Social Dimension in Ireland

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Development of National Access Plans

- Social Dimension Strategy in Ireland = National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education
- 3 National Plans for Equity of Access to Higher Education published
  - 2005-07; 2008-13, and 2015-19
- Rationale for National Access Plans:
  - Efforts to widen access to education only partially successful.
  - Lack of a coherent educational or philosophical rationale
  - No overall national framework
  - Practitioners and institutions operating in isolation
  - Efforts and resources potentially duplicated
  - Lack of transparency in allocation of resources
  - Lack of assessment and evaluation

National Access Plan 2015-19

- Developed by HEA / Ministry of Education and Skills

Development of National Access Plan, 2015-19

- Data analysis and evaluation

- Discussion document

- Public consultation and bilateral meetings

- 6 main groups encompassed by consultation:
  - Providers (Further Education and Higher Education)
  - Students
  - Advocacy groups
  - Enterprise
  - Teachers associations and trade unions
  - Researchers / experts
- Benefits of consultation:
  - Shared vision (including target groups and actual targets)
  - Collective responsibility
  - Best practice

National Access Plan 2015-19

Vision: *To ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing Higher Education reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population*.

Goals

1. To mainstream the delivery of equity of access in HEIs.
2. To assess impact of current initiatives.
3. To gather accurate data to inform policy
4. To build coherent pathways from further education and to foster other entry routes to higher education.
5. To develop regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access, with a particular focus on mentoring.

National Access Plan 2015-19

6 Priority Target Groups:

- Socio-economic groups with low participation

- First time Mature students

- Students with a disability

- Part-time/Flexible learners

- Further education award holders

- Irish Travellers

Also sub-groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, lone parents)

Target groups identified through consultation process.

Complemented by thematic approach e.g. non-completion, inclusive teaching practice, data, evaluation

National Targets: 2015-2019

Target group	2015 participation rate	Target participation rate
Semi/unskilled manual worker group (new entrants to HE as a % of 18-20 year olds in the population)	26%	35%
Non-manual worker group (new entrants to HE as a % of 18-20 year olds in the population)	23%	30%
Full-time mature student entrants (% of all new entrants to HE)	13%	16%
Full & part-time mature student entrants (% of all new entrants to HE)	19%	24%
Students with disabilities (% of new entrants to HE)	6%	8%
Part-time/flexible participation (% of all students in HE)	19%	22%
Entrants on the basis of a further education qualification (% of new entrants to HE)	6.6%	10%
Irish Travellers (overall number in HE)	35	80

Key actions in National Access Plan

- 28 actions spread over 2015-2019
- Promote participation in initial teacher education by target students
- Address non-completion in HE
- Review how Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) supports access.
- Review the Student Assistance Fund, and the Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities
- Data Strategy on Access to Higher Education
- Develop a National Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning
- Measures to engage directly with disadvantaged communities

Factors behind sustainability (1)

1. **Collective ownership**
   - Consultation
   - Communication (Steering group, Forum, sub groups)
   - Shared vision and understanding of priorities
   - Roles and responsibilities outlined
   - Collaboration required

2. **Investment**
   - €450m in 2017 (28% of higher education budget)
   - More than 300 'access' individuals working in HEIs
   - NAP provides opportunities for additional funding

3. **Continuum of education**

Factors behind sustainability (2)

4. Reinforced by wider policy

- Higher Education 'System Performance Framework'
- Access forms part of core funding
- Access reflected in key national strategies

5. Mainstreaming

- HEIs to have an access strategy aligned to NAP
- Each faculty to have an access 'champion'
- Target groups addressed by mainstream services where possible

6. Leadership

- Leadership by Ministry of Education and Skills
- Key support by National Access Office (Higher Education Authority)

Factors behind sustainability (3)

8. **Data to show progress e.g.**
   – National Participation rate up from 44 to 52% since 2005
   – Overall participation rate up from 55 to 69%
   – Part-time/flexible learning up from 7 to 19%
   – Students with disabilities up from 3% to 8%

9. **Innovation and competition**

10. **Evaluation** (mid term evaluation in late 2017)

11. **Flexibility** as new issues emerge
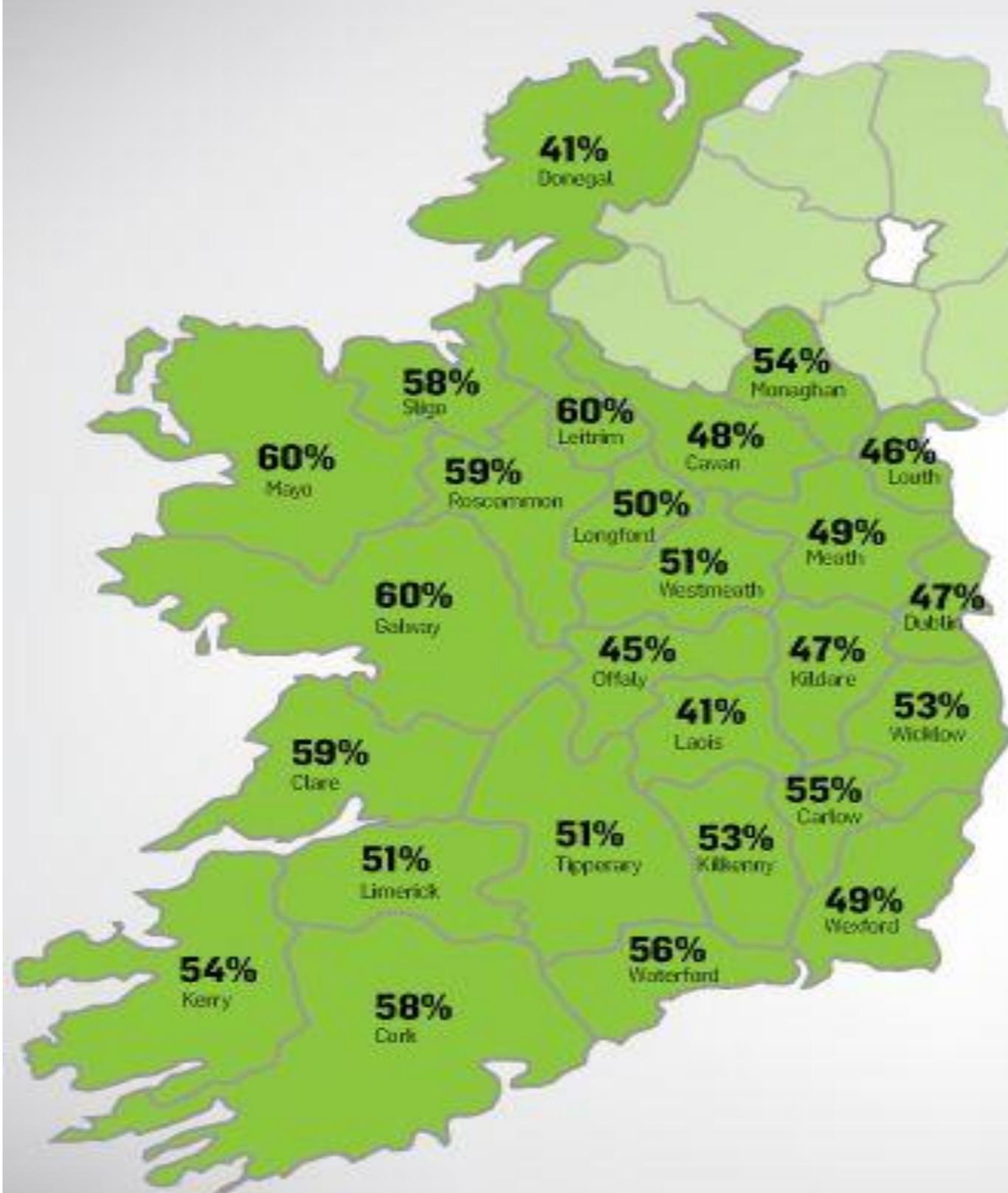
Some remaining challenges

<u>Overall challenges</u>

- Not all issues can be solved by education sector
- Not all issues can be solved by Higher Education
- Competing for scarce public resources
- Rising demographics

<u>Policy challenges</u>

- Non completion
- Competition between HEIs
- New issues emerging
- Specific challenges with some target groups (sensory disabilities, Travellers, part-time learners, geographic imbalances).

Progression to Higher Education Institutions

41% Donegal

58% Sligo

60% Leitrim

54% Monaghan

48% Cavan

46% Louth

60% Mayo

59% Roscommon

50% Longford

51% Westmeath

49% Meath

60% Galway

45% Offaly

47% Kildare

47% Dublin

59% Clare

41% Laois

53% Wicklow

51% Limerick

51% Tipperary

53% Kilkenny

55% Carlow

49% Wexford

54% Kerry

56% Waterford

58% Cork

Dublin Avg. **47%**

Dublin 1	23%
Dublin 2	26%
Dublin 3	60%
Dublin 4	84%
Dublin 5	47%
Dublin 6	99%
Dublin 6W	82%
Dublin 7	41%
Dublin 8	28%
Dublin 9	55%
Dublin 10	16%
Dublin 11	28%
Dublin 12	37%
Dublin 13	36%
Dublin 14	76%
Dublin 15	47%
Dublin 16	79%
Dublin 17	15%
Dublin 18	58%
Dublin 20	32%
Dublin 22	26%
Dublin 24	29%
Dublin Co	53%

Source: hea.ie