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Implementation of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Ireland: Key Issues in Social Security

The right to social security comprises all elements of State policy to protect the welfare of those unable to fulfil their basic needs through their own means. This includes pension schemes for senior citizens, support for unemployed workers, for children, benefits and services for people with disabilities, among others. It also includes social insurance to cover essential health and welfare. Under international human rights law, the state is obliged to provide such protections to its citizens and residents.

Social Security of Children

- According to the latest statistics to 2015, issued by the CSO, poverty rate among children up to the age of 17 was 11.5 per cent.
- A 2016 Tasc report showed that consistent poverty among children doubled during the recession.
- More than 5,000 young people leave school early each year.

Children have a number of rights under Irish law. The social security principles for Irish children are set out in a number of rules and regulations.

Specific sections of the Irish Constitution, including Part II Article 2 and Part III Article 12, are concerned with protection from any form of discrimination and access to basic rights respectively and are related to the same cause.

Poverty for children means that they are excluded from doing things that are considered normal in society because of inadequate household. Child poverty has a long-term effect on a child's health, education and employment prospects, lifespan and physical and mental development.

Social Security of Old Age Pensioners

- Full contributory State Pension is €238.30 per week
- The 'at risk of poverty rate' for over 65s is 10.7 per cent.
- More than 85,000 older people, 14.3 per cent, are living in deprivation, up from 9.5 per cent in 2009.

People aged over 65 years make up 11.6 per cent of the population in Ireland. For most, the State Pension, to which workers become entitled at the age of 66, is their primary source of income while a minority also have occupational or



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private pensions.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in their Concluding Observations on Ireland's third periodic report in 2015 noted with concern that, regardless of the changes made by the State to reduced the impact of austerity Ireland's response had disproportionately focused on cuts to social security,.

This includes cuts to secondary income supports for older people like the Fuel Allowance, the abolition of the Telephone Allowance and changes to the State Pension system in 2012 that disproportionately affected women pensioners.

The austerity programme continues to have an adverse effect on the entire population, especially on disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups, in enjoying their economic, social and cultural rights.

Social Security of Persons with Disabilities

- Census 2011 showed about 600,000 people reported having a disability, or about 13% of the population and In 2017, more than 56,000 people will be diagnosed with a disability for the first time.
- Almost 4,000 people with disabilities are on social housing waiting lists.
- People with a disability have an 'at risk of poverty' rate of 22.8%, a deprivation rate of 51.3% and a consistent poverty rate of 13.2%.

People with disabilities face many barriers that restricts them from fully participating in Irish society. They are discriminated against, services they need are unavailable or inaccessible and they face daunting employment prospects. However, one of the key issues for people with disabilities and their families is that so many are living in poverty or in danger of doing so..

The Government should also enhance social security for people with disabilities by giving them expanded financial assistance and enhanced supports for independent living.