

**Response of the Government of Ireland to OHCHR questionnaire**

**pursuant to Human Rights Council Res 16/2 on**

**the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation**

The Irish Government agrees in principle that all persons, wherever located, should have access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. How that is accomplished is a matter for each individual country. Access to water and sanitation is generally not a problem for Ireland, where water services are currently provided by local authorities and the group water sector. Exchequer funding for water services is delivered via the local authorities. Capital expenditure is governed in the main by the Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013.

Water services cost over €1.15 billion in 2011, of which operational costs amounted to some €715 million, with capital costs of over €435 million. At present, domestic users are not charged for water services, and with revenue of just over €200 million from non-domestic charges, the balance of around €1 billion is largely State funded, through a combination of Exchequer grants and local authority resources, including the Local Government Fund. In 2012, €308 million was provided by the Department in capital funding to fund water services. The allocation for 2013 is €328 million which includes the rural water programme.

Those not connected to a local authority or group water scheme water supply or sewerage system rely on private wells or on-site wastewater treatment systems. Subject to households meeting eligibility criteria, grants are available from local authorities for wells and domestic waste water treatment systems.

The legislation governing provision of water services in Ireland is couched in enabling rather than in directive terms. There are no plans to enshrine a right to water services in Irish legislation as this could be problematic for local authorities and group water schemes where, due to particular circumstances, it would be economically or logistically impossible to provide a service, e.g. due to the location of particular properties. Local authority responsibility for public water services will shortly transfer to a new national water utility company, Irish Water. However, current policy regarding the provision of water services is expected to remain unchanged.

Links to the most relevant legislation governing water services in Ireland are as follows:

Water Services Act 2007

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Legislation/Environment/Water/FileDownload,1540,en.pdf>

European Communities (Drinking Water)(No.2) Regulations 2007

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Legislation/Environment/Water/FileDownload,14547,en.pdf>