

**Remarks by Mr Paschal Donohoe TD,  
Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform**

**on the launch of Benefacts first analysis report  
on the nonprofit sector in Ireland,**

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017  
at the Royal Irish Academy, Dawson Street Dublin.**

**Introduction by Mr Tom Boland, Benefacts Chairman**

In my short time with Benefacts, I have seen the enormous commitment of all the staff to the mission of the organisation. I think when he was first appointed as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the first official job that Paschal Donohoe had in his diary was the launch of Benefacts website. I'm delighted Minister that you can be back here again this morning to see the progress that has been made in the year since then.

**Remarks by Minister Paschal Donohoe**

Good morning everybody and Tom I thank you for the introduction, Ombudsperson, Patricia, I just want to recognise you all and thank you all for your immense work in getting to this point in this very important project. I'm really delighted to be back here today, as Tom has already said the very first public event I ever did as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform was to launch the website for this project.

An awful lot has happened since then and I have seen a lot of change. But one of the things that has been constant across this period is the admiration and supports that I and my Department have for the Benefacts project.

If you want an example as to why I believe this is a very valuable project, as to why I believe the output is so crucial, it is actually contained in the final chapter in this report, which is entitled 'Scope and Approach'. Because in that section there is an explanation of the process that was used to get to this point and the further work that needs to be done. And the key thing in all of this, we only have all this information, this analysis, because Benefacts have done the work to assemble all of the information that is needed in relation to what is happening in the not-for-profit sector. We are able to see the scale of the sector, to look at the sources of income, to look at the outputs that are achieved.

As someone who has spent so much of his time looking at outputs as opposed to input, the outputs that are now emerging from Benefacts work are really helpful. And the process that has got us to this point is incredibly important. Patricia has already touched on one of them, by referring to the clarity we now have for example about remuneration in the sector, and the disclosure of that. But what is as important is for all of us to be clear on the scale of funding that is involved in this sector, what goes to who and why. The interrogation of all of this data now makes analysis possible in an objective way because of the work of Patricia and her team. And I think it is incredibly important.

Patricia referred to the importance of information, the importance of having data to be able to understand where we are and understand where we are going. And I guess the value of these things is something now that we can't take for granted and maybe the value is even higher than it was a short time a while ago, in the environment of fake news, of post truth politics. What the Benefacts project is looking to do, for a sector that is really important, is to bring a fact-based approach to understanding how that money is used, what's the totality of funding and what are the disclosure levels of all the recipients of all of that funding.

This is a sector after all that receives from various funders well in excess of €10 billion worth of support, more than half of that from the Exchequer alone, which are gigantic amounts of money. This is vital not just for financial transparency. Again, as Patricia said, the not for profit sector is a sector that we as a country have decided to entrust with the delivery at times of public services or with the delivery of objectives that we believe are really important to our society.

And given that importance and given the debate that is taking place around who does what in our society, and what organisation should perform what services to who and under what conditions? It's more important than ever to have the deepest understanding of what is happening, to deal with misperceptions, to deal with things that are not true, but also to appreciate the scale of what goes on, so that when we want to acknowledge the fantastic work that does happen in that sector - and let's be clear of fantastic work that takes place - the degree of professionalism, the efficiency that is there in that sector, is really there it's something that pulses through us. But also, as we acknowledge what we want to do differently, how we want to improve, how we want to change. The starting point for any kind of discussion like this has to be facts, there has to be evidence. And a huge challenge that we have had in the past is trying to integrate all of that into a single place and then, when we integrate it, trying to do that integration in a way that's accessible to all.

It's to the huge credit of Benefacts that they have been able to do this. I want to acknowledge the other sponsors and funders that they have had, Atlantic Philanthropies, we see the reference to the Ireland funds here who have been huge supporter of the project. My own Department has prioritised this project for a nearly €2 million worth of funding in the recent past. And we did this because we think this is really important work. We are now engaging with the Board in relation to the business plan for this organisation and the future.

But to end where I began, I and my Department believe this is really important work in fact more important now than ever. The facts using give us an ability to understand what is happening, to explain to the public where the money is going. So, it's for those reasons I'm delighted to be here and to be associated with the launch of this report and I want to thank Patricia and all of the Benefacts team for the great work they have done in the set up of this organisation, the set up of the site and the early publication of this incredible valuable and useful report. Thank you.

Ends.