

IDSS COUNTRY STUDY

IRELAND

Written by Mary Murphy, Amelia Dulee-Kinsolving, Anne Eustace, Ann Clarke

Irish acronyms

CIE- Counterfactual Impact Evaluation
CWO-Community Welfare Officers
DHPCLG- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
DSP- Department of Social Protection,
DEASP Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (July, 2017)
EC – European Commission, ECB-European Central Bank
ETB- Education and Training Board
FÁS- Irish National Training and Employment Authority
FF- Fianna Fail, FG-Fine Gael
IMF-International Monetary Fund
Intreo-Public Employment Income Support Office
LCDC- Local Community Development Committee
LCDP- Local Community Development Programme
LESN- Local Employment Service Network
LMC-Labour Market Council
LTU- Long-term Unemployed
NEES- National Employment and Entitlements Service
PbR- Pay by Results
PES- Public Employment Service
PEX- Probability of Exit
PI- Programme Implementers
PPF- Putting People First
PTW- Pathways to Work
SLA- Service Level Agreements
SICAP- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
Solas-Further Education and Training Agency
STU- Short Term Unemployed
SWA- Supplementary Welfare Allowance
SWAP- Single Working Age Payment

Section I: Summary

1. Key features of the Intreo reform

The PtW strategy (PTW, DSP, 2011) outlines a number of reform strategies including a significant institutional and policy reform Intreo, the primary reform episode in this study. *Intreo* is a new national service with 60 offices offering short term unemployed job seekers a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. The Intreo reform reflects a shift in activation objectives, from active to passive and from low to higher engagement (a more frequent, intensive and conditional engagement). While the focus of this study is on Intreo, three other reforms are mentioned when relevant: JobPath, Local Employment Service Network (LESN) and the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), all of which offer services to the long-term unemployed and/or those most distant from the labour market¹.

The main internal developments that triggered the primary reform, Intreo, were the deep-seated inefficiencies and poor customer service outcomes associated with very fragmented institutions delivering income supports, supplementary welfare and Public Employment Service (PES). Unemployed customers had to make contact with multiple service points. Alongside this was the growing awareness of poor engagement and activation outcomes as evidenced in negative evaluations of the National Employment Action Plan. The added pressure of the 2008 economic crisis was another significant trigger. Unemployment increased by a multiple of six and grew from 4.4% in 2007 to a high of 15.1% in 2012. This placed an onerous burden on the State's welfare and employment services, at a time when the demand for increased resources strained the State's financial capacity to respond to the crisis.

External reform triggers included ongoing EU benchmarking and peer review exercises, which were important for policy learning and international comparison, and a range of activation studies across the OECD over this period, particularly the major milestone 2007 OECD review which negatively assessed Irish PES (Grubb *et al.* 2009). Another trigger was the pressure associated with Ireland's 2010-2013 €85bn loan programme and the Memo of Understanding (MOU) negotiated with the EU/ECB/IMF. Commonly known as the Troika programme, the MOU included key implementation targets and reform deadlines for Intreo. These reform targets have been subsequently aligned with the European Semester process.

The wider reform process included a range of public sector reforms, some which were included in the Troika programme (DoF, 2010), and later in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform plan for increased competition, use of information technology and better standards in customer services.

¹ JobPath, a later reform episode, introduced a new national privatised employment service in 94 locations for long-term unemployed job seekers, is closely related to Intreo in that Intreo refers to JobPath clients who become long-term unemployed. The Local Employment Service Network (LESN) worked with the long-term unemployed and those most distant from the labour market since 1994 was incorporated into Intreo in 2012. LESN provide extra capacity for Intreo's short term unemployed clients and are also a point of referral for clients who have not gained employment through JobPath. While not a PES the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) established in 2015, also works with those most distant from the labour market. SICAP is related to the reform episode in that Intreo and JobPath refer clients to local SICAP provided training and education opportunities. These three institutions are detailed in the appendix and referenced in the study only when relevant to Intreo.

There were no major reform activities before this reform episode but a range of policy initiatives, while not implemented, did inform the reform episode. A 2004 Supplementary Welfare Allowance Review led to a decision to integrate Community Welfare Services (CWS), which administered very short-term income supports, into DSP. This reform commenced in 2006 but was stalled by industrial relations. A 2005 National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) report, 'Developmental Welfare State,' used the flexicurity model to frame a reform agenda. A 2006 report, 'Supporting Lone Parents' (DSCFA 2006), promoted enabling activation, investment in childcare and individualised rights to social welfare for cohabiting couples thus recognizing the right to work part time to accommodate care. These latter two proposals also failed to progress.

The first main milestone, which took place in the reform episode, was the development of the profiling tool Probability of Exit (PEX) in 2005. This was followed by the 2007 OECD review of the Irish activation and the publishing of the report in 2009, while the 2008 economic crises led to sharp increases in unemployment. By 2009, the FÁS governance crisis occurred which worsened the poor response to increases in unemployment and claimant counts. In 2010, numerous reforms took place including the establishment of the Programme for National Recovery, the negotiation of a loan programme by the EC/ECB and IMF Troika, the targets for reform episode, the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, and finally, the transfer of the CWS and FÁS functions to the DSP. A General Election in 2011 led to a new government partnership between FG and Labour, which demonstrated commitment to NEES.

In the course of 2012, numerous important milestones marked the introduction of the Intreo reform. These included an internal pilot and the merger of SWA, FÁS and PES into DSP, along with the re-assessment of caseworkers including claimant ratios and Project 300, which redeployed 300 civil servants. This was followed by the transfer of LESN from FÁS governance to DSP Service Level Agreements and the commissioning of the Centre for Social Inclusion to develop the Pay-by-Results JobPath PES model. The 2012 Social Welfare Act was also enacted which included job seeker penalties for failure to engage in activation processes. Additionally, the PtW 2012-2015 strategy outlined 200 cross government quarterly action points, and, following an internal competition, a new nomenclature for reform 'Intreo' was adopted. The last milestones of 2012 included proposals to include One Parent Family (OPF) payment (for those whose youngest child is 14+) in the activation programme, ongoing developments of 60 Intreo offices (merge, fit out, staff training, IT alignment) and the establishment of the Further Education and Training Agency (Solás) as well as the Education Training Boards (ETB).

In 2013, the Labour Market Council was established to oversee implementation of the reform, and the following year the JobPath tendering process was completed and contracts were signed with Seetec and Turas Nua. In more recent years, the PtW 2012-2016 Strategy was reviewed and consolidated, services were extended to wider groups and unemployment rapidly declined. In 2017, the governance and funding review of LES/job clubs and CIE Evaluations Intreo/ JobPath took place.

The main actions and elements of the INTREO reform included the following:

- Redeployment of 1,300 civil servants into DSP.
- Dispersal of an additional 700 existing national training authority FÁS personnel and functions into DSP.
- Merger into DSP of 1,000 additional Community Welfare Officer's (CWO's).
- Over four years, development of 60 local Intreo offices with merged income supports and PES functions (including refurbishment, IT system, training, and cultural change).

- Establishment of Solas, a new national further education and training agency, with a regional structure of Education and Training Boards (arising from the amalgamation of FÁS training centres and local authority based Vocational Educational Committees).
- Initial focus on short term unemployed with Probability of Exit profiling model (PEX) to determine targeting, new features of group engagement and data sharing.
- Incorporation into Intreo of the local community Local Employment Services Network.
- Design and commission of new private sector Pay-by-Results (PbR) JobPath (contracts awarded to Seetec and Turas Nua), to deliver PES and activation of LTU.

Numerous actors were involved in the reform, each with different roles. The Minister for Social Protection, the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion, the Oireachtas (Dáil and Seanad) Sub Committee on Social Protection and Education were key actors in terms of political leadership and oversight of policy.

The DSP Activation and Employment Policy Unit provides policy advice and analysis on activation and employment and the roll out of the PtW, manages the Youth Guarantee scheme, engages in all aspects of EU activation and employment policy including the European Semester, conducts labor market research, evaluation and data analysis and acts as Secretariat to the Labor Market Council.

Furthermore, for Intreo, 60 local income support and PES offices are primarily responsible for assessing and delivering working age income support, as well as PES services and activation engagement for short term unemployed job seekers. The Local Employment Services Network (LESN) provided holistic guidance-oriented services in disadvantaged areas to those most distant from the labour market and is used as an overflow service for INTREO. The Labour Market Council, comprised of senior civil servants, employers, social partners and academic experts, provided policy advice and oversight of activation strategy. The establishment of Solas, the national further education and training agency, with a regional structure of Education and Training Boards was a key reform. The five trade unions representing staff from the civil service, Health Service Executive and FÁS work through a binding arbitration process, the ‘Croke Park Agreement’ and ‘Haddington Road’. JobPath was also a major stakeholder. New private sector Pay-by-Results were delivered by two prime agencies, Seetec and FRS/Working Links (Turas Nua), who focused on PES and activation of long term unemployed.

In terms of the impacts of the reform, there has been no major evaluations of the reform outcome to date (end March 2018). However, there are some qualitative assessments and the DEASP consistently monitors progress on PtW outcome, output and input measures.

The reform has impacted the architecture and landscape of activation in Ireland. With some exceptions, interviewees suggest a significant impact on office redesign and shifts in the service delivery focus, albeit this is uneven and issues of ‘capacity, competence and culture’ remain. Interviewee opinions about reform impacts are mixed. While most are positive, others are dismissive about any meaningful impact on the life opportunities of unemployed people. Others are frustrated with the lack of progress in extending enabling activation services to those outside the live register and the absence of ‘parity of esteem.’ Others await formal evaluation.

Academic judgement (O’Connell 2017), some based on qualitative interviews (Boland 2016, Murphy 2016, 2017), is also mixed. Interviews suggest overall improvement but considerable variance in service quality and a major qualitative review (NESC forthcoming) comments on the challenges of institutional co-ordination and mixed quality. NGO based service delivery organisations and some state

services differ in their assessment of service quality, with regular mention by NGOs of issues relating to staff empathy towards clients, competency, capacity, time and culture, over emphasis on fraud and control, lack of capacity to refer, and underdeveloped relationships with employers (see INOU 2016, 2017).

Boland (2016) observes that the Irish implementation of sanctions is increasing as unemployment is decreasing, and that Irish sanctions are moving in the opposite direction of declining UK sanctions. However Irish sanctions remain low, at less than 1% of the claimant count, with some cultural resistance amongst some caseworkers towards implementing sanctions (especially amongst those previously employed in FÁS or as CWOs). Sanctions have impacted social welfare claimants' awareness of job search obligations and the threat of the possibility of sanction appears to have changed claimants' behaviour and approach to engagement.

Others question the impact of reforms from the perspective of fragmented services. While state services are now merged and less fragmented there are new providers (JobPath), and there is potential for confusion and duplication. There is competition between different community, state and private actors, who are 'fishing in the same pond' and under pressure to deliver activation targets, while unemployed people may still encounter four different agencies over a three period of unemployment.

A potentially significant impact is the degree to which privatisation is now part of the Irish PES. Intreo is a state funded service but it is now supported by outsourced services for the long-term unemployed and non-job seeker clients through three different funding methodologies: Pay-by-Results tendering (JobPath), block grants in service delivery agreements (SLA's) for LESN's, and commissioning (SICAP). JobPath is now the primary public employment service for the long-term unemployed and its Pay-by-Result funding model may be extended to both SICAP and LESN. There is concern that this may bring closures or mergers and/or facilitate new private actors who will replace NGOs, with possible consequences for capacity to deliver integrated services and service different needs.

In terms of outcomes, over 75,000 long-term unemployed people were in work by the end of 2015. The persistence rate from short-term to long-term unemployment fell from 35% in 2012 to 25% in 2015. The progression rate of very long-term unemployed people increased from 25% in 2012 to 40% in 2012. Without a formal evaluation it is difficult to know to what degree these outcome can be linked to Intreo. However, over the period there has also been a significant growth in the numbers of long-term unemployed who are very long-term unemployed (3 years +). While only 25% of those unemployed for up to six months are still unemployed, six months later 55% of those already long-term unemployed (1-2 years) are still unemployed 1 year later, and 66% of those already long-term unemployed (2+ years) are still unemployed 1 year later (O'Connell 2017). This core group of people has multiple disadvantages and risks very long-term unemployment, literacy, skills, health issues, etc. Notably they have suffered from lack of attention, as Intreo services focused in the early days of the crisis on the short term unemployed, perhaps a fault line in the initial design.

Intreo output measures were largely achieved. Group Information Sessions were delivered to 30,000 new jobseekers in 2012, to 85,000 registered jobseekers in 2013 and to all new jobseekers, plus 100,000 long-term unemployed jobseekers in 2015 (over half a million group engagement sessions). In 2012, 150,000 new jobseekers were profiled, increasing to 400,000 (all new registered jobseekers plus all long-term unemployed jobseekers) in 2015. In 2012, 130,000 one-to-one case officer meetings

were held with new jobseekers, rising to 185,000 meetings in 2013 and 250,000 in 2015 (incorporating all new jobseekers and 100,000 long-term unemployed).

Key input measures included establishment of 60 Intreo centers, the introduction of a record of mutual commitments, the recruitment of over 200 employers to a long-term unemployed and youth activation charter and the enactment and implementation of new penalty rates processes, and a payment-by-results contracted resourcing model (JobPath) in 2014. A 2015 Intreo² client satisfaction survey shows high levels of client satisfaction, while the 2016 Intreo³ client satisfaction survey shows a slight decline in satisfaction. While pleased with staff, job seekers are least convinced that Intreo/branch offices improve their prospects of getting a job and are least satisfied with on-line services and with processes leading to getting onto a course, training or job.

During the Intreo reform episode DSP expanded activation to one specific group incorporating lone parents whose youngest child is 14+ into the job seekers payment. Following political rejection of proposals to apply full conditional activation to lone parents whose youngest child was aged 7-13, DSP developed a new Job Seekers Transition (JST) payment, which imposes conditional engagement with activation services but does not require participation in paid employment. DSP have signalled they may extend this 'half-way house' conditionality to other welfare claimants who are not receiving job seekers payments. The latest PtW (2016-2020) discussed such an expansion of activation however it remains unclear which PES agencies will have this responsibility and when or whether this will happen.

2. Driving forces, success and failure factors of the Intreo reform

The Intreo reform episode was a pragmatic and iterative process. Adapting to circumstances as necessary, it was largely driven from the top down through strong senior administrative leadership and significant political commitment, and allowing for delegation and local adaptation. Sustained momentum is linked to a rigid system of quarterly input/output/action reporting, first to the Troika and since 2013, to a new governance mechanism, the Labour Market Council. There was strong 'elite' consensus in the national policy and political community about the reform objectives. While national social partnership governance mechanisms collapsed in 2008, strong personal networks and relationships helped maintain policy consensus in a period of national chaos. In addition, crisis removed or tempered industrial relations vetoes and offered a well utilised binding arbitration system to settle disputes.

The DSP was the primary actor and engaged, through a small carefully chosen team with change management experience, to clearly message and lead the reform. Clear communication demonstrated little ambiguity about the serious intent to implement reforms. Innovative communication mechanisms were used including video, personalised and targeted emails. An internal programme board was chaired by the Department's General Secretary, who also convened an interdepartmental governance process of senior departmental officials. Monthly progress reviews to track 200 specific deliverables.

² <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/CustomerSatisfactionSurvey2015.pdf>

³ https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/2016_CSSResultsJobseekers.pdf

At government level, monthly Cabinet committee meetings were chaired by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), a member of the Fine Gael party, while the Labour Party Minister for Social Protection was highly committed. There was no internal government tension about the reform objective.

Implementation of the reform programme was achieved through existing vertical line management with a significant level of organizational planning. ‘Leaving nothing to chance’, there was a programme of work to achieve ownership in each division and to transfer implementation to local staff and managers. Staff consultation was used to ensure the reform episode is firmly embedded in DSP core values and culture. A variety of mechanisms were used, all of which constantly messaged the serious intent behind the reform agenda. These included quarterly progress reports (published online), large-scale staff briefings, staff surveys, a ‘culture and values’ programme and development of a single brand with a staff competition to coin the new name Intreo.

This strong internally driven vertical focus might also explain partial failures. While the centralised department with its regional structure had ‘a clear line of sight’ and could drive momentum through vertical governance structures, it was less successful from a horizontal governance perspective. The top down approach did not include a significant level of external consultation. There may have been an under-appreciation of the possible contribution from other stakeholders and thus a consequent lack of engagement with other services in the design of Intreo and the overall activation model. Some believe that rather than ‘building the service around the client’, the old DSP culture remained with ‘fraud and control in the driving seat’.

The deconstruction of the previous national training agency FÁS, and the allocation of education and training to SOLAS and regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs), has de-prioritised education and training for the unemployed within activation policy. This has consequences for how skills forecasting, education and training, social enterprise and local enterprise are integrated into the architecture of the activation system. JobPath for example, cannot refer people to long-term education options offered by ETBs, and there are questions about the quality of adult guidance services across the various providers (NESC forthcoming).

The need for both integration and capacity to refer to a range of services is more necessary in an underdeveloped welfare state where many health, care and social services are delivered by local and national charities and NGO’s. Community based PES providers (SICAP, LESN) are not seen as central or equal players. Previous state appreciation for and understanding of the potential role of local level actors appears to have faded over time and there has been little attempt to integrate these actors. Local discretion, autonomy and relevance have diminished in a ‘command and control’ model, impacting on implementation. Local development and community development actors report that local integration is almost entirely dependent on personal relationships and that integration remains challenging in the context of ‘cherry picking’ associated with over supply and competition amongst services at a local level.

This fault-line may become more obvious when the activation project is extended to groups with greater distance from the labour market who will require a different (less conditional) approach to engagement and outreach, and who have more complex and multiple barriers to employment. Local experience, knowledge and outreach will be more important in this phase and top down implementation may become an obstacle. In the meantime various actors are developing their own

devices to overcome the absence of integration. These include ‘round tables’, MOUs, protocols and town hall meetings, but most rely on personal relationships.

Personal relationships are challenged by a second fault-line in the Intreo reform episode. In the context of Intreo short-term capacity issues, the DSP focused Intreo on servicing short-term unemployed while introducing the privatised Pay-by-Results (JobPath) to service long-term unemployed. At the same time, DSP restricted local autonomy for LESN in block grant Service Delivery Contracts, and a sister department shifted to a commissioning process for SICAP, changing the fabric of local relations from a focus on cooperation to competition. While some instances of good local relationship may produce new processes of co-competition (Brandenburger & Nalebuff 1997), in other areas, competition has led to mistrust and a tendency to withhold local cooperation.

3. Good practices and dissemination possibilities in an EU context

a) To manage the Intreo reform, DSP senior management initiated a small change management team with expertise from inside and outside the civil service. This team facilitated a significant process of public sector reform in the context of serious fiscal and unemployment crisis, which was used as an ‘opportunity for reform’. The choice to create a small hub/team of four was informed by the need to maximize limited resources, to enable effective communication with internal experts and to share ownership of the change. Delegating line managers with local implementation enabled a faster and more flexible approach characterized by ‘centralized design, local implementation’.

The core reform team coordinated, facilitated, designed, negotiated and communicated implementation. All members had academic and practical backgrounds in change management. Specific skills were recruited including experience of partnership and performance systems in the public sector and industrial relations. The team worked closely with internal experts (IT, industrial relations, human resources), sought advice and input from international consulting firms and national experts (NESC and ESRI)⁴ and international policy experts (OECD). Senior management communicated directly to newly merging staff, for example in town hall meetings and workshops with CWS staff (later also with FÁS staff), and through video and personalised, targeted emails.

b) Strong leadership by the DSP’s chief statistician led to the development of a significant innovative Job Seeker Longitudinal Dataset. The process of seeking advice regarding methodology, sampling and robustness required close cooperation and skill transfer with the Labor Market Policy Unit / Social Inclusion Division and the Irish Government Evaluation and Expenditure Service as well as close liaison with the Central Statistics Office.

The Job Seeker Longitudinal Dataset (JLD) uses a unique identifier (PPS Number) that enables individualized intelligence on labor market inputs and outcomes. The database consists of tens of millions of individual episodes of welfare and work since 2004. It combines DSP, Revenue and Solas data to produce a uniquely detailed view of the Irish labor market from the height of the economic boom to deep crisis and subsequent recovery and moves the focus of analysis from administrative events to episodes of welfare or work. The JLD is a rich data source as it contains information on a claimant’s gender, age, marital status, nationality, educational attainment, previous occupation, employment and unemployment histories (both duration and number of episodes), unemployment

⁴ National Economic and Social Council and Economic and Social Research Institute

training history (type, duration and number of episodes), benefit type (e.g. Jobseekers Allowance, Jobseekers Benefit, etc.), spousal earnings (to qualify for an adult dependent allowance), number of child dependents, family payment type (e.g. adult and child dependent allowances, adult only, etc.) and geographic location.

While investment in staff training is needed to enable data input and use of the database there have been cost savings associated with the extra intelligence as the database has been used to resource internal evaluations, as well as pro-bono use of data by academics, etc. It is now the center of PtW counterfactual impact evaluations (Back to Education Allowance and Job Bridge reviews have already been published) and the JLD is being used to inform the evaluation of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (2017), JobPath (2018) and Intreo (2018).

Section II: Detailed description of the reform episode

Contents

1.	Setting the scene.....	11
1.1.	The broad socio-economic and political context	11
1.2.	The activation and poverty alleviation agenda and other relevant political issues	12
1.3.	A brief overview of the institutional setting at the starting point of the Intreo reform	13
1.4.	A brief overview of the benefit system at the starting point of the reform	13
1.5.	The main agents involved in managing the benefit system and providing employment and social services	15
1.6.	Brief description of the institutional status quo before the reform	17
2.	Details of the reform episode (initiative)	19
2.1.	Brief description of the initiative.....	19
2.2.	The rationale behind the initiative	21
2.3.	Detailed description of the NEW Intreo system.....	22
2.4.	Context of the initiative: where did the idea come from?	23
2.5.	The political decision phase: the actors	25
2.6.	The political phase: the actions.....	25
2.7.	The Intreo designing phase: the actors	26
2.8.	The designing phase: the decisions	27
2.9.	Who implemented the initiative?	29
2.10.	Implementation process	30
2.11.	Costs of the initiative.....	35
2.12.	Monitoring	36
2.13.	Impact assessment and impacts	37
2.14.	Any important follow-up measures?.....	37
3.	Assessment and conclusions.....	38
3.1.	What external factors helped/hindered the launch of the initiative and its successful implementation?.....	38
3.2.	Lessons for the country	39
3.3.	Lessons for Europe	40
3.4.	Main strengths and weaknesses	40
4.	References	43

1. Setting the scene

1.1. The broad socio-economic and political context

The PtW strategy (PTW, DSP, 2011) outlines a number of reform strategies including Intreo, the primary reform episode in this study. *Intreo*, is a new national service with 60 offices offering short term unemployed job seekers a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. The Intreo reform reflects a shift in activation objectives, from passive to active and from low to higher engagement that is more frequent, intensive and conditional. While the focus of this study is on Intreo, three other reforms are mentioned when relevant, JobPath, Local Employment Service Network (LESN) and the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), all of which focus on the longer term unemployed and those more distant from the labour market⁵.

Intreo, a reform that integrated Ireland's PES and income support system, was an idea signalled before the economic crisis amid a growing consensus that Irish PES and income support systems were fragmented and inefficient (Grubb et al 2009). Income support systems were also considered inefficient, with backlogs in payment, low levels of engagement and poor service quality. Pressure for reform became acute in a context of unemployment rising from 4.6% in 2007 to 13.7% in 2011. The reform occurred in a period of intense pressure on both public services and income support, with unemployment increasing by 300% over the 2008- 2012 period and DSP income support transaction volumes growing by a factor of six (ISSA 2016).

Early milestones include:

- 'Babies and Bosses' (OECD 2003), OECD Irish activation analysis (Grubb et al, 2009),
- 2004 Expenditure Review initiative of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance

Following the onset of the 2008 economic crisis:

- Governance crisis in FÁS PES 2009
- Public perception of crisis
- Various government responses to address the fiscal crisis
- A Fianna Fáil/Green Party government 2009 National Recovery Programme
- Ireland's entry into an international loan programme 2010 (DoF 2010)
- 2011 NESC report 'Services for Unemployed Job Seekers'
- General Election and new Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in March 2011
- 2011 Programme for National Government commitment to a National Employment and Entitlement Service (NEES)
- April 2012 - 4 pilots of NEES (subsequently renamed Intreo) in Kings Inn, Tallaght, Arklow and Sligo
- 2012 launch of PtW (2012-16), subsequently updated as PtW (2016-20)
- Oct 2012 launch of Intreo

⁵ JobPath, a later reform episode that introduced a new national privatised employment service in 94 locations for long-term unemployed job seekers, is closely related to Intreo in that Intreo refers to JobPath clients who become long-term unemployed. The Local Employment Service Network (LESN) had worked with the long-term unemployed and those most distant from the labour market since 1994 and was incorporated into Intreo in 2012. The LESN provides extra capacity for Intreo's short term unemployed clients and is also a point of referral for long-term unemployed clients who have not gained employment through JobPath. While not a PES, the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) established in 2015 also works with those most distant from the labour market. SICAP is related to the reform episode in that Intreo and JobPath refer clients to local SICAP provided training and education opportunities. These three institutions are detailed in the appendix and referenced in the study only when relevant to Intreo.

- 2013 launch of *One DSP*, an internal branding exercise to unite the full DSP
- 2014 establishment of the Pay-by-Results JobPath (Turas Nua and Seetec)

1.2. The activation and poverty alleviation agenda and other relevant political issues

The PtW strategy (PTW, DSP, 2011) outlines a number of reform strategies, including Intreo the primary reform episode in this study. The Intreo reforms reflect a shift in activation objectives, from active to passive and from low to higher (more frequent, intensive and conditional) engagement. An underlying strategy sought to integrate the minimum income Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) into the mainstream income support system delivered by the Department of Social Protection (DSP). SWA claimants who become job seeker payment recipients are included within Intreo activation services.

Social partnership based discussion on proposals for a Developmental Welfare State (NESC 2005), a departmental debate about activation of lone parents (DSFCA, 2006) and publication of the landmark OECD review of Irish activation (Grubb et al 2009) heralded a shift towards a more active approach integrating income support and PES. This was followed by a number of government policy initiatives (DSP, 2010, DSP, 2011a, DSP, 2011b), all of which outlined a more expansive, integrated and conditional approach to activation.

Up to 2007, anti-poverty advocates focused on welfare adequacy. Social welfare adequacy targets were part of social partnership national wage agreements and, in a revenue-rich environment, NGOs exploited political opportunity for increased welfare payments⁶. The 10 year National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 is linked to the EU Social Inclusion Strategy and has over 100 targets organised in a lifecycle framework (children, working age, older people, people with disabilities and communities). The EU target is to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion (as defined by at-risk-poverty; material deprivation; jobless households). This is reflected in an Irish target to reduce adult consistent poverty to 4% by 2016 and to 2% or less by 2020 and to eliminate child poverty⁷.

Over the period of the economic crisis, key poverty, equality and human rights institutions, including the long established Combat Poverty Agency, were abolished, merged or scaled back. The strategy on poverty alleviation shifted to include a focus on low-work intensity families and, elsewhere, government realigned local and community development towards activation. Community development led approaches to poverty alleviation were downgraded under the 2010-2015 Local Development and Community Programme to facilitate more focus on labour market led approaches to tackle poverty and disadvantage, a policy continued in the successor SICAP (2015-2018).

Other political goals, relevant to the Intreo reform but outside welfare policy, include the overall framework of austerity and public sector reform adopted in the Troika MOU (DOF 2010), and a significant programme of local government reform, 'Putting People First' (DHELGR, 2012), which included alignment and the cohesion of local government and the local development institutions.

The focus of both poverty alleviation and activation are relatively consistent with both focusing on employment as a route out of poverty. A high level goal is to address low work intensity in households with children. Eurostat statistics show that in 2014, 21% of Irish people under the age of 60 lived in low work intensity households (e.g. worked less than 20% of their total work potential during the past

⁶ See the social partnership national agreement 'Towards 2016' (Ireland, 2006)

⁷ The economic crisis meant regressive progress towards these targets (DEASP 2017).

week). This was the highest rate in the EU – above Greece (17.2%) and Spain (17.1%) which have much higher unemployment rates than Ireland. However, this focus is not yet reflected in Intreo which does not extend activation to non-job seeker claimants in families at risk of poverty (spouses, people with disabilities, carers).

1.3. A brief overview of the institutional setting at the starting point of the Intreo reform

At the starting point of the Intreo reform, Irish PES were governed by FÁS, the national training authority, a national organisation with a regional structure governed by a relatively autonomous board populated by social partners, primarily business and unions. Since 1994, PES for the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups were delivered by a Local Employment Service Network (LESN) in 22 disadvantaged areas. LESN were under the national governance of FÁS and locally governed by autonomously weak local development partnership boards.

FÁS’s multi- functional roles included administration of EU funded local programmes in local constituencies. This gave FÁS local political relevance and a degree of political protection. Despite a relatively poor reputation and poor evaluation outcomes (O’ Connell 2012), and seemed impervious to pressures to reform (Hardiman 2011, Murphy 2012, Boyle 2005).

Income supports were delivered, in a relatively passive fashion, by the Department of Social Protection (DEASP), a national government department overseen by a government minister and accountable to a highly centralised national Cabinet. A Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Inclusion was chaired by An Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and senior officials worked through an Inter-departmental Committee on Social Inclusion. The DSP were relatively autonomous in terms of policy design and, pensions aside, welfare policy was rarely politically salient.

Ireland’s minimum income supplement, Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA), was funded by DSP, but delivered by the Health Service Executive (HSE) who employed Community Welfare Officers to work in local HSE offices, historical regional autonomy was still visible in variance in policy and delivery of SWA. While the HSE was autonomous in the function of delivery, the DSP, because it funded the SWA, had policy input in the design of SWA payments. A 1990’s reform agenda to transfer this SWA function to local authorities had been vetoed by industrial relations interests, but since a 2004 SWA review, the policy objective was to integrate SWA into DSP.

1.4. A brief overview of the benefit system at the starting point of the reform

Ireland’s contingency based welfare system is delivered predominately through statutory schemes supplemented by some administrative schemes and funded very broadly 60:40 through general taxation and contributions to the Social Insurance Fund (SIF).

Name of means tested benefits	Job Seekers Allowance	One Family Payment	Disability Allowance	Supplementary Welfare Allowance	

Main access criteria	Means tested Available and genuinely seeking	Means tested Parenting alone for child in Full Time education and under 21 yrs.	Means tested Pass a medical examination to prove incapacity to work in paid employment	Means tested Awaiting assessment for benefit of assistance payment	
Target group	18-66 working age men and women	16-66 men and women parenting alone	16-66 men and women with disability that excludes employment	16-66 men and women awaiting mainstream payment	
Who evaluates claim	DSP local office	DSP national office	DSP national office	HSE	
Who enforces activation	DSP on advice from FÁS PES, obliged to register with PES through NEAP protocol	N/A Not obliged to register with PES	N/A Not obliged to register with PES	N/A Not obliged to register with PES	
Who decides on sanctions	DSP but only applied if not strong case of not available or genuinely seeking	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Who pays and who funds	DSP, central taxation	DSP, central taxation Social insurance fund for Job seekers benefit	DSP, central taxation	HSE recouped from DSP, central taxation	

Income support payments are divided into three different categories: social insurance or contributory payments; social assistance or means-tested payments; and a universal Child Benefit which is residence-based and unrelated to income or previous contributions.

Social insurance are flat rate payments and paid at the same rate as assistance payments with reduced rates for unemployed part-time workers. The duration for job seekers benefit was 15 months in 2008 but dropped to 9 months in 2012 in the context of austerity and crisis.

Social assistance payments are paid on a contingency basis for different welfare categories (job seekers, disability, parenting alone, caring, blindness etc.). These assistance payments are means tested with varying earned income disregards and allowances for a basic amount of savings/assets, before a notional annual value of assets is assessed. There is no duration limit or welfare cap. A habitual residence rule applies for all means tested payments.

SWA is paid at the same rate as Job seekers payment while a person is awaiting assessment of the benefit or assistance payment, or if a person is found ineligible for any contingent payment.

In 2018, all full rate adult working age payments are paid at a flat rate of €198 weekly with an additional €131.40 for a qualified spouse and €31.80 for each eligible dependent child. The payment is structured in a relatively strong male breadwinner regime and entitlement to active labour market measures, including education and training options, is normally restricted to the primary claimant. Up to 2012, the sanction to apply to job seekers was the total loss of payment for failure to be available for, seek or accept employment. This ‘all or nothing’ sanction was weakly enforced.

1.5. The main agents involved in managing the benefit system and providing employment and social services

Public institutions (autonomous and directly managed by a ministry)

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP)⁸ is a national department with a regional structure of 11 offices. Its 4,900 staff in 2008 rose to 7,000 in 2012 but dropped to 6,535 in December 2015. In 2015 it delivered 70 separate schemes and services to 1.6 million people (2.1 million beneficiaries), at a cost of €19.9b. While the largest government department in terms of staff and expenditure, DEASP is traditionally regarded as an operational or delivery function with little policy capacity. It is funded by central taxation and the social insurance fund⁹. A number of supporting agencies include Citizens Information, Pensions Board, Social Welfare Appeals and Social Welfare Tribunal.

Autonomous public bodies (financed by central government but autonomously managed)¹⁰

SOLAS, the Irish Further Education and Training Agency, was established in 2013. Funded by Department of Education and Skills and governed by an independent board, SOLAS is tasked with the development of 16 regional Education and Training Boards (ETBs). SOLAS is responsible for the national apprenticeship system, the momentum training programme, e-college, safe pass and the construction skills certification scheme.

^{8 8} In July 2017 DSP (Department of Social Protection) was renamed DESP (Department of Employment and Social Protection). Previously this department was known as Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA), Department of Social and Family and Community Affairs (DSFCA), and Department of Social Welfare (DSW).

⁹ Sourced by pay related social insurance of employees and employers

¹⁰ FÁS, the national training authority, was a national organisation with a regional structure. Formally disbanded since 2014. It had a relatively autonomous board populated by social partners, primarily businesses and unions. Health Service Executive (HSE) is a large organisation of over 100,000 people, which administers the Irish public health services. With a regional structure of four regional health forums, the HSE had administrative responsibility for the employment of Community Welfare Officers who delivered the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA), a form of urgent income supports, through local HSE offices

National Voluntary

Irish trade unions have no administrative role in the social welfare system. Their main function is to represent staff in pay bargaining (both central bargaining for public sector workers, and sectoral bargaining for some private sector workers), and in reform processes and dispute mechanisms. The primary unions here are CPSU and PSEU and IMPACT who in Jan 2018 merged into Fórsa and SIPTU (Ireland largest trade union representing a mix of private, NGO and public workers).

The Irish National Organisation of Unemployed is a 30 years old not for profit organisation with 216 member groups including community based resource centres, Citizens Information Services, Money Advice and Budgeting Services, national NGOs, trade unions and branches of unemployed people, governed by an elected executive committee. Core funding is from DSP along with 'SNNO' (Scheme to Support National Organisations) funding through Pobal.

Regional-level organisations

JobPath comprises two regional private sector companies. While not aligned to NUTs level 2, Seetec and Turas Nua administer PES for the long-term unemployed in each half of the country. They are expected to process 100,000 clients per annum and are funded on a Pay-by-Results basis. The total estimated cost of the four year 2014-18 contract will be in the region of €300m.

Education and Training Boards (ETB's) are regional boards formed as an amalgamation of local authority level Vocational Education Committees and the regional FÁS training infrastructure, ETBs are under the strategic governance of SOLAS.

Local government

While local government has no input into Intreo, Intreo managers may sit on new Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) whose overall function is to coordinate local authority social inclusion plans and to tender delivery of the SICAP programme.

Local Voluntary¹¹

Local Employment Service Network (LESN) and Job Clubs have existed since 1994 and deliver PES for the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups in 22 disadvantaged areas. LESN are accountable to DEASP but are governed by local boards. The 2015 budget was €20m. Local job clubs service referrals from Intreo with individualised supports and drop in services and cost €5m in 2015.

¹¹ See appendix

1.6. Brief description of the institutional status quo before the reform

	Job seekers	Other working age claimants
Name of provision (benefit or service)	Job Seekers Allowance, Job Seekers Benefit entitled to full range of PES and Activation	One Parent Family Payment/Disability Allowance/Carers Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance ¹²
Main purpose of the benefit/service	Weekly income support for job seekers and PES	Weekly income support for working age clients not considered job seekers
Main access criteria (insured, means-tested, other criteria, e.g. age, family status, etc.)	Means tested, age 18-66, conditions (available for and genuinely seeking work, habitual residence)	Mean tested, age 16-66. Conditions, parenting alone, disability, habitual residence, awaiting mainstream payment
Target group and its size in proportion to total non-working active age population 2011	JSA 283,923 JSB 96,044 Total job seekers 379,967 Total WA 569,766 ¹³ Job seekers as % of WA 66.16	Disability Allowance 102,866 Carers Allowance 51,666 One parent family (various) 92,675 SWA 34,597

¹² The Irish welfare system has a significant number of contingency payments. Only some of the largest claim categories and those considered to have most employment potential are included. Ireland's system is family based. The considerable number of adult dependents resident in working age households with social welfare claims are not included.

¹³ In Irish data, disability and carers payments are not included in the working age category. This means Disability Allowance (102,866) and Carer's Allowance (51,666) are not in the working age total. If one was to include them, the working age total would be 750,098 and job seekers would be 50.65% of the revised working age population.

Who is the main actor that determines the client journey?	DSP Intreo	DSP local office/national office
Who evaluates claims for this benefit / decides on who can participate in this service (if the service is open to all, please indicate that)?	DSP – theoretically open to all	DSP but open to all
Who enforces the activation (job search, accepting job offer, etc.) requirements (if these exist)?	DSP	N/A
Who decides on sanctions (in case of non-compliance)?	DSP	N/A
Who pays the benefit / delivers the service?	DSP (ST), JobPath (LT), LESN (VLT)	DSP
Who provides the funding behind (e.g. local government using their own revenues or local gov. using a per capita subsidy from the central budget)	National taxation and social insurance	National Taxation

Main inefficiencies in the original system

In DSP own words (ISSA, 2016) *‘even before the crisis, the service model underpinning the provision of welfare and related employment services was inefficient. Unemployed customers engaged with multiple service points in three separate organizations. None of these organizations offered a full range of services. Fragmentation of service delivery meant that people who became unemployed faced a delay of about three weeks in receiving their jobseekers payment and a delay of at least three months before they could engage with the public employment service. The overall challenge faced by the State was to reform business operations to provide a higher quality of service to clients and improve employment outcomes, and to increase the capacity of the service, with no additional resources, to cater for the significant increase in the client base and transaction volumes’.*

A primary inefficiency was the unjustified complexity and poor quality of the client’s journey which could include three statutory (DSP, FÁS and HSE) and one voluntary agency (LESN), with a considerable overlap between the services of the various actors¹⁴.

There was also growing awareness that, in the context of international trends in the activation of benefit recipients or other clients, Ireland was considered a laggard or late moderniser. The main problem identified was lack of engagement or activation of unemployed people. A poor perception of FÁS existed, as it utilized a generic and expensive engagement model that was neither based on customer need nor involved employers.

The National Employment Action Plan evaluation suggested a negative correlation between FÁS engagement and the likelihood of accessing employment (O’Connell, 2012). In the context of crisis there was considerable frustration with the inefficiency in the capacity of FÁS to react speedily and with flexibility to the changing needs of the PES¹⁵. Following exposure of excessive management expenditures and poor financial control, media focus on corporate governance in FÁS led to political pressure to close FÁS in 2009.

Throughout the 2000’s, concerns grew regarding the operational costs of the SWA system which the DSP paid for but did not control. There was concern about the administrative complexity of implementing different but related services through different legislative frameworks and issues relating to access to services and benefits. The SWA was considered to be residual and variable in the quality of service delivery with 470 often part-time offices, variable hours and considerable regional inconsistencies in service delivery, as well as stigma associated with having to access the service. A 2006 reform to integrate SWA into DSP as an independent service was vetoed by trade unions which feared wage losses and changes in working conditions. However, by 2010 the reform agenda had shifted to fully merge SWA into the DSP, beginning with a nine month secondment.

2. Details of the reform episode (initiative)

2.1. Brief description of the initiative

The reform episode was launched within the PtW (2012-15, DSP 2012) with the overall aim of integrating the PES and income support systems. The primary objective was to increase the likelihood of the client accessing employment and reducing the incidence and persistence of long-term unemployment. Related objectives included improving the management of activation (e.g. improving coordination between benefit administration and job search enforcement), addressing duplication in

¹⁴ The 2017 the client ‘journey’ can potentially still involve four agencies players – Intreo, JobPath, LES and SICAP.

¹⁵ FÁS case management was limited to 8 per day including no-shows while DSP estimated 20-30 engagements per day was necessary

parallel services (income support and SWA), and reducing administrative costs. A concern to improve the client journey is also evident. A shorter term rationale, in the context of crisis, was the urgent need to meet immediate capacity shortages (the rationale justifying the establishment of the privatised JobPath).

In practice, the reform episode focused on redeploying staff into DSP as follows:

- 1,000 community welfare staff were redeployed from HSE into DSP, many located in Intreo,
- 700 FÁS staff redeployed from employment services & community employment into DSP,
- Redeployment of 1,300+ staff from other government departments to DSP¹⁶.

Intreo is a national service of over 60 offices intended to integrate job seeker benefit administration with PES in a one stop shop model. The clients are those on short-term job seeking welfare payments. From the client's perspective the aim is to have one interface with one case worker mediating the activation process from the point of entry, maintaining client information and tracking client compliance with a personal progression plan for job seeking. After one year Intreo case managers implement 'a warm handover' of the client to JobPath if the client has not gained employment.

While O'Connell (2017, 245) describes the progress of reform as slow and 'sluggish,' most observers describe the reform as ambitious and significant. The merging process was described as 'stormy' by a senior DSP official. Previous attempts to reform had been vetoed by industrial relations, however the economic crisis appeared to focus minds and energies. There was a collaborative approach by public sector trade unions who also had access to a system of binding arbitration. After much political confusion and hiatus over the 2010-2011 periods, the reform episode was launched by the DSP in 2011 and implemented by the DSP directly but with high level support of An Taoiseach (Prime Minister) who chaired an interdepartmental Cabinet committee. Targets to implement the reform were integrated into the Troika quarterly monitoring system, an important aspect of the reform's implementation.

Both political parties in power from 2011-2016 were behind the initiative. From 2011, the Minister for Social Protection was a senior politician and deputy leader of the junior political party, the social democratic Labour Party. In 2015, she assumed party leadership and became Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister). Labour Party presence in government was important for public sector unions and made them more likely to cooperate with reform. Public sector union power was also muted in the context of crisis and it was unlikely that, outside of crisis, this level of reform could be contemplated without wage claims. Unions do continue to voice concerns about staff terms and conditions, day-to-day roles, office locations and work culture. They also raised wider concerns about quality of employment, the degree to which wages might be subsidised by the welfare system and objected to privatisation of PES.

Non-ministerial political pressure largely came through constituency level pressure from rural TDs to either roll out Intreo, or to manage political kickback when smaller services were merged or closed down¹⁷. National civil servants and political advisers did however have to convince politicians to take the JobPath privatisation route, a route that still evokes some unease. Political actors made specific interventions regarding ongoing changes. For example, Junior Minister Humphries, having visited UK

¹⁶ This entailed growth in total DSP staff numbers from 4,900 in 2008 to 7,000 in 2012, although overall reduced demand means staffing in the DSP reduced to 6,516 by end 2015, with plans for further reductions (AONTAS 2017).

¹⁷ Some DSP offices are contracted out as branch offices and many local CWO staff offices closed during the reform period

services, responded to service quality concerns by incorporating client satisfaction indicators into the JobPath contract.

2.2. The rationale behind the initiative

The rationale for the reform can be traced back to various national and international reports (Grubb et al 2009, NESO 2011) and EU benchmarking exercises which recommended integrating income supports and PES. The reasoning that a more conditional and work-first oriented regime would enhance the likely return to work was supported by referencing meta-evaluations but was also disputed (Sweeney 2017). A related rationale was that reform of the SWA would enable people more speedily access activation supports.

While Intreo awaits formal evaluation, interviewees identify possible flaws in the regime including:

- The lack of mechanisms to facilitate effective quality career guidance, education and training, both at policy design, at regional planning and at implementation or local delivery stages.
- An absence of monitoring of job quality or in-work progression outcomes and lack of concern with low pay as a dominant exit option or the degree to which activation may push people into poor paid employment.
- The earlier lack of sufficient data to enable coherent and comprehensive outcome evaluations.
- The lack of engagement of key stakeholders in the planning and development of Intreo. Despite the focus of integration, local PES actors (LESN, Job Clubs and SICAP) were not factored into the planning of Intreo, potentially causing confusion in the client journey.
- An absence of sufficient focus on barriers to employment (transport, childcare, health supports).
- Lack of capacity, resources and skills to advance engagement to non-job seeker cohorts.
- Lack of strategic assessment of over-capacity, duplication and even competition for the 'client'.
- The use of JobPath (privatisation), and possible mirroring of developments in the UK Work Programme.
- Insufficient engagement with employers. National liaison with a particular cohort of large employers is not matched with the intensive local relationships with local employers in small and medium sized enterprises most likely to employ those most distant from the labour market with low skill, low educational attainment, ill health. The rationale for engagement with employers is confused between encouraging recruitment by employers of the long-term unemployed and meeting skills and labour needs of employers.
- Concern about new forms of stigma in the shift from a positive focus on enhanced engagement to a more conditional form of activation with more stress on individual employability and a related ideological and narrative shift (focusing on issues of fraud, lifestyle, etc.).
- Closure of community welfare supports, which may have had hidden impacts in terms of social inclusion of the most vulnerable and hard to reach.
- The male breadwinner focus on the live register and failure to develop a 'care' led activation strategy which would enable part-time employment choices to facilitate care obligations.
- Despite the Youth Guarantee, no coherent focus on young people. Ireland has too high a proportion of NEETs, and there is concern that young people are a testing ground for neo-liberal policies (as evidenced by internships, low pay and insecure contracts).

2.3. Detailed description of the NEW Intreo system

	Job seekers	Working age clients One Parent payments, Disability Allowance, Carers Allowance , SWA¹⁸)
Name of provision (benefit or service)	Job seekers (SWA claimants are not part of the Intreo target but a more efficient processing of claims means SWA interim claims are more quickly processed into mainstream payments).	Working age clients (One Parent, disability allowance, carers, SWA)
Main access criteria (insured, means-tested, other criteria, e.g. age, family status, etc.)	Weekly income support for working age clients on job seeking payments	Weekly income support for working age clients not ‘job seekers’
Target group	18-66 unemployed men/women entitled to contributory/means tested job seekers payments	Main working age categories except job seeker
Who is the main actor that determines the client journey?	DSP Intreo office - income support and activation DSP Intreo income support, JobPath activation	DSP national office – income support LESN activation
Who evaluates claims for this benefit / decides on who can participate in this service?	DSP Intreo office STU JobPath (LTU), LESN (most distant, VLTU)	DSP Intreo office (One Parent Payment, SWA) DSP national office/LESN activation
Who enforces the activation (job search, accepting job offer, etc.) requirements?	DSP Intreo office on advice from JobPath and LESN	N/A but activation through SICAP and LESN
Who decides on sanctions (in case of non-compliance)?	DSP Intreo office on advice from JobPath and LESN	N/A
Who pays the benefit / delivers the service?	DSP income supports DSP Intreo (activation STU) JobPath (Seetec and Turas Nua, activation LTU)	DSP (LESN) and Department of Housing and Local Government (SICAP) DSP – income supports
Who provides the funding behind (e.g. local government using their own revenues or local gov. using a per capita subsidy from the central budget)	General Taxation	General Taxation and EU PIEL fund for labour market services aspect of SICAP (20% SICAP budget)
Notes		

¹⁸ The impact of Intreo was to decrease the waiting time for SWA to three days this ensuring claimants almost immediately accessed job seeker payments and activation supports

2.4. Context of the initiative: where did the idea come from?

There appeared to be no ‘penny dropping moment,’ rather the development of the idea was an outcome of relatively systemic long-term awareness of the need for change, early innovations in profiling by DSP personnel, input from the EU¹⁹, OECD²⁰, NESCS²¹ and ESRI²², and knowledge of what was happening in other countries. In this sense a policy consensus emerged amongst policy and political elites, even if this was not necessarily reflected in local voluntary organisations.

The idea of the reform then intensified in the social, economic and political developments associated with the 2008 crisis, and the 2010 presence of the international lenders’ Troika. The catalyst for making it happen was the need to respond, at a capacity level, to the increase in unemployment from 4.6% to 13.7% (or 104,000 to 294,000) from 2007 to 2012. A secondary catalyst was the growing awareness of, and frustration with, FÁS incapacity to provide increased engagement. FÁS also ‘shot itself in the foot’ with a serious 2009 corporate governance debacle which caused a media and political scandal.

The blue print for reform was developed before the presence of the Troika and was largely consistent with EU and international policy trends. It was evident that the Troika in promoting activation were ‘pushing an open door’ (Dukelow 2015, Hick 2017) and that there was a ‘meeting of minds’. However, the Troika presence added urgency to the reform agenda, making it politically relevant and more likely a reform of this scale would be implemented.

The presence of the Troika also prompted attention on administrative reform affecting the whole public administration. A focus on opening up competition provided space for creating the impetus around JobPath, a PES privatisation model adapted from the British model to suit the local Irish labour market. National level senior administrators and political advisers’ had ‘to convince politicians to go with this idea’. This privatisation initiative is linked to strong advocates including the head of Intreo (recruited from the private sector) and to two political advisors considered partial to privatisation.

The formal process of political agenda setting shows that the Fianna Fáil (FF), in power until March 2011, had already signalled reform in their Blueprint for National Recovery (Ireland, 2009). This was then translated into the Troika MOU (DoF 2010, Hicks 2017). Following the resounding defeat of FF in the March 2011 General Election and the elevation to power of a Fine Gael/Labour coalition, the Labour Party (Labour 2011)²³ committed to establishing a National Employment and Entitlement Service (NEES, the precursor to what became Intreo in 2012). Designed without input from DSP officials, but reflecting emerging policy consensus, the NEES proposal mirrored DSP’s analysis and policy intent, albeit with wider functions including administration of higher education grants and wider mean-testing²⁴.

¹⁹ Mid 2000’s EU peer review and benchmarking exercises

²⁰ Grubb *et al.*, 2009

²¹ Services for Unemployed Job Seekers, NESCS, 2011

²² Layte and O’Connell 2005, O’Connell *et al.*, 2009, Mc Guinness *et al.* 2011

²³ ‘One Ireland Jobs reform fairness’

http://www.labour.ie/download/pdf/labour_election_manifesto_2011.pdf Fine Gael manifesto ‘Let’s get Ireland Working’ P 80, Sinn Fein There is a Better Way

²⁴ ‘We will replace FÁS with a new National Employment and Entitlements Service so that all employment and benefit support services will be integrated in a single delivery unit managed by the Department of Social Protection. This integrated service would provide a ‘one stop shop’ for It will process citizen entitlements such as supplementary welfare allowances, higher education grants and welfare allowances. It will manage as much as possible means testing for State entitlements. It will also be responsible for employment referral and training supports provided by FÁS. This service will offer users a higher level of personalised employment counselling, with more frequent face-to-face interviews. Those on the live register who are

There was reliable evidence that the FÁS PES had very low capacity and was poor in generating outcomes (McGuinness et al 2011). There was also evidence that, comparatively, Irish client: case worker ratios were very low (Grubb et al, 2009). The evidence for which model of activation works best is somewhat contested (NESC 2011). Evidence that early engagement with unemployed jobseekers was key to reducing transitions into long-term unemployment was influential, while evidence from value for money reviews of the SWA supported a full integration into DSP.

EU level evidence also informed development of Intreo with key staff conducting EU research visits. An EU PES network assessor visited Ireland, rated services and compiled country reports and benchmarked learning (this process aligned with research completed by the World Bank). Staff visited Northern Ireland and France (where they sought to learn lessons from the failed 2009 French top-down experiment). Norway and Netherlands were also examined as was the UK. Ireland was also a focus for international policy, particularly for the PEX system (ESRI, 2005). Aware of evidence and data gaps, in 2011 the DSP commissioned UCD to advise on a live register data strategy, to collect, use and learn from data for regular monitoring, policy development and evaluation purposes (Harmon et al 2011).

power interest	Low	Medium	High
Low	Media (reform under the radar, many other austerity distractions)	FÁS (still some power but senior management distracted by formation of SOLAS)	Business – more interested in high level reform than details
Medium	Left wing opposition parties Not able to veto reforms	ICTU (possible veto power was limited during crisis when social partnership institutions were stood down) Public sector unions representing workers (CPSU, PSEU IMPACT, SIPTU) NESC (important for consensus) Academic (O’Connell, profiling expertise)	Finn (JobPath) CSI UK (JobPath) John Sweeney (NESC but individually respected as pragmatic policy entrepreneur)

identified as being most at risk of long-term unemployment will receive priority treatment for more intensive support. It will ensure active case management for people in need of assistance’. (Ireland 2011, p 8)http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Programme_for_Government/Programme_for_Government_2011-2016.pdf

High	NGO's, EAPN , INOU LESN, ILDN Weak/no consultation with local level delivery agents, clients representatives and lobby NGO's	OECD – 2009 report John Martin (invited onto Labour Market Council) Michael Martin (CEO HP and Chiar LMC)	Troika Political ministers & ministerial political advisers in DSP and Taoiseach's DSP senior administrative staff
------	--	---	--

An early consequence of crisis was the 2009 collapse of existing national wage agreements, following which Ireland's social partnership institutions were formally dissolved in 2011. However personal networks and relationships (some two decades long) survived to maintain a policy consensus during this period and public sector binding arbitration mechanisms were in use.

Notable in their absence is the non-government sector, media and protest movements. While some protested increased conditionality (Boland 2016), none had any discernible impact. Where consultation took place it was relatively symbolic. Societal response was muted. Public sector unions were engaged but largely about how employment terms and conditions might be impacted by mergers. Implementation of the SWA reforms was eased by the atmosphere of crisis which to some degree abated potential industrial relations issues. Overall, the reform evolved largely 'under the radar' and with little political or policy controversy²⁵.

2.5. The political decision phase: the actors

2.6. The political phase: the actions

During the reform episode both government and opposition parties party manifestos supported activation policies, while the electorate was primarily concerned with employment and emigration.

Decision-making was enacted at Cabinet level and implementation monitored through a Cabinet subcommittee. The Taoiseach's and Tánaiste's leadership was considered crucial. Despite early periods of hiatus and policy confusion, as the economic and political crisis deepened and the Troika arrived in 2010, senior administration in the DSP initiated the reform and, with the active assistance of the OECD, defined the problem and prepared the diagnoses leading to the formal initiative. While other types of proposals existed (NESC 2005) they were not alternatives but differed largely about nuance, language and level of ambition.

The political decision about the reform was supported by FF, FG and Labour. Sinn Fein made several amendments. The hard left political parties, Anti Austerity Alliance and People before Profit, generally opposed government policy. The reform bill contained several austerity measures and was enacted in a period of crisis and chaos. Minor changes during this phase were made largely in response to the DSP Minister's engagement with senior administration²⁶. Other refinements occurred because of resource constraints (budget deficits, public sector recruitment embargos, and growing demand on services).

²⁵ Some political cost was associated with two relatively peripheral activation issues: activation of lone parents and a national internship programme (JobBridge), both of which were considered to have political consequences contributing to electoral defeat of the Labour Party

²⁶ For example a political commitment in the Seanad to maintain LESN.

The most significant policy shift was, for resource reasons, a focus on the short-term unemployed as the primary target.

The formal Irish Government's labour market policy, '*PtW2011-2016*' (DSP 2011) and updated 2016-2020 (DSP 2016), is implemented by the DSP Activation Unit. The primary reform vehicle is *Intreo*, the formal name for the new service offering clients a single point of contact for all employment and income supports.

Troika aside, while EU analysis and Country Specific Recommendations were an important backdrop, the EU played no role in the decision phase. More generally, EU procurement policy influenced the ongoing design and tendering/commissioning processes of JobPath, SICAP and LESN. The procurement process required more focus on the use of outcome indicators to track and monitor actions. Implementation of procurement caused considerable disquiet and the process was painful for many, especially in a context of resources being halved. For some, procurement left a legacy of competition and a breakdown of trust between local activation and community actors.

2.7. The Intreo designing phase: the actors

The overall concrete Intreo *policy goal* focused on simplifying processes to achieve a more engaged client journey. The broad (political or policy) goals was set out in a 50-point action plan for PtW (2011-2016) outlining the government's intention for an 'unrelenting focus' on unemployment across five strands. Strand 5 refers to the Intreo institutional reform, the reform episode in question.

- Strand 1: More regular and ongoing engagement with the unemployed
- Strand 2: Greater targeting of activation places and opportunities
- Strand 3: Incentivising the take-up of opportunities
- Strand 4: Incentivising employers to provide more jobs for people who are unemployed
- Strand 5: Reforming institutions to deliver better services to the unemployed

The DSP was the only government body responsible for designing the measure with the support of external expertise. There was limited involvement of stakeholders, with little consultation in the early stages of Intreo development when most communication focused on internal engagement and change management. One key stakeholder, NESC, a policy think tank of social partners and government departments, was engaged both systematically in debating the development of JobPath and more informally by engaging the staff member who authored the key 2011 NESC report *Services for Unemployed Job Seekers*. Public sector unions were also engaged directly in the context of negotiating transfer of staff between departments and objecting to the JobPath privatisation model.

The primary stakeholders involved were a discrete set of DSP officials, the Minister and her political advisers. The primary mechanism was designed in house by DSP working from an initial NEES policy document. The legal context was straightforward as the DSP already used contracted services and was able to use existing legal provisions to extend the use of contracting services. Legal changes were introduced in various annual social welfare acts including the introduction of financial penalties in the SW 2012 Act.

Generally this was seen as a 'below the radar' design process with a degree of frustration among experts, NGO's and local staff about the absence of consultation. While social partnership or 'social dialogue' processes had broken down during the crisis, there was some dialogue with the Community

and Voluntary Pillar of social partnership. The national network of local development agencies (ILDN) was engaged superficially. There was little informal or formal consultation with NGO's delivering labour market services. Local DSP welfare administration staff were informed rather than consulted.

One of the more serious fault lines was the absence of any ex-ante impact evaluation or consideration of data requirements for an ex-post evaluation. Intreo was formally piloted with extensive learning in the pilot stage, followed by a pragmatic staggered roll out over four years and implemented in urban regions earlier than rural regions²⁷. While all DSP offices have now embraced Intreo, contracted branch offices have yet to change and many are in need of modernisation, reform or closure.

Overall, a generally high level of support existed for the reform, with little dissent. While there was no overall opposition, concern was expressed by different actors about conditionality, capacity, lack of consultation, engagement with NGOs as service delivery agents and the lack of focus or parity of esteem for those most distant or not in receipt of a job seekers payment (including women and people with disabilities). There was no significant contestation of the initial plan which did not change significantly from conception to implementation. Some of the changes included extension of the profiling exercise and the group engagement. The most significant problem was ongoing lack of capacity in the context of high unemployment, this was addressed with the Pay-by-Results privatised element, JobPath.

2.8. The designing phase: the decisions

The potential Intreo target groups were first discussed in a DSP (2010) policy document which advocated a Single Working Age Payment (SWAP). It defined the need for activation services in three tiers: low, middle, and high. This logic was informed by a 2005 profiling exercise devised as a pilot in a regional office, and subsequently developed by the ERSI (2005). The nationally calibrated profiling system (O'Connell et al 2012) measured the probability of exit to employment (PEX). The intention was that those with high probability of exit were simply encouraged and assisted to seek work, those with medium probability were to be invited to group engagement and to be offered job search support and training opportunities, while those with low probability would be offered one-to-one support.

With no resources and limited capacity, there was considerable political resistance to extending activation beyond the live register and the size of the target groups was pragmatically ring fenced to those on the live register (job seekers claimants). Due to capacity restrictions, the initial group targeted by the initiative was the short term unemployed (justified on the grounds of efficient use of scarce resources and prevention of long-term unemployment growth).

The role division between agents in the new system is largely organised around target groups with Intreo focusing on short term unemployed (with LESN to cope with over-flow), JobPath focusing on long term unemployed, LESN working with very distant and other groups not on the live register. This particular division was chosen without consultation and appears largely driven by the path dependant decision that Intreo would initially focus on short term unemployed.

²⁷ O'Connell observes no pilot of JobPath (2017 45) which was introduced with no clear integration strategy with local PES or education or training services. The Youth Guarantee, an EU wide programme, was piloted in 2014 in urban Ballymun. While the evaluation was positive there was no rural pilot and there were concerns about its capacity to replicate the pilot in mainstream services or to implement such a programme nationwide. There was also concern about the degree to which the pilot was restricted to a narrow range of young people on job seeker payments.

There are clear reporting and referral relationships between DSP (Intreo) and Seetec and Turas Nua, the two JobPath providers. Co-operation between the different actors at a local level is dependent on the depth of personal relationships between Intreo, JobPath, LESN and SICAP. Where organisations lie on a spectrum of loose cooperation to full integration will very much depend on these local relationships which vary from excellent to poor. Cooperation between the different agents is organised in different formats in different areas (including through shared IT systems, local interagency meetings and various types of protocols or MOU's). Some good practice exists, for example in local protocols or 'local town hall' or 'round table' coordinating meetings.

The nature of engagement with employers was not an initial focus of the Intreo programme but evolved over time, and with a different national and local focus. At national level, through the Labour Market Council there is national liaison with a particular cohort of large employers who launched a 'charter' to commit to employing the long-term unemployed²⁸. Locally, Intreo, LESN²⁹, JobPath and SICAP all seek to develop more intensive local relationships with employers most likely to employ those most distant from the labour market (e.g. low skill, low educational attainment, and ill health). This means at local level there is potentially competition for local employers. The persistent use of national and local recruitment agencies by both employers and job seekers is also testament to the failure of all PES to fully engage employers.

DSP set Performance Indicators (PIs) for Intreo, JobPath and LESN, with no common indicator across all services^{30,31}. Performance indicators do not seem to be designed to promote cooperation. LESN's for example, believe a greater range of PI's would reflect the reality of their local interagency work and encourage joint effort between cooperating units. A considerable facility to promote co-operation is the development of the open access Job Seeker Longitudinal Dataset (JLD - see best practice).

The planning stage recognised the need for considerable adjustment in staff capacities and skills, particularly as DSP staff had to move from fraud and control functions to more enabling activation functions. However, capacity constraints limited advancing the full range of training needed and it was not until early 2015 that the Learning Curriculum was launched as part of 'One DSP'³². However informants in this study stressed the ongoing need to also address competence and culture and for training to enable staff demonstrate empathy to clients.

EU experts, peer learning events, benchmarking evidence and previous recommendations played a role in the design phase. EU PEIL funding of one fifth of SICAP required coherence with EU procurement policy leading to the development of a new commissioning process for local and community development work. The UK experience of Work Programme and use of PbR contracting arrangements

²⁸ Innovative practice exists in some large multiples TK Maxx, Tesco's, M&S recruiting from particular cohorts, over 40's, people with intellectual disability, lone parents, and young people.

²⁹ LESN, on DSP instruction, do not overtly engage with local employers, but in practice some LESN do maintain existing relations with local employers

³⁰ JobPath PIs are part of the contract/Service Level Agreement and are monitored monthly by the DSP through service delivery indicators and progression indicators/outcomes at 13 weekly intervals - a client management system tracking where clients are in terms of sustained employment and or progression path

³¹ LESNs have only one key performance indicator, exits into employment, which is monitored through monthly reports in the shared BOMi IT data entry system, a system generally acknowledged to have improved integration and coordination.

³² In 2014 DSP worked with National College of Ireland (NCI) to review and redesign its functional training programmes, focusing on the business skills required for key frontline roles in the organisation, including case officers, and to develop level 8 FETAC accreditation.

was impactful, with UK consultants hired to guide the DSP in the design of the JobPath contract. Other countries mentioned as influencing include Germany, France and Australia.

Ireland is historically considered to be 'light' in the implementation of conduct conditions (NESC 2011). The reform episode is associated with a shift in the behavioural conditions of eligibility (proof of job search, accepting job offer etc.) with Irish labour activation policy converging towards a work-first conditional regime. New penalties and sanctions and a broader range of job-seeking requirements are now applied to a larger section of the working-age welfare population (Murphy 2016, 2017). This is consistent with models elsewhere.

Three specific reforms increased the job search obligations of unemployed jobseekers, lone parents and young people, and extended the range of penalties for failing to meet these new obligations (Murphy 2016). While the initial 2010 agenda of increasing labour market conditionality for all working-age claimants lost political momentum, a 'halfway house' of conditionality requiring engagement was eventually extended to lone parents whose youngest child is aged 7 or over and may yet be implemented for partners and people with disabilities under the activation strategy PtW2016–2020 (DSP 2016). Since 2017 claimants in part-time employment and in receipt of job seekers payments (casuals) are now required to attend JobPath.

A penalty of €44 (25% of payment) is applied by Intreo in cases of non-compliance or non-engagement. Both JobPath and LESN are required to inform Intreo of non-engagement, and Intreo then implement sanctions. The level of enforcement is low by international standards (0.3% of jobseekers in 2016 and 0.4% in 2017), but is increasing as the live register decreases.

In practice there is some cultural ambiguity about implementation of sanctions (with ex FÁS employees, CWO's and LESN's particularly reluctant) and there is evidence of innovative street level bureaucratic practice to avoid sanctions while addressing non-engagement. Others observe that a growing 'climate of fear' about sanctions is sufficient to motivate engagement.

There is no systematic tracking or reporting of varying sanction trends by region or by demographic profile of claimants. Intreo senior staff are conscious about the need to reflect on the use of sanctions and whether/how they work. DSP appears open to change and adjustment over time. For example the Youth Guarantee increased the range of penalties for younger people.

Overall, the reform design involved a significant change in the frequency of and approach to engagement as well as a more intense quality of engagement. The reform responded to a mid-2000's analysis which identified a problematic short-fall in engagement on the part of the DSP and/or FÁS. However, over time it seems the problem has been redefined as a problem of non-activation of the claimant with a significant change in the rules of behavioural conditions, albeit not as significant a shift in enforcement of such conditions.

2.9. Who implemented the initiative?

Internal governance of the implementation process was managed through a small and close knit 'programme board' chaired by the Department's Deputy Secretary. This developed a cross-government menu of over 200 specific actions, with delivery deadlines for relevant departments overseen by monthly review meetings of senior officials from each Department and monthly Cabinet committee meetings chaired by the Taoiseach.

A number of retirements of senior DSP personnel provided an opportunity to recruit a number of internal senior level staff with change management experience. This was complemented by existing

staff with both operational and industrial relations experience and with good local knowledge of staff. This small and centralised design team had limited resources and delegated the core implementation tasks, leaving room for local innovation and adaptation. While this approach had advantages, those implementing Intreo sometimes perceived that DSP did ‘not really know what they were doing’. The ability to skilfully identify local change agents was crucial as was the ability to foresee and mediate local industrial relations.

Clear directives were issued from the national level Intreo Implementation Team (described above). A piloted Intreo in Kings Inns (Dublin) was used as the model or reference ‘proof of concept’ for others and three other pilots were road tested in 2012. Change management consultants were hired as well as new staff with private sector and/or change management experience.

Quarterly progress reports were published on the Department’s website while staff engagement was prioritised through large scale briefings and an innovation programme (including a competition to name the new integrated service), staff surveys, a culture and values programme and online fora and communications.

In 2013, a new governance and oversight mechanism was established, the Labour Market Council, comprising 13 senior representatives from business, trade union, advocacy groups and labour market experts, all appointed by the DSP Minister.

2.10. Implementation process

The small central implementation team of senior management in the DSP worked through a regional management structure (with 13 operational divisions, each headed by a Principal Officer) to integrate DSP, CWO’s and FÁS staff. The central team worked with each division to articulate the service vision and hand over ownership of implementation, via facilitated workshops, to local staff and managers. The approach appears to have been measured and methodical, and carefully planned one office at a time, across the country. The massive organisational change programme included changes in product, services, IT supports, resources, culture and people. However, it is an incremental process and ongoing, particularly in relation to resources, training and development, and organisational culture. It appears the technical implementation is almost complete with cultural change now the focus.

An early implementation challenge was the merger of three different and originally separate organisations. FÁS Employment Services Officers and Community Employment staff, Health Services Executive employed Community Welfare Officers and DSP staff who were front line Deciding Officers or Jobs Facilitators all had to merge together in Intreo. The initial cohort of Intreo case officers was insufficient to address increasing unemployment, necessitating an increase in the number of Intreo Case Officers (Project 300). It was challenging to identify such potential staff (within the existing DSP), as not all staff fit the desired profile or skills/value set for case mediator roles.

Staff briefings were used for capacity building, internal newsletters referred to a structured transformational agenda, and there was early use of the language of ‘merger’ to pave the way for the new and integrated working arrangements. Implementation required a ‘massive amount of re-arranging and re-locating staff’ and related industrial relations. Two large staff briefing sessions were held at the prestigious Dublin Castle which signalled the strategic nature of the reform agenda. The Assistant General Secretary initiated a ‘top management road show’ across the country to brief all staff. Part of the change management plan included high level DSP managers meeting all staff to

message ‘a personal, distinct and purposeful emphasis on integration and communication’. Later implementation focused on the concept of a ‘One DSP’ with a clear mission, vision and role for all staff.

Investing in staff capacity and building for new roles was challenging because ‘the ship was being built at sea’ during a time of enormous pressure on existing payment systems and a public sector recruitment embargo. Ideally, while staff training might have included a focus on changing attitudes and change management, much of the staff training was managerial and systems driven, focused on working with new IT systems, data input systems and client engagement. The adjustment to performance monitoring was challenging with new entrants required to engage with a culture partially dominated by fraud control and with existing staff required to reimagine clients outside the context of fraud controls.

A major and ongoing challenge was the integration of information technology. DSP systems had no activation or case management capacity so the FÁS ‘CES’ system provided the initial IT support for Intreo. While the customer experienced one IT system, backroom staff had to work dual IT systems until 2014 when a new DSP BOMi system was developed. By 2016 this was fully operational with the LESN and JobPath also trained on BOMi. Data systems are however still underdeveloped and appear designed for case management purposes rather than policy learning or evaluation. The Intreo client recording system has a ‘content box’ for personalized comment by the case worker but there is no systematic analysis of such data (for example, no coding system to enable central retrieval and analysis so consequently no feedback into wider needs analysis such as mental health). Nor is there analysis of who is referred back to Intreo by JobPath and where they go and referrals to LESN recorded as ‘other’.

Data protection issues have surfaced in two areas. The first is facilitating the private sector providers of JobPath to access PPSNs (Personal Pay Related Social Insurance Numbers – the key state identifier for citizens accessing state services), and related issues of transparency in JobPath. The second is facilitating Pobal, an intermediary agency, to track multiple use of services funded under different programmes³³.

The main obstacles during the implementation process were the reality of economic recession, public sector recruitment embargos and increased pressure on PES and income supports, all of which set the context within which a challenging reform agenda was to be implemented. Differences in institutional cultures, delays in IT development, and extent of need for staff redeployment, were all managed in a highly centralised fashion with key messaging from the General Secretary. Overcoming obstacles was also aided by political leadership and support of the Taoiseach (and later the Tánaiste), and by having the ‘trump card’ of having to meet formal targets in the Troika programme. In one example, reductions in the capital budget for Intreo office design were resolved with a high level intervention to allow the DSP to manage its own capital budget. Issues that could have derailed reforms, for example differences in salary grades across the three merging organisations, were possibly eased by the wider context of public sector crisis but were in any case addressed in a levelling up context.

Integration across the services remains challenging. Nationally, JobPath has monthly review meetings with the DSP and daily contact with the DSP central office, with the data system in a real time IT system.

³³ In 2016, a Minister of State was appointed with responsibility for co-ordination of the 2018 implementation of the EU data protection directive. Subject to legal data protection requirement there is an intention to use personal identifiers issued in a Public Service Card to enable alignment with other online systems to match and notify clients about employment opportunities (ETB, SOLAS, mywelfare.ie, Jobs Ireland).

LESN and SICAP have different national protocols but depend ultimately on local personal relationships. Lawlor's (2016) regional case study examines the challenges of integrated services in the DSP North Dublin region with 22,000 on the Live Register, and a 35,000 total claim load served by 6 Intreo offices, 4 JobPath, 3 LES, 6 Jobs Clubs and 3 SICAP Programmes as well as a suite of active labour market programmes including 62 Community Employment schemes. Even though they serve common customer groups, Lawlor identifies multiple barriers to interagency work, including lack of familiarity with each other's work, legal statutes, different work cultures or approaches to customer service, systems barriers/IT connectivity, pressures of time and competing priorities and data sharing issues.

The main features of the new service, as they moved from design to implementation, are subject to considerable local variation as services developed pragmatically in localised circumstances (rural/urban, large and small towns, etc.) For some, such variance is considered an advantage with a one-size-fits-all model rejected in a context of significant regional variation.

Distinctive features of Intreo services now include:

- An integrated reception area in all Intreo offices - one place/area to go for all services and located all in one building, with an open reception and then all other services by appointment so there are no queues (an important feature of the new service).
- A common brand, colour scheme, and seating arrangements
- Integrated decision-making, i.e. payment of social welfare, employment services, etc. all in one building and under the same brand.
- Group Engagement Processes include a common set of slides/power point, sending out clear and uniform messages and explaining the system and sanctions (refined and updated over time based on feedback).
- Focus on the client in activation system as quickly as possible, moving through the system and with clear systematic progression and referral points.
- Development of a Personal Progression Plan for each client (during first appointment the case workers fill the first part of the form).
- The process of sanctions in cases of non-engagement is explained to all who attend the Group Information Sessions and is also explained in a letter with next appointment details. Payments are reinstated once behaviour is compliant.

The Intreo client journey³⁴ includes considerable variance across localities

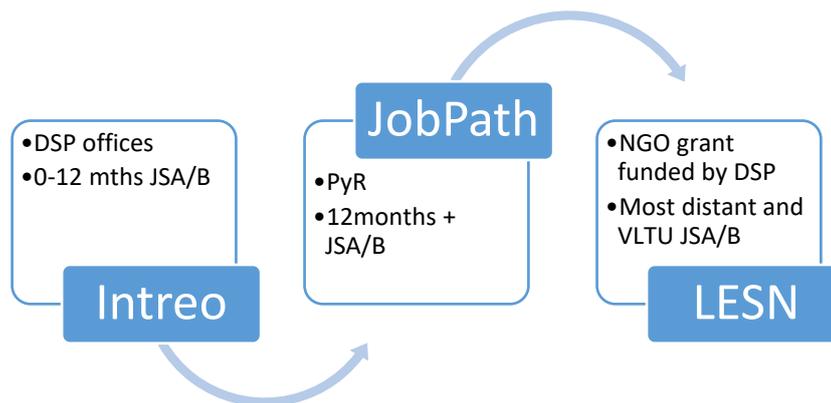
- All clients are assessed with a PEX score via a questionnaire attached to the claim form
- All such data is inputted into BOMi
- All claims are processed and straight forward claims decided within three working days
- All clients requested to attend Group engagement
- Depending on PEX score those with low PEX or probability of exit offered one to one session with a Case Officer
- Develop Personal Progression Plan and meetings with Case Officer to progress and plan

³⁴ Client journeys for Seetec, Turas Nua, LESN and SICAP are outlined in the appendix

- Assessment, support and referral with a warm handover for long-term unemployed (12 months or more), in a seamless three way meeting between DSP Case Officers, JobPath worker and the client

Diagram 1 Overview of system within which Intreo leads client activation

Intreo first provides activation services for short term unemployed job seekers, and then hands over long term unemployed clients to JobPath. After one year JobPath refers those still unemployed back to Intreo, who then most likely refer these very long term unemployed clients to LESN



Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), targets non job seeker working aged welfare claimants and provides pre labour market supports (individual & community).

The services/measures selected for individual clients are determined by the PEX profiling (Intreo), a client assessment portal (JobPath) and holistic case work (LESN). In each case the counsellor or caseworker has discretion to decide progression paths (subject to budgets/guidelines). Available services and measures are provided internally, by public bodies, or other times accessed externally. For example group engagement sessions offered by Intreo may be delivered by LESN. In this instance they are financed by Intreo and quality control is tracked by the local Intreo office. Training services are purchased in the local market (driving lessons), financed by individual training grants funded by DSP and quality control assumed to be the function of relevant regulatory authority for that industry. Training services may also be purchased from private actors and regulated by SOLAS (for example Safe Pass).

Intreo staff were trained primarily in technical, IT and administrative aspects of the activation system. To support this, the Department developed and delivered a new case officer training programme in 2013 (training in the Intreo process, activation measures with exercises and case studies, job seeking supports, employer engagement, communication skills, adult guidance and IT systems training), with updates to reflect new programmes and changes to existing initiatives. Other training includes claims decision making, customer service, non-violent crisis intervention, change management and the community welfare service.

Core capacity was a key issue during the implementation of the initiative and this was originally resolved by the introduction of the cost efficient private sector solution JobPath, with the alternative, an expanded LESN dismissed as a potential solution to under-capacity. Ultimately capacity was addressed by the drop in the live register (from a high of 15.1% in 2013 to a low of 6.4% in March 2017). The rapid fall in unemployment has in fact created a potential problem of over-capacity³⁵. Lower unemployment also creates a contractual concern that client targets for JobPath may not be met and/or that LESN and SICAP will not receive sufficient referrals to be sustainable services. Options for addressing over capacity include reviewing the role or presence of JobPath³⁶ and/or reviewing the role of LESN, or expanding capacity for deeper engagement and widening the scope of who is in the activation net. There are concerns that some groups (for example people with disabilities) may become targets for JobPath services, and that this would be an incorrect rationale for their activation and that there may be more appropriate.

There were various adjustments in the design of the initiative during implementation. DSP tweaked the profiling instruments and IT systems, group engagement was made available to all and the role of the LESN was integrated into the Intreo model. The largest adjustment was arguably the establishment of the PbR model JobPath.

EU officials in the shape of the Troika had some influence on this implementation trajectory. EU peer review and benchmarking exercises provided useful policy learning, access to EU peers and examples of implementation experiences elsewhere. 2014, 2015, and 2016 structural reform proposals under European Semester National Reports and Community Specific Recommendations have recommended improving evaluation. The DSP Activation and Employment Policy Unit services European Semester reporting and EU activation and employment policies and works with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) and SOLAS to report and monitor all EU employment policies and actions through three committees/groups³⁷.

2.11. Costs of the initiative

Köppe and O'Connell (2016) found that small changes in political networks and power resources, for example among trade unions, enabled political room to manoeuvre and minimise political costs of reforms. While some aspects, including the PbR JobPath model and intensification of conditionality, proved controversial, the reform had no immediate political costs³⁸. Most reforms, including PbR, happened 'under the radar' with little in terms of protest by social partners or social movements. Most consider the reforms are now well embedded and would be difficult to dislodge.

The measure was financed solely by the national budget and from general taxation³⁹. Capital set-up costs of Intreo are estimated at €40m, but running costs of the system are not known, making it difficult

³⁵ The possibility of such a rapid decrease in unemployment was raised but never fully considered in the planning stages, nor was there consideration about how over capacity might be addressed.

³⁶ Some suggest that new EU trade and investment rules may limit DSP in regressing use of private sector.

³⁷ EU level Irish Youth Guarantee monitoring requires servicing numerous requests for information; annual data collection; inputs to reports and policy advice and analysis on youth unemployment and appointment of a designated National Youth Guarantee Co-ordinators to attend three National Youth Guarantee Co-ordinator meetings per annum.

³⁸ While some reforms proved controversial (extension of activation to lone parents, the private sector internships, Job Bridge,) these were not central to the reform agenda

³⁹The EU PEIL European Social Fund 20% funded the youth labour market goals and actions of SICAP and necessitated procurement

to assess Intreo against other services including LESN (€20m annually), Jobs Clubs (€5m annually), SICAP (€40m annually) and JobPath (€300m over four years). Capital budgets were under extreme fiscal pressure and DSP achieved the development of 61 Intreo offices with a capital budget of €30-40m and in a context where the State architectural and building services, the Office for Public Works (OPW), was under extreme pressure. This compares well to investment in comparable PES reforms in Northern Ireland (£100m), UK (£2b) and Cyprus (€10m). Public Relations costs were low and estimated at less than €100,000 for Intreo compared to €1.3b for Germany's Hartz 4 public relations campaign. Such low costs were in part facilitated by the low profile 'under-the-radar' nature of the reform episode.

2.12. Monitoring

A number of formal systems are in place to monitor effectiveness. The DSP is responsible for monitoring Intreo, JobPath and LESN⁴⁰. DSP has developed a longitudinal data set of working age claimants which provides data on flows in and out of employment, duration of claims and employment, and proxies for levels of income. Formal evaluations of both Intreo and JobPath (both by ERSI) took place in 2017 but, up to April 1st 2018, remain unpublished as does a 2017 value for money and governance review of LESN and Jobs Clubs carried out by Indecon consultants. O'Connell (2017) and Sweeney (2017) observe that the poor evaluation culture is shifting especially through the influence of an evaluation sub-committee in the Labour Market Council.

Pathways to Work sets explicit quarterly action targets and these have been largely achieved. The PtW quarterly monitoring system completed an assessment on 5th December 2016 and reported no actions were at risk, that 33 (38%) of actions had been completed with 36 (42%) on target for completion and 17 actions (20%) off target, but due to be completed.

High level employment outcome targets set through PtW have been achieved (75,000 more long-term unemployed in employment, overall increase in progression rate to employment, persistence decrease in long-term unemployment rate). This is not necessarily a function of Intreo or PtW and may be simply an outcome of economic growth and jobs growth. However, the greater proportional drop in long-term unemployed (46%) compared to an overall drop in unemployment (37%) cannot be explained as a function of jobs growth. Irish long-term unemployment is now 4.25%. This compares to Greece at 17.6% and Iceland with a low of 0.5%.

PtW now works to achieve a long-term unemployment target of 2% to 2.5% for 2020 and for long-term unemployment to comprise less than 40% of total unemployment. A 2020 youth unemployment target has been set at 12% (twice the adult rate). Arguably, given Ireland's recent economic growth there is room for more ambitious targets albeit Brexit and the global political economy pose uncertainties.

The quality of Intreo services and casework is assessed through a client satisfaction phone survey of 1,010 job seekers. There is an equivalent JobPath survey. This shows positive feedback with premises, staff, services and processes rated 4.38 of a max score of 5. While more than three quarters either completely or moderately agreed that the process helped them get a job, the 2017 survey appears less positive than the 2015 survey. Feedback is processed back to caseworkers via line management and internal bulletins. The data is made available on-line while large scale staff think-ins encourage reflective practice. INOU (2016, 2017) and NESCC (forthcoming) reviews of Intreo, LESN and JobPath are also relatively positive but point to the need to intensify efforts to facilitate equality, rights and empathy.

⁴⁰ DHCPLG are responsible for monitoring SICAP through the intermediary agency Pobal.

Engagement, progression and job placement are the main indicators for assessing performance. Information for the period before and after the reform re job entry outcomes, participation in active measures, duration of unemployment spells, users' satisfaction, client waiting time, and staff caseload is included in the annex for 2008 and 2015⁴¹. There is no information regarding staff satisfaction. Key performance indicators show transaction processing times reduced from three weeks to three days and the lead time for engagement with employment services has reduced from at least three months to about two weeks. Both Seetec and Turas Nua have monitoring systems. Turas Nua work with MESME/UK quality standards and Seetec uses Sales Force to collect and monitor quality data.

2.13. Impact assessment and impacts

There was no formal impact assessment of Intreo, and as of April 1st 2018 there has been no published ex ante impact assessment however an Intreo ex-post evaluation is currently under preparation by the ERSI using C.I.E analysis and will be available later in 2018. Qualitative data (Boland 2016) and anecdotal feedback from NGO based service delivery agents suggests considerable variance in the quality of services. There is regular mention of issues relating to staff empathy towards clients, competence, capacity, time and culture, an over emphasis on fraud and control, lack of capacity to refer, and under developed relationships with employers.

The reform had a number of unintended consequences; three mentioned earlier are worth revisiting.

PtW has overseen a significant growth in the numbers of long-term unemployed who are very long-term unemployed (3 yrs. +). While only 25% of those unemployed for up to six months are still unemployed six months later, 55% of those already long-term unemployed (1-2 years) are still unemployed 1 year later and 66% of those already long-term unemployed for two years or more are still unemployed 1 year later.

It is not yet clear how DSP will expand activation to non-job seeker claimants and there appears to be a tension between policy to expand activation and the need to address possible 'overcapacity'. While DSP argue they are under no obligation to continue with JobPath most observers believe JobPath will continue and that LESN, who have a track record of dealing with groups more distant from the labour market, is more vulnerable to downscaling.⁴²

The development of the Job Seekers Transition payment, a half-way house of conditionality, obliges engagement but crucially does not oblige participation in paid employment. If this remains the model, it may have useful application for including other groups presently outside the activation regime (DEASP, 2017).

2.14. Any important follow-up measures?

Intreo was created during the recession and when unemployment was 15%. However, it now continues in a different environment with unemployment at 6.4% (CSO Q2 2017). Intreo has demonstrated some capacity to reflexively respond to different economic contexts shifting from the recession focused PtW (2012-15), to a recovery focused PtW (2016-2020). However, given the Irish focus on low work

⁴¹ We were not sure about 'indicator data provided in cost-gain tables', ESRI CIE will likely include such data?

⁴² Opinion is mixed in this regard, some argue, LESN as most experienced working with those most distant from the labour market may become more relevant, however some interviewees perceive LESN as outdated in skills. LESN as well embedded local services may also have some degree of local political protection.

intensity families, roll out of enabling activation to qualified adults (spouses) and people with disabilities has been slow. McKeon (2016) argues that *‘during recovery or prosperity, as the labour supply tightens activation becomes more expansive and is oriented towards minimising frictional unemployment, by increasing active labour-market participation by all people of a working age, widening labour supply and enabling “active inclusion.”* It is noticeable that, other than the rhetoric of social inclusion, McKeon’s recovery vision does not include equality objectives.

How JobPath, LESN and SICAP are further integrated with Intreo will influence prospects of integrated service delivery for those most distant from the labour market. Integration involves key challenges especially in relation to IT, online services and the changing nature of employment. While the overall system now integrates signposting to other services, there is still insufficient integration particularly for those with considerable barriers. There remain gaps in the provision of employment guidance and career management and weak capacity to orient people towards long-term education or training options. More policy design and institutional overlap is required between Intreo and the Further Education Sector (FET), which is itself relatively underdeveloped. Integration between Intreo, FET and training is urgent given those most distant from the labour market who are likely to require a train first, rather than a work first oriented activation regime.

The future of work is uncertain and the changing nature of work, jobs and the potential impact of information technology and artificial intelligence on the labour market is challenging to predict. Those on the wrong side of the digital divide will experience new forms of exclusion in terms of not only how jobs and the nature of work will change, but how access to jobs will also change. Engagement with soft skills development as a core feature of education/training will be central to PES enabling clients to adapt to this future labour market.

3. Assessment and conclusions

3.1. What external factors helped/hindered the launch of the initiative and its successful implementation?

Ireland’s fiscal crisis and presence of the Troika is assumed, by many, to have been a strong external factor pushing reforms, and the Troika MOU (DOF 2010) does contain specific references to activation reform targets. However, Hick (2017) and Laffan (2017 p85) concur that Ireland ‘owned the reform agenda’ and retained a degree of manoeuvrability to influence Troika governance. Rather, the presence of the Troika was a catalyst for reform implementation, elevating Intreo reform to a political priority and providing and embedding a monitoring framework which included quarterly monitoring, a relatively novel feature in Irish policy implementation.

The external factors that influenced the initiative include the numerous activation studies used by policy makers to promote systematic learning, in particular the OECD country study and EU peer reviews. Some external factors hindered the reform initiative and its successful implementation including the EU engineered fiscal framework which restricted Irish officials’ capacity, and which necessitated a targeting of available resources on the short term unemployed at the expense of the long-term unemployed and non-live register claimants of working age. EU procurement policy at least partially informed the commissioning process for SICAP and JobPath. The external policy transfer from the UK is curious in light of the poor evaluation and public reputation of the UK reforms, particularly the Work Programme, albeit efforts were made to avoid UK policy errors (Wiggan 2015).

3.2. Lessons for the country

The successful implementation of Intreo offers many lessons in a country associated with poor implementation. The reform experience reflects *'a deeply rooted political and administrative culture of pragmatism'* (Laffan 2017). The reforms took place in a relatively small population of actors reliant on personal relationships to achieve integration at both national and local levels. These relationships are not enough to break down national and local silos and institutional innovations are needed for a deeper level of sustainable integration.

Lessons include the importance of strong political and policy leadership, clear communication throughout the organisation, piloting, quarterly reporting, and the strategic use of crisis as an opportunity (both economic crisis and the FÁS PES governance crisis), as well as the importance of setting clear objectives and effective use of evidence.

The focus on strong internal change management was not matched by an equivalent culture of consultation and engagement with external stakeholders, including peripheral PES services in the LESN and the local development sector. This has clearly caused (perhaps unnecessarily) ongoing tension, mistrust and uncertainty. There is also a sense of a missed opportunity to include the experience and skills of the LESN and local development actors in policy deliberation. Had this been done, the needs of those most distant from the labour market might have been better served by activation reforms.

With a shift in social partnership style governance over the period, the Labour Market Council appears an innovative way to hold the DSP to account to some form of external stakeholder. However the composition of the LMC appears unbalanced towards employers and key actors like LESN and the new national training authority, Solas, are noticeably absent. It is clear the LMC has influenced the emerging practices of quantitative counterfactual evaluations but that this new commitment might need to be balanced with more qualitative evaluations. Likewise, the commitment to employer engagement, a focus of the LMC, might need to be better balanced to include both large and smaller employers. The LMC composition should reflect the experience of working with those most distant from the labour market and those developing policy in, and delivering, education and training. More can be done to monitor the relationship between activation and low paid work and avoid the likelihood that activation might compel people into low paid employment. Some fear that JobPath, in particular, will encourage a cohort of employers to structure their business around low paid, short-term, temporary contracts.

The PtW 2012-16 evaluation highlighted that future activation policy should do more to address issues for the very long-term unemployed of three years or more and the young unemployed, as well as jobless households, which include lone parents, spouses and people with disabilities and carers.

There are also issues of inconsistency in the quality of service delivery and demand from other non-job seeker cohorts for access to activation services and a desire for a "parity of esteem" with job seekers (McKeon 2016). There appear gaps in the DSP's public duty to promote equality and human rights, with differential access on grounds of age, gender, disability and family or marital status and insufficient mechanisms to review and monitor equality of outcomes for different cohorts. Within this, concerns exist that the male breadwinner activation still stresses full-time work availability as a core component of the definition of job seeker. This excludes significant cohorts of society who have part-time availability on care and health grounds.

Ireland needs to develop procurement and commissioning practices to maximise flexibility in the application of EU public procurement directives⁴³. There has been no impact or risk assessment as to

⁴³ A European Directives (March 2016) made the explicit provision that member states have the right to exclude areas of social protection).

how privatisation impacts on future public policy options. The TTIP debates highlighted how future ratchet clauses in investment and trade law may make restoration of public services difficult to effect and deny the State exit strategies from private contracts. Higgins (2016) argues a full long-term evaluation of the PbR models is necessary before the extension of such models or variants of these to the LESN, SICAP and other social inclusion programmes.

3.3. Lessons for Europe

Notwithstanding the difficulties of policy transfer some observations are relevant.

- Innovative: Ireland's cultural approach to sanctions with relatively strong messaging but weak enforcement reflects a traditional orientation to 'sensitive activation' or 'supportive conditionality' (NESC 2005). This offers a more tempered approach to punitive sanction. For example, requiring those with care obligations to participate in a 'half-way house' of conditionality offers potential for a more developmental and less 'work first' model of engagement.
- Transferable: Ireland is a late moderniser and the Intreo model was transferred or adapted from other countries, informed by research and consultancy work in EU, statements of best practice, quality and benchmarking. As such it is an interesting model of policy transfer. More could be explored about where and why Ireland sought lessons.
- Scalable: Ireland's challenge to date has been narrowly State and private market focused and it remains a challenge to vertically and horizontally integrate the third sector or local development PES into its model.
- Sustainable: The reform process is still underway and the ability to persist over time while also adapting to new challenges is crucial. As unemployment reduces and the focus shifts to very long-term unemployed and those most distant, the institutional process needs to be flexible, incorporating new actors and perhaps shedding old actors. Governance is key, including willingness to be held accountable in a transparent manner to a wide set of well-informed stakeholders with capacity to engage with evidence and data.

3.4. Main strengths and weaknesses

The majority saw the Intreo reform episode as a significant reform and remarkable in the degree to which such a sizable reform was delivered without significant political controversy.

The reform episode is an example of a strong reform initiative, internally focused and driven from the top by both political and policy actors. Its strength lies in its drive to change, in difficult circumstances. Its weakness lies in an absence of engagement and consultation with surrounding stakeholders, perhaps limiting the longer term and wider potential of the reform and hampering capacity to expand and reach those most distant from the labour market.

A significant feature of the reform is the mixed level of integration with other 'arms', moving from a strong integration with JobPath to weaker forms of engagement with LESN and little overlap with SICAP. A related feature is the gradual shift towards PbR and commissioning as features of the reform model amidst legitimate questions about whether these shifts are necessary.⁴⁴

- Coordination of job seeker activation: The reform has merged the administration of job seeker income supports with PES. They are delivered from the same location, albeit at times with different office entrances. There is now a focus on more active engagement

⁴⁴ For an explanation of these aspects please see [Scharle \(2015\)](#) pp 23-24.

and encouragement of active job search and while opinions are mixed and there is considerable local variation, the client journey is now clearer.

- Absence of institutional overlap with education and training sector providers (FET): One of the more serious gaps in coordination and integration, this is evident in both policy design and implementation and at national, regional and local levels. The reform agenda for FET is itself underdeveloped and proceeding at a slower and less ambitious pace than activation reforms. The urgency of more effective integration with FET and training is given new relevance with the emerging policy focus on those most distant from the labour market who are likely to require a train first rather than a work first oriented activation regime.
- Coordination of information exchange and exploiting synergies between services: With the use of BOMi in three of the four services (Intreo, JobPath and LESN) and with protocols on sharing information with SICAP, there is a closer coordination and exchange of information. However this information is one way into Intreo and the more peripheral organisations are less informed or less able to access the full suite of available information. An immediate challenge is meeting requirements of the new EU data directive.
- Response to multidimensional problems: Local capacity to make multidimensional responses still appears dependant on good personal relationships, although there are examples of institutional mechanisms (monthly local round tables, protocols) to achieve more horizontal integration. Nonetheless, the more peripheral SICAP and LESN appear better placed to respond to multidimensional problems (housing, transport, family support, health, childcare), particularly those that are delivered through local actors.
- Access to (take-up of) benefits and services: A ‘no wrong door’ rather than a ‘one stop shop’ rationale seems to permeate the model of integration. The DSP favours more back room integration through shared information systems and means testing than a fully integrated local service access mechanism. Reducing stigma or addressing take-up issues do not appear on the policy agenda.
- Innovative capacity of service providers: A greater balance between accountability for service provision and capacity for innovation could be achieved. Both SICAP and LESN feel they have lost autonomy to innovate as a result of tighter grant and commissioning targets that narrow the scope of work and that mitigate interagency work ‘that they are not paid to do’. DSP have innovated. For example, resource allocation is informed by use of a profiling tool to predict the probability of remaining unemployed. Other features (group information sessions, records of mutual commitments, new penalties for non-engagement, employer support initiatives and integration of welfare and employment services), while new to Ireland, are hardly innovative.
- Poverty: All aspects of poverty (at risk, consistent and deprivation) increased over the crisis, but all indicators are now experiencing a slow decline across all groups. Given lack of paid employment is a clear risk factor for groups experiencing poverty, activation may be a necessary but insufficient priority for an anti-poverty strategy. Enabling access to work for low work intensity families will require more focus on enabling and voluntary activation of lone parents, (female) spouses/partners and people with disabilities, learning from the experience of other actors, including LESN and greater engagement with SICAP.

- Transparency and accountability of (actors involved in) service provision: While democratic institutions have oversight of activation policy (at Cabinet, Cabinet sub Committee and in Parliament Committees (Jobs, Social Protection and Education) policy is driven from and by senior management in DSP. The Labour Market Council, an innovative transparent governance initiative, needs to be broadened to be interdepartmental and include a wider range of perspectives, including those most distant from the labour market (LESN, SICAP, ILDN, gender, migrants) as well as SOLASand ETBs, SMEs and labour market skills forecasting experts.

A key question is who benefits from activation services. The efficacy of focusing on the short term unemployed is now under question, an unintended consequence, and a new policy problem may be a sharp rise in the numbers of the three year plus unemployed. There is an increasing demand for parity of esteem for those outside formal job seeker claimant count and a questioning of a predominantly male bread winner focus of work-first activation into full time employment. Other critical issues to be addressed include the viability of extending conditionality to those in part time employment and in receipt of social welfare payment (casual earners), and the extent, quality and appropriateness of career guidance in the activation process.

4. References

- Boland, T. & Griffin, R. (2015) *The Sociology of Unemployment*. Manchester, Manchester University Press,
- Boland, T. (2016) 'Seeking a role: Disciplining jobseekers as actors in the labour market' *Work, Employment and Society* 30(2): 334-351.
- Boland, T. & Griffin, R. (2015) 'The Death of Unemployment in Welfare Policy: Governing a liminal experience' *Irish Journal of Sociology* 23(2): 29-48.
- Boyle, N. (2005). *FÁS and active labour market policy, 1985–2004*. (Studies in Public Policy 17). Dublin: The Policy Institute, Trinity College Dublin
- Collins M. and Murphy M.P (2016) Activation for What? Employment or a low pay economy' in Murphy M.P. and Dukelow F. (eds.) *The Irish Welfare State in the 21st Century: Challenges and Changes*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Ch 3
- CPA (2014) Report of the Civil Service Arbitration Board on JobPath, Dublin, Civil Service Arbitration Board
- Considine, M. and Dukelow, F. (2014) 'The role of national and international policy actors and influences in crisis times: the case of Ireland' In: Michael Hill (Eds). *Studying Public Policy: an international approach*. Bristol: Policy Press
- CSO 2017a, SILC 2015, Dublin: CSO
- CSO 2017b QNHS Q2, Dublin: CSO
- CSO 2017c Live Register March 2017, Dublin; CSO
- DoF (2010) EU/IMF 2010 Programme of Financial Support for Ireland: Programme Documents, Dublin: DoF
- DEASP (2017) Pathways to Work: Action Plan for Jobless Households, Dublin, DEASP
- DSP (2016) Pathways to Work 2016-2020
<http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/PathwaysToWork2016-2020.pdf>
- DSP (2012) Pathways to Work 2012-2016 Government Policy Statement on Labour Market Activation
DSP Dublin <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/pathwaystowork.pdf>
- DSP (2011a) Project Plan for the Development and Implementation of NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND ENTITLEMENTS SERVICE Dublin DSP <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/nees.pdf>
- DSP. (2010). *Report on the desirability and feasibility of introducing a single social assistance payment for people of working age*. Dublin: DSP
- Department of Social and Family Affairs. (2006). *Proposals to support lone parents*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Dukelow, Fiona (2015) 'Pushing against an open door: reinforcing the neo-liberal policy paradigm in Ireland and the impact of EU intrusion'. *Comparative European Politics*, 13 (1):93-111

- Dukelow, F. and Considine, M. (2014) 'Between retrenchment and recalibration: the impact of austerity on the Irish social protection system'. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 41 (2):55-72
- ESRI (201X) Intreo Evaluation- forthcoming (ESRI),
- ESRI (201X) JobPath Evaluation forthcoming (ESRI)
- Finn, D. (2011). *An international overview paper to Supports and Services for Unemployed Job Seekers Challenges and Opportunities in a time of Recession*, 15th September 2011, Dublin: RIA
- Grubb, D. Singh, S. and Tergeist P. (2009) Activation Policies in Ireland OECD Social, Employment and Migration working Papers No 75, Paris: OECD
- Hardiman, N. (2011). Introduction: Profiling Irish governance. In N. Hardiman (Ed.), *Irish governance in crisis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Hick, R. (2017) Enter the Troika: The Politics of Social Security during Ireland's Bailout *Journal of Social Policy*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279417000095> -
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (2016) *Mapping the journey for people who are short term unemployed: Report on Phase One of the Employment Services Research Project* Intreo Dublin: INOU
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (2016) *Mapping the journey for unemployed people Report on Phase Two of the Employment Services Research Project* LESN Dublin: INOU
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (forthcoming) *Mapping the journey for people who are long-term unemployed: Report on Phase Three of the Employment Services Research Project* JobPath, Dublin: INOU
- Ireland (2012) *Joint Committee on Jobs, Social Protection and Education Report on The Single Working Age Payment Proposal*, Dublin, Dail Eireann
<https://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/archivedcommittees/jobssocialprotectionandeducation/Single-Working-Age-Payment-Report-13-March-2012.pdf>
- ISSA (2016) Intreo - Integrated welfare and employment service: *A case of the Department of Social Protection: good practices in Social Security*, online: ISSA
- Kelly, E., Mc Guinness S., O'Connell P.J. (2013) Do Active Labour Market Programmes Activate in P. Lunn and F. Ruane (Eds) *Using Evidence to Inform Policy*, Dublin: Gill and McMillan
- Köppe S and O'Connell P.J (2016) *Change Management, Redeployment and Designing an Integrated Service: Implementation of Intreo* unpublished Dublin, Geary Institute UCD
- Layte R. and O'Connell P.J., (2005) *Profiling the unemployed; An Analysis of the Galway and Waterford Live Register Surveys* Policy Research Series No, 55, JUNE 2005, Dublin ESRI
- Lawlor, S. (2016) Inter-Agency Working Together for Success presentation to *Creating an Inclusive Labour Market*, Pobal Conference, DCU, 9th November 2016
- Martin, J. (2011, July). Single social assistance payment for people of working age. Presentation to Department of Social Protection consultation seminar 'Progression to a single working age payment', Goldsmith House, Dublin.

Martin, J. 2014 *Activation and active labour market policies in OECD countries: Stylised facts and evidence on their effectiveness*, UCD Geary Working Paper 2014/09, Dublin: UCD

McGuinness, S., O'Connell, P. J., Kelly, E., & Walsh, J. R. (2011). *Activation in Ireland: An evaluation of the National Employment Action Plan* (Research Series No. 20). Dublin: ESRI

Murphy M.P. (2017) Irish Flex-Insecurity: the reality for low paid workers in Ireland Women, Special Issue, Changes in labour markets – impact on welfare states, *Social Policy & Administration*, 2017, 52 2,

Murphy M.P. (2016) Low road or high road? The post-crisis trajectory of Irish activation, *Critical Social Policy* 36 (2) 1–21

Murphy M.P. (2012) The Politics of Labour Activation 1980-2010, *Administration* 1 (2):20-32

Murphy M.P. (2014) Poverty in Ireland in Mc Kendrick J.H. et al (eds.) *Poverty in Scotland 2014, The Independence Referendum and Beyond*, London: CPAG pp. 281-286

Nalebuff B.J. and Brandenburger, A.N. (1997) *Co-opetition* New York: Double Day

NESC. (2005). *Developmental welfare state*. Dublin: The Stationery Office

NESC. (2011). *Supports and services for unemployed job seekers: Challenges and opportunities in a time of recession* (Report No. 123). Dublin: National Economic and Social Development Office.

NESC (forthcoming) Study of low work intensity families, Dublin NESC

NESF (2004). *Ending long-term unemployment* (Report No. 4). Dublin: NESF

Ireland (2017) *Oireachtas Jobs, Social Protection and Education Committee Reports on Activation 2017*, Dublin, and Dail Eireann

O'Connell P.J. (2017). Unemployment and Labour Market Policy in Roche WK, O'Connell P.J. and Prothero A. (Eds) *Austerity and Recovery in Ireland: Europe's Poster Child and the Great Recession* OUP, Oxford pp232- 251.

O'Connell P.J., Mc Guinness S. and Kelly E. (2012) The Transition from Short-term to Long-term Unemployment: a statistical profiling model for Ireland, *Economic and Social Review* 43(1) 135-64

O'Connell, P.J., McGuinness S., Kelly E., Walsh J. (2009) *National profiling of the Unemployed in Ireland*, Research Series No 10 JULY 2009, Dublin ESRI,

O'Sullivan, M. et al. (2015), *A Study on the Prevalence of Zero-hours Contracts among Irish Employers and their Impact on Employees*, Dublin: Low Pay Commission

Turner, T. and O'Sullivan, M. (2013), Economic crisis and the restructuring of wage setting mechanisms for vulnerable workers in Ireland, *Economic & Social Review*, 44, 2: 197–219.

Walsh F. (2015) *Labour market measures in Ireland 2008–13: The crisis and beyond* International Labour Office, Research Department. – Geneva: ILO, http://www.ilo.org/global/research/publications/WCMS_44992/lang--en/index.htm -

Watson, D., Maître, B. and Whelan, C. T. (2012), *Work and Poverty in Ireland*, Dublin: ESRI and Social Inclusion Division of Department of Social Protection.

Wickham, J. and Bobek, A. (2015), *Enforced Flexibility? Working in Ireland Today*, Dublin: TASC, <http://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/enforcedflexibilityfinal.pdf> (accessed 21 November 2016).

Wiggan J. (2015). What variety of employment service quasi market. Ireland's JobPath as a Private Power Market, *Social Policy Review*, 2015 pp 151-168city or

Section III: Annexes

A.1. Overview of the existing literature

- (1) empirical studies that focus on reform episode, describing the data and method of analysis.

INTREO Evaluation- forthcoming (ESRI), and JobPath Evaluation forthcoming (ESRI) will both be comprehensive CIE's and likely include some level of CBA, they will contain the only accessible quantitative information on the two primary PES in Ireland

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (2016-17) – Trio of qualitative reviews of Intreo, JobPath, and LESN. These are primarily qualitative assessments (using interviews and focus groups) from the claimant's perspectives, of the three PES, although not comparative the three reports use a common framework which allows some level of comparison

PtW 2012-2016, 2016-2020 and suites of quarterly monitoring reports updating progress on action targets, can be read alongside Labour Market Council comments on PTW. Planning and policy documents outlining key targets, time frames and policy rationale and progress reports on quarterly basis.

Walsh F. 2015 Labour market measures in Ireland 2008–13: The crisis and beyond International Labour Office, Research Department. – Geneva: ILO, 2015 http://www.ilo.org/global/research/publications/WCMS_44992/lang--en/index.htm - comprehensive outline of key Labour Market features including regulatory changes, wage changes, income support scheme changes, and ALMP's as well as data on trend in employment/unemployment.

- (2) Papers (empirical or other) that discuss the reform, briefly describing their main focus and highlighting their strengths.

O'Connell P (2017) Unemployment and Labour Market Policy in Roche WK, O'Connell P.J. and Prothero A. (eds) *Austerity and Recovery in Ireland, Europe's Poster Child and the Great Recession* OUP, Oxford pp232- 251. Good overview of statistical data and sketch of major activation reforms, critical of pace and ambition of reforms

Hick R (2017) **Enter** the Troika: The Politics of Social Security during Ireland's Bailout *Journal of Social Policy*. Published online 02 March 2017 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279417000095> - good practical assessment of Troika's influence on core department DSP, shows more room to manoeuvre than might be expected

Köppe S and O'Connell P.J (2016) *Change Management, Redeployment and Designing an Integrated Service: Implementation of Intreo* unpublished Dublin, Geary Institute

Murphy MP (2016) Low road or high road? The post-crisis trajectory of Irish activation *Critical Social Policy* 36(2) 1–21 critical engagement assessing work first nature of Irish activation

Murphy M.P. (2012) The Politics of Labour Activation 1980-2010 *Administration* 1 (2):20-32 mapping the key ideas interest and institutions of the early reform period 2007-2012

Watson, D., Maître, B. and Whelan, C. T. (2012), *Work and Poverty in Ireland, Dublin: ESRI and Social Inclusion Division of Department of Social Protection.*

A.2. Good practice examples

Field	Information provided
Country	Ireland
Title of the good practice feature (English and original)	Intreo Change Management Team/Hub
Short sentence summarising the practice	Small change management team with expertise from inside and outside the civil service facilitated a significant process of public sector reform in the context of a fiscal and unemployment crisis which was used as ‘opportunity for reform’
Rationale	The DSP moved from ideas for a ‘parallel’ integration into a full merger to provide an integrated service for the client and efficiency gains, this required management of an 5 year implementation process
Start (and end) date	October 2010 new senior staff being merged into an existing DSP project board to become a Change Management Team within DSP, ongoing
Which organisation(s) was involved in its implementation?	In the context of crisis early retirement had eroded established knowledge-based communities, this allowed space for new alliances across agencies and departments with existing DSP staff, Community Employment Service, FÁS, external experts, management consultancies, domestic and international policy experts
Main elements of the feature	<p>Focus on a small hub/team of four (partly due to limited resources, but also because to maximize effective communication with internal experts and share ownership of the change delegating to line managers for local implementation thus enabling faster and more flexible approach characterized ‘centralised design, local implementation’.</p> <p>The core reform team of four had to co-ordinate, facilitate, design, negotiate and communicate implementation, All members had academic and practical backgrounds in change management. Specific skills were recruited into the team including experience of partnership and performance systems in the public sector as well industrial relations.</p> <p>Senior management communicated directly to newly merging staff for example in town hall meetings and workshops with CWS staff (later also with FÁS staff) and used innovative communication mechanisms including video, and personalised, targeted emails)</p>

Field	Information provided
Resources 1: money	Increasing demand due to rising unemployment and shrinking budgets and hardly any resources for managing, planning and redeveloping service delivery
Resources 2: PES capacity, tools	Team worked closely with internal experts (IT, industrial relations, human resources), sought advice and input from consulting firms (Accenture, BearingPoint) and national and international policy experts (OECD, NESC and ESRI).
Transferability	Highly transferable
Sources of further information	Köppe S & O’Connell P. (2016) Change Management, Redeployment and Designing an Integrated Service: Implementation of Intreo, Dublin: University College Dublin (unpublished) ISSA (2016) Intreo - Integrated welfare and employment service: <i>A case of the Department of Social Protection: good practices in Social Security</i> , online: ISSA

Field	Information provided
Country	Ireland
Title of the good practice feature (English and original)	Job Seeker Longitudinal Dataset (JLD)
Short sentence summarising the practice	A Job Seeker Longitudinal Dataset achieve by promote co-operation in cross departmental open access to data relevant to Job Seekers Longitudinal Dataset (JLD). Unique identifier PPS No enabled individualized intelligence on labour market inputs and outcomes. A rich analytical database consisting of tens of millions of individual episodes of welfare and work since 2004. } Combines DSP, Revenue and SOLASdata to produce uniquely detailed view of the Irish labour market from the height of the economic boom to deep crisis and subsequent recovery. Moves focus from administrative events to episodes of welfare or work.
Rationale	A considerable facility to promote co-operation is the development of the open access Job Seeker Longitudinal Dataset (JLD). This dataset was created through the amalgamation of five administrative data sources and tracks the social welfare claim, employment, and training and activation programme episodes of job seeker claimants since 2004. Brief description of the mechanism that makes this feature useful.
Start (and end) date	2015-ongoing

Field	Information provided
Which organisation(s) was involved in its implementation?	Main implementer: DSP Other important partners: Revenue, Labour Market Council, CSO
Main elements of the feature	<p>The JLD is a rich data source as it contains information on a claimant’s gender, age, marital status, nationality, educational attainment, previous occupation, employment and unemployment histories (both duration and number of episodes), unemployment training history (type, duration and number of episodes), benefit type (e.g. JA, JB, etc.), spousal earnings (to qualify for an adult dependent allowance), number of child dependents, family payment type (e.g., adult and child dependent allowances, adult only, etc.) and geographic location.</p> <p>Data collate from Revenue – job commencements and P35 exits, DSP administrative & staffing data, FÁS/SOLASTraining, and the DSP ISTS (system for processing claims), all related by a PPSN number, unique identifier and cleared for data protection</p>
Resources 1: money	The data base was relatively cheap to introduce utilising skills of internal experienced statistician who had extensive networks across government departments as well as free expertise inputted by evaluation experts on Labour Market Council. Resources required are time to invest in data analysis and to invest in documenting the data holdings
Resources 2: PES capacity, tools	<p>Need to invest in staff training to input data and to use the data base, but cost savings associated with extra intelligence used to resource internal evaluations, as well pro-bono use of data by academics etc. is a cost free resource enhancing policy capacity. } At centre of PtWcounterfactual impact evaluations: ◦ Back to Education Allowance and Job Bridge already published ◦ Upcoming: Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, JobPath and Intreo.</p> <p>The process of seeking advice re methodology, sampling and robustness required close cooperation and skills transfer with Labour Market Policy unit / Social Inclusion Division and the Irish Government Evaluation and Expenditure Service and close liaison with the Central Statistics Office.</p>
Transferability	The challenge of enabling administrative co-operation to share data across government departments is common and the Irish experience is instructive in breaking through previously difficult to penetrate barriers
Sources of further information	Full reference with link https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/Data_in_the_DSP_NSB_25_10_2016.pdf

A.3. Additional information on tools, good practices

JobPath, Local Employment Service Network (LESN) and Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

JobPath, Local Employment Service Network and Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme are related in the reform episode. JobPath is closely related to Intreo in that Intreo refers to JobPath clients who become long-term unemployed. JobPath a later reform episode introduced a new national privatised employment service in 94 locations for long-term unemployed job seekers. The Local Employment Service Network (LESN) who since 1994 worked with the long-term unemployed and those most distant from the labour market was incorporated into Intreo in 2012. LESN provide extra capacity for Intreo's STU clients and are also a point of referral for ITU clients who have not gained employment through JobPath . SICAP is related to the reform episode in that Intreo and JobPath refer clients to local SICAP provided training and education opportunities. While not a public employment service the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) established in 2015 also works with those most distant from the labour market. These three institutions are detailed in the appendix and referenced in the study only when relevant to Intreo.. SICAP is related to the reform episode in that Intreo and JobPath refer clients to local SICAP provided training and education opportunities. This appendix briefly outlines some background information relating to JobPath, LESN and SICAP .

JobPath

JobPath is a privatised public employment service for Ireland's LTU. It comprises 94 offices across Ireland and is administered by two contracted companies. Geographical boundaries are clear; Seetec provides services for clients living in the top half of Ireland (northwards from Dublin across to Galway), Turas Nua everywhere else. The Pay-by-Results model includes payment for each employment outcome, sustained at 13, 26 and 39 week intervals of JobPath, this financial model restricted potential bidders to those able to absorb up-front costs of a pay-by-results model. The service in existence since 2015 and a full evaluation is underway.

The design of the JobPath contract has been critically assessed by Wiggan (2015) who identified some social democratic or Nordic welfare state elements in its model. Positive features include required minimum performance standards and customer service guarantees with payments contingent on satisfactory scores in customer satisfaction. Employment outcomes are 30 hours a week (compare to 16 in UK) and are for a minimum of 13 weeks (compared to four in the UK). There are penalty payments if contractors are 60% in excess of the agreed targets when the contract is signed and no obligation exists on the Department to extend or renew the four year contract (with a two-year work-out provision). The contract requires providers to send people into training and education where a 'stop the clock' mechanism incentivises providers to facilitate people into short-term training and education. For JobPath there are clear administrative and financial incentives to enhance cooperation

Anecdotal feedback on JobPath is mixed, with ongoing disquiet about use of a Pay-by-Results model (based on the UK experience). However, client feedback is relatively positive about service quality, the 2016 JobPath client satisfaction⁴⁵ survey showed slightly more than half feel that the JobPath service is better than Intreo service centre/Branch office but were least convinced that JobPath improves their prospects of getting a job. Suggestions for improvement focused on provision of better variety of jobs, more suitable courses and better service for older people. Jobseekers express a high level of satisfaction with the service (76 – 81% satisfaction) and low levels of dissatisfaction (5 – 8%). Among

⁴⁵ https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/2016_CSSResults_JobPath.pdf

jobseekers completing 12 months as a JobPath client, JobPath participants have a 23% higher rate of job-starts than non-participants and, were 15% more likely to be in employment than non-participants at the end of October 2016; however there is no assessment of job sustainability. Impacts are greater for very long-term unemployed people (3yrs+ unemployed) where JobPath participants had a 44% higher rate of job-starts than non-participants and were 42% more likely to be in employment than non-participants in October 2016. This impact analysis used survey data and statistical analysis but did not use a randomised control trial. A full CIE evaluation should be published by mid-2018. The JobPath client journey is outlined below. The JobPath client journey appears quite systematic with some variance between the two JobPath providers suggesting client journey variation depending on where one lives. In both cases the journey begins in theory with a 'warm' hand over or a seamless three way meeting between DSP Case Officers, JobPath worker and the client.

The Seetec JobPath client journey, a 12 month/52 week programme, begins with

- Mandatory Letter from the DSP - sent from Seetec
- Attend an general/group information session (and warm or soft handover from Intreo Case Officers)
- One to one sessions
- Progression planning - moving closer to the labour market - looking at stages of progression
- Psychometric assessment, on line tools, client assessment portal
- Sign posting to other services as necessary, e.g. Literacy support, ETC, specific training (can be bought in)
- Month 12 exit review and warm handover back to Intreo or ongoing support in employment
- Access to On line support in the six month period post (Seetec)
-

The Turas Nua JobPath client journey is a 12 month/52 week programme begins with

- Client attends initial meeting, one to one assessment with Personal Adviser and personal progression plan begins and client then meets with their Personal Adviser every 20 days.
- Interventions and supports include confidence building, tutoring (tutor/teams right across the country), attendance at small classes, CV preparation, interview skills, coaching and practice.
- CV builder on line - 50,000 versions of a CV
- The diagnostic/assessment⁴⁶ is completed again after 8-10 weeks and in this way there is a track of each client and analysis can be run at any point
- Provide/build bespoke training programmes to allow clients to compete for work - can offer short or longer courses depending on needs (activation programmes), some are class room based and other are industry based
- Sustained employment is the ultimate goal - they are paid at junctures, 13, 26, 39 and 52 weeks (different to UK which is 16 hours work or more, Ireland is 30 hours work)

⁴⁶ Turas Nua uses psychometric instruments developed with University of Sheffield - over 100 questions/criteria are measured at points with a Personal Adviser - this serves to build the personal progression plan that is unique to each individual. (Criteria include skills, health, budgeting, attitude, etc.)

- Also focus on employers are clients and responding to their needs, e.g. source and train people in accordance with specific need/demand, e.g. certification in Safe Pass

A key policy question is whether the originally anticipated volumes of referral, for which JobPath providers were required to have capacity are still relevant. If there is now a lesser volume of potential referrals the issue becomes how over capacity will be managed and who will pay the price for the lack of capacity to meet full contractual or service delivery targets (JobPath, LESN or SICAP).

Table 1. Indicative volumes of referrals¹ for which JobPath contractors should have capacity.

Principal sources of referrals	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total	
Already LTU ²	56,406	68,356	11,973	0	136,735	31%
5% of STU with highest probability of becoming LTU ³	10,799	10,802	10,805	10,807	43,213	10%
Passing 12 Months on LR <i>during</i> programme period	50,582	50,598	50,610	50,618	202,408	46%
LTU working part-time ⁴	0	0	24,774	33,095	57,869	13%
<i>Total</i>	<i>117,787</i>	<i>129,756</i>	<i>98,162</i>	<i>94,520</i>	<i>440,225</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Request for Tenders, 12 Dec 2013.

Note 1: Referrals are only made from among those on the Live Register who are in receipt of a payment and not aged 62 years or over.

Note 2: In the Request for Tenders, the already LTU constitute three separate referral groups based on the duration of their claims (12-23 months, 24-35 months and 36+ months).

Note 3: As measured by their 'probability of exit' (PEX) score computed when 'profiled'.

Note 4: Over 20% of those on the LR at the end of 2013 (i.e., 81,382 claimants) were casual or part-time workers.

Local Employment Service Network

LESN provide extra capacity for Intreo's STU clients and are also a point of referral for ITU clients who have not gained employment through JobPath, and as such is related to the reform agenda. Established in 1996, LESN is a network of 14 Local Employment Services (with sub offices) which operate under the auspices of local development companies (two exceptions, Clare and Kildare operate as non-profit boards). LESN's considered a 'second tier' in public employment and is currently operated by not-for-profit bodies, principally Local Development Bodies, under contract from Department of Social Protection (DSP).

LESN offices mainly operate in disadvantaged areas primarily with clients referred by DSP who they work with to source and provide personal development, training, education or placement services as needed. Core to their original inception is an enabling adult guidance and counselling model⁴⁷ which centres on enabling clients to gain greater self-awareness, address the issues and barriers which affect their ability to access employment or could impact on their career choice and set achievable goals. Skilled staff focus on active listening, understanding and interpretative skills to facilitate clients progress their lives. Although local SICAP and LESN services overlap geographically there is no formal

⁴⁷ Ali, L and Graham, B, 1996. *The Counselling Approach to Careers Guidance*. Routledge: London

contractual relationship between them, in some areas there are local co-operation protocols while in others SICAP and LESN compete for a similar profile of client.

The capacity of the LESN to work with its original ethos and guidance model has been impacted by the crisis and the Intreo reform initiative . Higher levels of unemployment and resource pressures have impacted on the LESN, while following a restructuring and the merge of FAS employment services, the LES was subsumed into Intreo, and funded on an annual block grant contractual basis by DSP⁴⁸. Adaption by LESN to the Intreo administrative architecture and case management system ‘Bomi’ has meant higher work loads and a narrower interpretation of outcomes as there is an emphasis on counting ‘employment’ as an outcome. Insufficient time to implement the guidance/counselling model has impacted on LES efficacy and capacity to engage in interagency local partnership work which is a core feature of the LESN. There has been a corresponding decrease in wellbeing for staff in this period which has been compounded by anxiety associated with annual contracting.

There is a limited evidence base to assess the impact of the LESN. In 2017 the LESN are the subject of a DSP commissioned governance and value for money review which may lead to institutional changes including new models of funding which may include commissioning. The new institutional contexts for public management and commissioning, recent reforms aligning local government and local development and the significant range of reforms in public employment services including Intreo, JobPath and Solas, taken together, present the opportunity for creative change for the LES. While concerned, the LESN appears keen to grasp the nettle and influence its future trajectory

The LES client journey

- Walk in or mandatory Letter from the DSP
- Attend an general/group information session or ‘handover’ from Intreo Case Officers)
- One to one sessions
- Progression planning - moving closer to the labour market - looking at stages of progression
- LES guidance model holistic tools
- Holistic and integrated key worker approach (with family if necessary)
- Case file is open ended and can last longer than 12 months and include support in employment

LES client journeys vary considerably across the 22 LESN’s and local outreach offices

A key policy question is whether the given a perceived over capacity the LESN are still relevant or are considered surplus to requirement, they appear to be competing for unemployed clients and squeezed between Intreo, JobPath and SICAP.

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme

SICAP, the Social Inclusion Community Activation (SICAP) programme is run by local authority based Local Community Development Committees (LCDC). It is not part of Intreo but given it works with the most distant from the labour market and that Intreo and JobPath refer clients to local SICAP provided training and education opportunities , SICAP is related to the reform episode. Its origins are in the prior 2011 Local Community Development Programme which included a range of services for those

⁴⁸ A set of basic principles and guidelines for the operation and administration of LESN is updated annually by DSP (January 2016 LES01 V1.3) and specify target groups, essential services, required outputs (employment progression) and required caseload of a “mediator” or case worker.

distant from the labour market. This was reformed into a commissioned service, SICAP. DSP had no direct role in this policy shift and was lukewarm about the labour market rationale informing SICAP, preferring Intreo and JobPath to SICAP's community development led approach to labour market activation. Partially funded under the EU PEIL programme SICAP is required to follow procurement processes to determine who would deliver local services for those most distant from the labour market and community development. The reform did not involve any major change in constitutional arrangements but did occur in a context of local governance alignment and a shift in functions from local community based development companies to local government, which had implications for SICAP and LESN⁴⁹.

In 2014 SICAP was organised through a commissioning process to allocate resources. Funded through Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG). SICAP programme implementers⁵⁰ who run the Social Inclusion Community Activation are overseen at local government level in Local Community Development Committees⁵¹, the latter were a major institutional reform in Putting People First (2012) which realigned local structures in a cohesion process which resituated local community development work into local development work within local government processes. The reform changed the level of autonomy of both LESN and local development companies funded through SICAP, primarily by making them accountable to explicit PI's which narrow the range and type of activities they might engage in and in their view, limiting possibilities for local and integrated holistic work.

Goal 3 of the SICAP programme focuses on engaging and helping marginalised target groups/individuals who fall outside mainstream employment service provision, or who are referred by them to SICAP, to become more job ready. A key issue is the absence of effective 'formal' local integration of the various activation services, various local actors are devising their own devices to overcome the absence of integration, these include 'round tables', MOU's, protocols, town hall meetings but most rely on personal relationships. One emerging practice seeks to address gaps in existing relationships through 'round table' mechanisms⁵².

⁴⁹ Irish Local Development Network (ILDN), (predecessor was Planet) is run as the network of local development companies and funded through Pobal under SSNO. The ILDN Council (CEOs and Chairpersons of each of the 50 member companies) meets quarterly, an elected 14-person Executive Committee coordinates the work of the network.

⁵⁰ Social Inclusion Community Activation Programmes (SICAP) implementers are commissioned by local authority Local Community Development Committees (LDCs) to deliver SICAP. Most of these PI's are the local development companies, €40m in 2015.

⁵¹ Local Development Companies are community and local development organisations which run a number of services and are governed as not for profit partnership boards comprised of 35% community / voluntary, 26% statutory, 22% social partner and 17% local authority representatives. Originally established as local area based partnerships in unemployment black spots, LDC's for over two decades, have expanded in scope and geographical coverage to local authority boundaries.

⁵² The County Wicklow Partnership Company (LDC) for example has recently instigated a minimum of three round table events annually, commencing in 2017, with local Intreo case officers. The purpose is to address local implementation issues and to improve communication. The first round table event took place in February 2017 and discussed a specific ALMP. The LDC staff provided briefings focusing on opportunities for Intreo clients with an aim of increasing the number of referrals to the ALMP. An outcome of the meeting was that the LDC will develop a flyer for clients explaining Tus that Intreo case officers can distribute. Implementation around SICAP

DSP does not have a coherent referral process to SICAP but has developed a protocol, which has been described as ‘a start’ but requires further development. SICAP have a significant number of PIs and input, as well as outcome indicators which are perceived as unrealistic and burdensome in administrative and reporting terms. The IT system (IRIS) is co-ordinated by Pobal⁵³, an intermediary and generally considered in need of refinement.

A SICAP evaluation is underway, but already there is a sense SICAP has impacted on the type of local development work undertaken (with more focus on individual activation and greater outreach to those most distant from the labour market), and in the management of such work (more systematic data collection and tracking of individual engagements). The SICAP client journey will vary across 52 programme implementers and depending on the degree of integration with local LESN.

The SICAP client journey

- Walk in or referral from a wide range of local agencies including DSP/JobPath/LESN
- One to one sessions
- Personal progression plan
- Offer of at least two interventions (training programme, education or self-employment option)
- Holistic and integrated key worker approach (with family if necessary)

Local autonomy appears curtailed by excessive outcome indicators. These reforms and the use of procurement was controversial with both local development and community development agencies claiming a loss of autonomy and loss of capacity to animate local communities which had consequences for access and take up.

will form the basis for discussion at the next round table event, which will take place in the summer 2017. There is no significant cost but it is relatively inexpensive to introduce this practice as there is no cost other than LDC and Intreo staff time (and transport/refreshment costs) to take part in round table events. However, previous investment in staff training and cultural orientation toward local integration seem highly important for the good outcomes.

⁵³ Pobal (established in 1992 as ADM or Area Development Management), is a not for profit company and an intermediary organisation established by the Irish government with the agreement of the EU to support social and economic development. Pobal is governed by a board of management appointed by the Minister of the Department of Housing, Planning Environment and Local Government and operates in a framework agreement managing and dispersing a range of funding programmes including SICAP and DSP funded community services programmes. In 2015, Pobal dispersed €345.1m through 4269 contracts with beneficiary groups.

A.4. Background information on the reform episode

Annex Table A1 - Number of persons availing of Activation Programmes			
	December 2015	November 2016	December 2016
Back to Work Schemes			
Back to Work allowance scheme - Employee strand ¹	0	0	0
Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme -self employed strand	11,881	11,042	10,977
Short-term Enterprise Allowance ²	396	394	409
Total Back to Work payments	12,277	11,436	11,386
Other Activation Programmes			
DSP Part-time Job Incentive	421	482	482
TUS - Community Work Placement Initiative (2011)	7,939	7,299	7,273
JobBridge (2011) ³	4,683	3,390	3,390
Gateway (2013) ⁴	2,350	807	692
Total Other Activation Programmes	15,393	11,978	11,837
Community Employment Schemes (excluding Supervisors)	22,813	22,205	22,356
FAS (Solás) Full Time Training for Unemployed People⁵	7,481	7,075	6,863
Back to Education Courses			
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) ⁶	N/A	N/A	N/A
Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) ⁷	18,345	14,135	14,386
Total Back to Education Courses	23,345	19,135	19,386
Total Activation Programmes	81,309	71,829	71,828

¹ This scheme was closed to new applications from 1st May 2009.

² This scheme was introduced from 1st May 2009. It provides immediate support for someone in receipt of Jobseekers Benefit who wants to start a business.

³ JobBridge figure estimated at 3,390 for November and December 2016 as data unavailable at time of publication

⁴ Gateway Scheme included from December 2013.

⁵ Specific Skills Training/Local Training initiative/Traineeship/Return to Work.

⁶ VTOS figures are estimated at 5,000 each year.

⁷ BTEA figures include all schemes but participants from JA & JB are not entitled to BTEA during the summer holidays.

Matrix One - Overview of Relevant Irish Reports

	1. Title of Study	2. Group under investigation	3. Type of Data	4. Method	5. Covariate Adjustment	6. Time period	7. Outcomes	8. Effects	9. Unintended Effects	10. Efficiency	11. Differences
Econometric Evaluations	BTEA ⁵⁴	a, b, c,	a	b, e,	No	2004 - 14	a, c, d, e,	yes	yes	No data	yes
	Job Bridge ⁵⁵	a, b, e	a, b, c	b, e	a, b, e, h	2011-16	a, b, c, f,	a, b	yes	Yes	Yes
Departmental & NGO Reviews	CE ⁵⁶	e	a, b, c	E	No	2011-12	Not relevant	n/a	Yes	Yes	Not relevant
	SICAP ⁵⁷	a, b, c, e	a	E	No	2014	Not relevant	n/a	No data	No data	no
Qualitative Analysis	INO ⁵⁸	a, b, c	b (focus groups)	E	No	2013-14	Not relevant	n/a	No data	No data	Not relevant
	INO ⁵⁹		b (focus groups)	E	No	2015-16	Not relevant	n/a	No data	No data	Not relevant

⁵⁴ Kelly, Eilish, Seamus, Mc Guinness and John, R. Walsh. **An Evaluation of the Back to Education Allowance**, ESRI October 2015.

⁵⁵ Indecon International Economic Consultants, **Evaluation of Job Bridge Activation Programme**, October 2016.

⁵⁶ DSP, **Community Employment**, Financial Review of Scheme, 2012.

⁵⁷ Mc Guinness, Sean, Adele Bergin and Adele Whelan. **An Exploration of (Area Based) Social Inclusion and Community Development Programmes (SICAP)**. Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Series Number 54. October 2016.

⁵⁸ Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INO), **Mapping the Journey for People who are Short Term Unemployed** - Report on Phase One of the Intreo Project, October 2014.

⁵⁹ (INO), **Mapping the Journey for Unemployed People - Report on Phase Two of the Employment Services Research Project**, December 2016

Indicators 2008 and 2015 - awaiting data and Intreo evaluation – due late 2017

	Benefit type 1 (or client group) <u>Job Seekers</u>		Benefit type 3 (or client group) <u>Job Seekers Transition (only since 2015 and 2000 individuals insufficient data)</u>
Number of persons (stock)	2008 181,449 2015 358,372		
Outflow (number of persons leaving the benefit recipience)	<u>Outflow 2008</u> 347086 <u>Outflow 2015</u> 381,582		
<i>Of which:</i>			
Outflow to employment	<u>Outflow 2008</u> <u>Outflow 2015</u>		
Outflow to other benefits	<u>Outflow 2008</u> <u>Outflow 2015</u>		
Outflow to ALMPs (if this is considered as an outflow in the administrative data)	<u>Outflow 2008</u> <u>Outflow 2015</u>		

	Benefit type 1 (or client group) <u>Job Seekers</u>		Benefit type 3 (or client group) <u>Job Seekers Transition (only since 2015 and 2000 individuals insufficient data)</u>
Outflow to other destinations (unknown)	<u>Outflow 2008</u> <u>Outflow 2015</u>		
Outflow to sustainable employment (those who did not re-register within six months after outflow)	<u>Outflow 2008</u> <u>Outflow 2015</u>		
Inflow (number of persons newly registered)	<u>inflow 2008</u> <u>449,895</u> <u>inflow 2015</u> <u>347,086</u>		
Average number of participants in active measures	<u>2008 27,798</u> <u>(p 78 DSP,2008)</u> <u>2015 81,309</u>		<u>Outflow 2008</u> <u>Outflow 2015</u>