a higher number of people who were unemployed for more than two years. Also, the share of referrals from DSP significantly increased on the previous year.

A lower number of supports were provided in the area of self-employment and the progression to self-employment remained below target. The progression of women into self-employment remained below the national ratio for new female business owners. The number of new social enterprises established with assistance from SICAP decreased. Both LCDCs and Pls reported the significant impact the continued roll out of JobPath had on the implementation of SICAP. Also, the difference in challenges facing Pls implementing the programme in rural and urban areas became more apparent. In particular, the lack of public and/or affordable transport and continued lack of progression opportunities in rural areas appeared to become even more challenging.