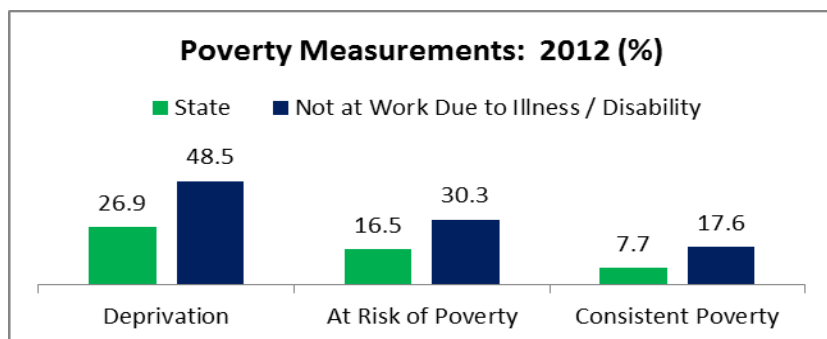


## Supporting People with Disabilities

***Women and men experiencing a disability suffer more than almost any other group in society. Compared to other countries, Ireland provides among the lowest supports. Unite argues that we need to mobilise investment to give people the support they need – in the community and in the workplace. No one should be denied the fullest participation possible in society, nor should anyone be forced into the deprivation experienced by many people with disabilities.***

### High Levels of Deprivation

The CSO shows that people unable to work due to illness or disability suffer extremely high levels of deprivation.

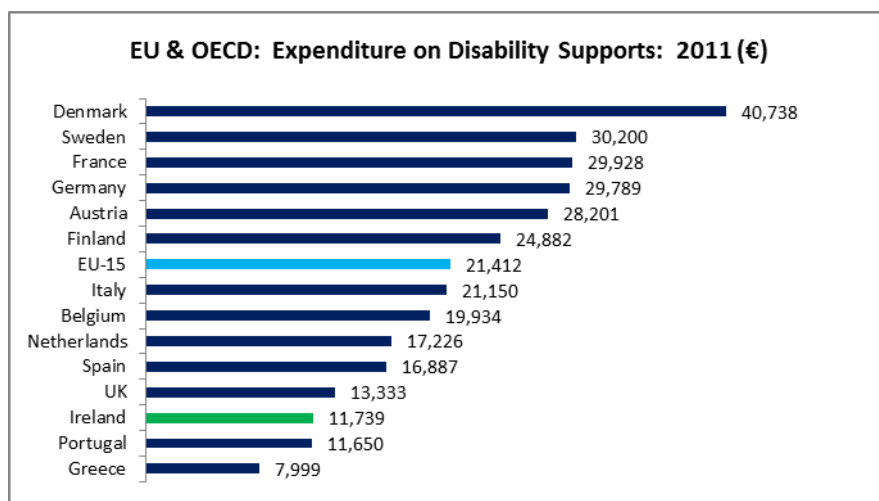


People with disabilities experience twice as much deprivation and poverty as the national average (which itself is scandalously high). More than half of those with disabilities have incomes in the bottom 30 percent.

And this poverty is exacerbated by the cost of disability – the extra necessary expenditure incurred by people with disabilities. Additional supports are required to cope with extra costs that most people without disabilities don't experience.

### European Comparisons

We can compare disability supports in other European countries



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*People with disabilities suffer twice as much deprivation and poverty as the national average (which itself is scandalously high).*

*Irish support for those with disabilities – both cash and in-kind supports – or 80 percent below the average of other EU-15 countries.*

Ireland ranks well down the EU table – nearly 80 percent below the average support that those with disabilities receive in other European countries. This measures not only cash but in-kind benefits as well (it combines two datasets and, therefore, can only be an estimate). Most other EU countries provide a range of community and household supports that improve living standards: accommodation, assistance in carrying out daily tasks, goods and services relating to rehabilitation and other supports which Eurostat defines as

*‘... enabling people to participate in leisure and cultural activities or to travel or to participate in community life.’*

## **Mobilising the Resources**

Unite argues that as a society we should prioritise supports for those most in need, in particular those coping with disabilities. This requires a two-prong approach:

- First, introduce a new ‘*Cost of Disability*’ payment to those in need – whether in work or reliant upon social protection payments. There is already a precedent for such a payment in our taxation code (e.g. Blind Person’s Tax Credit). This *Cost of Disability* payment would be tailored to each person’s needs.
- Second, increase the in-kind supports for those suffering from disability: home-help hours, rehabilitation goods and services, support in the home and respite care for carers, as well as community participation activities.

Mobilising the resources needed to bring us to the average EU levels in the medium-term is feasible and achievable. This will require a combined €1.3 billion over the next five years in today’s terms and numbers (or an annual increase of €260 million).

- a) €700 million in *Cost of Disability* payments
- b) Increase of €600 million in in-kind supports (goods and services)

This should not be seen as a cost. The supports provided to those with a disability will be returned back to the economy through higher personal spending and the resulting tax revenue; the employment of people – through voluntary agencies and the public service; and the purchase of goods and services to be provided as part of personalised ‘*Cost of Disability*’ packages. Supporting people with disabilities is one of the best value-for-money expenditures the government could make.

An economy and a society cannot maximise its prosperity if there are hundreds of thousands who are effectively excluded from social and economic life – whether through lack of means, lack of jobs or because of the disability they suffer. Providing the necessary supports is about ensuring the broadest possible participation in society and the economy. This is about growing prosperity and deepening an inclusive democratic community. Let’s start that work now.

*Mobilising the resources to ensure that everyone with a disability can fully participate in the society and economy is both feasible and achievable over the medium-term*

*Providing the necessary supports for those with disabilities is not a cost. It is one of the best value-for-money expenditures the government could make - growing prosperity and deepening an inclusive democratic community.*

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