



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027



Prepared by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
www.dttas.gov.ie





Foreword by Minister Shane Ross

The publication of this policy is an important milestone for the Irish sporting community. Following an extensive consultation process and research of best practice internationally, this policy sets out a Vision for Irish Sport in 2027 along with 57 actions to transform our sporting landscape over the next decade.

The Government and its agencies cannot deliver the aims of this policy in isolation. Central to the achievement of the planned transformation will be our National Governing Bodies of Sport, our Local Sports Partnerships and the various representative sporting organisations, specifically the Federation of Irish Sport, the Olympic Council of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Ireland Active and the CARA Centre amongst others. The combined use of the expertise, knowledge and insight of this sporting fraternity will be essential for the successful implementation of this policy. We will therefore prioritise and enhance their funding to reflect the important contribution they make to Irish society.

Increasing participation is the cornerstone of this policy. This will not be easily achieved. We want to see every citizen engaging regularly in some form of sport and physical activity, irrespective of their age, economic or social circumstances, their ethnic background or their physical capabilities.

The benefits of sport and physical activity to physical and mental health are well proven. An estimated €1.5 billion cost to our annual health budget due to physical inactivity indicates the scale of the financial benefit to be gained. However, other benefits are not so well known or understood. How many times have we heard the argument that participation in sport or physical activity programmes, particularly during exam years, is detrimental to academic performance? We now know that this is not the case. Research shows that in fact there is a positive relationship between participation in sport and academic performance, particularly in the case of girls and young women. Given that girls are more likely to give up sport during the adolescent years and that those who play a combination of individual and team sports are more likely to sustain their involvement beyond the school years, this provides a compelling argument for increasing our investment in sport and physical activity programmes.

This policy aims to elevate Ireland to the top of the table globally for both participation in sport and high performance. We will pursue these aims relentlessly over the next decade.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Ross' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shane Ross T.D.
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport

Foreword by Minister Brendan Griffin

Sport can mean different things to different people. For some, it's all about having fun. For others, the element of competition drives them to great levels of endurance. Some prefer the team environment whilst others prefer individual sports. And some simply enjoy being a volunteer in their local sports club or just going to a match with their families and friends. All of these are beneficial and whichever category you fall into, I would like to think that there's something in this policy for you.

Against a backdrop of rising obesity levels, with a health budget cost of €1.5 billion per annum, the benefits of sport and physical activity are clear. The need for our young people to develop a lifelong relationship with sport and physical activity is especially acute. Many young people will dream of playing on the biggest stage like their heroes across their favourite sports but we want them to maintain that relationship with sport in the later stages of their life. Community involvement in sport begins in early childhood but it has no upper age limit. The availability of quality sports facilities is key, the standard of which has improved greatly through Government investment in recent years, at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus and throughout the country. We are determined to sustain this investment to support more participation in sport and physical activity.

The inspirational effect of our high performance athletes is hugely important. Seeing an Irish sportsperson on an Olympic podium or being crowned an All-Ireland Champion in Croke Park inspires the next generation of athletes in that sport. Irish teams succeeding on the world stage also act as a tremendous motivator for children to fulfil their own dreams, to get involved and get active. High performance does not happen by accident but is the result of meticulous planning, perseverance and dedication. And it needs our support. Because of the financial crisis, it has simply not been possible to support our high performance athletes as much as we would have liked over the last decade. However, it is my ambition to redress that situation. Comparator nations are investing multiples of what Ireland is currently doing and if we are to compete successfully we have to do likewise. It is my aim to treble our annual high performance investment support to some €30 million over the next decade.

I look forward to working with our stakeholders to implement this landmark policy with all necessary urgency and commitment.



Brendan Griffin T.D.

Brendan Griffin T.D.

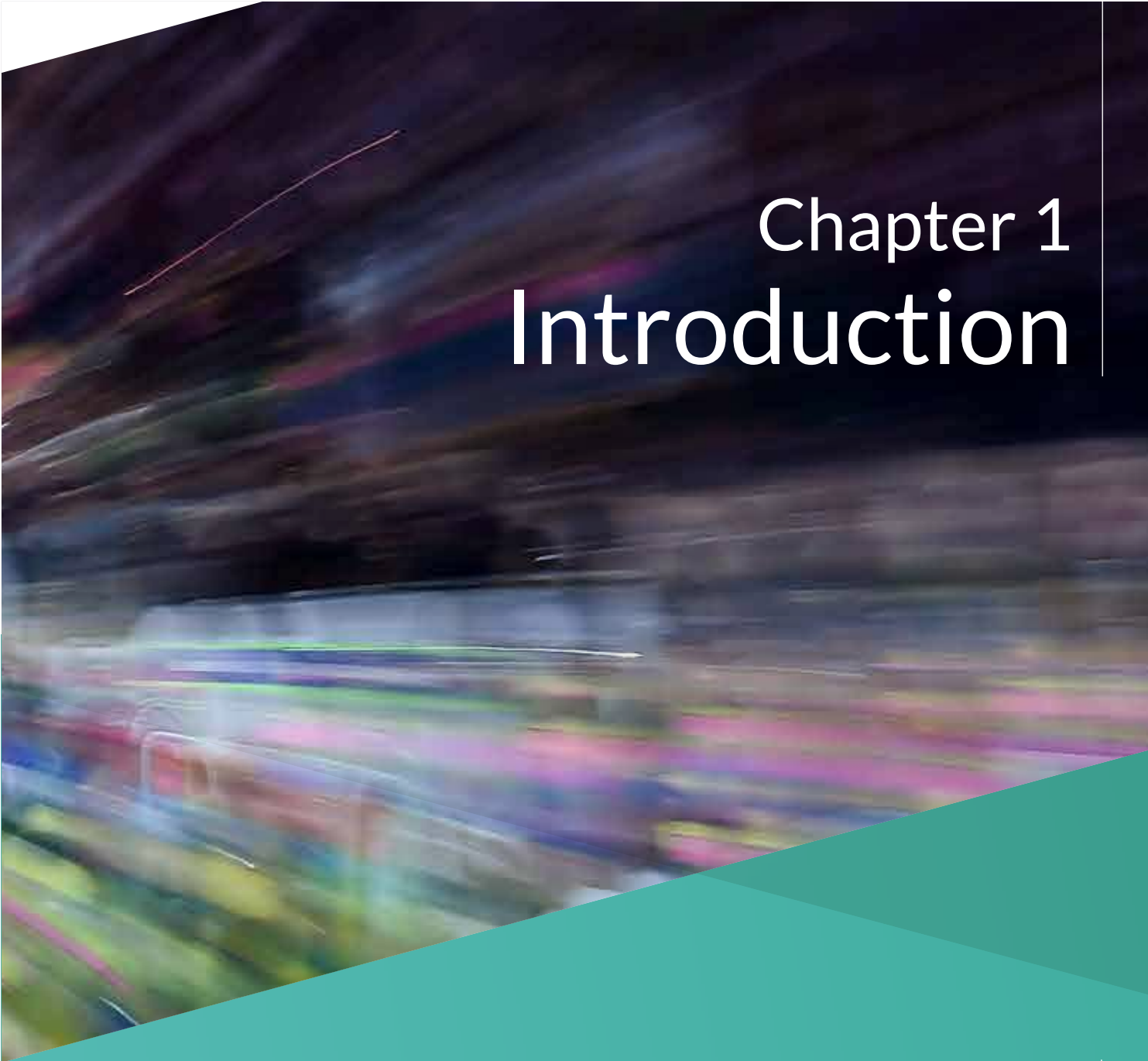
Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
with special responsibility for Tourism and Sport

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction	9	Key Trends in Adult Participation	32
Background	10	The role of NGBs and sports clubs in sports participation	33
Definition of Sport	10	Lead Role for Local Authorities	33
Contribution of Sport	10	Developing Local Sports Plans	35
Health and Wellbeing	11	Addressing the Gradients at a local level	35
Community Development and Social Cohesion	13	Outdoor Recreational Sporting Activities	37
Economic Activity	13	Social Participation	38
Education and Life-long Learning	13	Outcomes and Measurement	38
Quantifying the Benefits of Sport	13	Financing for Increased Participation	39
Delivery of Irish Sport	14		
National Governing Bodies	14		
Local Sports Partnerships	14		
Representative Sporting Organisations	14		
Chapter 2 - Our Vision	17	Chapter 4 - Sports Facilities	41
Introduction	18	Introduction	42
Vision	18	Investment Rationale	42
Values	19	Range of Facilities to be supported	42
High Level Goals, Key Performance Indicators and Targets	20	Principles for Support	43
Addressing the Gradients	21	Value for Money Review	44
		National Sports Facilities Audit	44
		Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund	45
		Potential Swimming Pool Projects and a National Swimming Strategy	46
		Addressing Access	47
		Measuring Impact and Evaluating Effectiveness	49
Chapter 3 - Participation	23		
Introduction	24	Chapter 5 - High Performance	51
Active Participation - The Challenge	24	Introduction	52
Younger Children	26	Rio 2016	52
Physical Literacy	27	High Performance in Ireland - Time for a Refresh?	52
Early Childhood	28	A new HP Strategy for Ireland	56
Primary Schools	28	Measuring Impact and Evaluating Effectiveness	57
National Governing Bodies	28		
Parents and Guardians	29		
Prioritised Participation Sports	30		
Adolescence and Young Adulthood	31		

Chapter 6 - Sport Ireland National Sports Campus	59	Agreeing a new Sports Action Plan	82
Introduction	60	The International Context	83
Current Position	60	European Union	83
Vision for the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus	60	Council of Europe	83
Further Development at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus	60	UNESCO	83
Measuring Impact and Evaluating Effectiveness	61	Chapter 9 - Integrity of Sport	85
Chapter 7 - Building Capacity	63	Introduction	86
Introduction	64	Anti-Doping Matters	86
The Challenge	64	Match-Fixing	87
Our Objectives	65	Corruption in Sport	87
Key Action Areas	65	Chapter 10 - Financing Irish Sport	89
Volunteering	66	Introduction	90
Coaching	67	Financing Participation and Investing in the Sporting Sector	90
Governance	69	Participation Programmes Supported by Dormant Accounts Funding	92
Gender Issues in Management of Sport	70	Funding High-Performance Programmes	92
Workforce Development	71	Investment in Sports Facilities	93
Collaboration	72	Continued Investment in the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus	94
Research, Evaluation and Information Systems	73	Other Sources of Funding	94
Chapter 8 - Sport in a Cross-Sectoral and International Context	77	Chapter 11 - Implementation, Monitoring and Review	97
Background	78	Sports Leadership Group	98
Enhanced Collaboration under the new National Sports Policy	78	Measuring Impact - Targets and Indicators	98
Interface with existing Government Policies	79	Appendices	101
Sport and Tourism	81	1. List of Actions	102
Governance of Sport in a Cross-Sectoral Context	82	2. List of Acronyms	106





Chapter 1

Introduction

Recognising the influence and importance of sport across Irish society, the National Sports Policy sets out our Vision for Irish Sport in 2027 and defines the actions we will undertake to achieve our ambitious goals. This introductory chapter sets out the definition of sport which we have adopted in the policy, the important contribution sport makes to Ireland and the key roles played by the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), the Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and the representative sporting organisations in the delivery of that contribution.

Background

Recognising the influence and importance of sport across Irish society, the National Sports Policy sets out our Vision for Irish Sport in 2027 and defines the actions we will undertake to achieve our ambitious goals. This introductory chapter sets out the definition of sport which we have adopted in the policy, the important contribution sport makes to Ireland and the key roles played by the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), the Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and the representative sporting organisations in the delivery of that contribution.

Definition of Sport

Ireland has adopted, and adapted, the Council of Europe's definition¹ where "sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aims at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels." Our adaptation has resulted in two separate strands, namely 'recreational sport' and 'competitive sport'. These have been defined in the Sport Ireland Act, 2015² as follows:-

- "‘recreational sport’ means “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or regular participation, aim at — (a) expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, and (b) forming social relationships;” and
- "‘competitive sport’ means “all forms of physical activity which, through organised participation, aim at — (a) expressing or improving physical fitness, and (b) obtaining improved results in competition at all levels”.

For recreational sport, the emphasis is on fitness, wellbeing and forming social relationships. It can be undertaken formally or informally

and covers a wide range of activities such as recreational walking; cycling for leisure; canoeing or kayaking; exercising in a gym; playing tennis or 5-a-side soccer with friends; playing camogie on the local green, etc. Competitive sport is primarily about performance and results. It involves more structured participation in leagues or tournaments usually organised around school or club structures. There is a strong emphasis on coaching allied to periods of intense, high-level training.

For our definition, we exclude activities such as active travel i.e. walking and cycling for transport, which are addressed under the Department's "Smarter Travel" Policy³ and work-related physical activity. We recognise the importance of working with the sectors operating in the broader physical activity space around the shared objectives of making Ireland more active. Our focus is on sport but we will work with other sectors where intersections occur.

One area that merits attention here is physical education (PE), an integral part of the education system in primary and post-primary schools. PE seeks to achieve the type of outcomes seen in the definitions of sport above around physical fitness, mental wellbeing and the formation of social relationships. It aims to develop skills, competencies and beliefs which are building blocks for participation in sport and physical activity over the longer term. We address the question of physical education and the related issue of physical literacy in Chapter 3.

Contribution of Sport

We now have a much better understanding of sport's positive contribution to so many aspects of Irish life including health and wellbeing, social and community development, economic activity, educational performance and life-long learning.

¹ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016804c9dbb

² <https://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2015/a1515.pdf>

³ <http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/smartertravel-policy-document>



Sport involves the highest level of community participation by adults in playing, club membership and volunteering.

Health and Wellbeing

Evidence around the contribution of sport and physical activity to health and wellbeing is particularly strong. A comprehensive review by the United States (US) Department of Health and Human Services in 2008⁴ concluded that regularly active individuals had lower mortality rates than the least active, and health benefits of being habitually physically active applied to people regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and whether or not they had a disability. Echoing this, research by the Economic and Social Research Institute⁵ (ESRI) estimated that “regular participation in sport is equivalent, in health terms, to being 14 years younger”.

Research published in The Lancet⁶ in 2012 estimated that physical inactivity was responsible for 14.2% of all-cause mortality in Ireland. Based on national statistics on causes of deaths for 2014, this would translate into approximately 4,000 deaths in that year being attributable to Irish people not engaging in enough physical activity. Furthermore, physical inactivity has been estimated to cost Ireland approximately €1.5 billion per year⁷.

Participation in sport and physical activity is effective in reducing depression, anxiety, psychological distress and emotional disturbance. The US report referred to above outlines the positive impacts of physical activity on various aspects of mental health.

⁴ <https://health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/report.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RS002.pdf>

⁶ [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)61031-9/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)61031-9/abstract)

⁷ <http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Get-Ireland-Active-the-National-Physical-Activity-Plan.pdf>



Physical inactivity has been estimated to cost Ireland approximately €1.5 billion per year.

Community Development and Social Cohesion

Sport involves the highest level of community participation by adults in playing, club membership and volunteering. The latest 2017 Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) survey⁸ reported that almost 11% of adults (equivalent to approximately 400,000 people) regularly volunteered for sport during the year. Similarly, more people are members of sports clubs than any other form of voluntary or community organisation. The same ISM report found that just over 34% of adults (approximately 1.25 million people) were members of a sports club. Sport can also play a role in tackling societal challenges around anti-social behaviour, particularly when offered as part of broader personal development programmes or in conjunction with community and youth services⁹ while active and social participation by migrants and ethnic minorities can help combat the social exclusion they often experience.

Economic Activity

Sport contributes significantly to the economy. A 2010 Indecon report¹⁰ found that:

- Irish households spend €1.9 billion annually on sport and sport-related goods and services, equal to 2% of the value of consumer spending in the Irish economy;
- Sport-related spending contributes €1.8 billion in value added to the Irish economy, equivalent to 1.4% of economy-wide Gross Domestic Product (GDP);
- For every €100 invested by Government, it received €149 in return in taxes;
- Sport and sport-related activities support over 38,000 full-time equivalent jobs, over 2% of the overall level of employment in Ireland; and

- Sport-related volunteering activity is estimated to have an economic value of between €322 million and €582 million per annum.

The economic contribution of sport will inevitably increase in coming years and there is merit in updating relevant research to track trends in this area.

Education and Life-long Learning

Sport England's Value of Sport Monitor¹¹ reports that sport has a beneficial effect on educational attainment and academic performance while the 2013 ESRI research study "Keeping Them in the Game"¹² found a positive association between playing sport and Leaving Certificate performance among a sample of almost 1,200 Irish students. Research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University¹³ found that engagement in sport (defined as playing, competing or volunteering) was associated with annual incomes which were higher by amounts in the range of £4,264 to £5,616 among a sample of nearly 6,000 graduates. It also found that employers viewed engagement in sport as a strength in providing a wide range of positive attributes such as team working, communication skills, motivation, competitiveness and resilience.

Quantifying the Benefits of Sport

Although our understanding of the wider contribution of sport to other policy areas, especially health and education, has improved substantially in recent years, there is merit in further developing our knowledge of the value proposition of sport and the returns it provides to other areas of Government.

⁸ [www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish Sports Monitor 2017/Irish Sports Monitor 2017.pdf](http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf)

⁹ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/benefits-of-sport/the-value-of-sport-monitor/-section-on-crime-reduction-and-community-safety>

¹⁰ http://sportireland.ie/Research/Economic_Impact_of_Sport_2010/

¹¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/benefits-of-sport/the-value-of-sport-monitor/>

¹² <http://sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013/>

¹³ Sheffield Hallam University SIRC "The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability" June 2013

Taking account of international experience, it is our intention to develop investment evaluation models tailored to the Irish environment and designed to quantify the cross-cutting benefits accruing from investment in sport.

Delivery of Irish Sport

Implementation of the Government's statutory responsibilities and the achievement of its ambitions for Irish sport cannot be carried out by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Sport Ireland exclusively. This policy requires in particular the active engagement of the National Governing Bodies of sport, the Local Sports Partnerships and the various representative sporting organisations.

National Governing Bodies

NGBs organise, promote and facilitate opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity in both recreational and competitive forms. They train and deploy coaches, officials and administrators, organise representative level sport, provide opportunities and pathways leading from local sports to national and international competition, deliver critical national sports programmes in areas such as the safeguarding of children in sport, and organise and host international sporting events. They are the delivery agents for the rollout of many essential programmes and will remain to the forefront in the Government's policy and practice in sport and physical activity.

Local Sports Partnerships

The LSP network plays a similarly vital role and has been tasked, in particular, with increasing participation levels in sport and physical activity, especially among those sectors of society that are currently underrepresented in sport. Their capacity to remove barriers and ensure that opportunities for participation in sport are progressive, innovative and fully inclusive at a local level is a unique and valuable strength.

A key priority of the LSPs is to continue to support a sustainable level of development within the local sport infrastructure, through support to clubs, groups, coaches and volunteers. The Government will continue to invest in the network of LSPs to ensure the consistent and sustainable delivery of sport and physical activity at a local level.

Representative Sporting Organisations

These organisations play a vitally important strategic, operational and advocacy role for Irish sport at all levels. Their wide-ranging national and international perspective and expertise on issues affecting sport is a particularly valuable input to sports policy development. It is expected that the key bodies concerned – the Federation of Irish Sport, the Olympic Council of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Ireland Active and the CARA Centre among others – will contribute significantly to the effective implementation of this policy.

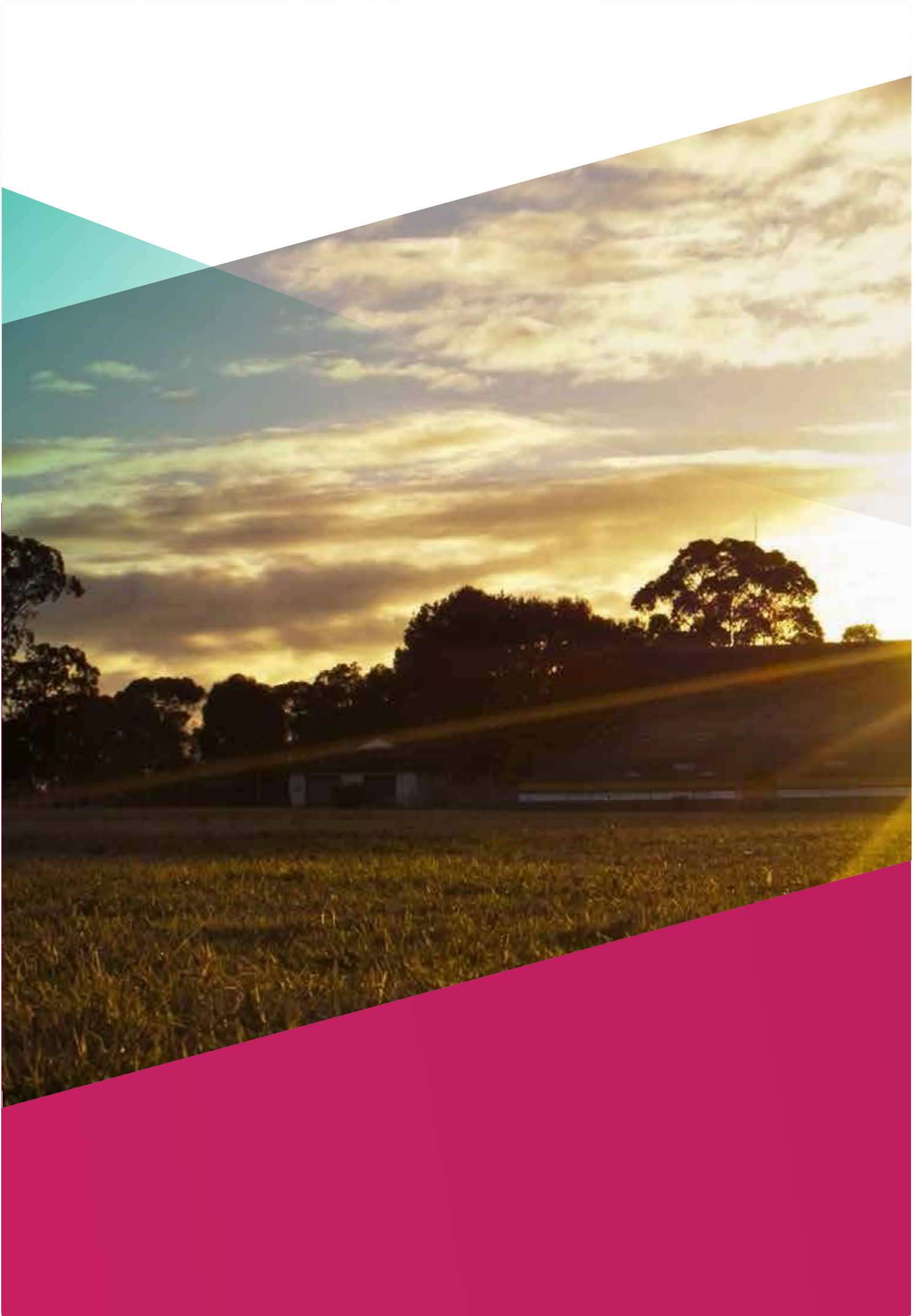


Conclusion

Participation in sport helps to improve physical and mental health, protect against a range of non-communicable diseases and contribute to a better quality of life.

Sport makes a very significant contribution to the Irish economy in terms of spending, output and employment. Government investment in sport generates a strong positive return for the Exchequer, while participation in sport reduces the risk of significant lifestyle-related costs for the health service. Volunteering and club membership generates considerable social capital and helps with community development and with the integration of

new communities and ethnic minorities. Sports participation is also associated with better educational performance and with the development of life skills which enhance employment prospects. The many and wide-ranging benefits of sport underline the need for clearly articulated Government policy, supported by practical approaches to facilitate participation and support high performance. Recognising this, we have in the following chapters first defined our Vision, Values and High Level Goals for Sport in 2027 and then elaborated on the issues to be addressed and the actions we will take to promote sport across the lifetime of this policy.





Chapter 2

Our Vision

Our vision for sport seeks to capture the importance of sport to life in Ireland and to counteract a commonly-held view that it is nothing more than a game or merely a distraction from the important events in life. We believe that getting more people involved in sport as active and social participants, enabling them to have quality experiences, and securing international success from our top sports people will enrich our country in a variety of ways. We believe that the vision must also acknowledge the importance of a strong and vibrant sports system, continually growing and developing, and operating in a strong spirit of collaboration with partners within and beyond the sporting sector to deliver these outcomes.

Introduction

Our vision for sport seeks to capture the importance of sport to life in Ireland and to counteract a commonly-held view that it is nothing more than a game or merely a distraction from the important events in life. We believe that getting more people involved in sport as active and social participants, enabling them to have quality experiences, and securing international success from our top sports people will enrich our country in a variety of ways. We believe that the vision must also acknowledge the importance of a strong and vibrant sports system, continually growing and developing, and operating in a strong spirit of collaboration with partners within and beyond the sporting sector to deliver these outcomes.



Vision

With the above in mind, our vision for sport in Ireland in 2027 is that:

People will be inspired, their lives enriched, their enjoyment enhanced, and their quality of life improved as a result of their own active or social participation in sport, and as a result of success by our top sports people in competition. All entities in our sporting community will be highly regarded for the quality of their staff and volunteers, their standards of governance, ethics and accountability, and their spirit of collaboration including with partners beyond the sporting sector.

Values

The policy is underpinned by a set of core values which we regard as the guiding principles to be followed in the implementation of this policy.

This policy:

Is evidence-led and outcomes focused;

Policies, programmes and funding are based on best-available evidence and focused on the achievement of agreed policy outcomes.

Has a clear accountability framework;

There will be a clear implementation structure involving monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms and lines of responsibility for leading delivery on specific actions.

Promotes inclusion;

Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our desired outcomes with a focus on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients.

Fosters collaboration;

We will encourage and stimulate collaboration within and beyond the sports sector as a foundation of the policy implementation.

Emphasises excellent ethical standards;

We will promote and foster fair play, respect, ethics, integrity and safety throughout the sports system.

Adopts a life course perspective around participation;

Active and social participation in sport over the life course yields huge benefits. This policy will be underpinned by the Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity (LISPA)¹⁴ philosophy and underscored by the development of physical literacy in childhood.

Encourages innovation;

We will encourage and stimulate innovative solutions to the challenges we seek to address around participation, high performance and the development of the sports sector.

¹⁴ <http://www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Life-Long-Involvement-In-Sport-Physical-Activity/>

High Level Goals, Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Our high level goals are set out in the table below. We also set out some key performance indicators (KPIs), targets and timeframes over which they will be measured. These are indicative and will be further considered by a Sports Leadership Group (SLG) which will be established to drive the implementation of this policy. The SLG will review and develop a final set of KPIs and targets as part of its initial actions under the policy, further elaborated in chapter 11.

High Level Goals	Key Performance Indicators	Baseline 2017	Targets 2027	Measurement Timeframe
Increased Participation: A significantly higher proportion of Irish children and adults from all sectors of society are regularly involved in all forms of active and social participation in sport.	• Increased number of adults regularly playing sport (excludes recreational walking);	43%	50%	Biennially
	• Elimination of active sport participation gradient between men and women;	4.5%	0%	Biennially
	• Reduced levels of adult sedentarism ¹⁵	22%	15%	Biennially
	• Increased number of children regularly playing sport;	TBD ¹⁶	TBD	Biennially
	• Increased number of adults regularly involved socially in sport through volunteering, club membership and/or attendance	45%	55%	Biennially
More Excellence: There are more Irish athletes and teams systematically and fairly achieving world-class results at the highest level of international competition.	• Increase in number of medals at successive Olympics and Paralympics	13 (2016)	20 (2028)	Quadrennially
	• Country ranking in Olympics Medal Table	62 (2016)	Top 50 (2028)	Quadrennially
	• Country ranking in Paralympics Medal Table	28 (2016)	Top 20 (2028)	Quadrennially
	• Increase in numbers of medals at junior & senior European and World level	255 (Rio Cycle 2013-2016)	290 (LA Cycle 2025-2028)	Quadrennially
Improved Capacity: We will have “fit for purpose” Irish sporting bodies (NGBs, LSPs and clubs) with strong leadership, ethics and governance at all levels, professionals and volunteers suitably trained and developed, and modernised working methods and systems. There will be greater levels of cooperation within and across sport, and between sport and other sectors, private and public.	• Increase in numbers of NGBs and LSPs adopting the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity (CVC) Sector	8 (NGBs) 2 (LSPs)	All 65 NGBs All 29 LSPs	Annually
	• Increase in number of all other funded sports bodies adopting the CVC Governance Code	1	All	Biennially
	• Progress towards greater gender balance in Board membership of funded sports bodies	TBD	30% minimum on each Board	Biennially
	• Improved workforce capacity in the sporting sector	TBD	TBD	Biennially
	• Quality of facility infrastructure	TBD	TBD	TBD ¹⁷

¹⁵ Sedentarism in this context means not engaging regularly in either sport or recreational walking.

¹⁶ Baselines and Targets will be set following the publication of the 2018 Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA) Study in 2018.

¹⁷ For KPIs under the 'Improved Capacity' section, research will be conducted following the publication of this policy to inform baselines and targets



Addressing the Gradients

While the targets being established for increases in sports participation, both active and social, are set at a population-wide level, it is recognised that there are a number of groups in our society that participate significantly less than the overall average. These include people with disabilities, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, women and girls and ethnic minority groups, such as the Traveller community.

Irish society is increasingly multi-cultural. Sport can make an important contribution to economic and social cohesion and a more integrated society by using the potential of sport for social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities, whilst emphasising the total unacceptability of racism and xenophobia. Narrowing the participation gradients will be a priority of this policy and ambitious KPIs and targets will be set by the Sports Leadership Group.





Chapter 3 Participation

Participation in sport takes many forms. Individuals can take part informally or formally, in competition or recreationally, on their own or as part of a group or team, as a beginner or at a top level. Socially, they can volunteer for many different roles, be a member of one or more sports clubs, or attend sporting events as a spectator. In Ireland, team sports such as Gaelic Games, Soccer and Rugby continue to offer a multitude of participation opportunities from school age to adulthood. There is also an increasing number of people participating in individual sports. All forms of participation confer benefits on the individual, community and broader society.

Introduction

Participation in sport takes many forms. Individuals can take part informally or formally, in competition or recreationally, on their own or as part of a group or team, as a beginner or at a top level. Socially, they can volunteer for many different roles, be a member of one or more sports clubs, or attend sporting events as a spectator. In Ireland, team sports such as Gaelic Games, Soccer and Rugby continue to offer a multitude of participation opportunities from school age to adulthood. There is also an increasing number of people participating in individual sports. All forms of participation confer benefits on the individual, community and broader society.

At the heart of our ambition for this policy we want more people from all areas of society regularly and meaningfully taking part in sport, both actively and socially. Achieving this would also contribute to the Government's aim of reducing inactivity as set out in the National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP)¹⁸.

The achievement of increased physical activity levels across the population is a key part of the Government's broader agenda to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland under Healthy Ireland 2013-2025¹⁹. This objective requires increased knowledge and awareness among the public and all other relevant stakeholders of the benefits of physical activity and how to be active. Reaching the recommended levels of physical activity is achievable by all if such activity is incorporated into daily routines, a message that needs to be effectively communicated across the population. The creation of a culture in Ireland that values physical activity as part of everyday life is our aim.

Increasing active participation requires that we adopt a life course perspective underpinned by the development of physical literacy throughout the population. Addressing the drop off in participation that commences during adolescence and continues into adulthood, providing opportunities adapted to people's changing circumstances as they go through life, and supporting the type of activities that people engage in more as adults and later in life are all part of the solutions we will seek to develop. We must also understand better the issues and factors that affect people's decisions to participate, including the increasing influence of technology such as apps and activity trackers.

These issues will only be successfully addressed through the concerted and cooperative efforts of all those with a passionate interest in increasing participation in sport and securing the future health and wellbeing of our nation including the broader public policy system, NGBs, clubs, Local Authorities, LSPs, local communities and the private sector.

Active Participation - The Challenge

While active participation levels have generally been on an upward trend in previous decades²⁰, the latest evidence²¹ suggests that participation numbers have plateaued in more recent years. Currently 43% of adults are regular participants in sport²². In other words, 57% of our adult population is not availing of the considerable personal benefits associated with such participation while as a country we are losing out on the societal benefits of having a more active sporting population.

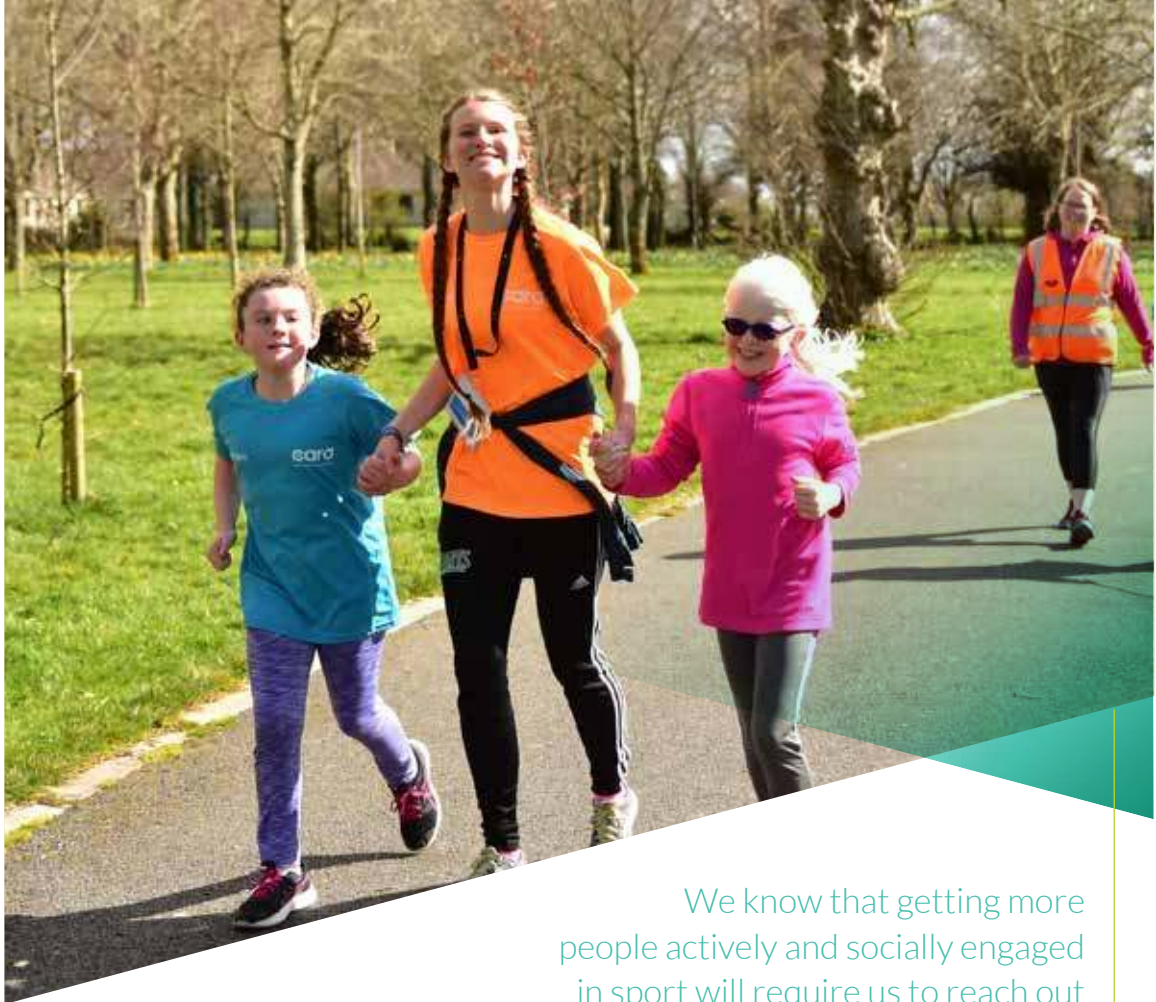
¹⁸ <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Get-Ireland-Active-the-National-Physical-Activity-Plan.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://health.gov.ie/healthy-ireland/>

²⁰ <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RS002.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>

²² <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>



We know that getting more people actively and socially engaged in sport will require us to reach out beyond existing participants.

If we do nothing and continue on with business as usual, it is likely that changes in demography alone would result in significant reductions in the number of active participants. Ireland's older population is expected to increase significantly in the coming decades. The Central Statistics Office (CSO)²³ projects that those aged 65 and over will account for approximately 17% of the population in 2026 compared to 13% in 2016. Such an ageing of the population allied to no change in the proportions currently participating in sport across each age group would, on its own, result in a reduction of 1% on the current participation rate of 43%. Clearly, that scenario is one which we should seek to avoid.

The "greying" of our population is not the only challenge we face. We can also expect to have a more ethnically and culturally diverse population including many groups in which active and social

participation rates in sport have tended to be low²⁴ and even greater regional variations in population distributions than currently exist²⁵. We have the existing challenges around the gradients in participation – by socio-economic status, disability, ethnicity and gender. All are likely to have significant implications for active and social participation in sport over the lifetime of the policy.

Our highly ambitious target to have half the adult population (16+) regularly playing sport by 2027 means activation of an extra quarter of a million people within the next decade. We know that getting more people actively and socially engaged in sport will require us to reach out beyond existing participants to focus on those who currently have little or no engagement with sport for a variety of reasons.

²³ http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2013/poplabfor2016_2046.pdf

²⁴ <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/66964/BKMNEXT216.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²⁵ <http://npf.ie/about/#publications>

We need a long-term commitment which:

- Ensures that all our children enjoy their sporting experiences and have the physical literacy to underpin their participation in sport and physical activity throughout their lives;
- Adopts a life course perspective around participation embracing the LISPA framework²⁶ recognising that people transition into, across and out of sport over their lives;
- Recognises the modern day trends towards certain types of sporting activity and towards certain contexts for participation among the vast majority of adults;
- Addresses the sharp and persistent gradients that exist in participation around socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, disability and gender that are at the heart of our relatively limited levels of participation overall;
- Fosters strong collaboration within sport, and between sport and other relevant sectors such as education, health and local government;
- Develops an adaptable and innovative sports sector that is capable of identifying and responding to the differing and changing needs of individuals at different points in their lives; and
- Creates an enabling physical environment encompassing high quality, accessible sports facilities, and the built and natural environment.

In this chapter we deal primarily with the first six of these points while the chapters on Building Capacity (7) and Sport in a Cross-Sectoral and International Context (8) also touch upon these issues. The Building Capacity chapter also deals in detail with social participation issues. The chapter on Sports Facilities (4) addresses the final point above.

Younger Children

By the end of their primary school years most of our children are regularly taking part in sport. The “Keeping Them in the Game” report²⁷ found that almost 90% of children were participating at least once a week in organised extra-curricular or extra-school sport by ages 10 – 12. The report also noted that “the current generation of primary school children is probably more active in organised sporting activity than any that preceded it”. So, we are already quite successful in getting our younger children initially involved in sport, primarily through the efforts of volunteers in schools, sports clubs and local communities.

However, the reality is that many of these younger children will give up sport during adolescence and young adulthood. Additionally, while most of these younger children are playing sport at least once a week, the vast majority are still insufficiently active overall to meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines²⁸ (more than 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily). The Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study (CSPPA) Research Report 2010²⁹ found that only 19% of primary school children met the guidelines.

²⁶ <http://www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Life-Long-Involvement-In-Sport-Physical-Activity/>

²⁷ <http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013-/>

²⁸ https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/active_guidelines.pdf

²⁹ <http://doras.dcu.ie/21335/>

This presents us with some policy challenges. While most of our younger children are engaged by sport to some extent, many are not sufficiently engaged to optimally benefit their health. For these marginally engaged younger children it is also likely that they are not developing the essential physical literacy which might underpin their more sustained involvement in sport and physical activity over the life course.

This is clearly not just about sport but also about physical education and physical activity more generally. What we need is a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the sporting, physical education and physical activity experiences for all of our children – and not just those who are “sporty”. Developing more physically literate cohorts of younger children will require that we provide positive and rewarding experiences for them in sport, physical education and physical activity in the belief that they will be more inclined to either stay “in the game”, or return to sport and physical activity at future stages of their lives.

Physical Literacy

Physical literacy has been defined as “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for maintaining purposeful physical pursuits/activities throughout the life course”³⁰ as captured in Figure 1³¹. It embraces the notion of participation in sport and physical activity over the life course encompassing pre-school children, school-going children and adults of all ages. This is recognised in the LISPA framework³² adopted by Sport Ireland a number of years ago.

The benefit of physical literacy in enhancing life-long physical activity and wellbeing is widely acknowledged. It forms a cornerstone of the PE curriculum and is reflected in the comprehensive range of supports delivered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers in this area. The development of physical literacy should start early in childhood and needs to involve a range of stakeholders including early childhood care and education services, primary schools, NGBs, relevant Government Departments and, critically, parents and guardians. This will align well with the work being undertaken under the NPAP.

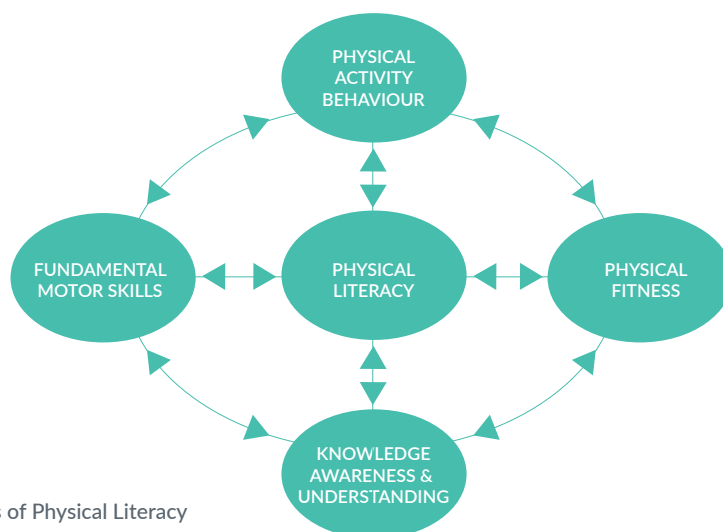


Figure 1: Components of Physical Literacy

³⁰ <https://www.physical-literacy.org.uk/> (citing Whitehead, 2016)

³¹ Derived from Lloyd, M, Colley RC, Tremblay MS “Advancing the Debate on “Fitness Testing” for Children: Perhaps We’re Riding the Wrong Animal” Paediatric Exercise Science 2010, 22, 176-182

³² <http://www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Life-Long-Involvement-In-Sport-Physical-Activity/>

Early Childhood

Early Childhood Care and Education services, which the overwhelming majority of young children participate in during their pre-school years, provide valuable opportunities to promote enjoyment of, and interest in, physical activity and physical literacy for young children. The State provides resources for early childhood services through universal and targeted subsidies for the provision of childcare and early education. State support is guided by a national curriculum framework (Aistear), a national quality framework (Siolta), and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion guidelines which provide a useful basis from which to develop initiatives to promote physical activity and physical literacy with young children and their parents/guardians.

ACTION 1

We will work with early childhood care and education services and organisations to ensure that pre-school practitioners, providers, and parents/guardians are supported in improving the physical activity habits of very young children in their care, including the development of improved physical literacy outcomes.

Primary Schools

Primary schools provide important opportunities for the development of physical literacy through the PE curriculum and the extra-curricular sporting opportunities delivered on a voluntary basis by teachers. In addition, programmes such as the Active School Flag help to engage children in physical activity throughout the school day.

Although all primary teachers are trained, as part of initial teacher education, to deliver the full spectrum of the Primary Curriculum including Physical Education, ongoing formal training would not only continually develop teachers' skills in physical literacy, but also increase teacher confidence in facilitating all strands of PE. The evidence³³ suggests that we also have scope for improvement in our PE system around the time allocation, facility availability and monitoring of outcomes for children. A PE system that is fit for purpose is essential if we are serious about developing greater levels of physical literacy among our children and young people. In particular we need to have a teaching profession empowered, equipped and enabled to fully deliver PE across all of the strands outlined in the curriculum; sufficient time and resources available for it to be properly delivered; and a mechanism for assessing and measuring the progress of our children's development. Realising these ambitions is a priority.

ACTION 2

We will work with the Department of Education and Skills, teachers, NGBs and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that PE in schools is delivered to fully support the development of physical literacy among all our children.

National Governing Bodies

NGBs have an important role in helping develop a more physically literate cohort of younger children in two critical respects. First, they can help support the delivery of a more rounded PE curriculum by offering the expertise and support

³³ <http://doras.dcu.ie/21335/>

of their coaches and development staff, and by making available their facilities to schools where possible.

Coaches and staff from some NGBs are already working with children in primary schools but concerns exist that the focus here is too sport-specific. They are serving the needs of their sport but not necessarily the longer term needs of all the children under their care. Engaging the four components of physical literacy, listed in Figure 1, should be the focus. Where NGB staff are accessing children in schools it is essential that they are not displacing the work of the teachers but are supporting them in their efforts. Second, NGBs can also serve to embed the concepts of physical literacy much more deeply into their own programmes particularly those aimed at younger children. Engaging non-participants and “hard-to-reach” groups such as those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds is especially challenging and the involvement of NGBs with the education sector, particularly in DEIS schools³⁴, is an important objective to be pursued.

ACTION 3

Sport Ireland will review the financial support to NGBs so that a greater focus is placed on the development of non-sport specific physical literacy programmes for younger children. As part of this arrangement, NGBs would be expected to work with each other and with Sport Ireland Coaching in developing appropriate programmes.

Parents and Guardians

Almost 70% of children who take up a sport are introduced to the activity by parents or teachers. Thus our efforts to promote physical literacy in early childhood care and services, in schools and in community-based sports organisations need to be complemented by initiatives to support parents/guardians in encouraging their children to develop positive habits around sport and physical activity. Part of that process is about educating parents/guardians about the importance of physical literacy to their child’s development and providing support materials to help develop physical literacy in their children from an early age. The development of this physical literacy should form part of the pursuit of an overall healthier lifestyle for children, embracing such key requirements as better nutrition and diet as well as more active travel by children walking or cycling to school. The contributions and roles of both ‘A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016-2025’³⁵ and ‘Smarter Travel - A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020’³⁶ will be instrumental in this regard.

ACTION 4

We will work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, LSPs, NGBs, Health Service Executive (HSE) and others to develop an education or information campaign to help parents/guardians to engage with their children to develop physical literacy and positive habits around sport and physical activity as part of an overall healthier lifestyle.

³⁴ Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

³⁵ <http://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/a-healthy-weight-for-ireland-obesity-policy-and-action-plan-2016-2025/>

³⁶ <http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/smartertravel-policy-document>

Prioritised Participation Sports

In adopting a life course perspective of participation we recognise that certain sporting activities are likely to have more lasting benefits than others. We will prioritise activities which offer the best chance of counteracting the likely negative impact of our ageing population profile³⁷ on participation levels generally. For many reasons, swimming, cycling and running are three such sporting activities which merit particular attention and support. To varying degrees, they all encourage more sustained involvement than other popular sporting activities over the life course and into old age among those who have acquired the skills at an earlier age³⁸.

Swimming has particular appeal for individuals who have a long-term illness or disability who are otherwise more likely not to take part in any sport or physical activity. It is therefore important that there is satisfactory access to hoists and accessible changing and showering facilities. In addition, it is a gateway activity allowing its participants to transition to other sports such as surfing, rowing, kayaking, canoeing and so on.

Cycling, in addition to conferring considerable health and wellbeing benefits on its practitioners, is an excellent exercise for helping with weight loss, is an environmentally friendly mode of transport which eases traffic congestion, and it allows people to remain fit outside of the sporting context whether they are going to work, school, or shopping. The aim of increasing cycling participation under this policy complements the objectives of the National Cycle Policy Framework 2008-2020³⁹, which is currently under review and is already focusing on the creation of a strong cycling culture in Ireland.

Running is also an excellent exercise activity that is easily pursued, inexpensive and can be

undertaken at any age. Innovative programmes such as Couch25k and parkrun are but two examples that highlight its broad participation potential.

The potential return on any investment in activities like swimming, cycling and running in terms of the future health and wellbeing of our society is likely therefore to be considerable and sustained. We need to develop a life course perspective, acknowledging the importance of developing a strong foundation through teaching the skills to our children at an appropriate age while also investing in the facilities, programmes and people to support continued participation throughout adolescence and adulthood. We know we face some particular challenges. In the case of swimming for example, almost one in five primary school pupils and one in four post primary pupils reported being a non-swimmer or beginner in the CSPPA study⁴⁰ with significantly higher numbers of pupils attending DEIS schools reporting this to be the case. We will seek to address these deficits.

ACTION 5

We will prioritise sports like swimming, cycling and running which we believe have the greatest potential for generating higher levels of active participation across the life course, seeking to ensure that our children have the necessary skills to engage in these activities in a meaningful way while also investing in the development of infrastructure, programmes and people to help sustain participation throughout adolescence and adulthood.

³⁷ <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/populationandlabourforceprojections2016-2046/>

³⁸ <http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013-/>

³⁹ <http://www.smartertravel.ie/content/national-cycle-policy>

⁴⁰ <http://doras.dcu.ie/21335/>

Adolescence and Young Adulthood

While almost 90% of children in the later years of primary school are regular participants in organised sport⁴¹, these numbers drop when the children move to post-primary school. “Keeping Them in the Game” estimated that roughly one in ten participants were lost during this transition. Participant numbers decline steadily during the post-primary years. Drop off is greater for school sport than for community sport and is more pronounced among girls, among children from lower socio-economic groups and among individuals with a disability. There is a sharp fall-off in participation during exam years despite the positive association between sports participation (particularly participation in a combination of team and individual sports) and exam performance⁴². This in turn has a negative impact on the likelihood of an individual continuing to play sports which they played at school once they leave school. Females and individuals in lower socio-economic groups are more likely to be affected in this respect. Getting a job or going to college after leaving school tends to make dropping out less likely. The drop out is most severe among those who had recently played only in team sports and least severe among those who had played a combination of individual and team sports as seen in Figure 2. Work and family

commitments are the most commonly cited reasons for people giving up sporting activity during the early adult years.

This brief analysis highlights that participation gradients around socio-economic status, disability and gender emerge particularly strongly during adolescence and have become well-established by early adulthood. Accordingly our response to addressing them will have a strong focus on this period of development. Stemming the withdrawal of young people, especially young girls, from structured participation in clubs during their teenage years is particularly challenging. Recognising that issues around body image and self-confidence can influence behaviour in these formative years, we will consider interventions to mitigate this challenge such as improved changing facilities.

Participation in sports outside of school is also an important strategy to help young people achieve the recommended daily amount of physical activity. Innate gender differences, developmental differences among children and young people of the same age, and the variety and quality of sport opportunities that children and youth are exposed to are some of the factors that make working with this age group very challenging.

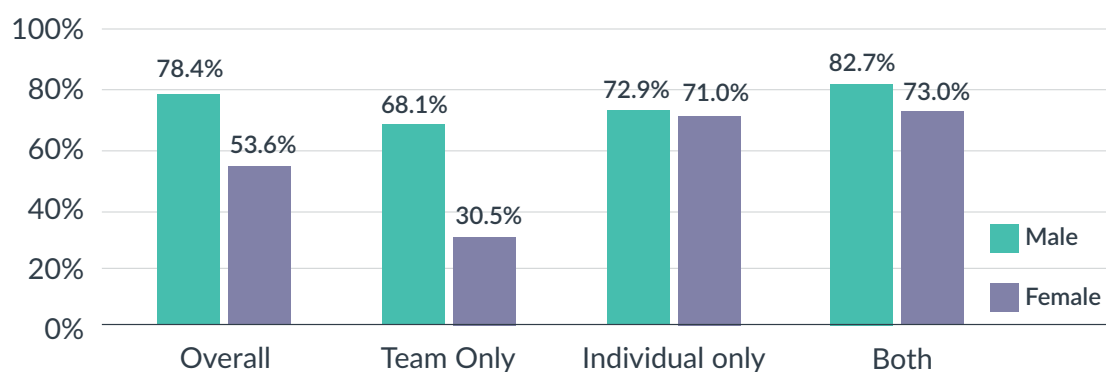


Figure 2: Proportion who Continue to Participate in a Sport Played at School after Leaving School, by Type of Sport (s) Played (Extracted from Keeping Them in the Game Figure 4.15)

⁴¹ <http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013/>

⁴² <http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013/> – Figures 4.10 and 4.11

It is important that teachers, coaches and club volunteers are provided with appropriate support to assist them in developing their skills in order to meet the demands of mixed ability groups. A better understanding on their parts of the behavioural factors influencing successful involvement in physical activity, physical education and extra-curricular club sport is essential.

Part of the answer may also lie in the range of sporting activities which we are offering for our young people in the school and community contexts. Emphasising participation in a broad range of team and individual sporting activities during adolescence appears to have the twin benefits of helping to sustain stronger levels of participation during the turbulent early adult years as well as helping to promote better academic performance in the Leaving Certificate. This emphasis is well reflected in the commitment to breadth and balance in the range of activities currently provided for in PE syllabuses and programmes.

ACTION 6

Sport Ireland will develop initiatives with the NGBs, LSPs, schools, third level institutions, the CARA Centre and other relevant parties to address participation in sport among adolescents and young adults, particularly females, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities. Team and individual-based NGBs will be encouraged to develop initiatives which promote wider participation across their respective codes. Schools and sports clubs will be encouraged to foster better links to make more efficient use of their facilities,

while LSPs will be asked to develop participation interventions making use of these facilities. The CARA Centre will advise on the particular needs in respect of individuals with disabilities.

ACTION 7

We will promote more strongly among teachers and parents/guardians messages around the positive relationship between sports participation and exam performance in our efforts to attenuate the drop off that occurs in participation levels around exam years.

Key Trends in Adult Participation

The most recent ISM report for 2017⁴³ shows a continuation in a longer term trend towards the “individualisation” of sport among adults, with just under 39% of those aged 16 and above participating in individual sports while only 8% participate in team sports. Among women there are over 12 times as many participants in individual sports as in team sports. The four most popular sports are ones which can be undertaken by an individual alone (personal exercise, swimming, running, and cycling). Factors behind these trends may relate in part to the easier access to sports participated in an individual basis for those with time-pressed lifestyles, for those taking up activity later in life, or for the vast majority of adults who participate in sport to improve their health and fitness⁴⁴.

⁴³ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://sportireland.ie/Research/Irish-Sports-Monitor-Annual-Report-2013/> - see Figure 4.14

This is also reflected in the context in which sport is played. Just fewer than two in every three adults participate in sport either alone or with family or friends. These trends around how and where sport is played must be borne in mind. We must respond to the reality that much sporting activity in Ireland is taking place increasingly by individuals alone or with a small number of others in a casual manner, in informal environments and in public spaces.

The increasing usage of gym equipment such as treadmills and exercise bikes, whether at home, in the workplace or in a traditional gym setting, indicates a growing preference for this form of physical activity. We will explore opportunities for further encouragement and facilitation of this activity, including taxation incentives. This will be considered further in Chapter 10 – Financing Irish Sport.

The role of NGBs and sports clubs in sports participation

NGBs and their affiliated sports clubs are important locations for many aspects of sports participation and development. They enable people of all ages to develop their sporting skills and engage in competition. The majority of adults who take up a new sport do so at a sports club or organisation⁴⁵ and over one quarter of adults participate in sport at a sports club⁴⁶. Sports clubs also provide significant opportunities for social participation. The 2017 ISM survey⁴⁷ found that more than one third of all adults were members of sports clubs, with significant numbers volunteering regularly in clubs. Given this important contribution to our sporting infrastructure, the Government will continue to support the critical backbone of sporting NGBs and local sports clubs.

However, in the context of this policy, and particularly our efforts to increase participation, we must recognise that sports clubs are not currently as attractive to many of our priority target groups as is clear from Figure 3 below. We must also acknowledge the trends among adults towards more casual forms of engagement in sport referred to above. Bearing these issues in mind we believe that new complementary mechanisms must be found to further increase participation and to engage an even broader group in sport outside the club structure.

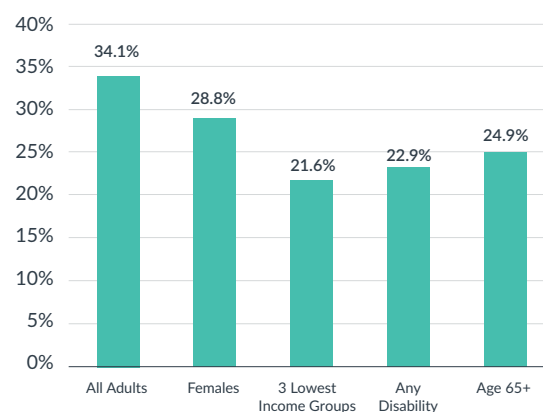


Figure 3 – Sports Club Membership by population categories (ISM 2017)

Lead Role for Local Authorities

Local Authorities are key stakeholders in the context of the public spaces which are widely used for sport and physical activity. They manage the public parks; they are responsible for the local road network; and they are key facilitators for outdoor recreation with almost 1 in 5 recreational walkers walking in public parks and 1 in 3 adult sports participants taking part in public spaces⁴⁸. Public spaces are often used on an informal basis by meet-and-train groups while sports clubs are also widespread users of these spaces.

⁴⁵ [http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013/-/Figure 6.6](http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013/-/Figure%206.6)

⁴⁶ <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-sp/qsp2013q02/>

⁴⁷ [www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish Sports Monitor 2017/Irish Sports Monitor 2017.pdf](http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf)

⁴⁸ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>



LSPs were established as a mechanism to engage with 'hard-to-reach' groups in terms of their participation in sport.

There is a lot of evidence of successful participation initiatives which are organised by, or in close co-operation with, the Local Authority and where the invitation to participate is relatively informal e.g. parkrun, Operation Transformation or other fun runs, sportive cycles, etc.

In addition to this important part already being played by Local Authorities in facilitating sport and physical activity opportunities, we also acknowledge that sport and recreation are key issues in the development of County and Local Area Development Plans, that sport is a very important element in the Local Economic and Community Plans and a core consideration for the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs). We also recognise the key role of Local Authorities in their local area, as they work in spaces and with communities alongside but often beyond the boundary of the traditional club environment.

For the above reasons, we believe that Local Authorities are well positioned to be charged within the policy with a formal leadership

role in facilitating the drive towards greater participation at a local level throughout the population. Local Authorities will be expected to foster a strong sense of collaboration across traditional boundaries with key roles for clubs, LSPs, community groups, leisure centres and other partners locally. The strong relationship between Local Authorities and Local Sports Partnerships will be particularly critical in this regard. Local Authorities will need to work even more closely with the relevant LSP in driving and delivering the participation agenda. LSPs were established as a mechanism to engage with the 'hard-to-reach' groups who face barriers in terms of their participation in sport. Each LSP has a strategy in place for their county. The evidence suggests that, even with their limited resources, the LSPs have been quite successful in creating opportunities in sport for many people who would not otherwise enjoy the benefits of being physically active. They operate within a strong cross-sectoral partnership ethos and have established relationships with a broad range of community-based stakeholders which can be built on when the necessary resources are in place.

They also have plenty of experience of what does and does not work to increase participation in sport among the 'hard to reach' groups. They have an important role to play in furthering our ambitions around participation.

Developing Local Sports Plans

Recognising the pivotal role of the Local Authorities and in light of the participation trends already noted, each Local Authority will be asked to develop a Local Sports Plan to increase participation locally, in a manner consistent with the vision and objectives set down in this National Sports Policy and taking appropriate account of any existing plans. To do this, each Local Authority will work with the LSP, with partners on the Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) and CYPSC, with clubs, schools, leisure facility providers, community groups and other stakeholders locally. A locally-led, nationally-supported approach will be a key feature of our participation strategy.

ACTION 8

We will establish, through Sport Ireland, an initiative to support Local Authorities in developing Local Sports Plans consistent with the overall vision and objectives of this National Sports Policy. The Local Plan will review needs and set out actions to increase participation locally. It will be developed and implemented in cooperation with LSPs, clubs, communities and partners within and beyond sport.

Addressing the Gradients at a local level

Our research makes it clear that the benefits of active participation in sport are not currently enjoyed equally by all sectors in our society. Participation levels in sport are significantly smaller among lower socio-economic groups, people with a disability, older groups and (to a lesser extent) females, as reflected in Figure 4. It may indeed be the case that under-representation is even more widespread among other groups where we currently have an information deficit e.g. among ethnic minorities.

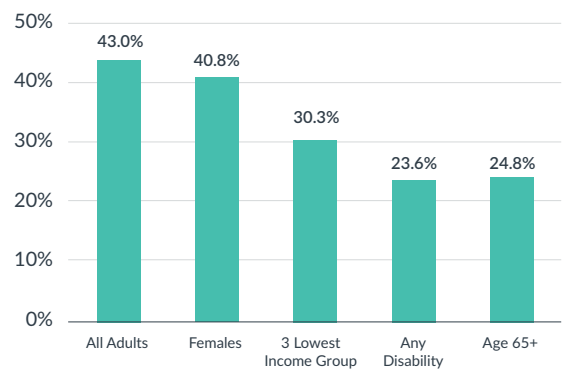


Figure 4: Percentage of population sub-groups playing sport at least once a week (ISM 2017)

Addressing these gradients must be at the heart of our efforts if we are to achieve our policy objectives around participation. Extensive co-operation across Government Departments and Agencies, in particular with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Health and the HSE, will be essential. Imparting information on participation opportunities available at local level is key and a role can be envisaged for community centres, libraries and the post office network among others. There are no simple answers: the reasons for non-participation vary within and between groups, and can change over the life course.

For example, it may be the case that the provision of more diverse opportunities for adolescent girls could help to narrow the gender gap that has its origins at this point in time. Among individuals from lower socio-economic groups there appears to be a strong belief that they are not in control of their own efforts to increase participation in sport⁴⁹. While they understand that there are benefits from taking part in sport and that it is a good thing to do, these beliefs do not translate into higher levels of participation. We need to better understand why individuals who believe in the benefits of sport and exercise feel unable to participate. Behavioural science might help us understand what lies at the heart of these decisions not to participate. For people with disabilities we know that access issues, not just around equipment or physical infrastructure, but also around softer issues such as attitudes and skillsets of individuals providing services or delivering programmes, are often cited as reasons for non-participation.

ACTION 9

We will redouble our efforts to address inequalities in sports participation as part of the Local Sports Plans development process. Resources will be directed to promote the broadest possible participation, ensuring quality and accessibility for all groups. Funding will be prioritised on programmes which focus on those groups with lower levels of participation, particularly those in lower socio-economic groups, persons with a disability and older people. We will also emphasise the virtue of collaboration between sporting bodies (NGBs, LSPs and clubs) and between sport and other policy sectors in the development and promotion of participation initiatives.

ACTION 10

In prioritising initiatives and programmes to engage groups with lower participation levels we will use behavioural insights and other research to better understand issues around non-participation.

Whatever the case, it is important that our efforts gain the best insight into the issues involved in people's decisions to not participate and are based on the best evidence of what can address these issues, including building on what we already know in both regards.

Dormant Accounts funding is currently being used to implement and evaluate a range of policy interventions around disadvantage and disability in sport in particular, many of which are linked to the NPAP. We believe that policy interventions have a better chance of succeeding with this type of approach where we learn from previous experience through trialling, evaluation and scaling up. One good example in this respect is the Community Sports Hubs (CSH) initiative based in local facilities such as sport or community centres, the natural environment and/or schools. They seek to bring local people together and provide a home for local clubs and sports organisations. They engage the local community, promote community leadership, offer a range of sporting opportunities and bring key partners and groups together in trying to make it easier for local people to get involved and engaged in sport and physical activity. They reflect key principles which we are encouraging in the policy around collaboration, capacity building, community engagement and innovation.

⁴⁹ <http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013/> - Figure 5.8 and related text

ACTION 11

We will use the Dormant Account Fund and other Exchequer funding to roll out initiatives such as the Community Sports Hubs on a nationwide basis where they have been found to be successful following robust evaluation. We will also seek the support of the private sector for such initiatives.

Outdoor Recreational Sporting Activities

We are fortunate in having high quality countryside and outdoor spaces, including a national network of trails, available for people to take part in a variety of outdoor recreational sporting activities such as recreational walking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking, hill climbing and so on. These are increasingly attractive pursuits for greater numbers of our population. Sport Ireland has played a key role in supporting the development of recreational trails in Ireland through the development, certification and promotion of best practice criteria for trails. It also maintains a National Trails Register, which is available to the public.

ACTION 12

In addressing the disability gradients in participation we will explore the possibility of introducing a national network of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers (SIDOs) aligned to the LSP network. These SIDOs would be expected to work closely with relevant NGBs, the disability sector, leisure centre providers, the CARA Centre and other stakeholders in providing opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport.

Sport Ireland will continue to fulfil this important supporting role for outdoor recreation over the coming years, expanding the national register to include other outdoor activity amenities. This will require close collaboration with Government Departments which fund the development of trails and outdoor recreation infrastructure in order to promote an excellent user experience of these facilities. The development of guidelines and standards, as well as the provision of relevant training and education, will continue. Greenways developed in recent years are attracting growing numbers of cyclists and walkers. A new Greenways strategy is being developed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and will address a range of issues relating to the future development of Greenways. This strategy will be an important reference for future work in this area. We will support participation in these outdoor activities taking into account the different perspectives around issues such as access, rights of way, land ownership, etc. Multiple and diverse organisations, including Government Departments and State agencies, are involved in the space.

ACTION 13

Apart from investment in traditional sports infrastructure we will examine how the wider natural and built environment can facilitate participation in sport and physical activity. This consideration will also take account of the type of activities towards which adults are increasingly gravitating such as running, cycling, outdoor adventure pursuits, recreational walking, etc.

Social Participation

Up to now, sports policy has tended to place a particularly strong emphasis on sport as a physical activity, notwithstanding that our definition of sport emphasises the formation of social relationships as an integral feature, and that volunteering, club membership and attendance at sporting events are particularly strong elements of Irish society. It is worth noting that, in terms of participation numbers, sport generates similar levels of social participation (through volunteering, membership and attendance) as active participation.

The 2017 ISM⁵⁰ reported that over 45% of adults regularly participated in at least one of the three social domains around sport. It is important therefore that we recognise and support these aspects of sport in addition to the physical participation aspect.

ACTION 14

We will use our funding streams to foster social participation in sport by encouraging the development of strong community-based sports organisations (e.g. Community Sports Hubs), supporting and developing those who volunteer for sport and promoting social membership of sports clubs (as well as playing membership).

Outcomes and Measurement

This chapter sets out policies and actions for increasing active and social participation in sport throughout all segments of our society. We are seeking to deliver four key outcomes:

- Enhanced levels of physical literacy particularly in young children;
- More sustained active participation in sport at all life stages;
- Significant reductions in the “gradients” by socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, age and gender; and
- Greater levels of social participation in sport across the population.

We will establish clear and specific targets around each of the above outcomes, along with baseline measures using the best available instruments or through developing new instruments as necessary. Targets will be ambitious recognising the enormous contribution to our society from any increase in participation. Given the latest figures from the ISM⁵¹ we believe that it should be possible to have at least 50% of adults actively participating in sport by 2027.

⁵⁰ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>

For adult participation, the baselines are being set by reference to the 2017 ISM report while for children's participation we will use the results from the forthcoming research follow up to the CSPPA study last undertaken in 2010 to provide baselines. The results from that study will be available in late 2018. We will also need to establish some baselines for physical literacy targets in conjunction with the research and education sectors.

ACTION 15

Sport Ireland will, by mid-2019, advise the Sports Leadership Group (see Chapter 11) around appropriate interim targets (2023) for adult and children's active and social participation in sport and for the reduction in the relevant gradients. Targets for narrowing the gradients in participation will also be set (age, gender, social, ethnicity and disability).

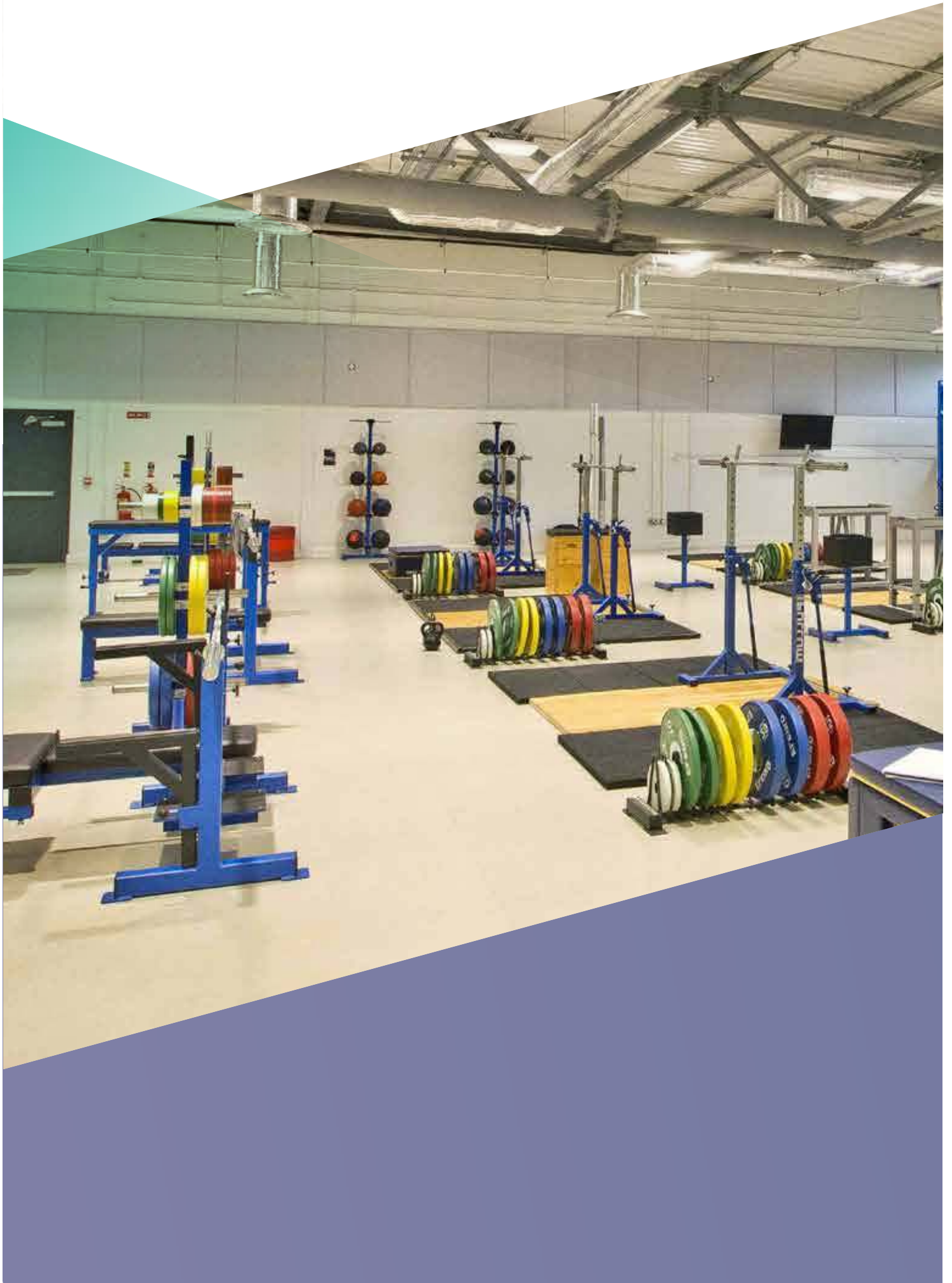
Financing for Increased Participation

We have set out key elements of our policy and plan over the next 10 years to increase participation in sport throughout the population. If we are successful the benefits to individuals, to communities and to society more broadly will be immense. We are under no illusions about the challenges involved. Many of the initiatives and programmes we seek to develop as part of our ambitions are highly labour intensive, particularly those seeking to engage non-participants and 'hard to reach' groups. They require significantly greater capacity and coordination than we have at present in our sports system.



Investment in people, programmes, organisations and systems will be required quite apart from the investment in facilities which we have addressed elsewhere in this policy. Furthermore, as has been pointed out repeatedly in the consultation process, there exists a greater need for security of funding among NGBs and LSPs in particular to enable them to invest in staff recruitment, training and development and more sustainable programme implementation which will be needed to drive the increased participation we seek.

Given the personal, community and societal benefits associated with active and social participation in sport, the case for significantly increasing, on a multi-annual basis, our investment to support greater participation in sport is strong. We deal with the issue of financing in more detail in Chapter 10.



A photograph of a modern sports facility, likely a gym or training center. The room features a high ceiling with exposed metal beams and large windows. Several blue weightlifting racks are arranged in rows, each equipped with various colored weight plates (yellow, green, red, blue). In the foreground, a stack of colorful weight plates is visible on a table. The overall atmosphere is clean and professional.

Chapter 4 Sports Facilities

Over the past 20 years, Ireland's stock of sports facilities at local, regional and national level has been substantially improved with the help of Government support under the Sports Capital and Local Authority Swimming Pool Programmes, as well as through investment in the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, Croke Park, Aviva Stadium, Thomond Park, Páirc Uí Chaoimh and other sporting arenas. This investment is helping to ensure quality sporting experiences for all adults and children regularly participating in sport, as well as assisting Ireland's top sports persons to compete successfully at the highest levels. The investment is contributing to the health and wellbeing of the nation as well as to social and economic development in Ireland.

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, Ireland's stock of sports facilities at local, regional and national level has been substantially improved with the help of Government support under the Sports Capital and Local Authority Swimming Pool Programmes, as well as through investment in the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, Croke Park, Aviva Stadium, Thomond Park, Páirc Uí Chaoimh and other sporting arenas. This investment is helping to ensure quality sporting experiences for all adults and children regularly participating in sport, as well as assisting Ireland's top sports persons to compete successfully at the highest levels. The investment is contributing to the health and wellbeing of the nation as well as to social and economic development in Ireland. While Chapter 6 describes our vision for the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, this Chapter focuses on the priorities for Government in relation to other sport facilities at local, regional and national level.

Investment Rationale

In an effort to attract new participants while delivering a high-quality experience for existing players and supporting top sports performers, we consider that sustained and enhanced investment in sports facilities is required under the new policy. Subject to availability of funding, investment programmes aimed primarily at local and regional level will be organised as follows:

- The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) will be run regularly to fund smaller-scale facilities targeting increased participation and improved participation experiences throughout the population; and
- A separate fund will be established for larger regional and national sports facilities which will drive participation and also support high performance sport.

Range of Facilities to be supported

In line with the definition of sport which we have adopted and the range of activities covered by that definition, our investment in sports capital envisages a similarly broad range of facilities to promote participation across the sports spectrum, such as clubs, schools and local community organisations. In this regard, support will target facilities for both team and individual sports. Team sports help to foster active participation among young people, while individual sports like personal exercise, swimming, recreational walking and cycling tend to sustain well throughout the life course. The scoring system and assessment procedures for future rounds of the SCP will continue to be reviewed to ensure that the programme is achieving its overall objectives in line with this policy.

There is a compelling need to foster increased physical activity by children generally. Given the significant contribution of schools in this regard, the availability of adequate physical activity opportunities for children in the school setting, whether by means of dedicated track-ways or synthetic surface play areas on school grounds, is recognised to be of paramount importance. The feasibility of a cross-Governmental initiative to secure improvements in this area will be considered in the context of future changes to the SCP.

ACTION 16

We will commit to run the Sports Capital Programme in each year of this policy, to fund facilities targeting increased participation and improved participation experiences throughout the population. The scoring system and assessment process for the Sports Capital Programme will be reviewed to ensure that the programme is achieving objectives in line with this National Sports Policy.



Delivering a sporting environment that can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, ability or disability will be prioritised.

Principles for Support

We will prioritise projects which develop multi-sport, multi-use options around participation, recognising the importance of the lifecourse perspective as well as the need for enhanced collaboration between sports. We will encourage team and individual sports to work together, and all sports bodies to cooperate with Local Authorities, schools, universities and others locally.

We will also encourage funding applicants to work with community organisations, Local Authorities, Local Sports Partnerships, the private sector and others locally in developing ongoing programmes and initiatives, which seek to connect with and engage non-participants, and which improve the experience for existing participants.

We will prioritise shared facilities, those facilities which are co-located with those of other community services and ensure an even greater focus on developing sports facilities in disadvantaged areas.

We will prioritise accessibility in the design, build and management of facilities. For certain groups, particularly people with disabilities, physical access is one of the potential barriers to be addressed. Delivering a sporting environment that can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, ability or disability will be prioritised. We will require applicants for significant sports capital support to address the issue of energy conservation and to encourage active travel e.g. through provision of cycle parking facilities.

Value for Money Review

Periodic Value for Money (VFM) Reviews of the SCP will be carried out and the results and recommendations of the reviews will be reflected in subsequent investment programmes. The first such VFM Review will commence in 2019.

ACTION 17

We will conduct periodic Value for Money Reviews of the Sports Capital Programme with the first one to commence in 2019. Recommendations of the reviews will be reflected in subsequent investment programmes.

National Sports Facilities Audit

We recognise the benefits of having a comprehensive and up-to-date database of sports facilities as the basis for a more long-term planned approach to facility investment. With this in mind, a nation-wide audit of sports facilities (whether publicly or privately owned) will be conducted periodically, with the first such audit to be completed within 2 years of the publication of the policy. The audit will include publicly-accessible facilities at schools and other educational facilities. The periodic audit will guide decisions regarding the sport capital projects which will be prioritised for public funding. Given their wide functions, their local knowledge and their overview of the range of facilities available, the proposal is that Local Authorities will conduct the audit at a local level. This will align well with their role in leading the development and implementation of Local Sports Plans.

In relation to the focus of future capital investment, we will also consider future demographic projections and local needs and will target multi-activity usage. We will encourage county level responses, based on a common methodology, which link with local development plans to prioritise local needs and frame the planning and funding of future facilities, particularly in disadvantaged areas. We will take account of the potential of the wider natural and built environment to facilitate the type of activities in which adults are increasingly participating, such as running, cycling, outdoor adventure pursuits and recreational walking. We will work closely with other Government Departments, Local Authorities (who will lead at a local level), LSPs, HSE, Office of Public Works (OPW), Coillte, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland, clubs, community groups, private sector, and other key stakeholders. In particular, we will engage with the NGBs in relation to any perceived deficits in facilities from their perspective. Combining this information with participation trends and demographic patterns will allow us to develop a clear understanding of the gaps in our sporting infrastructure.

One of the outputs of the periodic audits will be an up-to-date, fully accessible national database of sports facilities which can be used to underpin a web-based portal of information to serve the needs of current and potential participants. We will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that this database is comprehensive and kept up-to-date.



ACTION 18

We will periodically conduct a nationwide audit of sports facilities (whether publicly or privately owned), with the first such audit to be completed within 2 years of the publication of this policy. These audits will guide decisions regarding the sport capital projects to be prioritised for public funding and we will also consult with NGBs in relation to any further actions required. Local Authorities will conduct the audit at a local level, as part of their role in implementing their Local Sports Plans. As part of the audit we will work with relevant stakeholders to develop and maintain a fully-accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date national database of sports facilities which will also be translated into a web-based portal to serve the needs of the public.

Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund

A new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) will be established to provide Exchequer support for larger sports facility projects. These are projects where the Exchequer investment would be greater than the maximum amount available under the SCP. In some cases, these may be projects where the primary objective will be to increase active participation in sport throughout the population. In other cases, these may be large scale iconic venues/stadia where the focus is more related to social participation and high performance sport. Initially, the scheme will have a particular focus on NGBs and Local Authorities and the inclusion of new swimming pool projects under the scheme will also be considered. All project proposals will be subject to appropriate cost/benefit analyses.

Large scale projects which have benefitted from significant public investment in recent years include Croke Park, Aviva Stadium, Thomond Park and more recently Páirc Uí Chaoimh. This type of investment serves to underpin the iconic status enjoyed by sport in communities across Ireland and recognises the importance of social participation across the life-course. Furthermore these venues have a broader economic impact on the local economy. Having a dedicated fund in place will allow for a more structured and evidence-based approach to selecting the projects for Government support.

ACTION 19

We will establish a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund to support projects where the Exchequer investment will exceed the maximum amount available under the Sports Capital Programme.

Potential Swimming Pool Projects and a National Swimming Strategy

Swimming is a sport that enhances safety on and near water, acts as a foundation sport for other water sports, and is a form of physical activity that is particularly well-suited to lifelong participation. In recognition of the importance of swimming, aquatics form one key strand in the PE curriculum at both primary and post-primary school levels.

There has also been considerable capital investment under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP) as well as current support e.g. local authorities providing grants, subvention or management payments related to the operation of a pool and/or the access to pools by older or socio-economically disadvantaged people. Given the existence of disparate State-backed policy interventions, we will work closely with relevant Government Departments, Local Authorities, Sport Ireland, Swim Ireland, Ireland Active, Irish Water Safety, Olympic Council of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland and other key stakeholders such as the Federation of Irish Sport and the Irish Hotels Federation to agree a coherent national strategy for swimming.

In addition to increasing participation in swimming, this new national swimming strategy should also include a focus on the importance of continuing to ensure a high level of quality, safety and hygiene standards in this sector through a National Quality Standard framework in consultation with Ireland Active.

As part of the new approach, and as part of the facilities audit mentioned earlier in this chapter, we will review the provision of swimming pools, whether publicly or privately owned, across the country to identify where gaps in provision for schools and communities can be met and, if pertinent, where sufficient potential demand exists, both among children and adults, to justify the building of a new pool. Ensuring access by schools to swimming pools to fulfil the aquatics strand of the PE curriculum is an important objective which will be considered in the envisaged review.

In this context, it is clear that the existing LASPP which provides for maximum grants of €3.8m is not sufficient to cover potential new swimming pool projects. While Exchequer funding has been secured to cover commitments in relation to the swimming pools which are already in the LASPP, consideration will be given to allowing Local Authorities to apply for new projects under the LSSIF.

ACTION 20

We will work closely with relevant Government Departments, Local Authorities, sporting bodies and other stakeholders to agree a coherent national strategy for swimming. As part of this, we will review swimming pool provision to identify where gaps exist and how these can be met.



Addressing Access

Our overall policy aim is that facilities, especially those which have been developed using public funds, are fully accessible and available to the broadest range of users. We will continually review how best to ensure that this is the case. We will encourage and facilitate collaborative approaches between Local Authorities, NGBs, LSPs, Ireland Active, and others to identify capacity during off-peak times and to promote greater use of the facilities at these times e.g. for schools, for the unemployed, for older adults, for people with disabilities and for other relevant target groups.

While the majority of primary schools must access a swimming pool in the community to fulfil the aquatics strand of the PE curriculum, there is no specific funding available to help them defray costs like transport and facility hire. We will work with stakeholders across Government and within sport to identify any barriers and how to overcome these, in order to realise the objective that every child should learn to swim. In this context, we will consider the merits of a new programme of annual current sports funding under a targeted scheme to support schools with reasonable costs incurred in delivering the PE curriculum, including costs incurred accessing sports facilities off campus.

ACTION 21

We will work with relevant stakeholders to explore the merits of a new programme of current sports funding under a targeted scheme to support schools on a sustainable basis in defraying reasonable costs (such as necessary transport and facility hire) incurred in delivering the aquatics strand of the PE curriculum.

We recognise that Local Authorities, working with LSPs and other partners locally, are pivotally positioned to help us to ensure that facilities are accessible and in use by the broadest range of users. They are also well positioned to act as honest brokers around facilities, given their many linkages with local communities and their overview knowledge of facilities, whether publicly owned, club or school-based, third level, private or otherwise.

Recognising the inter-related and complementary roles of Local Authorities and Local Sports Partnerships, we will encourage continued close cooperation between them and with sporting bodies, schools, community organisations and others locally in working to achieve greater participation among local communities.

ACTION 22

We will encourage Local Authorities to promote and facilitate more sharing of facilities locally, especially where capacity is available at off-peak times during the day, in the evening or during holiday periods in the case of educational establishments. This will involve working closely with clubs and sporting bodies, schools and colleges, leisure facility providers and others. As part of the Local Sport Plans, Local Authorities will also lead on other collaborative initiatives to improve access locally e.g. Local Authorities and LSPs will combine to see how recreational areas can be utilised more fully by local communities for sport and physical activity e.g. for parkruns.

Many Local Authorities work closely with LSPs, sporting bodies and others to run programmes to encourage access by target groups which are traditionally less active. There are welcome examples of centres addressing affordability by providing services at reduced cost e.g. for groups of older people or people from disadvantaged areas. While the optimal operation of these centres and the delivery of outreach programmes are both critical in terms of promoting greater participation in line with Government policy, there is as yet no specific current funding stream available to Local Authorities to subvent their important contribution in this area. A new programme of annual current sports funding will be provided under a targeted scheme to support them in this important work.



ACTION 23

We will aim to secure a new stream of annual funding for a targeted sports scheme to subvent Local Authorities in the operation of loss-making facilities where these have a key role in increasing participation, as well as to support programmes to increase active participation.

Measuring Impact and Evaluating Effectiveness

As with all anticipated funding under the new policy, investment in facilities will be evaluated and monitored to assess the extent to which it helps to increase participation and assist in fostering excellence.





Chapter 5 High Performance

The structures for high performance (HP) sport in Ireland have advanced considerably since the then Irish Sports Council published its first high performance strategy in December 2001. The roles played by the Sport Ireland Institute, the Olympic Council of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland, together with Sport Ireland investment in the high performance programme and International Carding Scheme, have contributed to improved athlete performances, while world-class facilities to accommodate high performance training for a range of sports are now available at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus.

Introduction

The structures for high performance (HP) sport in Ireland have advanced considerably since the then Irish Sports Council published its first high performance strategy in December 2001. The roles played by the Sport Ireland Institute, the Olympic Council of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland, together with Sport Ireland investment in the high performance programme and International Carding Scheme, have contributed to improved athlete performances, while world-class facilities to accommodate high performance training for a range of sports are now available at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus.

Ireland's achievements in HP Sport have notably improved in recent years. Sport Ireland has provided clear leadership and there has been a step up, with initiatives like the Pursuit of Excellence Programme providing greater support for coaches and performance directors as well as programmes providing career development and post-sport transition guidance for athletes. There is also evidence of increased professionalism and best practice models around high performance being applied in many NGBs. The performance and integrity of our top athletes on the international stage has a very positive representational impact for Ireland, as Irish sport provides the world with a window into Ireland and the Irish people both at home and abroad.⁵²

However challenges are also evident, particularly around funding, governance and sporting integrity. International evidence demonstrates that the current level of high performance funding in Ireland is significantly behind that of comparator nations. There is also some concern around the relatively high number of sports receiving support. Limited commercial investment in high performance sport means that sports are over-reliant on the scarce public resources available.

In terms of governance, it is recognised that talented leaders within the high performance sector have been lost to other countries and systems, and there is a lack of investment in talent at coaching and performance director level. Matters relating to integrity in sport will be dealt with in Chapter 9.

Rio 2016

While the overall 2016 Games environment presented some difficulties, Rio also showcased tremendous moments for Ireland's Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Overall results were positive with Irish athletes achieving sixteen 'top 10' finishes in the Olympics compared to three in Athens 2004, nine in Beijing 2008 and fourteen in London 2012. Irish athletes also achieved thirty 'top 20' finishes. Across the four year cycle leading to Rio 2016, there was evidence of systemic improvement in terms of medals won at European and World level, personal bests and percentage improvements. Irish athletes also had a very successful Paralympic Games winning 11 medals in Rio, achieving 28th place in the medal table overall, and exceeding the performance target set - an achievement all the more meritorious given the changes in the competition programmes after London 2012.

High Performance in Ireland – Time for a Refresh?

The high performance system has advanced considerably in recent years. In particular, the developments on the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus and the Sport Ireland Institute demonstrate a real commitment to a system for Irish athletes to reach their full potential at home in Ireland if they choose.

⁵² <https://www.ireland.ie/en/stories/global-ireland-irelands-global-footprint-2025>



Rio showcased tremendous moments for Ireland's Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

We are proud of the achievements of our top athletes and are happy that the significant improvements in systems, support and facilities since 2002 have had a positive impact on their performances. Nonetheless, a clear sense emerged from Sport Ireland's Rio Review⁵³ that there is room for a more strategic approach and for further enhancements in the high performance system. The belief is that, having made huge advances, the time is now right to refresh the strategy and deliver a renewed shared vision across the system. With the solid building blocks already there, and a new strategy to focus on, the feeling is that our sporting nation could make us even more proud over the cycles ahead. Some of the issues which have been articulated, including in the Rio Review, are set out below.

Scale of Investment in Ireland relative to Competitors

While there will always be a variety of factors at play, international research under the SPLISS⁵⁴ review has demonstrated that high performance results are strongly linked to levels of investment. Figure 5 illustrates how, among 16 countries assessed by the review (not including Ireland), those with the most significant levels of investment in high performance sport in the period 2009 to 2012 (Australia, Japan, France, Korea) also had the greatest share of success at the London 2012 Olympic Games. However, we would normally regard our real competitors as those countries with a population size similar to ours (i.e. less than 10m). Of that group, over the Rio Cycle 2013-2016, New Zealand invested €152.1m in HP, Denmark invested €74.9m, while Ireland invested only €37.6m. We note that Denmark invested almost twice the amount invested by Ireland and delivered seven times more medals at Rio. It would seem clear that to achieve more medals, more funds must be found for high performance sport.

⁵³ http://www.sportireland.ie/High_Performance/2016%20Rio%20Review/Sport%20Ireland%202016%20Rio%20Review.pdf

⁵⁴ Sports Policy Factors leading to International Sporting Success, a joint initiative involving Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), WJH Mulier Instituut (Netherlands), Sheffield Hallam University (UK) and UK Sport (UK)

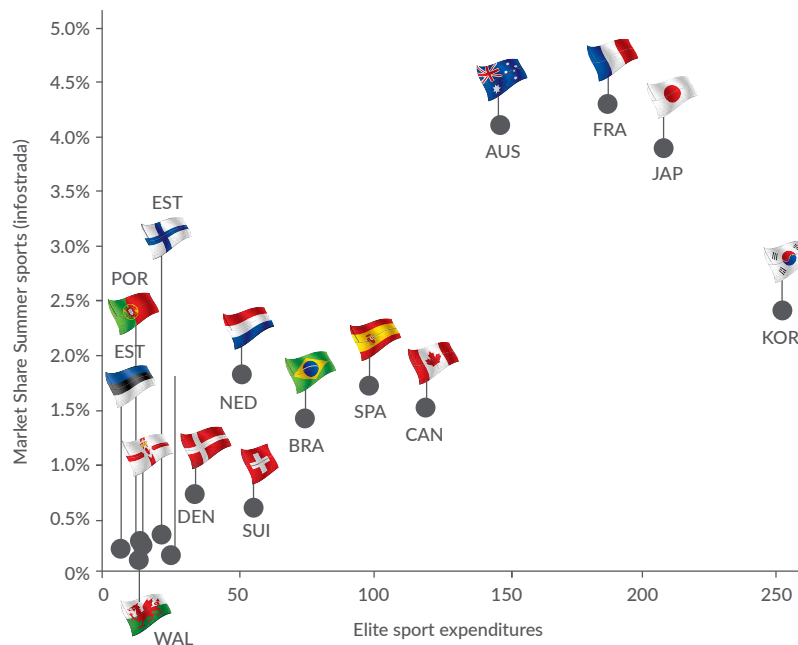


Figure 5: Summer Sports: Funding- Medals Relationship 2009-2012 SPLISS Review

Alternative funding options are untapped

As well as the need for an increased level of funding from Government, the opportunity for corporate Ireland to invest in high performance is one that remains largely untapped. There may be merit in Sport Ireland and the relevant NGBs recruiting experts to engage with the business and potential donor community to establish more innovative and attractive mechanisms for them to make a more substantial contribution. This should become easier once a High Performance Strategy has been defined, an overall approach and direction have been settled, and medal targets made clear. There may also be opportunities to consider collaborative models like that applied in Denmark where TV and sponsorship rights are sold as a bundle for a number of sports with the fund then benefitting all of those sports, including those which would normally earn strong returns from such rights, and equally those who in the normal course would have less chance to do so. A wider engagement with business or philanthropists might also yield novel approaches in this regard.

Available funding is spread very thinly

Aside from the different scale of investment in competitor countries, there is a further difference in that tiered systems have been applied successfully elsewhere. High performance investment in New Zealand is to targeted sports, of which three are in the top tier. Denmark targets 11 sports in its top tier. Over the 2013-2016 Rio Cycle, a total of €31.1m was invested in high performance in Ireland while a further €6.5m was allocated to athletes under the Carding Scheme. These monies were allocated across 21 sports with no strategic approach to tiering and with the largest annual grant being less than €900,000. The Rio Review contends that an insufficient level of funding is being shared among too many sports, some of which are unlikely to be world-class. If Ireland is to get a better return on its high performance investment, difficult decisions will need to be made in order to focus our funding on a smaller number of sports, targeting those with the greatest podium potential.

Funding is on a year-by-year basis

While the Olympic and Paralympic worlds operate on four-year cycles, high performance funding in Ireland to date has been granted on a year-by-year basis. This creates significant uncertainty and presents a challenge for NGBs aiming to plan for 4-8 year periods to build up to successive Games. Sport Ireland has presented the case that increasing the scale of high performance funding and moving to a commitment to deliver multi-annual funding for each quadrennial from 2019 onwards would allow NGBs to:-

- strategically develop their programmes over the 4-8 year horizon identifying medal opportunities and building towards these in a planned way;
- assure high performing athletes of a stable environment in which to train and grow improved performance, where a holistic approach to their career path development within and beyond sport can be taken;
- attract world class performance directors and provide skilled coaches with a clear career pathway, providing greater rewards for success and helping to address talent drain;
- enhance their ability to engage with potential partners to attract additional funding to supplement State grants; and
- improve the overall pipeline to ensure sustained and improved success for Team Ireland.

Opportunities for Greater Coherence

The need for greater integration with Northern Ireland high performance partner entities has been highlighted, given the synergies that could arise. There are also challenges in terms of how to manage at certain points, where an individual athlete may feel, due to multiple demands that they have to choose between their educational and their sporting development. Options like sport scholarships and other ways for the sports sector to work more closely with the third level



institutions could mean that we retain more of our highest performers in Ireland, after they reach 18. Consideration is also required to address the need to increase the quantity of services provided by the Sport Ireland Institute and to better tailor the location and timing of services to suit busy athlete schedules.

Openings for governance to be further enhanced

Good governance is the foundation on which NGBs can thrive. Consequently, all NGBs in receipt of Government funding through Sport Ireland are required to adopt the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations⁵⁵. The question of appropriate training for Board members, including on high performance, and the application of best practice (e.g. independent Board members, limited terms, etc.) also merit further consideration.

⁵⁵ See Chapter 7 for further details on this

A new HP Strategy for Ireland

Sport Ireland's Rio Review⁵⁶ sets out the next steps required to progress the system. One of the many recommendations is that it is timely to produce a new strategy for high performance sport in Ireland. Taking account of the above issues and recognising the need for a longer-term perspective when planning for the Olympic and Paralympic cycles, the following parameters will apply to the development of high performance sport in Ireland:

- Ireland will move to a multi-cycle approach to high performance funding. A new High Performance Strategy will be developed which will define the direction for at least 12 years and which will be reviewed each four years on a rolling basis.
- A Working Group chaired by Sport Ireland and comprising representatives of Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Olympic Council of Ireland, Athletes Commission, Paralympics Ireland and the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport will be established to develop the high performance strategy, which will be submitted to Government for its approval.
- The strategy will set clear and ambitious medal targets over three Olympic/Paralympic cycles. These targets will be communicated widely to the public.
- Commensurate with new ambitious targets, the strategy will include a clear commitment on increased Government funding for high performance to emulate the scale of investment available in comparator nations. Investment of the order of €20m per annum on a sustained basis will be required in the early years of this policy, with a clear commitment by Government to deliver multi-annual funding for each quadrennial from 2019 onwards.
- Opportunities will be explored so that business or individual donors will also be attracted to invest in a more meaningful way. Collaborative models where sports work together and share benefits from a joint fund will be considered.
- In line with successful international models, the strategy will be based on a tiered sport system. Sports will be tiered based on hard evidence and using criteria aligned with where Ireland has a natural advantage (geographic, infrastructural or otherwise), a critical mass of athletes, and effective governance structures. The evidence will be based on future potential. Up to a maximum of 12 sports will receive support. There will be a maximum of six sports in both Podium/Tier 1 sports and developing/Tier 2 sports.
- One or more team sports could emerge as a candidate for Tier 1 or Tier 2. While it would not be the over-riding factor, it is clear that the agreed level of investment per annum would support a smaller number of Tier 1 sports, if one or more of these were to be a team sport.
- As the number of sports receiving high performance support is to be limited, a national Talent ID programme may be developed to identify athletes with potential to move between sports and to build pipelines across a number of sports.
- While there will be a set number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 sports, there will also be an exceptional mechanism to support outliers where specific Olympic or Paralympic medal potential is identified. As resources are limited, a limit will be set on the number of outliers to be supported within a given Games cycle. A maximum of three outliers is anticipated.
- The challenge around "all-island" sports versus sports which operate on a jurisdictional basis will be considered. Greater strategic alignment between Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Ireland Institute and Sports Institute Northern Ireland may prove beneficial.

⁵⁶ http://www.sportireland.ie/High_Performance/2016%20Rio%20Review/Sport%20Ireland%202016%20Rio%20Review.pdf

- Recognising the requirement for all sporting bodies to adhere to the highest standards of corporate governance, this should also be applied to the oversight and governance of all high performance programmes. The strategy will specify actions in this regard, including options around high performance training for Board members, the question of independent Board members and limited terms.
- The strategy will review how best to address any challenges, including resourcing, in the context of high performance athletes who are also in secondary or third level education. In this respect, the welfare of athletes who pursue their sports, sometimes to the detriment of their education and long-term careers, is a matter that is important to Government and to Sport Ireland. It is an issue that is receiving increasing attention internationally, a debate that will need to be followed closely and actively. Initiatives, whether of a financial or non-financial nature, which seek to improve athlete welfare, during their athletic career or in the transition from full-time competitor to employment seeker, will be sympathetically considered.
- Top level athletes in receipt of Government funding will be required to engage in a programme of events agreed with Government, with a particular focus on events taking place in the period immediately after the Olympic or Paralympic Games. Such events could be aimed at encouraging participation in sport or promoting other national health and wellbeing objectives, for example promoting mental health or warning of the dangers of alcohol or substance abuse.
- Once the new strategy is approved by Government, Sport Ireland will be assigned appropriate resources to deliver it.

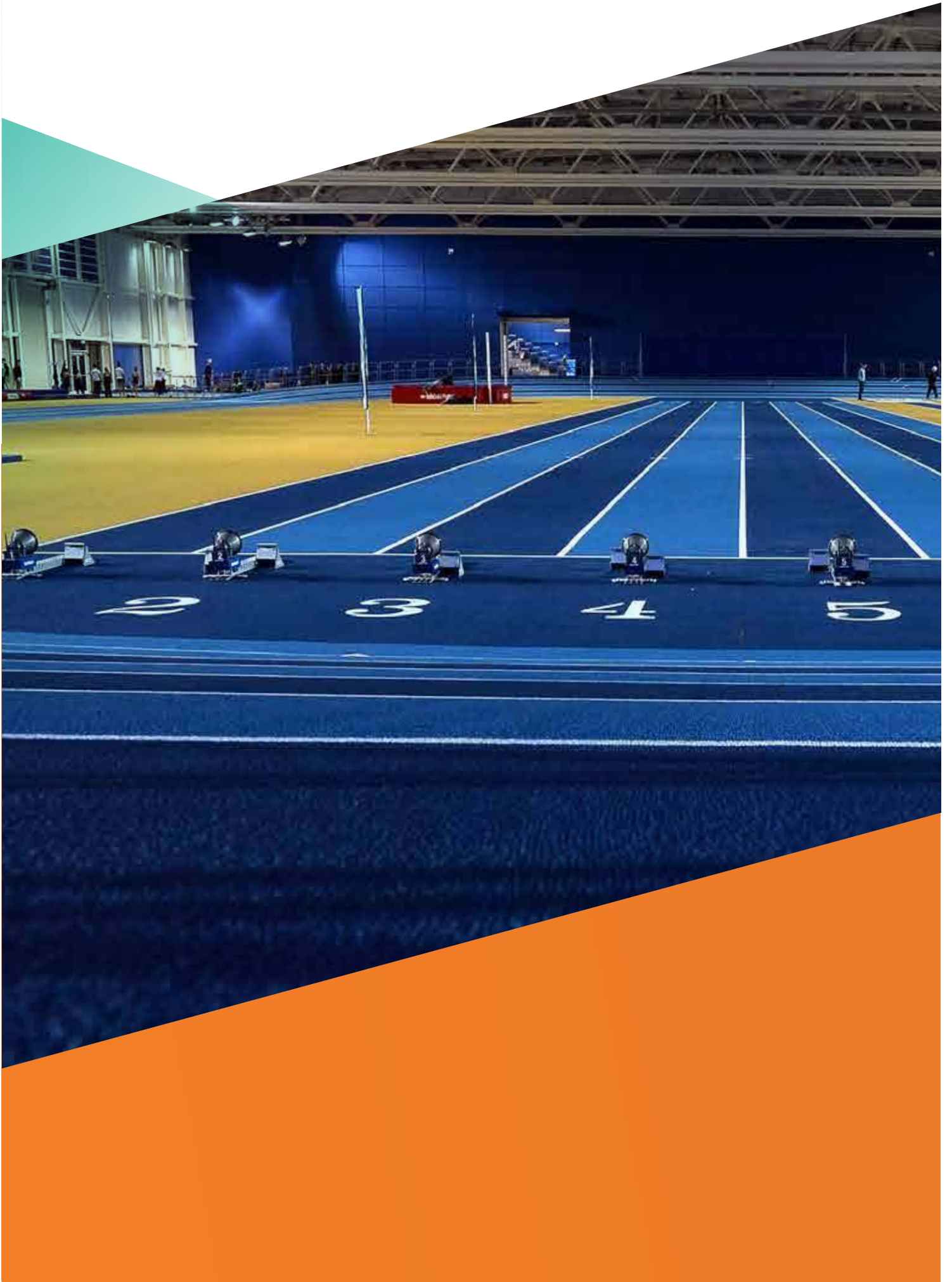


ACTION 24

Under the aegis of the Sports Leadership Group (see Chapter 11), we will establish a High Performance (HP) Working Group chaired by Sport Ireland and comprising representatives of Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Olympic Council of Ireland, Athletes Commission, Paralympics Ireland and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to develop a new HP Strategy for Ireland in line with the parameters set out in this policy. The new Strategy will be submitted to the Sports Leadership Group in the first instance and then to Government for approval.

Measuring Impact and Evaluating Effectiveness

As with all anticipated funding under the new policy, investment in high performance will be evaluated and monitored over time. Sport Ireland will lead on its own focused monitoring. A mechanism for high level monitoring and oversight of the strategy on a six-monthly basis will also be established. While medal targets will be clear and monitored, it is recognised that sports will have peaks and troughs through an Olympic/Paralympic cycle and between cycles.





Chapter 6 Sport Ireland National Sports Campus

Substantial work has been undertaken to develop the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus (“the Campus”) to meet the evolving needs of the sporting community in Ireland. Significant progress in recent years means that world-class facilities are now in place at the Campus for a variety of sports. Facilities developed to date have largely been in line with the 2004 Development Control Plan (also known as the Master Plan) for the Campus. The Campus is home to 27 sporting organisations and the development of office accommodation for Sport Ireland as well as other NGBs will continue over coming years. The Campus is operated by a subsidiary company of Sport Ireland.

Introduction

Substantial work has been undertaken to develop the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus (“the Campus”) to meet the evolving needs of the sporting community in Ireland. Significant progress in recent years means that world-class facilities are now in place at the Campus for a variety of sports. Facilities developed to date have largely been in line with the 2004 Development Control Plan (also known as the Master Plan) for the Campus. The Campus is home to 27 sporting organisations and the development of office accommodation for Sport Ireland as well as other NGBs will continue over coming years. The Campus is operated by a subsidiary company of Sport Ireland.

Current Position

The Campus provides world-class training facilities to support our top athletes in preparing for competition. As a secondary objective, it provides facilities and programmes targeting broader-based participation among the general public, where usage levels are increasing reflecting both increased participation in the existing swimming, diving and gymnastics programmes and the introduction of new athletics and multi-sport offerings. In 2017, almost 1.1 million visits were made to the Sport Ireland National Aquatic Centre, making it one of the top visitor attractions in the State.

The facilities currently in place at the Campus include:

- National Aquatic Centre
- National Indoor Arena Phase 1 - incorporating National Indoor Training Centre, National Indoor Athletics Training Centre, National Gymnastics Training Centre
- National Horse Sport Arena
- National Modern Pentathlon Centre
- National Diving Training Centre
- High Performance Training Centre

- FAI National Training Centre
- GAA National Games Development Centre
- National Cross Country Track
- Multi-Sport Synthetic Pitch facility
- Two large multi-sport turf pitches accommodating Gaelic games, football and rugby
- Jogging Track and Trim Trails

A High Performance Cricket Training Facility and Phase II of the National Indoor Arena will be delivered in the early years of this policy.

Vision for the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus

The Campus provides a high performance facility for Ireland’s top athletes with a world-class training environment to support them in their preparation for competition. Recognising the importance of promoting participation, we also see a wider role for the Campus in facilitating access for NGBs, clubs, communities and schools in a manner that accords with the core principle which ensures priority access across the year for our top athletes. The guiding principles to govern access to facilities, including pricing strategy, must therefore strike a balance between:

- Priority access across the year for high performing athletes;
- Promotion of participation by communities to maximise the use of facilities;
- Users of facilities contribute to the running costs; and
- Minimising the level of subsidy.

Further Development at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus

Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027⁵⁷ reiterated the Government’s commitment to the continued development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. €42million in capital funding has been committed for the period 2018-2021, and Phase 2 of the National Indoor Arena⁵⁸ and the National

⁵⁷ <http://www.gov.ie/en/project-ireland-2040>

⁵⁸ Comprises covered synthetic pitches and ancillary facilities designed primarily for rugby, soccer and GAA but capable of accommodating all field sports.

Velodrome and Badminton Centre are highlighted as priorities for delivery in the early years of this policy.

The NDP highlighted Sport Ireland's plans to develop athlete accommodation and additional office facilities for sporting bodies at the Campus. The NDP also referred to a proposed multi-sport indoor training facility for tennis and cricket, which for modest investment could have a huge impact for both high performance teams and wider participation in these sports. These projects, as well as the refurbishment of Abbotstown House, will be delivered as funding becomes available.

We also foresee the continued development of facilities at the Campus by National Governing Bodies in partnership with Sport Ireland, with projects anticipated to be delivered in the coming years by Cricket Ireland, the Irish Rugby Football Union and Hockey Ireland, amongst others. Sport Ireland will prioritise full accessibility in the design, build and management of facilities and encourage active and sustainable travel e.g. by provision of bicycle racks. Sport Ireland will also explore alternative options for funding, including different financial models, sale of land, philanthropy or through sponsorship by means of naming rights or otherwise.

ACTION 25

We will progress the construction of Phase 2 of the Sport Ireland National Indoor Arena and the National Velodrome and Badminton Centre in line with Project Ireland 2040. The Department and Sport Ireland will continue preparatory works in respect of other projects with a view to commencement as and when funding becomes available.



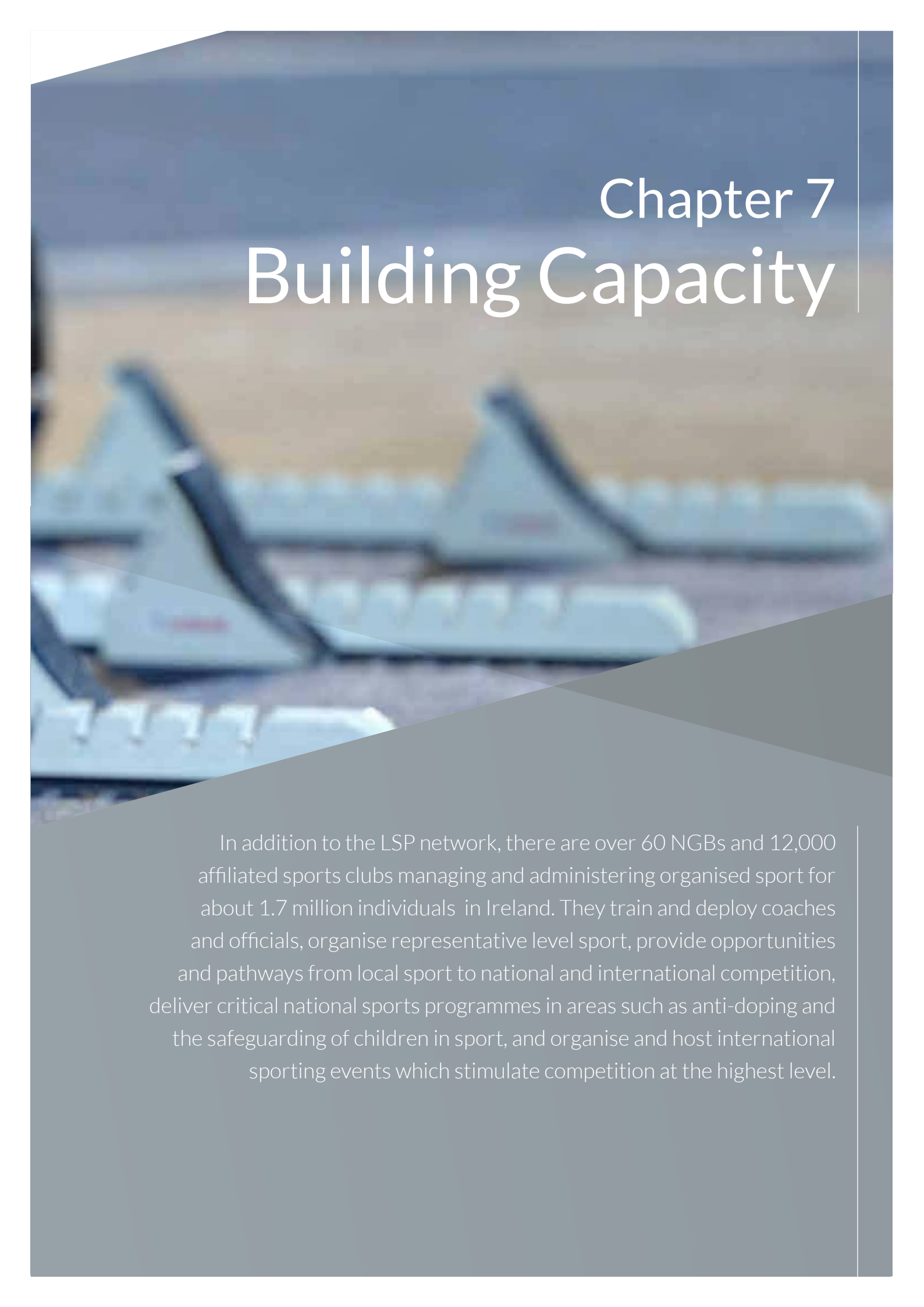
ACTION 26

Consistent with the vision set out in this policy, Sport Ireland will develop a new 10-year strategy for the development and operation of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. Sport Ireland will consult with the working group charged with development of the high performance strategy, with NGBs and with other key stakeholders in developing this strategy, which will be submitted to Government for approval.

Measuring Impact and Evaluating Effectiveness

As with all anticipated funding under the new policy, investment in facilities will be evaluated and monitored to assess the extent to which it meets the specified objective, with the primary focus at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus being the provision of a world class environment to support fostering excellence in our high performing athletes, and with the secondary focus being increasing participation.





Chapter 7

Building Capacity

In addition to the LSP network, there are over 60 NGBs and 12,000 affiliated sports clubs managing and administering organised sport for about 1.7 million individuals in Ireland. They train and deploy coaches and officials, organise representative level sport, provide opportunities and pathways from local sport to national and international competition, deliver critical national sports programmes in areas such as anti-doping and the safeguarding of children in sport, and organise and host international sporting events which stimulate competition at the highest level.

Introduction

In addition to the LSP network, there are over 60 NGBs and 12,000 affiliated sports clubs managing and administering organised sport for about 1.7 million individuals⁵⁹ in Ireland. They train and deploy coaches and officials, organise representative level sport, provide opportunities and pathways from local sport to national and international competition, deliver critical national sports programmes in areas such as anti-doping and the safeguarding of children in sport, and organise and host international sporting events which stimulate competition at the highest level.

Increasingly, sporting organisations are also being asked to go beyond their core business of sport to help address wider societal challenges around health, wellbeing, inclusion, and social and community development. All of this is happening in the context of the relatively limited resources available to many of them, particularly those local community-based sports clubs managed and run by volunteers.

The involvement of NGBs and sports clubs in the pursuit of broader policy agendas requires a more sustainable, diverse, capable and committed sports sector which can deliver for the entire community. We need to build capacity⁶⁰ within the sector which is the focus of this chapter.

The Challenge

The sports sector is diverse. Any capacity building programme needs to recognise this diversity as well as the variation in organisations' own capacities and interests. While many NGBs are already well advanced in terms of capacity building efforts, for most sports clubs and their volunteers within, the process of capacity building will represent a significant new departure.

The uncertainty associated with Brexit adds to the capacity building challenge facing the sport sector. There will inevitably be some operational impacts on sporting organisations on the island of Ireland, the scale and extent of which remains to be determined. The potential impact on those organisations operating on a cross border basis will require particular attention as the process of withdrawal from the European Union (EU) proceeds. Ensuring that these organisations are equipped to operate effectively within the post-Brexit environment is recognised as an important objective to be achieved.

Volunteers engage with their sport primarily because they are passionate about it, they want to give something back, help the community or because they enjoy working with young people. Any drive aimed at strengthening sports clubs to achieve policy goals may not necessarily be aligned with the motives, values or beliefs of volunteers.

A process of communication and advocacy is therefore necessary to build trust and engagement, provide clarity, and align the "policy" agenda with the motivations of volunteers in particular. We need to establish appropriate structures and processes for engaging with the sport sector and those other sectors which have a potential contribution to make. We need to empower communities - local leaders, parents and youths - through an enabling approach, to develop the skills and initiative to run their own clubs. Capacity building needs to be planned, purposeful, coordinated and sustained.

⁵⁹ http://sportireland.ie/Research/Economic_Impact_of_Sport_2010/

⁶⁰ The UN has defined capacity as "the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner."

Our Objectives

Our aims are to develop a sports sector that can help deliver on the major objectives established in the policy around participation and high performance, and which is sustainable, responsible and responsive based on sound principles including:

- Showing financial and organisational sustainability;
- Demonstrating uniformly high standards of governance;
- Having clear workforce development plans to support staff and volunteers;
- Exhibiting a collaborative ethos in its working within the sector and with other sectors;
- Promoting inclusivity in all its practices and engaging increasingly diverse sections of the community as athletes, participants, coaches, volunteers and spectators;
- Promoting safety, fairness and ethical behaviour at all levels;
- Being focused and clear in their strategic planning;
- Innovating and modernising through the use of research, evaluation and information systems; and
- Demonstrating accountability at all levels.

Key Action Areas

We have identified seven key action areas around which we will seek to build capacity. These areas variously work at individual, organisational and system levels allowing us to more holistically develop the sector's capacity. The action areas are:





The development of a stronger and a more diverse volunteering base will be central feature of our capacity building efforts.

Volunteering

There are currently approximately 400,000 adult volunteers giving on average 3.5 hours per week to sport⁶¹, a level of volunteering unparalleled in any other facet of Irish life. Its economic value has been estimated to be between €322 - €582 million per annum⁶². It helps sustain approximately 12,000 sports clubs serving 1.7 million members⁶³. It is central to organised sport in Ireland, particularly sport involving children where the extra-curricular contribution of teachers as well as parents/guardians and others in the community is hugely valuable to our sports system. It builds social inclusion and community cohesion as well as fostering the development of life and work-related skills for the volunteer.

The development of a stronger and more diverse volunteering base will be a central feature of our capacity building efforts. To achieve that strong base we will need to invest in volunteer training, development and recognition. We will need to encourage greater diversity within our volunteer cohort in line with our changing population

profile. This should also help in our efforts to narrow the gradients in active participation.

The ethnicity gradient merits a particular mention in relation to social participation, through volunteering or attendance. Notwithstanding certain limitations in the information available from the Irish Sports Monitor 2017⁶⁴, there appears to be some stark differences in the participation patterns between the different nationality groups, as seen in Figure 6

No.	Irish (%)	Non-Irish (%)
Volunteering	11.4	5.2
Club Attendance	35.0	25.4
Membership	19.7	7.7

Figure 6: Percentage of Irish and Non-Irish Social Participation in Sport

Achieving a reduction in this gradient is important and will likely require the capture of additional information on the level of participation in sport and physical activity among ethnic minorities.

⁶¹ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>

⁶² http://sportireland.ie/Research/Economic_Impact_of_Sport_2010/

⁶³ http://sportireland.ie/Research/Economic_Impact_of_Sport_2010/

⁶⁴ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>

There are other challenges to be addressed. Gender, age and social gradients are as strong for volunteering as they are in the case of active participation. Men dominate key management and leadership roles such as coach and club official. Levels of volunteering decline significantly among older adults. Higher income earners and those with higher levels of education are most likely to volunteer. People's busy lifestyles tend to challenge time-heavy forms of volunteering and are driving newer forms such as episodic (once-off or time defined) or micro-volunteering (parkrun). Information about volunteering opportunities is not as widely available as desired. Something that was raised often during the consultation process was the need to develop more generic training supports to deal with issues and challenges which might be common to volunteers across all sports. We propose a number of actions to address these challenges and to help strengthen our volunteering base.

ACTION 27

Sport Ireland will bring forward a volunteering strategy to consider issues around recruitment, retention and recognition, the gradients that exist in volunteering, and how to address the challenges to sustain and grow our volunteer base. Newer forms of volunteer engagement will be encouraged that stimulates active and social participation ideally suited to modern times.

ACTION 28

We will introduce an annual volunteer training budget to be jointly administered by the NGBs and the LSP network to ensure that volunteer training can occur across sports. This training will focus on issues such as child welfare, disability awareness, first aid, sports administration and governance, and fundraising. The NGBs and LSPs will be expected to work closely with clubs and Sport Ireland Coaching in planning and delivering this training.

ACTION 29

Sport Ireland will work with the corporate sector to support volunteering in sport among employees, which should benefit employers as well as society at large given that volunteering can help individuals to develop skills which they can use to good advantage in their careers.

Coaching

Coaching is central to player development and to sports performance at all levels of competition, and coaches are key agents in ensuring a quality experience for existing and new participants in sport. Coaching is the main activity undertaken by adult volunteers in sport with more than 1 in 3 of all volunteers regularly involved in this regard⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ <https://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017%20-%20Half%20Year%20Report/Irish%20Sports%20Monitor%202017.pdf>



The role, capacity, capability and circumstances of coaches can vary considerably, from part-time, unpaid volunteers at local level, to high performance coaches who occupy the role on a full time, paid basis.

Sport Ireland Coaching has the lead role in developing coaching in Ireland. It works with NGBs and the wider sports sector on an all-island basis primarily through the Coach Development Programme in raising the standards, status and profile of coaching. While this work has led to significant improvements in the area, some key challenges exist.

We need to broaden the base of coaches. According to the 2017 Irish Sports Monitor, almost 70% of volunteer coaches are men while 95% are white Irish. Coaching is also dominated by high income earners and individuals with a third level education. We need to ensure that Irish sport can involve all those with the initiative, skills and competencies to coach well. Broadening the coaching base to include more women, individuals with a disability and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds should help to stimulate a higher level of active participation among these groups. The coaching sector should be inclusive and reflect the population's diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religious beliefs and economic circumstances.

While coaching is central to player improvement we know that improving health and fitness, controlling weight, having fun, or spending time with friends and family are far more important than improving athletic skills or technical performance as motivations for the majority of adults to take part in sport. Yet, coaching qualifications at entry level focus on the development of technical skills rather than on gaining a better understanding of people's reasons for taking part at all. We need to encourage the development of qualified multi-sport coaches and sports development officers working in a multi-sport environment to facilitate multi-ability participation in sport across the life course.

New ways of providing training and development opportunities for coaches are required including the development of technological solutions that assist in "blended" learning, help us reach new audiences and engage potential coaches or tutors in different ways. We can promote communities of practice for club coaches to share learning and experiences. Initiatives like the CSHs provide us with opportunities to make coaching courses more accessible to a wider range of people. The provision of appropriate education and training opportunities should enable better coaching of people with disabilities.

ACTION 30

Sport Ireland Coaching will develop a new coaching plan by end 2019. It will seek to address the issues identified here around encouraging greater diversity among the coaching workforce, making coaching qualifications at entry level more adaptable so that coaches can work across a range of sports and physical activities. It will also place a greater focus on behaviour and attitudes rather than pure technical skills at entry level, promoting the greater use of technology in coach education, as well as coaching for people with disabilities.

Governance

Good governance is crucially important for the effective and efficient running of sport. It also helps to provide assurance to different stakeholders that sport is in safe hands. While our primary concern here is the governance of individual sports organisations, whether NGB, LSP, sports club or other, we recognise that when governance failures occur within individual organisations, they can tend to damage the reputation of the entire sports system as well as the organisation concerned. The development of stronger governance in sport is therefore important at both an organisation and system level.

Given the diversity of organisations within the sports system, we know that there is no single model of good governance for the sector. However, there is a degree of convergence internationally around what constitute good principles of governance for sport; principles which are adequately captured in Ireland's Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary

and Charity (CVC) sector⁶⁶ which has been adopted by Sport Ireland. The Code provides a framework against which to assess the progress of NGBs, LSPs and clubs in developing stronger governance. It is a principles-based code consisting of best practices for the Board in setting and overseeing the achievement of strategic objectives while applying such practices on a comply-or-explain basis. Practices are recommended at different levels for small, medium and large organisations.

NGBs, LSPs and sports clubs can adopt the Code in accordance with their resources and capabilities to do so and in line with their strategic goals. While the process has begun whereby funded NGBs are required to engage with the Code, we believe that an accelerated commitment is warranted to assure us that sport is in safe hands. We also expect that LSPs will commit to adopting the Code. We know that additional resources will be required to provide the training and support needed to effect the necessary changes within NGBs and LSPs.

The role, duties and obligations of NGBs, LSPs and all other sporting organisations in relation to safeguarding and athlete welfare requirements merit particular emphasis.

ACTION 31

Sport Ireland will oversee a process to have all NGBs and LSPs adopt the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity Sector by end 2021. As part of this process Sport Ireland will also identify and put in place the training and supports needed by the different organisations to assist with the adoption process.

⁶⁶ www.governancecode.ie

Gender Issues in Management of Sport

Addressing women's participation at all levels in sport is an important element of this policy. Elsewhere we have dealt with the involvement of women as active participants, as coaches and in the context of high performance sport. It is also important to consider the issue of women in leadership positions including as NGB Board members and CEOs. An international comparison of the situation⁶⁷ shown in Figure 7 reveals that Ireland occupies a mid-table position with less than one in four of all NGBs having at least 30% female members on their Boards. The situation in respect of CEOs shows about one in seven NGBs having female CEOs.

In light of these numbers it came as no surprise when, during the consultation process, NGBs expressed the clear view that the current situation as regards female membership on NGB Boards and in leadership positions was unacceptable and needed to be addressed. They were happy to acknowledge that greater efforts were required to get them achieving, or indeed surpassing, 30% female representation on their Boards. However, the consultation also highlighted that achieving this across the spectrum of NGBs would be difficult given the range of challenges they faced. Consideration was given to the introduction of mandatory quotas linked to funding. However, many of the NGBs stated that such a move could potentially undermine their effective functioning.

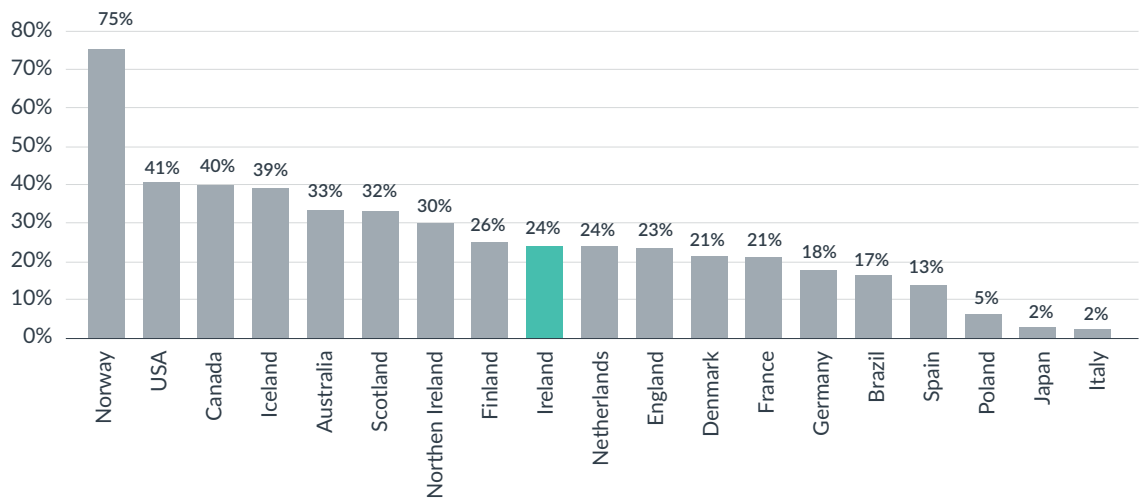


Figure 7: Sydney Scoreboard 2013-2014: % of NGBs having at least 30% female members on their Boards (by selected countries)

⁶⁷ <http://www.sydneyscoreboard.com/scoreboard/country/ireland/>

We have mentioned elsewhere in the document certain actions to support female participation in sport more generally as participants, coaches, referees or administrators. We believe that these actions should help to enhance the pool of individuals from which future senior sports administrators and Board members can be drawn. However, more is required which is why we propose the following action.

ACTION 32

NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans. Support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). Sport Ireland will monitor their progress in delivering on these and report annually. If sufficient progress is not being made, we will engage further with all stakeholders on the matter.

Workforce Development

Sport is a relatively labour-intensive sector which means that as the sector grows this is likely to lead to additional employment. A 2010 study carried out by Indecon⁶⁸ on behalf of the then Irish Sports Council, now Sport Ireland, reported that almost 39,000 people were employed in the sector, representing 2% of overall employment in Ireland. Almost 9,000 of these were employed in the voluntary sports sector, which, when combined with approximately 400,000 adult volunteers⁶⁹ operating in NGBs, sports clubs

and communities, represents a significant level of human resources for organised sport in Ireland. The increasing professionalisation and the expanding range of professions working in sport highlight the importance of our policy addressing issues around workforce training and development.

Much good work is already taking place in relation to the provision of education, training, learning, and development opportunities by Sport Ireland directly, NGBs, LSPs and the CARA Centre among others. This activity is focused on a wide range of individuals including coaches, volunteers, athletes, professional staff and members of governing boards. Learners number in the tens of thousands and the scope of activity ranges from coach education, anti-doping awareness and child protection training right through to an array of soft and technical skills focused on the professional development of employees in the sector. However, there is no clear and coordinated strategy for the sector in this regard.

Sport Ireland is empowered to develop sport education in the country to cover not only coaching but fitness industry courses, anti-doping issues, governance, child protection, etc. With an expanding and increasingly diverse workforce and with increasing mobility within the EU it is important that sports-related qualifications are included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and referenced by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). As well as assisting with workforce development this could help with workforce mobility across EU member states. The pursuit of a geographically mobile workforce can enrich the knowledge base of Ireland's sport sector. It will be important to ensure that the impact of Brexit does not jeopardise this aim.

⁶⁸ http://sportireland.ie/Research/Economic_Impact_of_Sport_2010_/

⁶⁹ <http://sportireland.ie/Research/Irish-Sports-Monitor-Annual-Report-2015/>

While formal learning opportunities are important in the development of capacity within the sector, an objective enhanced by the introduction in 2018 of PE as an examinable subject in the Leaving Certificate, informal learning experiences also deliver significant benefits in this regard. Networks provide opportunities to facilitate sharing of practice, relationship-building within sport and with other relevant sectors such as health, community development and education, the adoption of a more collective approach to problem solving, and enhancing understanding around workforce development.

We want Irish sporting interests to be fully taken into account when decisions are taken at international level. With some notable exceptions, Irish sports administrators to date have not featured at the relevant levels in international sports decision-making bodies. More Irish sports officials and administrators in high level positions in international sport federations and international multi-sport organisations would be welcomed, and would promote the positive values and strong ethical principles which are essential to sport's reputation.

ACTION 33

Sport Ireland will lead in the development of a sports sector workforce strategy which addresses recruitment, increased professionalisation, development, validation and recognition, provision for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), diversity of leadership throughout the sector and Irish representation on international sports federations. We will support Sport Ireland's efforts to develop a long term strategy for education, learning and development.

Collaboration

A goal of capacity building is that all elements of the sports system will work better together as well as with those organisations outside of sport that can make a difference to the sporting lives of individuals. Fostering greater collaboration and developing linkages within and beyond sport has the potential to be transformative in contributing to the success of the policy. Given the all-island nature of most NGBs it is important to consider North/South issues here.

We believe that fostering collaboration will require efforts on two fronts. Firstly we need to develop the abilities and skill sets within the organisations to recognise the potential benefits from making the connections with other sports bodies and external organisations. This is part of the workforce development programme referred to above. We will also need to incentivise collaborative behaviour through the development of funding criteria where possible.

We see great potential for a much-enhanced level of collaboration between sport and education to facilitate greater participation, athlete development, coach education, access to facilities and high performance objectives. For example, third level institutions which are involved in sports-related courses generate a ready-made supply of trained personnel who could assist the sporting system with real world challenges around research, evaluation, programme development, etc. Schools and universities have facilities which can lie idle for holiday periods and which could be used to engage local communities. Students, sports bodies and local communities could come together to develop ideas as to how to progress this.



ACTION 34

We will foster and encourage collaboration within the sports sector and between sport and other sectors through training and development initiatives and through the provision of financial and other incentives to stimulate collaborative behaviour at all levels of sport. We will work on an all-island basis in this regard. We will seek to develop a stronger relationship with the education system in particular in our efforts.

Research, Evaluation and Information Systems

We are committed to fostering better evidence-based decision making throughout sport. Sport Ireland's research programme over the past 10 years has added significantly to our understanding of the landscape of sport. However, it is still the case that gaps exist in what we know, in the communication and dissemination of the existing research, and in the connections being made between research, policy and practice.

ACTION 35

Sport Ireland will develop a research strategy for sport engaging with all key organisations operating within the sector. The strategy should help to create more formal and structured relationships between the practice, policy system and research communities to ensure that the limited resources available in all domains are prioritised towards developing a better understanding of the key policy questions around sport, thereby developing better solutions to the challenges we seek to address. We will ensure that research and evaluation information is more widely disseminated throughout the sports system. To this end, Sport Ireland will develop an online sports research and data repository.



The ability to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and actions is important. There is currently a lack of evidence to inform practice, in particular when it comes to increasing participation in sport, and future research needs to look at how sport and physical activity programmes can serve as interventions to promote the development of healthy behaviours and physically active lifestyles for individuals and communities. Furthermore, a range of skills and expertise, not currently available within sports organisations, is likely to be required to design and evaluate sports programmes serving a wider range of population groups (health population groups, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, people with disabilities, etc.).

36

We will support NGBs and other sports bodies to develop evaluation tools for programmes and initiatives. Sport Ireland will develop standardised evaluation frameworks which will allow for the robust assessment of the impact of publicly funded facilities, programmes and interventions. We will seek to tap into the considerable and expanding expertise in the third level and other sectors around sport and community-based initiatives to help develop the capacity of the sport system in this area. We will align our actions in this area with Action Area 7 of the National Physical Activity Plan.



ACTION 37

In order to understand better the impact of Government investment in sport we will develop, in consultation with the representative sporting organisations, more coordinated information systems throughout the sector which will allow the Department, Sport Ireland, NGBs, Local Authorities and LSPs the opportunity to understand fully the impact of their investments.





Chapter 8 Sport in a Cross-Sectoral and International Context

Sport policy has long been closely linked with a breadth of Government policies. The role of the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport as joint chair with the Department of Health in the development and oversight of the National Physical Activity Plan is one example among many where the implementation of sports policy interfaces closely with the work of other Government Departments.

Background

Sport policy has long been closely linked with a breadth of Government policies. The role of the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport as joint chair with the Department of Health in the development and oversight of the National Physical Activity Plan is one example among many where the implementation of sports policy interfaces closely with the work of other Government Departments. Against this cross-governmental backdrop, many submissions received under our consultation process recognised that cross-sectoral cooperation was essential. The case was made that a vision and a set of national objectives for sports policy needed to be defined and communicated more clearly across all Government Departments, agencies, sport bodies, stakeholders and the general public. There is always a risk of duplication of effort or missing opportunities, especially if there is any lack of clarity regarding the outcomes we are aiming for or the roles of different entities in working together to achieve those outcomes.

At the international level, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport works with the European Union, the Council of Europe (COE) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These organisations provide advocacy and guidance on the development, promotion and administration of sport in their member countries.

Understanding that sports policy cannot be implemented by the Department or Sport Ireland alone, in this chapter we first revisit themes emerging earlier in the policy, noting in particular where collaboration within and beyond sport is needed. We then acknowledge the substantial collection of Government policies and strategies which interface directly with sport policy. Finally we set out the structures we believe are necessary to ensure clarity of purpose and coordination of work programmes, as we progress together towards a shared 2027 vision.

Enhanced Collaboration under the new National Sports Policy

There is a range of areas where collaboration with partners within and beyond sport is necessary in order for us to achieve our objectives. These include:

- The need to develop physical literacy as a foundation skill among our children. Optimal results would be more likely if a clear policy with shared objectives could be agreed with partners in the Departments of Education and Skills, Children and Youth Affairs, and Health. This would allow the distinct roles of parents/families, of early years provision, of the formal educational system and of sports bodies to be articulated, and would lead to better interventions by Government.
- Considering how best to increase participation in light of trends towards individualisation and a more casual approach to involvement with sport also requires consideration. We see growing numbers participating in parkrun, sportive cycles, fun runs and other mass participation events. NGBs and clubs have already demonstrated openness and creativity in engaging with a wider audience and planning many initiatives with partners within and beyond sport. Private sector entities have a role to play and we know that many are keen to work closely with local authorities and others in pursuit of common goals. In Chapter 3, we recognised the need for continued and enhanced cooperation on the ground as well as the necessity for clear leadership locally. It is in this context that we have proposed that Local Authorities would take a lead coordinating role, in close collaboration with the Local Sports Partnerships and local sports clubs and organisations, with a view to achieving increased participation across their local population.

- Knowing that sport can act as an important catalyst in enhancing social inclusion, we set out earlier how we will address specific target groups identified in the ISM reports, with a particular focus on social gradients, disability, ethnicity, older people, as well as considering the gender gap. Our goals for increased participation for these target groups are objectives shared with our partners in the Department of Justice and Equality. Pooling expertise and sharing understanding in terms of what initiatives might work best is important at the level of Government Departments, as well as on the ground where out-reach programmes are designed and rolled out.

Our ability to communicate common goals and collaborate effectively will be crucial as we progress towards 2027.

Interface with existing Government Policies

This policy recognises the existence of a range of other Government policies and strategies which have a close interface and direct bearing on our work. Some of those most directly linked are referenced below.

- Under the Healthy Ireland Framework, we work very closely with colleagues in the Department of Health. We co-chaired the working group that developed Ireland's first National Physical Activity Plan⁷⁰, and are now leading, together with our Department of Health colleagues, in overseeing its implementation. The NPAP aims to "increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland..." The NPAP acknowledges the considerable contribution of sports bodies in helping people be active and identifies sport as a key area for the plan to be successful.
- Project Ireland 2040, the Government's National Development Plan (NDP)⁷¹ for the long-term spatial development of Ireland, was launched in 2018 and seeks to promote a better quality of life for all. We will work with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and other Government colleagues to progress actions in the NDP relating to sport, PE and physical activity.
- "Better Outcomes Brighter Futures" 2014 – 2020⁷² (BOBF) is the overarching national policy framework for children and young people. Its aspirations around active and healthy children and young people experiencing physical and mental wellbeing are of particular relevance to this sports policy. The policy references Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that "every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child..." We will work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs along with the CYPSCs to ensure that the aspirations around active and healthy children are fully realised and that sport continues to make an important contribution in this regard. The National Early Years Strategy, a constituent strategy of BOBF, is due for publication in 2018 and will cover a range of commitments and actions related to 0-5 year olds and their parents, including in relation to health, wellbeing, learning and development.
- The 2015 Children First Act provides a clear framework for ensuring that children and young people are safe and protected and that their wellbeing is looked after. Sports bodies in receipt of public funding will be expected to demonstrate that they are operating fully in accordance with all statutory requirements in this regard. We will continue to work with

⁷⁰ <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Get-Ireland-Active-the-National-Physical-Activity-Plan.pdf>

⁷¹ <http://www.gov.ie/en/project-ireland-2040>

⁷² https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf

the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and other relevant statutory authorities to ensure that our children have a safe, enjoyable and positive sporting experience.

- We engage regularly with the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and worked closely with them in recent years to develop the Get Active Framework as a joint initiative. The “Get Active Guide – Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport for Children & Young People”⁷³ aims to create the framework for a co-ordinated approach to physical education, physical activity and sport in school and community settings for children and young people. We also work together in promoting the Active Schools⁷⁴ culture.
- Local Authorities have a significant role in promoting participation in sport and physical activity in the community. They invest significant resources in physical infrastructure for sport and physical activity and employ sport and recreation development officers. They are strongly engaged in community development through the LCDCs and the associated Local Economic and Community Plans, which seek to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of communities linking strongly with the policy agenda around sport and physical activity. They have a close working relationship with LSPs and NGBs, sports clubs, facility providers, schools, community groups and other stakeholders locally. As already noted, we see potential for an expanded role for Local Authorities in leading collaboration within and beyond sport in their local area.
- The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 – 2020, led by the Department of Justice and Equality, aims to identify and address barriers preventing migrants from participating on an equal basis with individuals of Irish heritage. Census 2011⁷⁵ identifies that 12% of the population is of migrant origin and Ireland is expected to become even more culturally diverse in the future. Participation in sport has been identified in the strategy as having the potential to help the process of integration and a Communities Integration Fund has been established to support organisations in local communities, including sports clubs, to undertake initiatives to promote integration. We will work with the Department of Justice and Equality to ensure continued support for such initiatives as the sports policy is rolled out.
- “Positive Ageing Starts Now – The National Positive Ageing Strategy” (NPAS)⁷⁶ launched by the Department of Health in 2013 is Ireland’s plan for addressing issues associated with ageing over the next decade. The number of older people in Ireland is set to increase considerably over the coming decades. This presents a growing challenge for sport, given the traditional decline we see in active and social participation among older age groups. Initiatives such as Go For Life aim to address this challenge. Importantly, NPAS points to the positive opportunities provided by the large numbers of healthy and active older people and of the significant contributions they continue to make as workers, mentors, volunteers, etc. Active and social participation in sport have clear roles to play here in enhancing physical and mental health and promoting active citizenship and engagement in community activities.

⁷³ <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Get-Active-Physical-Education-Physical-Activity-and-Sport-for-Children-and-Young-People-A-Guiding-Framework.pdf>

⁷⁴ <http://activeschoolflag.ie/>

⁷⁵ <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/census2011profile6migrationanddiversity-aprofileofdiversityinireland/>

⁷⁶ <http://health.gov.ie/healthy-ireland/national-positive-ageing-strategy/>

- The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020⁷⁷ was launched by the Department of Justice and Equality and is intended to address obstacles to women's equality in Ireland. A key thread is around "visibility" as it seeks to promote more women participating in decision-making across all aspects of Irish society, including in sport. The strategy includes a number of objectives and actions to advance the engagement and status of women and girls in sport and physical activity. This sports policy will help address this also.
 - The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021⁷⁸ is being developed by the Department of Justice and Equality at present. This will take a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities. Among the strategic themes being considered are those dealing with equality and choice, health and wellbeing, living in the community, and transport and access – many of which connect with issues being addressed under the sports policy.
 - The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion⁷⁹, which is being updated by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, has the overall aim to combat poverty. The increased involvement in sport and physical activity of marginalised groups, including those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, is an important aspect of this sports policy.
 - Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015 to 2020⁸⁰ recognises the importance of physical activity as a protective factor for mental health and its contribution to the aim of reducing suicide levels in Ireland.
 - The Action Plan for Rural Development⁸¹, under the auspices of the Department of Rural and Community Development, is aimed at delivering real change for people living and working in rural Ireland. One of its key deliverables is that €50+ million will be invested in sport, recreational and cultural amenities over the life of the plan. It includes a range of actions to develop and promote outdoor adventure tourism in activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking. We also work closely with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on matters related to outdoor recreation and will continue to progress this important agenda in collaboration with them and with other Government colleagues.
- It is evident that the necessary cooperation is already commonplace over a wide range of closely inter-linked Government policies. This provides an important foundation for the deeper and wider collaborative approach now proposed under this new policy.

Sport and Tourism

The Government's Tourism Policy Statement, 'People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025' was published in 2015. It recognises that sporting events (including large scale international events but also smaller participative sporting events) should play a part in achieving our future tourism growth targets.

Ireland has a proven record of hosting and delivering international sporting events. Events of scale including the successful bid to host UEFA Euro 2020 fixtures at Aviva Stadium further demonstrate appetite to attract and host international sporting events in the future.

⁷⁷ http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017-2020

⁷⁸ <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/WP17000244>

⁷⁹ <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/PublicConsultation-for-newNationalActionPlan-forSocialInclusion2018-2021.aspx>

⁸⁰ <https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HME00945.pdf>

⁸¹ <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/162404-rural-ireland-action-plan-web-2-1.pdf>

Gaelic Games represent a unique sporting activity on the domestic landscape that draws high spectatorship levels each year, offering further potential to attract more overseas visitors as a way to experience at first hand our sporting heritage.

ACTION 38

Fáilte Ireland will continue to support NGBs in attracting those sports events which meet its events criteria and deliver a significant economic return.

Governance of Sport in a Cross-Sectoral Context

Although great energy is already invested in cross-sectoral engagement on sport, submissions received during our public consultation articulated the view that the absence of a common vision and clear planning structures is leading to duplication of effort, poor use of resources and missed opportunities. These concerns must be addressed.

Chapter 2 provides full clarity as regards our vision, values and high level goals. However given the extent of close linkages for sport across a variety of sectors, as well as the concerns which have been raised, we believe that a broader, more inclusive governance structure is now needed for sport in Ireland. To this end, we propose that a Sports Leadership Group be established and led at Ministerial level in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The main objectives of the SLG will be to:

- Keep all stakeholders focussed on achieving the agreed set of shared goals;

- Ensure all initiatives undertaken are consistent with the vision;
- Provide the necessary clarity in terms of roles and accountability;
- Underpin closer relationships and facilitate improved communication and collaboration;
- Significantly reduce the risk of duplication or redundancy; and
- Help ensure value for money.

This will facilitate enhanced collaboration across the relevant bodies to realise our shared Vision for 2027. It is proposed that the SLG will comprise representatives from relevant Government Departments, Sport Ireland, the wider sports sector, local government and the commercial leisure sector among others. Active engagement and collaboration with the wider sports sector is considered to be of particular importance, and representation is envisaged from, among others, the Federation of Irish Sport, Ireland Active, LSPs, disability sports and volunteers.

Agreeing a new Sports Action Plan

Since the Vision, Values and High Level Goals are settled, the first task for the SLG will be to finalise a new Sports Action Plan.

To help progress this, all the Actions set out in this National Sports Policy will be amalgamated to form a Draft Sports Action Plan. The SLG will consider the Draft Sports Action Plan and suggest any additional actions. The Group will agree a timeline for each action, and will present a finalised Plan within six months of its establishment. The final Sports Action Plan will ultimately be submitted to Government for review and approval. Once the Sports Action Plan is approved, the main focus for the SLG will be to maintain coherence and to drive its successful implementation.

ACTION 39

We will establish a Sports Leadership Group within three months of the publication of this policy to agree an Action Plan and to oversee its implementation once approved by Government.

The International Context

The administration and implementation of sport policy must take account of its international context. This requires ongoing collaboration and co-operation with the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (COE) and UNESCO, each of which performs important roles in the wider international effort to promote increased sports participation.

European Union

The EU's common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities recognised by Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, are highly pertinent to this policy, which seeks to promote in particular non-discrimination, tolerance, solidarity and equality of opportunity in the sporting sector between women and men.

While the setting and implementation of sports policy remains a matter for EU Member States individually, there is an EU competence as a result of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009. Member States have the opportunity to work closely together to address issues of common interest. Since 2010, EU Sports Ministers are invited to meet twice-yearly in a formal context as part of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council. These meetings are a

forum to adopt political statements on priorities for EU action and react to topical issues in the field of sport. There is more frequent engagement at official level between Member States, particularly at the Council Working Party on Sport, which usually meets on a monthly basis.

Council of Europe

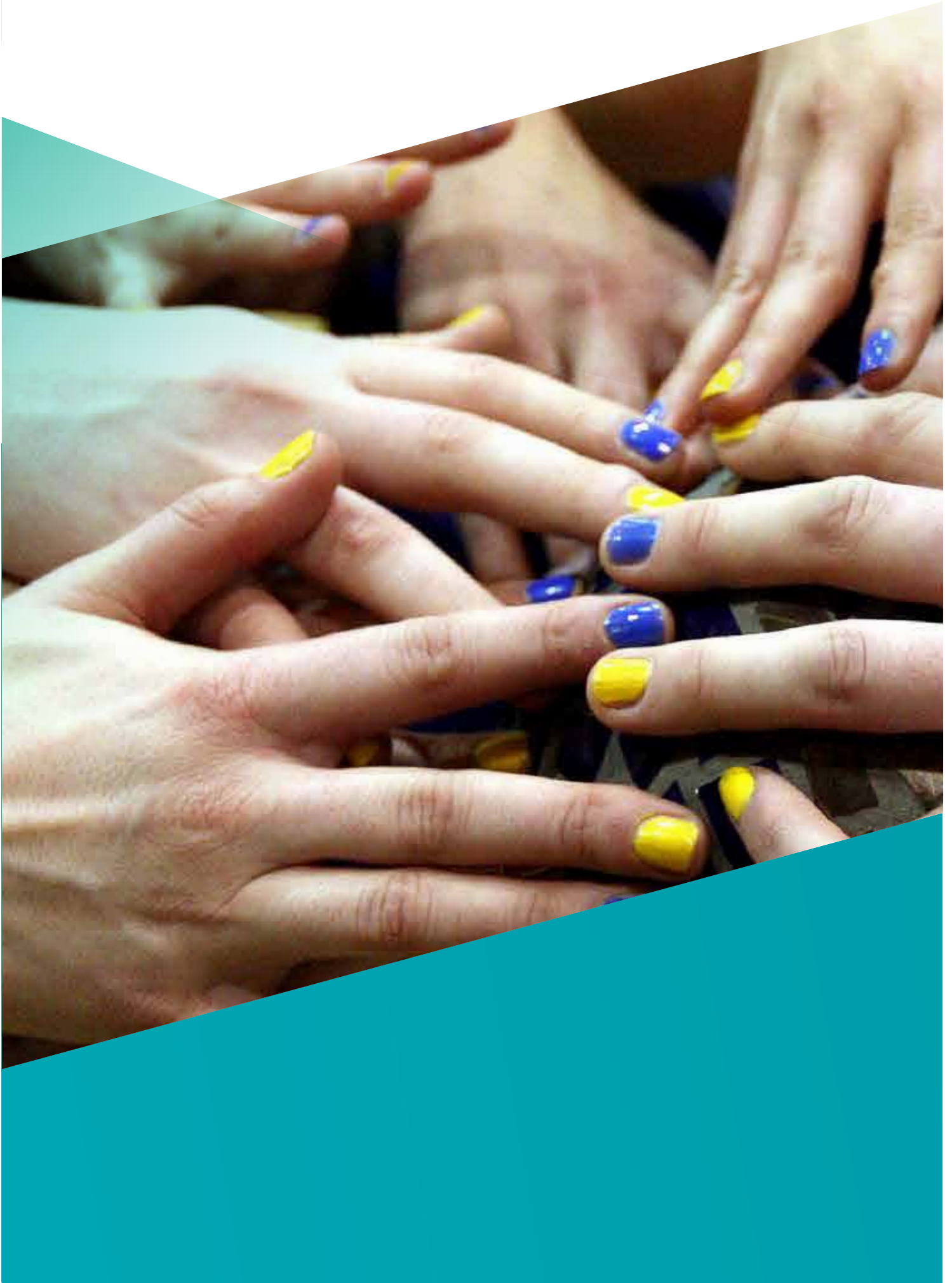
COE involvement in sport stems from its contribution to the achievement of its core value to create “.....inclusive, democratic societies which respect human rights and the rule of law”. The COE advocates for fair play and respect in sport, tackling corruption and helping make sport safe, ethical and accessible to all. It has pursued these aims by adopting various Conventions, which are reference texts in international law, particularly in the field of Anti-Doping, Manipulation of Sports Competitions, Safety, Security and Service at sports events and Spectator Violence.

UNESCO

In its capacity as the United Nations' lead agency for Physical Education and Sport, UNESCO provides expert assistance and guidance services for governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and experts in order to assist consideration of the challenges involved in physical education and sport. The organisation also assists and advises Member States on physical education training and sports development programmes.

ACTION 40

We will continue to engage actively with international organisations in order to be aware of, and to influence, developments at international level particularly at the EU, Council of Europe, UNESCO and international sporting federations and bodies.





Chapter 9 Integrity of Sport

Integrity and trust lie at the heart of people's expectation of sport. In their absence, sport is diminished and devalued.

At every level, from the club member to the player to the spectator, people want to believe that fairness and authenticity prevail. Those competing in or watching sport should have no doubt that it is being conducted on a level playing field. Competition in sport provides enthralling experiences that are rightly to be cherished.

Introduction

Integrity and trust lie at the heart of people's expectation of sport. In their absence, sport is diminished and devalued. At every level, from the club member to the player to the spectator, people want to believe that fairness and authenticity prevail. Those competing in or watching sport should have no doubt that it is being conducted on a level playing field. Competition in sport provides enthralling experiences that are rightly to be cherished. An attitude and approach to sport that is built on a "win at all cost" mentality is completely unacceptable. Mutual respect amongst all those involved in sport, from coaches to competitors to spectators, is the bedrock of fair competition in sport and we are fully entitled to demand that. Nowhere is that respect more absent than doping in sport, which can never be tolerated and must be fought relentlessly.

Anti-Doping Matters

Doping runs counter to all our beliefs as to what constitutes fair and ethical sport. Under the stewardship of Sport Ireland⁸² Ireland's anti-doping programme has established a strong international credibility and is held in high regard world-wide. We will continue to support Sport Ireland to ensure that the programme retains its world class status and that it can keep pace with innovations in science, technology and intelligence in its efforts to combat doping. Doping continues to be one of the biggest threats to the integrity of sport. In this context, Ireland remains insistent that all State Parties that have signed the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport fully comply with that Convention's requirements and provide evidence of such compliance.

Ireland is also insistent that all relevant Sports Organisations use their existing rules and regulations to (a) fully comply with their obligations in line with the World Anti-Doping Code and (b) proactively promote initiatives and measures to protect the integrity of sport, the credibility of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the vast majority of clean athletes performing to their maximum potential without the use of prohibited performance enhancing methods or substances.

A culture built on openness and transparency is a key prerequisite to ensuring that doping in sport is regarded as the wholly unacceptable activity that it is. Clean athletes can make an important contribution through their consistent and vociferous opposition to those engaging in doping. Engagement with athlete and player representative bodies such as the Athletes Commission is considered important in this regard.

Ireland sees an emerging requirement for the anti-doping system to be seen as independent of the system that supports and funds the achievement of excellence in sport. The trend internationally is for the establishment of an agency, separate to the sports development agency, to regulate anti-doping matters. We commit to a detailed consideration of this issue in the first two years of the policy.

ACTION 41

We will examine the potential for the establishment of an independent anti-doping agency during the first two years of the policy.

⁸² Prior to 1 October 2015 the Irish Sports Council



Match-Fixing

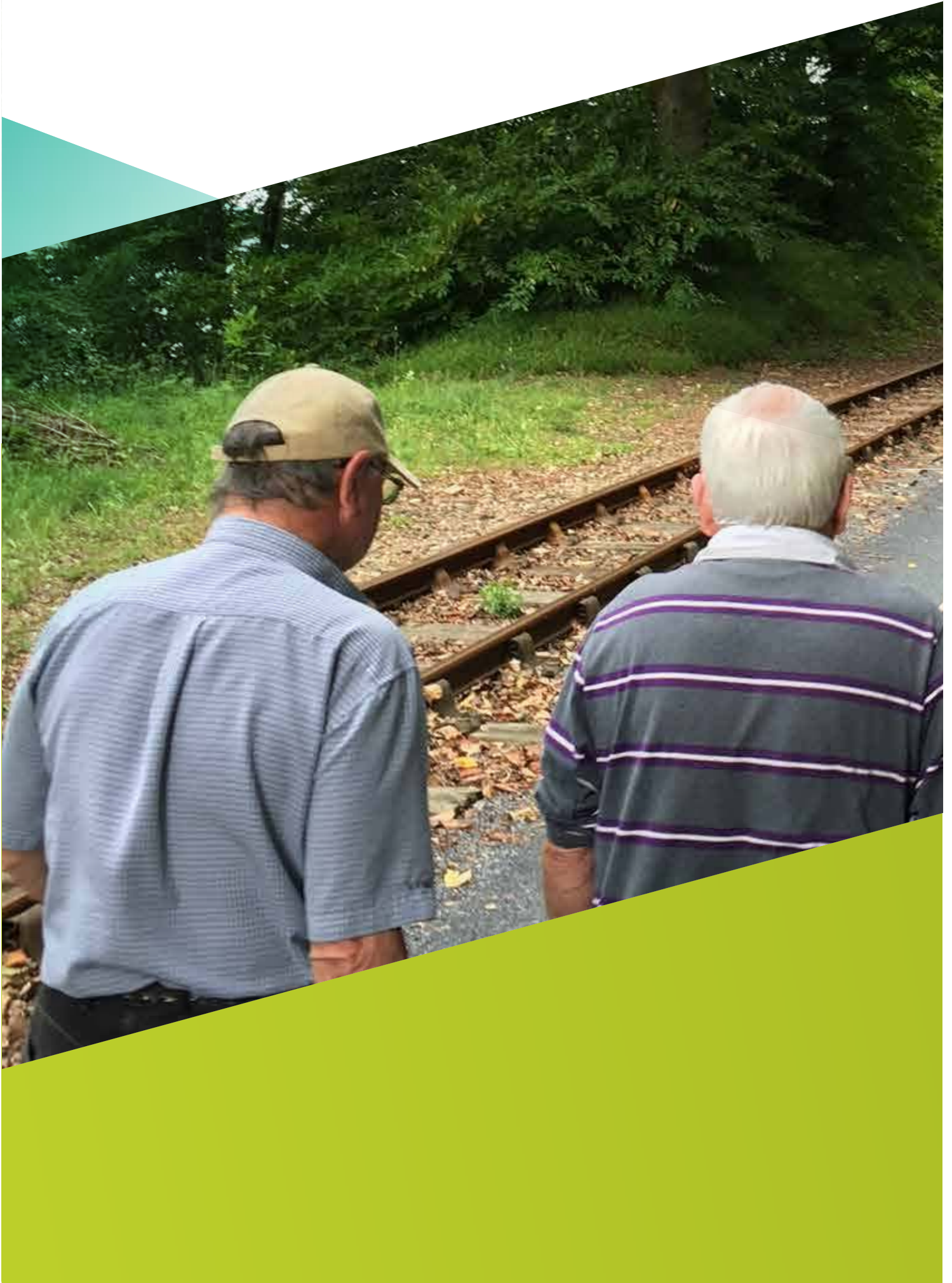
In response to a growing global threat of match-fixing in sport, the COE Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions was adopted in July 2014. Ireland has not yet ratified this Convention, in common with most other European countries. The Convention covers a number of complex cross-sectoral issues such as gambling, money laundering, data protection and criminal jurisdiction. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, in consultation with relevant Government Departments and other stakeholders, is in the process of considering Ireland's signature and ratification of the Convention.

Corruption in Sport

Anti-Doping and Match-Fixing tend to be perceived as two of the more prominent ways in which sport can be corrupted. Corruption in sport may however have a broader perspective. There exists a potential for corruption in sport in the same way that can occur in any other sector. It may manifest itself locally, nationally or internationally and may arise at the level of an individual athlete seeking to distort the result of a given sports competition for personal gain or in decisions by sports officials that are again motivated by personal gain and at odds with sport's fundamental values. Vigilance, international cooperation and a total commitment to good governance are key instruments to address the issue.

ACTION 42

We will complete, on a collaborative basis, the preparatory steps necessary to facilitate a decision on the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.



A group of people, mostly older adults, are walking away from the camera on a paved path that winds through a dense, green forest. The path is surrounded by tall trees and thick foliage. In the foreground, a woman in a black t-shirt and light-colored trousers is walking, carrying a dark bag. To her left, another woman in a dark blue top is walking, holding a hat. Further ahead, several other people are visible, including a man in a pink shirt and a woman in a purple shirt. The scene is bright and sunny, with sunlight filtering through the trees.

Chapter 10 Financing Irish Sport

The actions referenced in this policy will facilitate the development of our sporting sector over the period 2018-2027. The Government's objectives for 2027 are to achieve a sustained increase in participation levels across all sectors of society, to support our athletes to reach their potential in international competition and to support the development of the sport sector, in terms of facilities and organisational capacity. These objectives will not be achieved without continued investment of public funds across the sporting sector, and a number of significant funding measures have been referenced in each chapter.

Introduction

The actions referenced in this policy will facilitate the development of our sporting sector over the period 2018-2027. The Government's objectives for 2027 are to achieve a sustained increase in participation levels across all sectors of society, to support our athletes to reach their potential in international competition and to support the development of the sport sector, in terms of facilities and organisational capacity. These objectives will not be achieved without continued investment of public funds across the sporting sector, and a number of significant funding measures have been referenced in each chapter.

It is clear that the ambitious objectives in this policy cannot be achieved without a significant increase in investment in sport. In 2018 the Government's total investment in sport is just over €111 million, through Sport Ireland, the Sports Capital Programme, the Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme and Dormant Accounts Funding. The National Lottery Fund supports a wide range of community programmes, including sports facilities and programmes. It will be important to safeguard this funding resource over the coming years, recognising the risks associated with the growth in online gaming and betting.

ACTION 43

We will seek to increase investment in sport over the lifetime of this policy. Our ambition is that State investment in sport would exceed €220million in 2027.

As well as increasing our investment in sport, it is clear that the positive change we wish to achieve will require multi-annual funding commitments.

In particular, a strong case has been made for multi-annual funding of high performance programmes, and other countries have clearly achieved success where the programme is linked to the Olympic and Paralympic cycle. Participation programmes would also benefit from the certainty that multi-annual commitments would provide.

ACTION 44

We will aim to deliver funding on a multi-annual basis for high performance and participation programmes. Funding for high performance programmes will be delivered on a multi-annual basis from 2019 onwards.

Financing Participation and Investing in the Sporting Sector

This policy sets out a range of activities for the coming years aimed at increasing participation in sport throughout the population. Success would give rise to significant benefits for individuals, communities and society. In addition to the challenge of better coordinating our efforts, we need to increase the capacity of our sporting sector to deliver effective interventions. Increased investment in people, programmes, organisations and systems will be required quite apart from investment in sports facilities.



Furthermore, as has been pointed out repeatedly in the consultation process, there exists a greater need for security of funding among NGBs and LSPs in particular to enable them to invest in staff recruitment, training and development and more sustainable programme implementation which will be needed to drive the increased participation we seek.

ACTION 45

We will aim to increase funding to participation programmes for every year of the policy, with the intention to double our annual investment in participation by 2027. We will support Local Authorities in developing and implementing Local Sports Plans, which will aim to work with local stakeholders to increase participation levels.

ACTION 46

We will provide greater certainty in funding for participation programmes year-on-year. Arrangements for the introduction of multi-annual funding for key grantee organisations will be prioritised.

ACTION 47

We will increase our investment to build the capacity of the sporting sector, through strengthening governance, enhanced training and development of coaches and others in the sports workforce, support for volunteering in sport, and improved research, evaluation and information systems.

Participation Programmes Supported by Dormant Accounts Funding

Dormant Accounts funding is currently being used to test policy interventions tackling issues around disadvantage and disability in sport in particular. The participation gradients for these communities are among the most persistent. Success would be more likely through trialling of innovative policy interventions, evaluation of their impacts and scaling up programmes which deliver positive changes.

ACTION 48

Sport Ireland and its partners will continue to develop pilot programmes aimed at addressing participation gradients in sport around disadvantage and disability, to be supported by Dormant Accounts funding. As increased funds are made available for participation programmes, successful policy interventions will be scaled up and rolled out nationwide using more mainstream Exchequer funding sources along with possible private investment.

Funding High-Performance Programmes

This policy provides for significant changes to our high performance programmes. International research has demonstrated clearly that high performance results are strongly linked to levels of investment. We have set challenging targets for our athletes' performance which will not be achieved without a significant increase in support for athletes and coaches. In addition, sustained investment to support our NGBs is required to

strengthen their capacity to develop and deliver effective high performance programmes. It is clear from consultation across the sporting sector that a shift to multi-annual funding would have many benefits both for athletes, their coaches, as well as for Sport Ireland and the NGBs.

ACTION 49

We will move to a multi-cycle approach to high performance funding from 2019 onwards. A new high performance strategy will be developed which will define the direction for at least 12 years and which will be reviewed each 4 years on a rolling basis.

ACTION 50

Government funding for high performance will be increased to match the investment made in comparator nations. Sustained funding will be committed for each Olympic cycle.

As well as the need for an increased level of funding from Government, we believe that the opportunity for domestic and international corporations based in Ireland to invest in High Performance is one that remains largely untapped. The Government will support Sport Ireland and the relevant NGBs to consider ways to develop these and other alternative funding sources for high performance programmes.

Investment in Sports Facilities

Sustained and enhanced investment in sports facilities is required to attract new participants while delivering a high-quality experience for existing players and supporting top sports performers. The Government's Sports Capital Programme will be aimed primarily at local and regional level. Our investment will support a broad range of facilities to promote participation with an emphasis on projects which develop multi-sport, multi-use options around participation. We will prioritise accessibility in the design, build and management of facilities.

ACTION 51

We will seek additional capital funding for annual rounds of the Sports Capital Programme.

Recognising the benefits deriving from large scale projects which have benefitted from significant public investment such as Croke Park, Aviva Stadium, Thomond Park and Páirc Uí Chaoimh, the Government is committed to establishing a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund to provide Exchequer support for larger sports facility projects. This fund will support projects where the primary objective will be to increase active participation in sport throughout the population. The fund will also provide support for large scale iconic venues or stadia where the focus is more related to social participation and high performance sport.



ACTION 52

As set out in Project 2040, the National Development Plan, €100 million will be committed to the establishment of a new Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund for larger sports projects where proposed Government contribution exceeds €500,000. As well as other large-scale projects, the Fund will encompass potential new swimming pool projects, thereby superseding the existing Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme.

Continued Investment in the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus

Substantial investment over recent years has delivered world-class facilities at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus for a variety of sports. The Campus is also home to 27 sporting organisations. The Government is committed to the continued development of the Campus as a high performance facility for Ireland's top athletes with a world-class training environment to support them in their preparation for competition. Recognising the importance of promoting participation, we also see a wider role for the Campus in facilitating access for NGBs, clubs, communities and schools, while retaining priority access across the year for high performance athletes.

ACTION 53

We will seek additional capital funding to progress the further development of world class sports facilities at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, in line with the priorities identified in the new Master Plan and in support of the new High Performance Strategy.

Other Sources of Funding

In addition to the extraordinary contribution of Irish people volunteering in the sporting sector, there is a significant financial investment by individuals and businesses to support their local sports clubs. This is a welcome complementary funding source and the Government tries wherever possible to ensure an enabling environment for sporting bodies to further develop these funding opportunities. The long-standing scheme of tax relief for donations to approved sports bodies for the funding of approved capital projects is a good example, whereby sports clubs can claim tax relief on all donations of €250 or more⁸³. As there has been limited take-up of this scheme, the Department and the Revenue Commissioners will seek to promote it more widely among sports clubs and NGBs. Consideration will also be given to expanding this scheme, either by amending the terms for qualifying donations or broadening the range of projects which can be supported.

ACTION 54

The Sports Leadership Group will consider the operation of the tax relief scheme for donations to approved sports bodies for the funding of approved projects and, in consultation with sporting bodies, develop proposals to expand this scheme, for consideration by Government.

⁸³ Section 41 of the Finance Act 2002 inserted a section 847A into the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 providing for a scheme of tax relief for relevant donations to an approved sports body for the funding of approved projects. The scheme is applicable only to relevant donations received on or after 1 May 2002 in respect of expenditure incurred on approved projects on or after that date. The minimum qualifying total donation amount by a single donor in any year to an individual sports body is €250.

An approved project would be one of the following:-

- the purchase, construction or refurbishment of a building or structure, or part of a building or structure to be used for sporting or recreation activities provided by the approved sports body
- the purchase of land to be used by the approved sports body in the provision of sporting or recreation facilities,
- the purchase of permanently based equipment (excluding personal equipment) for use by the approved sports body in the provision of sporting or recreation facilities
- the improvement of the playing pitches, surfaces or facilities of the approved sports body
- the repayment of, or the payment of interest on, money borrowed by the approved sports body on or after 1 May 2002 for any of the above purpose



There have been consistent calls from the sport sector for Government to incentivise further donations by individuals and corporations, including the multinational sector, such as through measures in the taxation system. We will build upon work already undertaken to identify policy interventions which will attract further donations of this nature and consider policies which have proven successful in other jurisdictions in this regard.

ACTION 55

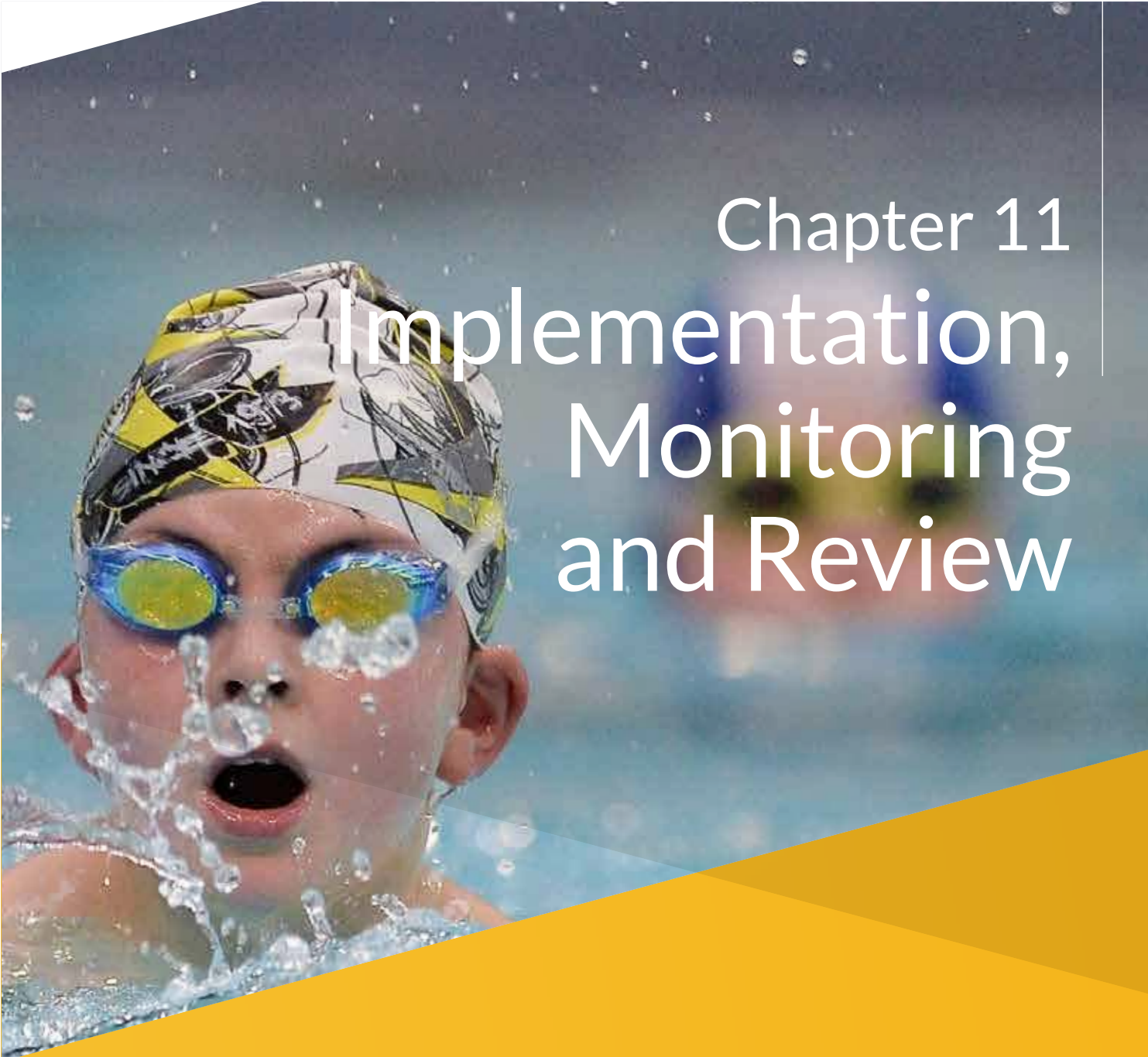
Opportunities will be explored so that business or individual donors will also be attracted to invest in a more meaningful way in sport. Collaborative models where sports work together and share benefits from a joint fund will be considered.

As outlined in Chapter 3, trends indicate that participation rates are far higher among individual sports than team sports. Evidence also shows that much sporting activity in Ireland is taking place increasingly by individuals alone or with a small number of others in a casual manner, in informal environments and in public spaces. In particular, growing numbers of Irish adults are using gym equipment such as treadmills and exercise bikes, whether at home, in the workplace or in a traditional gym setting. It is appropriate that consideration be given to interventions aimed at expanding participation levels in more casual settings.

ACTION 56

Recognising the increasing trend towards personal exercise in gyms and other facilities, we will, in consultation with stakeholders, consider possible changes in the taxation code to incentivise participation through the usage of gym equipment and personal sporting equipment.





Chapter 11 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

Sports Leadership Group

A Sports Leadership Group will be established within 3 months of the publication of the policy to agree a prioritised Action Plan. The plan will be submitted for Government approval within 9 months of the Group's establishment. The SLG will oversee its implementation and report bi-annually on progress to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy.

The SLG will consist of not more than 15 people and will comprise representatives of relevant Government Departments, Sport Ireland, the wider sports sector, Local Government, and the leisure sector among others. It will be chaired at Ministerial level in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The SLG will prioritise the actions to be taken to give effect to the policy and will develop a clear mechanism to allow it to monitor, review and report on progress on such actions and across each of the policy's objectives. It will also assess whether further action is required on specific issues or if revised actions are required taking account of changing circumstances during the lifetime of the policy.

The Sports Policy and National Sports Campus Division within the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will support the SLG. A full mid-term review of the policy will be undertaken in 2023.

Measuring Impact – Targets and Indicators

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will develop a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) comprising short-term outputs linked to investment and medium to long-term outcomes tied to the overall objectives of the policy. These will be considered and agreed by the SLG as part of the process in developing an Action Plan. Such

an approach will help us address the challenge to understand more fully the impact of our investment in sport through grant schemes and programmes.

Output indicators will be developed around governance, organisational development, anti-doping, numbers of coaches trained etc., or around particular programmes where a direct evaluation approach will allow assessment of immediate programme impact. Medium to long term outcome indicators will include overall participation levels both active and social, changes in gradients in participation by age, gender, socio-economic status, disability, ethnicity etc. and standard of performances at international sporting events. In measuring the impact of participation in sport we will set clear participation targets for sport in its own right, in the context of sport's contribution to the NPAP.

The vital importance of having a comprehensive, insightful understanding of the prevailing participation situation and trends is fully acknowledged, which will be achieved in particular through regular publication by Sport Ireland of both the ISM and the CSPPA.

We will also measure sport's impact and contribution to economic and tourism activity, and educational performance. In relation to children's involvement in sport, we will institute a qualitative dimension which looks at physical literacy levels, running, swimming and cycling proficiency and other potential enablers of greater involvement in sport and physical activity over the life course.

In relation to sports facilities we will assess the potential for adopting a model based on the UK Audit Commission's Annual Audit of public facilities where KPIs include participation levels per 1000 population within the catchment area and participation levels among disadvantaged groups, etc. so as to measure the impact of our capital investment.



When it comes to high performance sport we recognise that we are limited in our ability to compete with wealthier nations which also have larger talent pools. So, in addition to winning medals, success will also be assessed on personal bests, national records achieved in major competitions and numbers of athletes finishing in the top 8/10/20. We will benchmark against ourselves year on year and against nations with similar populations and investment.

ACTION 57

We will develop and publish, by mid-2019, a comprehensive set of key performance indicators covering all elements of the policy. Progress in implementing the policy will be assessed against these indicators.



A photograph of two Gaelic football helmets and a hurley (stick) lying on a green grass field. The helmet on the left is pink and white with 'mycro' written on it. The helmet on the right is white and blue with 'ONYX' and 'SLIP' visible. A wooden hurley with a black grip is positioned between them. The background is a lush green field with a white line.

Appendices

Appendix 1	List of Actions	102
Appendix 2	List of Acronyms	106

Appendix 1 – List of Actions

No.	Action
1	We will work with early childhood care and education services and organisations to ensure that pre-school practitioners, providers, and parents/guardians are supported in improving the physical activity habits of very young children in their care, including the development of improved physical literacy outcomes.
2	We will work with the Department of Education and Skills, teachers, NGBs and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that PE in schools is delivered to fully support the development of physical literacy among all our children.
3	Sport Ireland will review the financial support to NGBs so that a greater focus is placed on the development of non-sport specific physical literacy programmes for younger children. As part of this arrangement, NGBs would be expected to work with each other and with Sport Ireland Coaching in developing appropriate programmes.
4	We will work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, LSPs, NGBs, Health Service Executive (HSE) and others to develop an education or information campaign to help parents/guardians to engage with their children to develop physical literacy and positive habits around sport and physical activity as part of an overall healthier lifestyle.
5	We will prioritise sports like swimming, cycling and running which we believe have the greatest potential for generating higher levels of active participation across the life course, seeking to ensure that our children have the necessary skills to engage in these activities in a meaningful way while also investing in the development of infrastructure, programmes and people to help sustain participation throughout adolescence and adulthood.
6	Sport Ireland will develop initiatives with the NGBs, LSPs, schools, third level institutions, the CARA Centre and other relevant parties to address participation in sport among adolescents and young adults, particularly females, those from lower socio-economic groups, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities. Team and individual-based NGBs will be encouraged to develop initiatives which promote wider participation across their respective codes. Schools and sports clubs will be encouraged to foster better links to make more efficient use of their facilities, while LSPs will be asked to develop participation interventions making use of these facilities. The CARA Centre will advise on the particular needs in respect of individuals with disabilities.
7	We will promote more strongly among teachers and parents/guardians messages around the positive relationship between sports participation and exam performance in our efforts to attenuate the drop off that occurs in participation levels around exam years.
8	We will establish, through Sport Ireland, an initiative to support Local Authorities in developing Local Sports Plans consistent with the overall vision and objectives of this National Sports Policy. The Local Plan will review needs and set out actions to increase participation locally. It will be developed and implemented in cooperation with LSPs, clubs, communities and partners within and beyond sport.
9	We will redouble our efforts to address inequalities in sports participation as part of the Local Sports Plans development process. Resources will be directed to promote the broadest possible participation, ensuring quality and accessibility for all groups. Funding will be prioritised on programmes which focus on those groups with lower levels of participation, particularly those in lower socio-economic groups, persons with a disability and older people. We will also emphasise the virtue of collaboration between sporting bodies (NGBs, LSPs and clubs) and between sport and other policy sectors in the development and promotion of participation initiatives.
10	In prioritising initiatives and programmes to engage groups with lower participation levels we will use behavioural insights and other research to better understand issues around non-participation.
11	We will use Dormant Accounts and other Exchequer funding to roll out initiatives such as the Community Sports Hubs on a nationwide basis where they have been found to be successful following robust evaluation. We will also seek the support of the private sector for such initiatives.
12	In addressing the disability gradients in participation we will explore the possibility of introducing a national network of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers (SIDOs) aligned to the LSP network. These SIDOs would be expected to work closely with relevant NGBs, the disability sector, leisure centre providers, the CARA Centre and other stakeholders in providing opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport.
13	Apart from investment in traditional sports infrastructure we will examine how the wider natural and built environment can facilitate participation in sport and physical activity. This consideration will also take account of the type of activities towards which adults are increasingly gravitating such as running, cycling, outdoor adventure pursuits, recreational walking, etc.
14	We will use our funding streams to foster social participation in sport by encouraging the development of strong community-based sports organisations (e.g. Community Sports Hubs), supporting and developing those who volunteer for sport and promoting social membership of sports clubs (as well as playing membership).
15	Sport Ireland will, by mid-2019, advise the Sports Leadership Group (see Chapter 11) around appropriate interim targets (2023) for adult and children's active and social participation in sport and for the reduction in the relevant gradients. Targets for narrowing the gradients in participation will also be set (age, gender, social, ethnicity and disability).

No.	Action
16	We will commit to run the Sports Capital Programme in each year of this policy, to fund facilities targeting increased participation and improved participation experiences throughout the population. The scoring system and assessment process for the Sports Capital Programme will be reviewed to ensure that the programme is achieving objectives in line with this National Sports Policy.
17	We will conduct periodic Value for Money Reviews of the Sports Capital Programme with the first one to commence in 2019. Recommendations of the reviews will be reflected in subsequent investment programmes.
18	We will periodically conduct a nation-wide audit of sports facilities (whether publicly or privately owned), with the first such audit to be completed within 2 years of the publication of this policy. These audits will guide decisions regarding the sport capital projects to be prioritised for public funding and we will also consult with NGBs in relation to any further actions required. Local Authorities will conduct the audit at a local level, as part of their role in implementing their Local Sports Plans. As part of the audit we will work with relevant stakeholders to develop and maintain a fully-accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date national database of sports facilities which will also be translated into a web-based portal to serve the needs of the public.
19	We will establish a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund to support projects where the Exchequer investment will exceed the maximum amount available under the Sports Capital Programme.
20	We will work closely with relevant Government Departments, Local Authorities, sporting bodies and other stakeholders to agree a coherent national strategy for swimming. As part of this, we will review swimming pool provision to identify where gaps exist and how these can be met.
21	We will work with relevant stakeholders to explore the merits of a new programme of current sports funding under a targeted scheme to support schools on a sustainable basis in defraying reasonable costs (such as necessary transport and facility hire) incurred in delivering the aquatics strand of the PE curriculum.
22	We will encourage Local Authorities to promote and facilitate more sharing of facilities locally, especially where capacity is available at off-peak times during the day, in the evening or during holiday periods in the case of educational establishments. This will involve working closely with clubs and sporting bodies, schools and colleges, leisure facility providers and others. As part of the Local Sport Plans, Local Authorities will also lead on other collaborative initiatives to improve access locally e.g. Local Authorities and LSPs will combine to see how recreational areas can be utilised more fully by local communities for sport and physical activity e.g. for parkruns.
23	We will aim to secure a new stream of annual funding for a targeted sports scheme to subvent Local Authorities in the operation of loss-making facilities where these have a key role in increasing participation, as well as to support programmes to increase active participation.
24	Under the aegis of the Sports Leadership Group (see Chapter 11), we will establish a High Performance (HP) Working Group chaired by Sport Ireland and comprising representatives of Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Olympic Council of Ireland, Athletes Commission, Paralympics Ireland and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to develop a new HP Strategy for Ireland in line with the parameters set out in this policy. The new Strategy will be submitted to the Sports Leadership Group in the first instance and then to Government for approval.
25	We will progress the construction of Phase 2 of the National Indoor Arena and the National Velodrome and Badminton Centre in line with Project Ireland 2040. The Department and Sport Ireland will continue preparatory works in respect of other projects with a view to commencement as and when funding becomes available.
26	Consistent with the vision set out in this policy, Sport Ireland will develop a new 10-year strategy for the development and operation of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. Sport Ireland will consult with NGBs and with other key stakeholders in developing this strategy, which will be submitted to Government for approval.
27	Sport Ireland will bring forward a volunteering strategy to consider issues around recruitment, retention and recognition, the gradients that exist in volunteering, and how to address the challenges to sustain and grow our volunteer base. Newer forms of volunteer engagement will be encouraged that stimulate active and social participation ideally suited to modern times.
28	We will introduce an annual volunteer training budget to be jointly administered by the NGBs and the LSP network to ensure that volunteer training can occur across sports. This training will focus on issues such as child welfare, disability awareness, first aid, sports administration and governance, and fundraising. The NGBs and LSPs will be expected to work closely with clubs and Sport Ireland Coaching in planning and delivering this training.
29	Sport Ireland will work with the corporate sector to support volunteering in sport among employees, which should benefit employers as well as society at large given that volunteering can help individuals to develop skills which they can use to good advantage in their careers.

No.	Action
30	Sport Ireland Coaching will develop a new coaching plan by end 2019. It will seek to address the issues identified here around encouraging greater diversity among the coaching workforce, making coaching qualifications at entry level more adaptable so that coaches can work across a range of sports and physical activities. It will also place a greater focus on behaviour and attitudes rather than pure technical skills at entry level, promoting the greater use of technology in coach education, as well as coaching for people with disabilities.
31	Sport Ireland will oversee a process to have all NGBs and LSPs adopt the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity Sector by end 2021. As part of this process Sport Ireland will also identify and put in place the training and supports needed by different organisations to assist with the adoption process.
32	NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans. Support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). Sport Ireland will monitor their progress in delivering on these and report annually. If sufficient progress is not being made, we will engage further with all stakeholders on the matter.
33	Sport Ireland will lead in the development of a sports sector workforce strategy which addresses recruitment, increased professionalisation, development, validation and recognition, provision for CPD, diversity of leadership throughout the sector and Irish representation on international sports federations. We will support Sport Ireland's efforts to develop a long term strategy for education, learning and development.
34	We will foster and encourage collaboration within the sports sector and between sport and other sectors through training and development initiatives and through the provision of financial and other incentives to stimulate collaborative behaviour at all levels of sport. We will work on an all-island basis in this regard. We will seek to develop a stronger relationship with the education system in particular in our efforts.
35	Sport Ireland will develop a research strategy for sport engaging with all key organisations operating within the sector. The strategy should help to create more formal and structured relationships between the practice, policy system and research communities to ensure that the limited resources available in all domains are prioritised towards developing a better understanding of the key policy questions around sport, thereby developing better solutions to the challenges we seek to address. We will ensure that research and evaluation information is more widely disseminated throughout the sports system. To this end, Sport Ireland will develop an online sports research and data repository.
36	We will support NGBs and other sports bodies to develop evaluation tools for programmes and initiatives. Sport Ireland will develop standardised evaluation frameworks which will allow for the robust assessment of the impact of publicly funded facilities, programmes and interventions. We will seek to tap into the considerable and expanding expertise in the third level and other sectors around sport and community-based initiatives to help develop the capacity of the sport system in this area. We will align our actions in this area with Action Area 7 of the National Physical Activity Plan.
37	In order to understand better the impact of Government investment in sport we will develop, in consultation with the representative sporting organisations, more coordinated information systems throughout the sector which will allow the Department, Sport Ireland, NGBs, Local Authorities and LSPs the opportunity to understand fully the impact of their investments.
38	Fáilte Ireland will continue to support NGBs in attracting those sports events which meet its events criteria and deliver a significant economic return.
39	We will establish a Sports Leadership Group within three months of the publication of this policy to agree an Action Plan and to oversee its implementation once approved by Government.
40	We will continue to engage actively with international organisations in order to be aware of, and to influence, developments at international level particularly at the EU, Council of Europe, UNESCO and international sporting federations and bodies.
41	We will examine the potential for the establishment of an independent anti-doping agency during the first two years of the policy.
42	We will complete, on a collaborative basis, the preparatory steps necessary to facilitate a decision on the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.
43	We will seek to increase investment in sport over the lifetime of this policy. Our ambition is that State investment in sport would exceed €220 million in 2027.
44	We will aim to deliver funding on a multi-annual basis for high performance and participation programmes. Funding for high performance programmes will be delivered on a multi-annual basis from 2019 onwards.
45	We will aim to increase funding to participation programmes for every year of the policy, with the intention to double our annual investment in participation by 2027. We will support Local Authorities in developing and implementing Local Sports Plans, which will aim to work with local stakeholders to increase participation levels.

No.	Action
46	We will provide greater certainty in funding for participation programmes year-on-year. Arrangements for the introduction of multi-annual funding for key grantee organisations will be prioritised.
47	We will increase our investment to build the capacity of the sporting sector, through strengthening governance, enhanced training and development of coaches and others in the sports workforce, support for volunteering in sport, and improved research, evaluation and information systems.
48	Sport Ireland and its partners will continue to develop pilot programmes aimed at addressing participation gradients in sport around disadvantage and disability, to be supported by Dormant Accounts funding. As increased funds are made available for participation programmes, successful policy interventions will be scaled up and rolled out nationwide using more mainstream Exchequer funding sources along with possible private investment.
49	We will move to a multi-cycle approach to high performance funding from 2019 onwards. A new high performance strategy will be developed which will define the direction for at least 12 years and which will be reviewed each 4 years on a rolling basis.
50	Government funding for high performance will be increased to match the investment made in comparator nations. Sustained funding will be committed for each Olympic cycle.
51	We will seek additional capital funding for annual rounds of the Sports Capital Programme.
52	As set out in Project 2040, the National Development Plan, €100 million will be committed to the establishment of a new Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund for larger sports projects where proposed Government contribution exceeds €500,000. As well as other large-scale projects, the Fund will encompass potential new swimming pool projects, thereby superseding the existing Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme.
53	We will seek additional capital funding to progress the further development of world class sports facilities at the Sport Ireland National Sport Campus, in line with the priorities identified in the new Master Plan and in support of the new High Performance Strategy.
54	The Sports Leadership Group will consider the operation of the tax relief scheme for donations to approved sports bodies for the funding of approved projects and, in consultation with sporting bodies, develop proposals to expand this scheme, for consideration by Government.
55	Opportunities will be explored so that business or individual donors will also be attracted to invest in a more meaningful way in sport. Collaborative models where sports work together and share benefits from a joint fund will be considered.
56	Recognising the increasing trend towards personal exercise in gyms and other facilities, we will, in consultation with stakeholders, consider possible changes in the taxation code to incentivise participation through the usage of gym equipment and personal sporting equipment.
57	We will develop and publish, by mid-2019, a comprehensive set of key performance indicators covering all elements of the policy. Progress in implementing the policy will be assessed against these indicators.

Appendix 2 – List of Acronyms

BOBF	Better Outcomes Brighter Futures
COE	Council of Europe
CSPPA	Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study
CSH	Community Sports Hubs
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CVC	Community, Voluntary and Charity
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committee
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HP	High Performance
HSE	Health Service Executive
ISM	Irish Sports Monitor
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LASPP	Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LISPA	Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity
LSP	Local Sports Partnership
LSSIF	Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund
NDP	National Development Plan
NGB	National Governing Body
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPAP	National Physical Activity Plan
NPAS	National Positive Ageing Strategy
OPW	Office of Public Works
PE	Physical Education
SCP	Sports Capital Programme
SIDO	Sports Inclusion Disability Officers
SLG	Sports Leadership Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	United States
VFM	Value for Money
WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Leeson Lane, Dublin, D02 TR60

Phone: + 353 1 670 7444

www.dttas.gov.ie