

# TASC 5 Year Strategic Plan: 2022 – 2027

## Midterm Review/Extension to 2029



**25 Years**

Addressing inequality and sustaining democracy since 2001

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# Introduction

## Forward from the Chair and Director of TASC

This mid-term strategy review is occurring in a period when extremist politics are becoming more mainstream. Racist and discriminatory language, enforcement of social hierarchies and inequality, dissemination of disinformation propelled by social media platforms, and increasing concentration of wealth have become more normalised.

TASC's mission is not just to counter these trends, but to show another way forward, whether locally, nationally, or within the European Union. We base our policy recommendations and public education projects on evidence generated through independent research. Our work encourages both innovation and participation enhanced by consensus-building, which enhances trust. Our objective is to enable individuals and communities to represent their own interests better, to achieve tangible and lasting impacts on the ground through their own initiative, and to see social justice, climate action, and solidarity as positive assets for generating social change.

The mid-term review assesses progress between 2022-25; presents revises objectives and priorities that account for the current context – which has changed significantly over the past three years; and describes our plans for the future. We have elected to extend the strategy period until 2029 to reflect ongoing projects and, as mentioned, the global political, economic, and social transformations characterizing this current period.

TASC is committed to its independence and its unique capacity both to translate research into action and to partner with other organisations to improve the lives of others. We believe our work remains critical to expanding our understanding of economic inequality and its consequences for Irish society, how this inequality should be addressed within policymaking and frontline services across different areas (e.g., climate, health), and how, in turn, effective policies and services can generate greater public trust in democracy.



A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Mike Jennings".

Mike Jennings  
Chair, TASC



A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Shana Cohen".

Shana Cohen  
Director, TASC

## **Changes in our Work Since 2022**

In 2022, we committed to using our research to improve frontline services and to develop innovative projects. We continue to seek to devise effective responses to longstanding issues like poverty, health inequalities, the decline of democratic institutions and mechanisms for achieving political consensus, and climate change, as well as more immediate crises, like the cost of living and energy poverty. We are also increasingly focused on how to improve social mobility in an era when digitalisation and other factors are transforming labour markets. To account for the range and depth of our work, we have added health inequalities as a workstream and increasingly integrated technology, especially the development of AI, across all of our 5 workstreams.

TASC's Workstreams:

- 1. Economic Inequality**
- 2. Social Inclusion**
- 3. Climate Justice**
- 4. Health Inequalities**
- 5. Democracy.**

In 2022, we also committed to striving to achieve greater economic equality, and with it, climate justice, social inclusion, and stronger democratic institutions, by devising creative, far-reaching policy agendas and practical interventions at a national and EU level. We continue to do so through five principal activities, four of which remain essentially the same as in 2022, with an added activity of partnership.

**Our work consists of five principal activities:**

- 1. conducting policy analysis based on independent research**
- 2. initiating and contributing to public awareness and understanding of policy**
- 3. engaging with policymaking and policy makers**
- 4. partnering with other civil society organisations, government bodies, and the private sector**
- 5. supporting social change and climate justice at a local, national, and EU level.**

# Vision, Mission and Values



## VISION

### Vision

A sustainable, flourishing society characterised by economic equality, with strong public engagement in politics and an accountable government.



## MISSION

### Mission

To develop policies and solutions using evidence-based research and analysis on economic inequality. To work nationally and internationally, in partnership with other organisations, to catalyse momentum for progressive change, especially for those marginalised from both political decision-making and economic opportunity.



## VALUES

### Values

We believe that greater economic equality is unequivocally positive for society as a whole; as it improves wellbeing for everyone.

TASC is a think tank dedicated to championing the value of equality, human rights, democratic accountability and sustainability in the context of 21st century Ireland and the European Union.

We believe that the social costs of inequality include financial uncertainty, poverty, poor health, crime, and low educational attainment. Inequality undermines not only individual human potential but also the functionality of society and democratic political processes.

We believe that economic growth for its own sake is unsustainable and must be assessed for its impact on the environment, society, and public trust in the state. Economic growth must strengthen, rather than undermine, democratic institutions, so as to create a virtuous cycle of public engagement and effective policymaking that in turn enables social solidarity and human fulfilment.

Recognising the scale of the challenges that face Ireland and Europe, TASC is committed to pursuing policies that truly generate progressive change.

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## Our Strategic Objectives 2025 - 2029

Our objectives have been revised and refined over the past three years. The new objectives express more clearly our goals and priorities over the next four years. We included five objectives in the 2022-2027 strategy: conduct and publish research that benefits the public and contribute to policy debates; design and deliver public education projects and events that generate greater solidarity and a fairer, more democratic and sustainable society; develop progressive policy responses to regional, national, and local challenges across Ireland and the EU; partner with other civil society organisations, unions, government bodies, and the private sector across Ireland, Europe and globally; and continue to diversify raising awareness outside of conventional methods. The three new objectives focus explicitly on research that informs progressive policy, incorporates diverse perspectives, and supports businesses, government bodies, and other civil society organisations to address inequality:

1. **Conducting robust research grounded in diverse perspectives:** Conducting high-quality, methodologically rigorous participatory research informed by a wide range of voices and experiences. Ensuring our evidence addresses the complex nature of social and economic inequality.
2. **Producing outputs that help shape progressive policy in Ireland and Europe:** Sharing our research through publications and events and translating our research into public education initiatives.
3. **Building partnerships to amplify impact and drive change:** Working closely with civil society organisations, trade unions, businesses, government bodies, and communities to co-develop ideas, share expertise, and strengthen collective responses to inequality.

## **Our Work Goals 2025-2029**

In 2022, our goals were to continue to conduct policy research and analysis, translate our research into public education projects, organise events, and disseminate our work through diverse social media and other outlets. We also sought to collaborate more within Ireland and across borders with CSOs, government bodies, and businesses and raise our profile through traditional and digital media. In line with our strategic objectives, our impact has grown substantially in terms of 1) influencing policy thinking and agendas through independent research and analysis 2) partnering with other organisations 3) public outreach and awareness and 4) contributing to social change and climate justice.

In relation to outputs, we have published 46 reports since 2022. In both 2022 and 2023, TASC collaborated with 38 partners in business, civil society, the media, and government. In 2024, this figure rose to 54. We collaborated with 25 organisations for the People's Transition work, which took place in 16 communities and reached almost 2100 residents. In delivering FRT, TASC has worked with 18 local development companies (LDCs) in rural and urban areas across Ireland and 10 national and local CSOs, as well as an ETB in Kerry and the University of Galway. Supported by Aviva and IBCB, TASC delivered FRT training to over 1537 individuals, charity staff, and community members, including those in homeless services, low-income families, student groups, and disability organisations. Training staff had a further impact on their beneficiaries. One project trained 188 staff who then worked with at least 50 beneficiaries, affecting in turn at least 3 individuals per household, leading to an estimated total reach of 28,200 beneficiaries.

Since 2022, several funders (e.g., MSD and IBCB) have commissioned multiple pieces of work, reflecting confidence in the quality of our research, and organisations (e.g., Safe Ireland, Ballyhoura Development, ICBAN, and the Dublin City Community Co-op) have partnered on repeated projects.

For the next four years, up to 2029, we intend to focus on the same activities listed above, but to engage more in translating our research into public education projects, primarily in partnership with other organisations. Public education at TASC has had two core functions: 1) bringing lived experience into our systemic research, and 2) translating analysis into practical action with, and for the benefit of, communities. Since 2019, TASC has used research on non-mortgage household debt (funded by JPMC Foundation) to design and deliver financial resilience training (funded by JPMC, Aviva, and IBCB) and research on the potential of integrating community wealth building and climate action in rural areas (in partnership with FEPS) to design and deliver the People's Transition (funded by AIB).

Over the next four years, we will continue delivering the same projects, and expand to include a maternal health project in partnership with Cairde, and upscaling a pilot civic engagement project, with Poppintree Youth Project and Muck and Magic (the community garden in Ballymun) that has emerged from our People's Transition project. The new phase of the PT, funded by SSE Generation Green Community Fund, will be implemented in 3 new communities (Limerick, West Belfast, Inishbofin). We also are working with 5 other communities to fund PT projects and multiple LDCs, education training boards (ETBs), and family resource centres (FRCs) regarding the delivery of FRT.

Both of the new public education projects reflect the rapid expansion of our health inequalities work over the past three years and the consolidation of our democracy workstream, which has been aided by generous support from the Community Foundation of Ireland. The maternal health project will involve training 24 community based advocates across 5 geographic regions who work with migrants, particularly from non-EU backgrounds and with poor English-language proficiency. The target population is approximately 2,013 women from migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds. The development of the online resources means that, in addition, the project has the



potential to indirectly benefit up to 10,000 women across Ireland (based on figures re. births to women from EU 15-27 countries or other countries).

Our research in general has expanded to include far more commissioned work from government bodies, foundations, and CSOs, including unions and frontline service providers. Pursuing commissioned work forms part of our strategy since the closure of Atlantic Philanthropies and the loss of significant research project funders, namely the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (because of changes in European Parliament funding to third parties). We have also been successful in European and national funding calls. At the same time, to maintain our objective of working in partnership and our mission to catalyse progressive change, we have conducted research for smaller organisations at lower value, occasionally incurring a minor loss. The signature TASC report, the inequality report *The State We Are In*, is paid for out of core funds to protect its independence.

As our partnerships have grown, so has the extent of our expertise, though always focused on economic inequality and its consequences. Responding to the rapid advancement of digital technologies, we hired a technology researcher in 2024 to participate in a Horizon project on SMEs and digital technology and to conduct a study for the Financial Services Union (FSU) on the impact of AI on staff. She has also gone on to secure funding on the impact of data centres on communities in West Dublin. Though not a formal workstream, the objectives for the next four years for our research on technology and inequality are to provide independent analysis how emerging technologies shape income inequality and social inclusion in Ireland and Europe, with particular attention to impacts on low-income communities, precarious workers, and groups already facing structural disadvantage; to increase understanding of structural risks created by AI and digital systems, including algorithmic bias, surveillance, data extractivism, environmental impacts, and the creation of new 'sacrifice zones' through uneven digital infrastructure; and to enable TASC to support civil society in navigating rapid technological change.

Since 2022, TASC’s research and analysis have gained growing visibility across Irish public discourse and media. Our work has been cited in major outlets such as the **Irish Times**, **Irish Examiner**, **Irish Independent**, and **RTE**, as well as local and community media, including **Dublin City Community Co-op**, **Clare PPN**, **Today FM**, **Galway Bay FM** and **Mayo News**. This coverage has highlighted our flagship inequality reports, civic engagement initiatives, and public education projects, helping shape debate on economic inequality, social policy, and community resilience. Media attention has amplified the impact of our partnerships and training initiatives, reinforcing TASC’s role as a trusted voice in national and local discussions on social change, climate justice, and progressive policy solutions.

Below is an assessment of how the five workstreams have progressed over the past three years, recognising health inequalities as an independent workstream, and our plans for the next four years.

Stream	Goal	Achievements	Plans
Economic Inequality	Raise awareness about the causes and consequences of inequality in Ireland and Europe	Published the annual inequality report <i>The State We Are In</i> ; examined factors driving the housing shortage and potential solutions; examined	Focus on issues related to living standards, in-work and out-of-work poverty, income in retirement, and progressiveness of the overall tax system in Ireland.

<b>Climate Justice</b>	Build public support for a Just Transition by tackling inequality and raising standards of living through the delivery of climate solutions	Finalised the second phase of the PT (funded by AIB) over 11 locations; Supported local organisations to develop Just Transition strategies (Clare, Ballyhoura); Secured funding for another 3 PT locations and building a network of all PTs; Partnered with European football clubs to raise awareness of climate change.	Continue to expand to new locations for the People's Transition projects; implement a PT in another European location and engage more with the EU context for the Just Transition; assess the impact of regulation and climate change on basic needs, like access to water; and examine the impact of carbon emissions reductions on wellbeing, rather than primarily economic growth.
<b>Social Inclusion</b>	Improve conditions for marginalised individuals and groups, giving them the social and economic tools to thrive and live full lives	Drew on our research on income inequality and indebtedness to design context-specific financial resilience training and evaluation tools for domestic violence services and youth services; rolled out further training nationwide in partnership with Local Development Companies; and published new research on the impacts of Brexit in Northern Ireland.	Continue FRT with existing and new groups; collaborate with communities that have experienced division or conflict to support social connection, trust, and collective action; explore how digital tools and technologies can be used to enhance social inclusion and enable greater civic participation.
<b>Democracy</b>	Explore and develop innovative ways of encouraging democratic participation by citizens while demonstrating the value of democracy as a political system	Consolidated the democracy workstream after years of sporadic work; received two years of funding for a full-time democracy researcher. Conducted research on morale and pay within civil society and amongst frontline health and social care workers, on volunteering, and on voter and civic engagement in disadvantaged areas, as well as international collaborations on democratic engagement,	Upscale the pilot civic engagement project in Poppintree to involve other groups besides young people (e.g., new migrants) in community development and to support youth leadership projects in disadvantaged areas; promote greater public awareness of how local and national government functions, in particular through updating our open government toolkit but also by understanding through

		including participatory budgeting.	research barriers to this awareness and capacity to engage with policy and politics.
<b>Health (new)</b>	Strengthen evidence on health inequalities and access to care and enhance public communication regarding health inequalities	Secured funding for and completed multiple projects on access to cancer and other medical services; conducted evaluations of two Dublin-based social prescribing programmes; assessment of the current status of health care assistants in the Irish healthcare system; conducted research on the role of mental health supports for people experiencing homelessness; developed research partnerships.	Assess the health impacts of hygiene inequality in Ireland; understand the impact of ageing, trauma, and addiction on health, especially in disadvantaged areas; assess access to health services for minority groups, including LGBTQ+; conduct research on support for pregnant mothers from new migrant communities in partnership with Cairde.
<b>Technology (across streams)</b>	Analyse how emerging technologies shape income inequality and social inclusion in Ireland and Europe, with particular attention to impacts on low-income communities, precarious workers, and groups already facing structural disadvantage	Published research on the impact of AI on financial service staff and civil servants; Secured funding for assessing the impact of large-scale AI infrastructure on the lived experience of low-income communities in West Dublin; Participating in Horizon funded research on SMEs and AI	Examine how AI affects wage distribution, job quality, and labour market transitions, identifying which groups face heightened risk of displacement and developing policy solutions; support CSOs to use data and digital tools in equitable ways; assess cybersecurity vulnerabilities affecting Irish CSOs, especially those working with marginalised communities (e.g., migrants, survivors of domestic violence, homeless services); examine how workers in Ireland's growing tech start-up space think about issues surrounding responsible AI use.

The risks over the next four years encompass financial, political, and social pressures:

1. Financial: This risk refers not just to securing income to pay for salaries and overheads, but also to fit income generation within the financial calendar year to balance the annual budget.
2. Accepting low value projects: Keeping in line with our ethos means occasionally accepting low value work to increase other organisations' impact and maintaining our own status as a nonprofit. We need to maintain a balance regarding these projects but that is sometimes not easy because of the particular partner (e.g., small CSO or union).
3. Staff turnover: We need to retain qualified staff in order to reduce turnover, which can be very time consuming for the Executive Director and disrupt activities. To avoid this turnover, we must offer competitive wages and good working conditions (which fit with our ethos as a progressive think tank).
4. Complexity of work is increasingly demanding for staff and the ED: Contractual conditions, payments, and partner relationships can vary between projects. TASC staff are still learning how to manage this complexity, as the organisation has only adopted this working and funding model over the past four years.
5. Changing political context internationally and potentially within Ireland is not necessarily in favour of a progressive organisation: We must navigate different political actors while maintaining our independence and enabling the expression of marginalised voices. Importantly, we must show that democracy is the most effective system for reducing inequality, as in line with our vision, mission, and values.
6. Distrust in our work: One of our strengths is our ability to link local, national, and European issues and to avoid distrust within specific communities and different political organisations and other stakeholders, we must build and sustain relationships while maintaining our independence and integrity.
7. Measuring impact can be difficult: TASC's impact can often be quantified, but not always, so we need to determine ways to present influence, particularly where we have not been cited, and qualitative impact in clearer ways within our reports.

## Actions

1. Increase collaboration across TASC workstreams to illustrate the complex consequences and causes of economic inequality
2. Utilise our public education work to demonstrate the impact of public participation – and democratic values - on improving quality of life locally and nationally
3. Use the F/T communications executive to expand TASC's profile internationally, nationally, and locally, targeting key audiences, particularly young people and minority groups; update the website and actively promote social media accounts.
4. Ensure robust oversight through board committees of research quality, finances, governance, fundraising, and communications by continuing to seek expert advice and external input.
5. Implement
  - a) appropriate project management system to account for growing complexity of project work and
  - b) Financial tracking to monitor income, costs, and characteristics of specific contracts.
6. Improve impact tracking across different categories: use of reports, number and nature of partnerships, benefit to direct and indirect beneficiaries, media attention, and follow-on initiatives (e.g., from People's Transition or civic engagement work).
7. More generally, the board will respond to ongoing financial pressures and the challenge of proper management and governance by
  - a. recruiting board members with specific expertise and skills (e.g., charity governance, public relations)
  - b. adoption of a fundraising strategy for 2026-2027 to ensure the organisation is not only breaking even but investing in reserves
  - c. reviewing income streams that have declined in the past 24 months (bids for tenders in specific

areas or funding applications that have been repeatedly unsuccessful)

- d. ensuring regular board training on compliance
- e. ensuring staff remain up-to-date on legislation related to the charity sector, income generation (including our VAT exemption), and research (ethics, safeguarding, and intellectual property in particular)
- f. ensuring policies are up-to-date and on the website
- g. ensuring regular committee meetings take place, especially in relation to the research and policy committee (RPC), fundraising, and governance committees. The RPC is responsible for ethics approval and quality control, which are fundamental to our reputation.
- h. reviewing regularly outcomes and impact to understand TASC's role within civil society and the broader policy context.