

# TASC ANNUAL REPORT 2020

---

Tasc is an independent think-tank whose core focus is addressing inequality and sustaining democracy



Celebrating  
20 Years

Addressing inequality and sustaining democracy since 2001

# Contents

Welcome from the Chair	3
Outputs & Outcomes 2020	5
TASC Milestone 2020	6
Additional Engagement	7
Introduction	8
Governance in 2020	9
Staff at TASC	10
External Relationships	11
Sustainability at TASC	12
Looking Ahead to 2021 and 2022	12
Audited Accounts	13
Research and Policy	13
Research and Policy Work Programme	13
Equality	14
Social Inclusion	16
Climate Justice	19
2020 Case Study 1	21
2020 Case Study 2	22
2020 Case Study 3	23
Additional Communications at TASC in 2020	24
Additional Opinion Pieces in 2020	25

# Welcome from the Chair

As Chair of TASC, it is an honour for me to introduce the 2020 Annual Report of the organisation. It is commonplace in such introductions to highlight the successes and achievements of the organisation while, at the same time referring to the challenges it faces.



In this past year, there has been an abundance to report under both of these headings. However, with regard to 2020 it is possible to use the word "unique" when referring to the context in which all of these achievements were secured, and all of these challenges were addressed with courage, commitment and energy.

For me, the greatest of the negative effects of the Pandemic on the work of TASC was, not that the work was of diminished quality (if anything, the opposite is the case) nor was it that our level of activity decreased (it didn't). It was that we had to forego the privilege and the pleasure of sharing the same physical space with the exceptional members of the TASC team who produced such remarkable outputs; together with the pleasure of, literally, sharing meeting rooms with those many of our supporters and friends, whose loyalty and commitment to TASC and its values have always been an intrinsic and indispensable aspect of the first twenty years of its existence.

As the organisation celebrates this important milestone, it is appropriate that both our achievements and our ambitions should be evaluated in the context of our founding and enduring principles.

The first of these is that TASC is independent, objective, innovative, and ambitious in addressing issues related to inequality and democracy. That we have remained so over the years is a source of great pride. But now, as we face into a time of change to our recent and accustomed model of organisational funding, the maintenance of this independence, objectivity, innovation, and ambition becomes a major challenge. It is, however, a challenge which all of us in TASC are absolutely confident we can rise to.

Being independent, objective and courageous is useless unless deployed in the pursuit of worthy goals and causes. For TASC these have always included the highlighting and combatting of inequality and the strengthening of democracy in all of its forms. In more recent times we have also recognised and addressed the challenge of securing the future of our planet by enabling the just transition we will all have to make to secure our very existence on this fragile globe.

As I have alluded to, the year 2020 was notable for the heroic manner in which our dedicated staff kept TASC's flag flying by continuing to produce reports and organise conferences and events promoting our core values. However, COVID-19 was not the only new challenge for all of us. The year was also characterised by the progress we made in putting in place a coherent plan and strategy to ensure that we remain financially viable as we continue our adjustment to the reality of the loss of the extremely generous support given to us multi-annually by the wonderful Atlantic Philanthropies organisation.

We now have clear plans, targets and goals to ensure the continuation of our work for years to come. Already we have benefitted from the generosity of new individual donors. As we progress, we are confident that we will reach out successfully to others of like mind. If you are reading this, it is more than probable that you recognise and share our vision and our principles. If so, you may also like to know that, for this vision and these principles to endure and be promoted with the fearlessness that independence brings, we need your help in whatever manner and by whatever means it is possible and fitting to your circumstances.

As I write this piece there is an air of cautious optimism about our chances of returning soon to something like what used to be "normal". For me however, and I hope for you too, one huge victory has already been secured: that is that, despite the enormity of the challenges we have faced, we have endured. Indeed, we have thrived.

***To all of those whose work, dedication and generosity have made the above statement truthful, all I can do is to say “thank you!”***



**Mike Jennings**  
Chair, TASC

# Outputs & Outcomes 2020

**53** blogs



**35,319**  
website visits

**24**   
broadcast interviews



**15,500**  
blog reads

**20**   
participants financial  
capability training

**4,000**   
report downloads

 **24**  
research partners

 **930**  
event attendees

**6,650**   
twitter followers

**139**   
media mentions

**4**   
projects supporting  
frontline organisations

**1,400**   
newsletter subscribers

# TASC Milestones 2020

## February

Lunchtime Seminar:  
Aircraft leasing and Ireland

## March

Exploring household Debt in Ireland - Launch  
TASC Annual Inequality Report - Launch

## April

Thinking through the Crisis -  
Podcast Launch

## May

Personal stories of the Pandemic - Launch  
The Ireland we Want - Policy Brief Series  
Launch

## June

Home Care Sector post Covid - Policy Brief  
Millennials and Gen Y workers in Ireland

## July

Millennials and Covid 19  
TASC Researcher interview on RTE

## August

TASC Director joins Ireland's contribution to  
the Trade Policy Review & features on Reboot  
Republic Podcast Series

## September

Fit for Purpose:  
Traditional Politics and young people  
Inequality and the top 10% in Europe - Launch

## October

Conversations Series – Minister Eamon Ryan  
Cherishing all Equally 2020 - Care Economy -  
Launch

## November

*Exploring the potential of a wellbeing framework  
in Ireland*  
Brexit - All change now with Paul Blomfield MP  
The Peoples Transition: Community-led  
development for climate justice

## December

Conversation Series - Tánaiste Leo Varadkar  
2020 Annual Lecture - Philip Alston

# Additional Engagement

**10** Oireachtas debate mentions

**35** event attendees from the political sphere

**1** Tánaiste event

**21** Newspaper/ Print citations (16 in The Irish Times )

**4** Radio Features

**3** RTÉ references

## COVID specific events

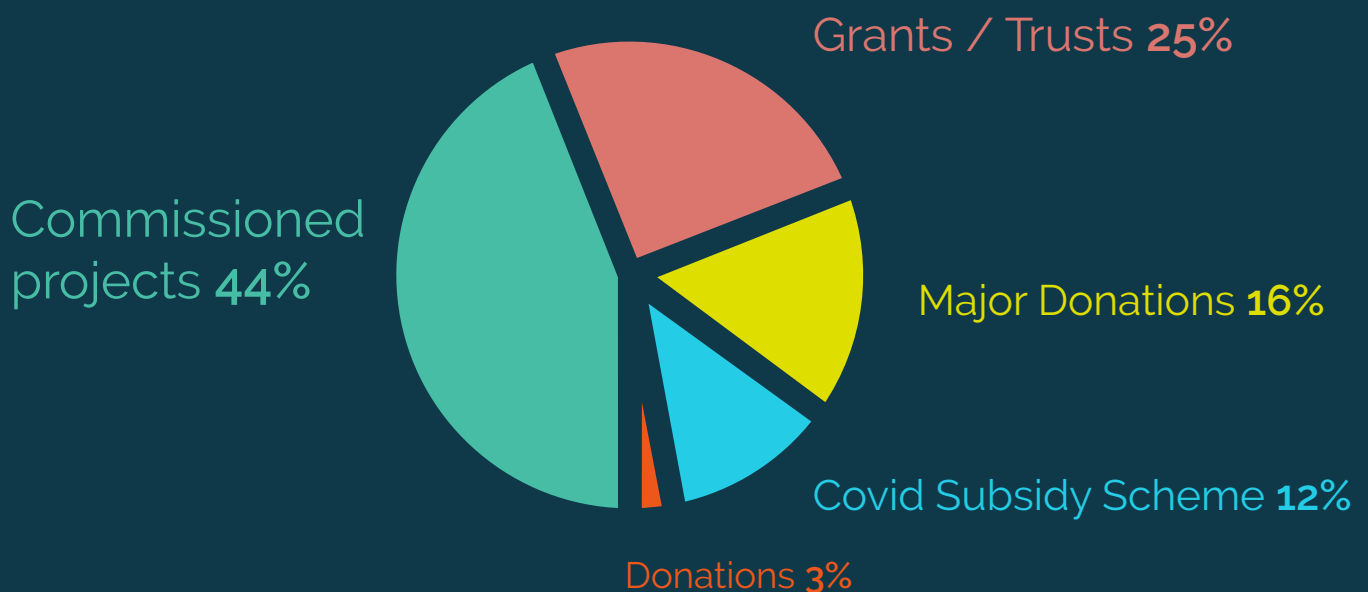
**14** Pandemic Podcasts

**30** Stories of the pandemic  
pandemic stories documented  
(10 food producers, 10 millennial  
workers, 10 people made  
redundant)

## Inequality Report

**420** downloads of our 2020  
Annual Inequality Report -  
The State we are in.  
TASC's flagship annual report  
running since 2015.

## TASC Income 2020



# Introduction

Despite challenging economic conditions and the public health crisis, TASC continued to grow as an organisation in 2020, diversifying partnerships and furthering its work within its four streams of activity: Equality, Democracy, Social Inclusion, and Climate Justice. The difficulties presented last year did mean that the organisation had to pay greater attention to sustainability as opposed to forward- planning but by the end of 2020, our team secured a number of commissioned projects, including a European grant.

TASC is an independent think-tank whose mission includes the following aims:

- To address economic inequality and sustain democracy by translating analysis into action.
- To develop policies and solutions based on evidence-based research concerning inequality, social inclusion, climate justice, and democracy.
- To work nationally and internationally, in partnership with other organisations, in order to build a momentum for change on pressing societal issues.

TASC carries out its work programmes based on consistent values and beliefs:

- Greater economic equality is unequivocally positive for society as a whole; it generates greater wellbeing for everyone.
- The social costs of long-term inequality create a burden of uncertainty, poor health, crime and lower educational attainment on people and society in general.
- Economic growth for its own sake is unsustainable, and that sustainability must be understood in both its environmental and social dimensions.
- An innovative, dynamic and equal society must be underpinned by a healthy democracy.



# Governance in 2020

TASC is managed by an Executive Director who reports to a Board of Directors. The current director is Dr Shana Cohen, who joined TASC in August 2017.

The TASC board membership remained the same in 2020.

In late 2020 TASC began reviewing its compliance with the Charities Regulator's Governance Code. Policies and procedures already in place were considered, and revised where needed. Where gaps were identified, new policies and procedures were approved by the Board. The project was led by TASC Board Member Bríd Nolan, along with the Board, director and staff. It is anticipated that the project will be completed in 2021 and that TASC will meet the deadline for submitting its report of compliance.

The Board met in January, March, May, July, September and November in 2020.

The Research and Policy Committee monitors the quality of outputs and proposed projects. In 2020, it was composed of Micheál Collins (Chair), Paul Sweeney, Michelle O'Sullivan, Donald Storrie, Kevin Cardiff, and Shana Cohen.

The Finance Committee, which oversees the financial position of the organisation was composed of Kevin Cardiff, Shana Cohen, and Angela Maguire. This committee reports to the TASC Board.

The Fundraising Committee, which contributes to raising funds to ensure the sustainability of the organisation, was composed of Bríd Nolan, Proinsias de Rossa, Mike Jennings, and Shana Cohen. The Committee met regularly with the contracted fundraising consultants, 2into3, in 2020.

# Staff at TASC

Firstly, we want to thank all of the staff at TASC for their extraordinary efforts last year. They produced high quality work disseminated to policymakers, the media, and the wider public and they strove together to move TASC forward during a period of financial transition and within a challenging public health and economic context. The Board wish to recognise their achievement.

Two staff members left TASC in 2020 – Tyler West, who was responsible for fundraising support and social media, and Kirsty Doyle, who was the lead researcher on a project examining the role of civil society in alleviating health inequalities. Seán McCabe became the Executive Manager of the Climate Justice Centre in order to further develop a stream of work for TASC integrating policy approaches to reducing inequality and fighting climate change. Amie Lajoie continued to manage all projects regarding social inclusion and Rob Sweeney led on the economic inequality work. Shana Cohen led on the democracy stream. John White and Sylvia Byrne were responsible for office administration and events, as well as specific support for projects.



# External Relationships

## Developing partnerships nationally and internationally

TASC continued to develop national and international relationships and partnerships in 2020 in all four areas of its work. TASC worked with CIOB (Chartered Institute of Builders), Galway Traveller Movement, Waterford Traveller Interagency Group, Northside Partnership, Dublin City Community Coop, MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service) and NESCC (The National Economic and Social Council).

We continued to work with our partner FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies) and were part of a successful EU for Citizens application bid.

Other partners include Fundación Alternativas (Spain) and academic researchers in Germany and Greece as part of a FEPS supported project on migration and social solidarity in the EU and for the EU for Citizens project, FIDU (Italy), Youth Center of Epirus (Greece), Associação Social Recreativa e Cultural Bem Fazer Vai Avante (Portugal), European Centre for Economic and Policy Analysis and Affairs (Belgium), Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Culture and Education (Bulgaria), and Eurasia Net (France).



# Sustainability at TASC

TASC continued to broaden its sources of funding as part of its transitional fundraising strategy after funding ceased with Atlantic Philanthropies in 2019. This included seeking out individual donations, pursuing commissioned work from corporations and charities in Ireland, developing academic research grants in collaboration with faculty at Irish and European universities, and building relationships with foundations in Europe and the US.

In 2020, we developed a number of relationships with corporations, such as AIB and JP Morgan, who recognise the importance of our core work in the areas of inequality, social inclusion, climate justice and democracy. Demand for commissioned work is increasing because of our experience in engaging with pressing issues such as the prevalence of health inequalities, the lack of community-led climate action, sectoral reliance on low paid work and social marginalisation of minorities as well as victims of domestic violence.

## Looking Ahead to 2021 and 2022

We are continuing to progress with our fundraising strategy, diversifying our income sources and partnerships, and to develop our four key streams of work. We will be launching a new three-year strategy in the first part of 2021, which will outline our core objectives of engaging in innovative policy research and practice through partnerships with charities and companies, raising our European and international profile, and encouraging public policy debates through our events. Just as we have done in 2020, we will continue to invite leaders in politics, business, and civil society from all over the world to discuss current and future policy issues and how governments, civil society organisations, and business must respond.

We are also celebrating our twentieth anniversary in 2021. To mark the occasion, we are organising a special event on the 11th November 2021 with Roddy Doyle and several other speakers to discuss the role of arts in Irish society post-pandemic. We are also publishing a collection of essays on TASC's contribution to the public sphere in Ireland.

# Audited Accounts

The **TASC 2020 Audited Accounts** have been lodged with the CRO and are available to view.

# Research and Policy Work Programme

TASC's activities to achieve its strategic objectives are grouped into the four key areas of Equality, Democracy, Social Inclusion and Climate Justice. Within those areas, we conduct research and analysis, initiate and contribute to public awareness and debate, influence policy, and support change on the ground. The primary aim of our work is to translate analysis into action, or to use research to improve frontline services and develop innovative, effective projects that tackle urgent issues like climate change and in-work poverty. TASC is the primary independent think tank in Ireland and this independence contributes to our credibility as an organisation equipped to conduct original research that informs practice and increases social impact.



# Equality

## 1. Inequality and the top 10% in Europe

This report examined the financial position and attitudes towards inequality amongst the top 10% of income earners in four European countries: Ireland, the UK, Sweden and Spain. The countries in the report were selected because of their



distinctive economies, welfare policies and experiences of the 2007/8 financial crisis. The study concentrates more accurately on the bottom 9% of the 10%, excluding the extremely wealthy in the top 1%. One finding was that the vast majority of those in this population, not just in Ireland, but across all four countries within the study, do not see themselves as being 'rich'. The report confirmed that since the economic crash of 2008, the wealthiest are moving further away from the rest of population, including those conventionally seen as well off.

The report focused on this population because of their relative high participation in conventional politics and proven political influence. Other findings included support for public services, belief in meritocracy but also the necessity of state intervention. Though in Spain, the UK, and Sweden, interviewees in the research tended to support centre right political parties, in Ireland, there was very little support for any specific political party and, likewise, pervasive skepticism about national politics. The Irish top 10% expressed the greatest economic insecurity of the four countries, though they were comparatively the highest earners.

The full report was produced in partnership with Compass (UK), Arena Idé (Sweden) and Fundación Alternativas (Spain), and supported by FEPS, the Foundation for Progressive Studies.

## Media mentions

**TheJournal.ie** - Ireland's high earners insecure with 28% finding difficulty making ends meet

**The Irish Times** - Ireland's top earners do not see themselves as rich

**Joe.ie** - business highest earners Ireland

**Newstalk** - Top 10 earners income inequality

## 2. Cherishing all Equally 2020: The Care Economy

This project was commissioned by FEPS in 2019 and launched on the 14th October 2020. It looked at how the care economy generates economic inequalities between men and women. It examined how the unequal provision of care affects gender income differences,

gender differences in time allocated to paid and unpaid work, and the gender pay gap. It also looks at the working conditions of care workers. One chapter is devoted to Europe and the other to Ireland.

## Citations

[Earlychildhoodireland.ie](#) - early childhood Ireland's budget 2022 submission keeping our promise to children

[Earlychildhoodireland.ie](#) new report release cherishing all equally

### On the Corona Frontline

- TASC submission to the Budget Oversight Commission 7th October 2020. In this prebudget submission TASC raised a number of revenue and public spending recommendations.

### Cited in an Oireachtas budget analysis

- This was a policy brief based on the larger care report above, co-written with Laetitia Thissen of FEPS and launched on the 30th July 2020.

Towards a fair recovery launched on the 23 June 2020.

## 3. The state we are in: inequality in Ireland 2020

This report was the second edition of The State We Are In, the shortened analysis of inequality in Ireland and launched on the 10th March 2020. It was written during the CherishingAllEqually/care economy cycle. Partly funded by board member Kevin Cardiff, it looked at the determinants of market inequality in Ireland. It found that Ireland's high levels of market inequality were driven by high wage inequality and low work intensity among low-income households.

## Citations and Media

[The Irish Times](#) - Share of Income going to top 1% has increased TASC report says

[Discussion of report by Kitty Holland in Irish Times](#)

[Social Justice Ireland podcast](#) conversation about inequality

[The Journal](#) - opinion piece on economic recovery

[RTE Brainstorm](#) - opinion piece

[Newstalk Breakfast](#)

[Appearances on local radio outlets: Northern Sound and Kildare FM](#)

# Social Inclusion

## 1. Financial Capability Training: "Money Made Sense"



In 2020, TASC designed and began delivering the "Money Made Sense" financial capability training, funded by JP Morgan and delivered in partnership with Northside Partnership and MABS.

The training is based on research on household over-indebtedness in Ireland conducted by TASC in 2019. Problem debt or over-indebtedness occurs when households are over-burdened by debt repayments and do not have the means to meet essential living costs and debt repayments as they fall due. The research found that in Ireland low-paid workers and single parents have consistently higher rates of over-indebtedness and lower rates of financial capability than other household types.

The significant job loss and financial hardship faced by many as a result of the Covid-19 public health emergency has exacerbated trends regarding the prevalence of debt and financial precarity amongst low-income households in Ireland. As a peer-to-peer training that addresses financial impacts of Covid-19, "Money Made Sense" is unlike any other financial support currently available in Ireland. The objective of the training is to provide a space for participants to gain new skills in money and debt management, as well as to expand their perspectives through an understanding of the way structural factors shape financial decision-making. By reviewing how external factors affect our income and spending power, we hope that the participants will leave the programme being more able to plan financially and make decisions in the Irish context.

## Waterford Traveller Interagency Group combined Needs Analysis and Strategic Plan

This project analyses the needs of the Traveller Community living in Waterford in order to develop a comprehensive Needs Analysis and Strategic Plan for Waterford TIG, 2020-2025. This involves quantitative and qualitative data collection, including the outline of a statistical profile of Travellers living in Waterford and a desk review of existing reports, research and studies related to the specific needs of Travellers living in Waterford, as well as national and local policies and best practice. The four key areas of this research are employment, health, accommodation and education. This research also consists of engagement with members of the Traveller Community, as well as one-on-one interviews with relevant stakeholders and service providers. This project will be completed by April 2021.



## 2. “A Class Action”: Equality outcomes for members of the Traveller Community in education

This project was commissioned by Galway Traveller Movement and involved gathering and systematically processing data on the educational experiences and lived realities for young Travellers in terms of their numeracy and literacy needs, in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4.6) on universal literacy. This research deployed a combined approach of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a series of focus groups with young Travellers (aged 14-18) living in Galway in February 2020. The research forms the basis for the development of a practical tool for the relevant stakeholders (such as schools and government) on the human right to education of the Traveller Community. This report and toolkit are due to be launched in 2021.

## 3. “Stories of the Pandemic” – A TASC Social Listening Project

From April – September 2020, TASC published three collections of stories of persons living in Ireland that highlighted the multiple layers of uncertainty people are facing at the moment due to the COVID-19 public health emergency – and their own reflections on the challenges that may lie ahead. The first collection explored the experiences of workers who lost their jobs at the onset of the lockdown. The second collection looked at the experiences of “millennial” and “generation y” workers living in Ireland, aged 32 to 41 years old, who are now facing an imminent second economic recession at a crucial moment in their working lives. The third collection highlighted the experiences of food producers, specifically fishermen and farmers, who were deemed essential workers during the pandemic.

### Media

Voices of the Pandemic - Impact of Covid on Workers Report - May 5, 2020

**The Irish Times** - COVID 19 jobless face multiple layers of uncertainty

Voices of the Pandemic- Millennials Report- June-July 2020

**The Journal.ie** - Millenials in crisis

**The Irish Times** - COVID 19 jobless face multiple layers of uncertainty

**RTÉ** - Covid-19 and the millennial wealth divide

**RTÉ radio** - TASC's research on millenials and Covid-19 with Tommy Meskill, David McWilliams and Barra Roantree.

## 4. Exploring Household Debt in Ireland: The Burden of Non-Mortgage Debt and Opportunities to Support Low-Income Households

This project, funded by JP Morgan, scrutinises the policy and social context of non-mortgage household debt in Ireland, and specifically when low-income households face unmanageable debt levels. The research involves a complex mapping of national services and supports for debt advice and insolvency services in Ireland, and frames debt as a structural issue intricately connected to housing, financial access, income level and cost of living. The research methods used in the project included roundtable discussion with relevant stakeholders, consultative meetings with experts on debt and credit access in Ireland, interviews with service users and Money Advisors from the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), as well as a quantitative analysis of the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

The launch took place on the 4 March 2020 and speakers included: Gwen Harris, Regional Manager at MABS; Dr Stuart Stamp, University of Maynooth, Cian O'Callaghan Social Democrats TD.

### Select Media Coverage

**The Irish Times** - Just 40 renters can afford to regularly save money

**The Irish Examiner** - One third of renters overburdened by debt repayment

**The Journal.ie** - 1 in 3 renters in debt struggling to meet repayments, think-tank says

**RTÉ** - 1 in 3 renters with debt struggle with burden of repayments

**FM104** - Renters struggling to pay off debts

**Newstalk** - choose March 4th, section 44:50 to 54:45 minutes

**RTÉ Drivetime** - at section 1:39 – 1:46 minutes

**Dublin Inquirer** - We need more debt relief not just for homeowners

**Credit Union Connect UK** - Third of Irish renters face debt repayments struggle

### Prominent Citations of the Exploring Household Debt in Ireland Report

Cited by Sinn Fein TD Clare Kerrane

Cited by Eurofound

## 5. Social Inclusion – Policy Briefs and Roundtable Briefing Documents

November 2020: **Mental Health and Covid-19 Roundtable**

June 2020: **Homecare Sector post-Covid-19**

# Climate Justice

## 1. The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice



The publication of *The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice* marked the culmination of two years research into the conditions necessary to enable a fast and fair transition to a zero-carbon future across Ireland. The research, which was a FEPS-TASC project, proposes a participative decision-making model, *The People's Transition*, that views climate action as an enabler of local development, gives people and communities ownership of the transition to zero carbon societies and enhances public support for a Just Transition by tackling inequality and raising standards of living through the delivery of climate solutions.

The report was launched in November 2020 at a virtual event which included Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Diederik Samsom, Head of cabinet of the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of the European Green Deal, Montserrat Mir, Just Transition Centre ITUC, Deputy Joe O'Brien, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and Deputy Holly Cairns, Social Democrats.

## 2. Assessment of the Social and Environmental Risks Posed by the EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement

TASC worked with Uplift to produce a report assessing the EU-Mercosur Trade Deal. The EU- Mercosur Free Trade Agreement has come under increased scrutiny regarding its potentially harmful impacts on the environment and human rights as EU member states try to reconcile global trade with commitments to combat climate change and enable sustainable development.

This research sought to understand the social, economic and environmental landscape onto which the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement would be introduced in order to understand how the deal may exacerbate or address issues in the interrelated spheres of environment, workers rights, human rights, public health and agriculture. The report was launched in August 2020.

## 3. Community-led Just Recovery for Rural Ireland

In May 2020, at the beginning of the global pandemic, TASC published a policy brief exploring how focusing on community led climate action in the aftermath of COVID-19 would both encourage a fair recovery across Ireland and ensure social approval for the measures necessary to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The brief was fed into the negotiations of the new programme for government.

## Policy Roundtable: Just Transition, Food Security and Rural Regeneration

In June, 2020, TASC hosted a policy roundtable which sought to understand how communities could play an enhanced role in the post-COVID 19 recovery and can accelerate climate action through the formulation of bottom-up climate policy. The roundtable was chaired by Tom Arnold and included representatives of all political parties as well as experts in food production, community development, climate action and just transition.

## Thinking through the crisis podcast series

TASC put out a number of climate justice focused podcasts as part the Thinking Through the Crisis podcast series. These included interviews with author and anthropologist Alf Honberg, CEO of Trocaire Caoimhe de Barra, architect Emmett Scanlon and food sovereignty experts Judith Hitchman and Kevin Flanagan.

## Prominent Citations

**A blog by Seán McCabe on the TASC** website analysing the first iteration of the climate bill published in 2020 was cited by the Joint Committee on Climate Action in their Pre-Legislative Scrutiny.

**The People's Transition was referenced by Mary Robinson in her discussion with Bernie Sanders as part of the I.NY event.**

**The People's Transition report formed the basis of a motion on community-led local development at Cork City Council.**

TASC's work on just transition was cited in the **National Economic and Social Council's Secretariat Paper on Approaches to Transition.**

## Media coverage

**Irish Times coverage of the People's Transition launch**

**Green news coverage of the People's Transition launch**

## Events

Seán McCabe took part in a panel discussion on food, farming and the future of the agricultural system in Ireland with Sli Eile.

Seán McCabe took part in the NERI video series episode 6 on The Case for a Just Transition in Ireland.

Seán McCabe took part in the Green European Foundation's Question of Scale podcast.

Seán McCabe took part in a panel discussion on Financing the Just Transition hosted by the Just Transition Greens.

## Articles and Blogs

Our current food system is failing farmers, consumers, and future generations (FEPS)

# 2020 Case Study 1

## The State we are in: inequality in Ireland 2020

Researcher: Dr. Robert Sweeney

Project Duration: 2-3 months

### Background

This report is TASC's annual flagship inequality report and has been running since 2001.

The 2020 report examined the determinants of market inequality in Ireland, that is inequality of incomes before taxation and transfers. It found that Ireland has a very high wage inequality and that low work intensity among low-income households also contributes to high market inequality.

### Research methods used

Quantitative. Descriptive statistics using microdata, and also decomposition of statistical indices, and some simulations.

### Events and media coverage

#### **One**

The in-person launch event was well-attended despite being the day before Ireland went into lockdown.

#### **Two**

Interview with Newstalk the morning of the launch and a write-up in the Irish Times. Also featured on local radio outlets and a podcast for Social Justice Ireland.

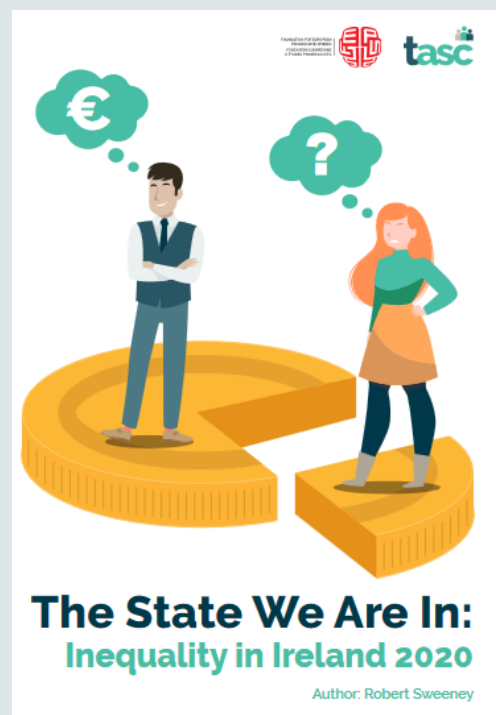
#### **Three**

Invited to present to the Low Pay Commission on the National Minimum Wage Policy as a result of this project.

### Next steps

I would like to develop the issue more.

Market inequality is still not fully understood in an Irish context. During a presentation to the Geary Institute in UCD, I highlighted the issue of high pay as contributing to market inequality in Ireland.



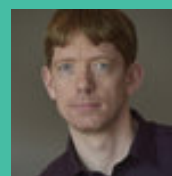
### Key points

#### **Overview**

- TASC's Annual Flagship report
- Running consecutively since 2015

#### **Impacts**

- Affects debate on inequality among policymakers
- Raises awareness among the public on inequality
- Deepens academic/scientific knowledge on inequality



Dr. Robert Sweeney is the FEPS TASC Senior Economic and Policy Analyst. His work focuses on issues surrounding inequality. This includes income distribution, low pay, and working conditions. He is currently working on projects on international taxation, housing, and public sector reform.

# 2020 Case Study 2

## The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice

Researcher: Seán McCabe  
Completed: 20th November 2020

### Background

This research analysed the perceptions of climate change in rural Ireland to understand how to achieve rapid and enduring climate action. It proposed a participative decision-making model, The People's Transition, that views climate action as an enabler of local development, gives people and communities ownership of the transition to zero carbon societies and enhances public support for a Just Transition by tackling inequality and raising standards of living through the delivery of climate solutions.

### Research methods used

The research relied primarily on qualitative approaches and interviews with key stakeholders. A number of focus groups were also organised, both with grassroots stakeholders and decision makers.

For this research a design thinking approach was adopted. What is special about design thinking is that it allows for systematically extracting, learning and applying human-centred techniques to solve problems in a creative and innovative way.

Significant time was invested in listening to residents of rural communities in Ireland and empathising with the challenges they face.

### Impact

The report was launched virtually by Mary Robinson; Diederik Samsom, Chief of Staff for EU Commissioner Frans Timmermans; Joe O'Brien, Minister of State for Rural and Community Development; and Deputy Holly Cairns and had over 200 attendees.

The report led to the creation of two Pilot Projects to test the initiative – one in Dublin and the other in Donegal. Locally, the report has helped to ensure a provision for community wealth building being included in the Dublin City Development Plan and was raised by councillors on Cork City Council. Nationally, the report also led to TASC being invited to speak at the Oireachtas Budgetary Committee and make two submissions to the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action related to Just Transition and Agriculture. Similarly, TASC were also consulted along with NESAC and ICTU in relation to the development of Ireland's Just Transition Territorial Plans under the EU's Just Transition Mechanism.

### Next steps

The People's Transition report resulted in two new projects: (i) The People's Transition pilot projects in Ardara and Phibsborough which are supported by AIB; and (ii) Talking Green, a research project into perceptions of climate action among working class communities, funded by FEPS.

Key stakeholders from the initial research are still centrally engaged in the rollout of the new projects.



### Media coverage

- The Irish Times
- The Irish Independent
- The Dublin Inquirer
- The Green News
- ARC2020
- Donegal Live
- Changing Ireland

#### *Referenced in articles*

- CNN
- Dublin Live

#### *Referenced in articles*

- RTE Radio 1
- The Green Room on Dublin Live
- Climate Allies Podcast with Ali Sheridan
- LMFM
- Highland Radio
- ABCs of Green Politics Podcast on Just Transition
- Chu & Chats podcast with Lord Mayor Hazel Chu
- Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability podcast



Sean McCabe aims to identify and address knowledge and capacity deficits that must be overcome in order to include workers and their communities in the design, planning and implementation of a fair transition to sustainable economies and societies.

# 2020 Case Study 3

## Exploring Household Debt in Ireland: The Burden of Non-Mortgage Debt and Opportunities to Support Low-Income Households

Researcher: Dr. Amie Lajoie  
Project duration: 14 months (Jan 2019 – March 2020)

### Background

This research explores the current problems and trends in Ireland related to debt and access to credit amongst households in Ireland, concerning non-mortgage debt in particular. The report focused on the experiences of disadvantaged households in Irish society, including those who are low-income (bottom 20-40%), renters (in the social and private rental sector) and single-parent households.

### Research methods used

- Qualitative - interviews with Money Advisors and people who access MABS services
- Quantitative - analysis of EU-SILC or European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions data
- Interviews

### Impact outcome and policy influence

1. The report and research involved resulted in the follow-on "Money Made Sense" project (2020 – 2022), the design and implementation of a financial capability training to support low income households living in North Dublin.
2. This training is unique in the Irish context as it involves both bespoke 1:1 financial coaching sessions and group trainings, and operates as a preventative measure for households at high-risk of financial difficulty.
3. The report has been cited in policy documents including those from Sinn Féin and Eurofound

### Next steps

In 2020, TASC designed and began delivering the "Money Made Sense" financial capability training, funded by JP Morgan and delivered in partnership with Northside Partnership and MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service).

The training is based on research on household over-indebtedness in Ireland conducted by TASC in 2019. Problem debt or over-indebtedness occurs when households are over-burdened by debt repayments and do not have the means to meet essential living costs and debt repayments as they fall due.

The research found that in Ireland low-paid workers and single parents have consistently higher rates of over-indebtedness and lower rates of financial capability than other household types.

The report sought to challenge the understanding that high levels of personal debt are solely the result of personal failing/ individual behaviours. This attitude ignores the macroeconomic drivers of debt and the ways debt is intimately connected to key structural factors – including the cost of living and housing, income levels, access to financial services and financial exclusion.



### Media coverage

#### Podcast Coverage

- Podcast Social Justice Ireland (July 2021) Dublin Live

#### Articles

- The Irish Times
- The Irish Examiner
- The Journal
- RTÉ

#### Radio

- FM104
- Newstalk (March 4th, 44:50 to 54:45) – Amie with Ivan Yates
- RTÉ radio 1 – Amie on Mary Wilson Drivetime
- KFM Radio
- Credit Connect UK



Dr. Amie Lajoie leads TASC's "Social Inclusion" research stream and manages projects that investigate the ways public services and institutions in Ireland can better serve the needs of socially, economically and culturally excluded persons and groups such as: Travellers, adults with unmet literacy needs, low-pay workers, lone parents, and rural communities. These projects are intersectional and span a range of socio-economic and cultural areas, including education and financial inclusion

# Additional Communications at TASC in 2020

The staff at TASC consistently publish in Irish media or are asked to provide input, whether on the radio or for print media. TASC staff are also regularly invited to present their work at conferences, workshops, and private meetings with representatives of civil society as well as policymakers and civil servants.

Furthermore, TASC continued in 2020 to develop partnerships with other organisations to translate its research into action, which led both to the development and delivery of financial resilience training and the conception of people's transition dialogues, which were funded in 2021. These practical outputs receive attention in their own right from other charities, business, government departments, and policymakers.





# Additional Opinion Pieces in 2020

February 2020

**RTE: Why young voters have a lot to be happy about**

**Irish Times: Europe looking to see if Ireland can answer call for change**

March 2020

**Irish Times: Swedish model is riddled with inequitable flaws**

**The Journal: Coronavirus Economy**

**Irish Times: Coronavirus can it be politics as usual if we are to survive**

June 2020

**Irish Times: Inequality not racism has been institutionalised in the US**

July 2020

**Irish Times: How the government can woo young Sinn Féin supporters**

**Irish Times: Government's stimulus package falls short of the big thinking Ireland needs**

August 2020

**Irish Times: Internal debate a true measure of coalition governments strength**

September 2020

**Irish Times: Job quality as important as job quantity as we exit this crisis**

October 2020

**Irish Times: Biden must put the needs of Trump voters first**

November 2020

**Irish Times: Hope gleams in America's scarred democracy**

December 2020

**Irish Times: Altruism is key to a more resilient society**



Celebrating  
20 Years

Addressing inequality and sustaining democracy since 2001

[www.tasc.ie](http://www.tasc.ie)  
[contact@tasc.ie](mailto:contact@tasc.ie)

TASC is the trading name of TASC Europe Studies Company Ltd (T/A TASC). Registered Address: Hill House, 26 Sion Hill Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Company No. 342993 - CHY 14778 - RCN 20049096 - TRN 6263993W.

