

# Ireland

## Recent policy developments

- A review of the National Spatial Strategy, and an associated pause in its implementation pending the formulation of a replacement strategy.
- Abolition of 80 town councils in all urban areas outside the major cities – announced in October 2012 and due to take effect in May 2014.
- Increased centralisation, with a transfer of funds from local government to central quangos (e.g. water infrastructure becomes the responsibility of a new public utility called “Irish Water”).
- Reducing the territorial approach to development as endogenous partnerships become subject to local authority co-ordinating controls. Details are currently being formulated by an “Alignment Working Group”, which includes civil society, local development, local authority and civil service representatives.

| Government structure | Municipal-level governments* | Intermediate-level governments                   | Regional** or state-level governments |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Unitary              | 114                          | 2 regional authorities;<br>2 regional assemblies |                                       |

\* Ongoing local government reform will be implemented as of the local elections of May 2014: the 114 local authorities will be replaced by 31 new entities.

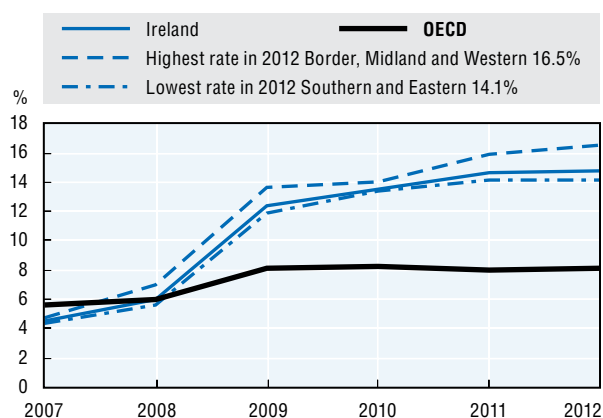
\*\* As a result of a process of centralisation, which is in part associated with restoring fiscal solvency, the regional tier of government (in the form of the eight regional authorities) is due to be abolished and the two regional assemblies, which up to now have been responsible for the co-ordination of EU-funded programmes, are to be reconfigured and will increase to three (from two).

| Regional development policy      |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Lead ministry(ies) or committees | Department of Environment, Community and Local Government   |
| Regional development framework   | The eight regional authorities have formulated and revised regional planning guidelines so as to ensure the co-ordination of municipal (county and city) level plans and the contribution of all planning tiers to the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy (2002-20). |

| Urban development policy           |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Lead ministry(ies) or committees   |  |
| Urban policy framework or strategy |  |

| Rural development policy           |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Lead ministry(ies) or committees   | Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (including CAP Pillar II) and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government |
| Rural policy framework or strategy | White Paper on Rural Development (1999)  |

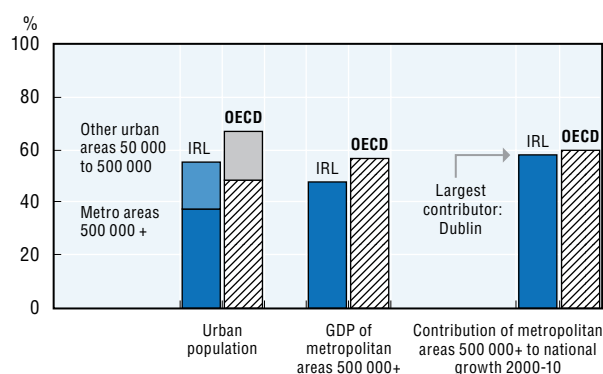
## Regional disparities in unemployment trends



In recent years, the unemployment rate has soared in Irish regions such as Border, Midland and Western (16.5%), where the youth unemployment rate reached 33.9% in 2012.

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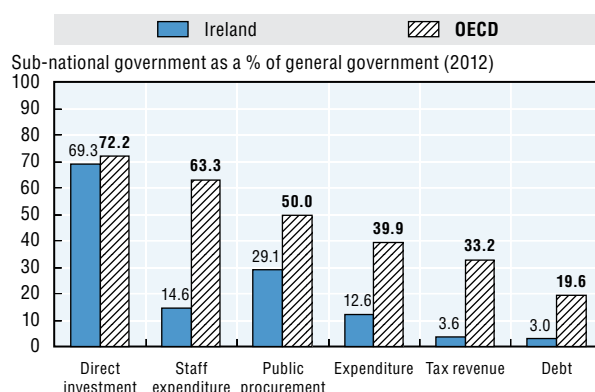
## The importance of urban areas



In Ireland, 56% of the population lives in cities of different sizes. The share of population in the metropolitan area of Dublin (the only urban area with more than 500 000 inhabitants) is 38%, compared to 49% in the OECD area.

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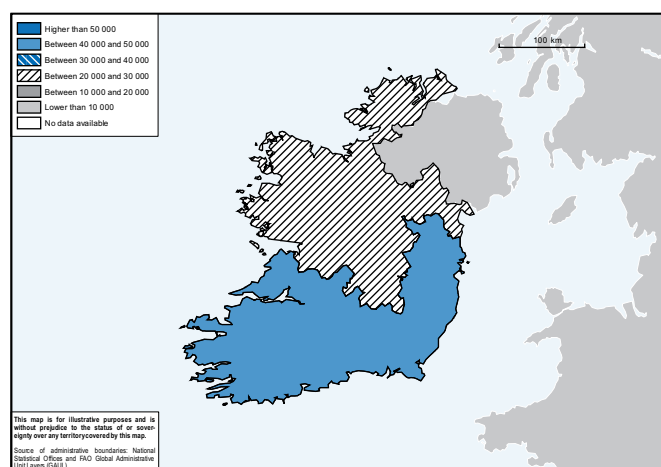
## The role of sub-national governments in public finance



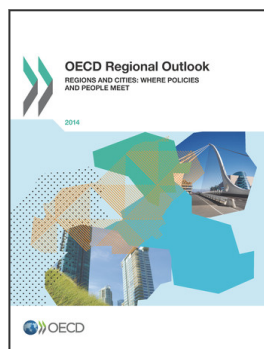
Education and general public services are the two largest spending items for SNGs in Ireland: together they represent 50% of sub-national expenditure, compared to 40% in the OECD area.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933108054>

## Regional differences in GDP per capita levels



Ireland had the 12<sup>th</sup> smallest regional disparities in GDP per capita in OECD countries in 2010. In the previous decade, regional growth varied from +2.8% annually in Southern and Eastern to +2.2% in Border, Midland and Western.



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