OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

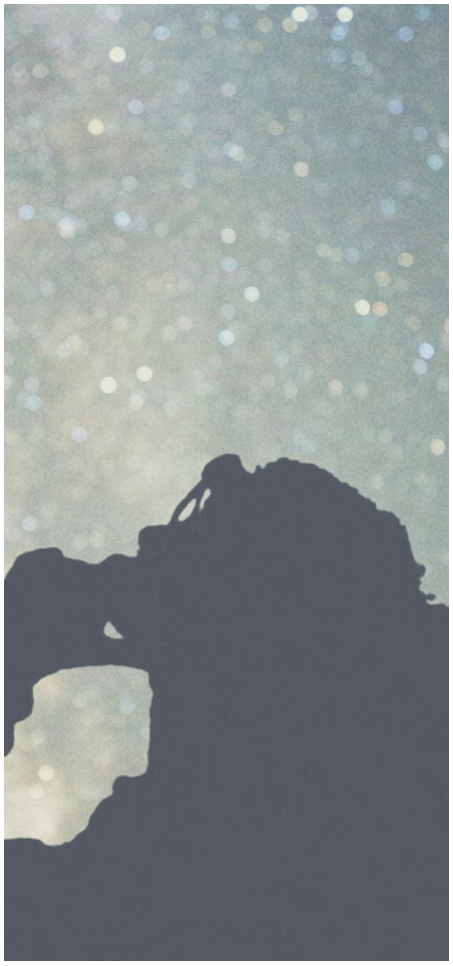
THE WELL-BEING LENS

Applied to the Irish Transport Sector

INTRODUCTION

Ireland's 2021 climate bill more than doubles the ambition of annual emission reductions by 2030 from 3% to 7%[1]. An independent advisory body – the Climate Change Advisory Council – has the role of informing and shaping Ireland's response to climate change, as well as of monitoring the Government's progress towards the above mentioned target.

The OECD has developed a process – the well-being lens – to help governments think innovatively and deliver the transformational change needed to achieve international climate goals while improving wider well-being outcomes. This document is a proposal to apply the well-being lens to the passenger surface transport sector in Ireland, including both urban and rural areas, with a particular attention to climate justice considerations in the latter[2].



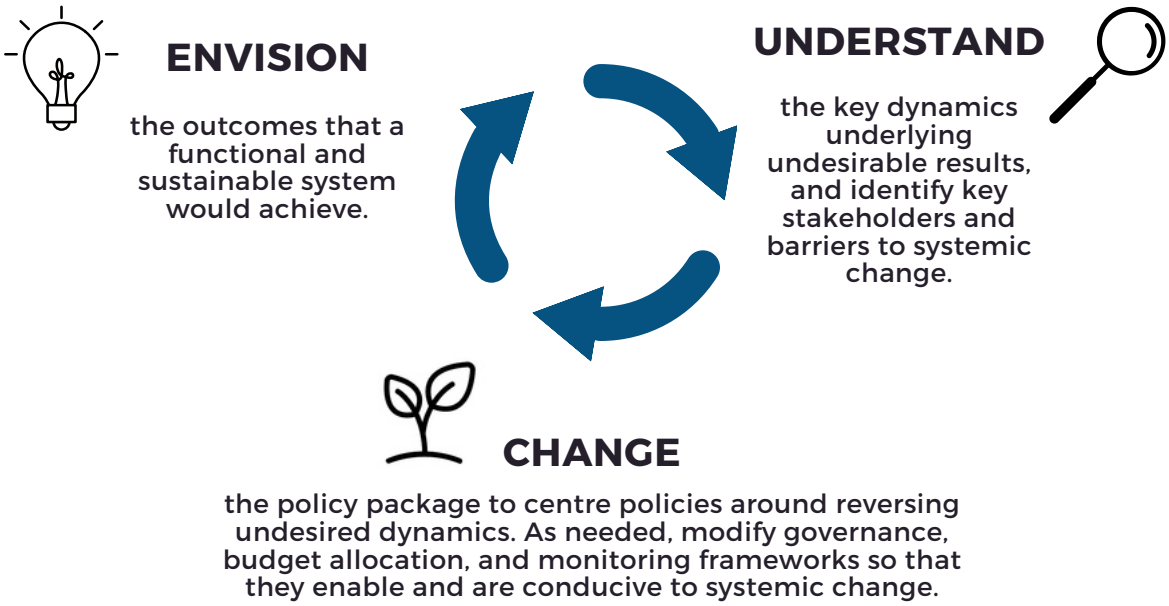
[1] Source: OECD, EPR Ireland 2021

[2] Emissions in the transport sector have been on the rise since 2010. Transport accounted for 20% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2018 (OECD STAT, n.d.[1]), most of which comes from road transport, and is the sector with the largest energy demand (SEAI, n.d.[1]). Private cars in particular account for the largest energy use, accounting for 40% of total final energy demand in 2018.

THE WELL-BEING LENS IN A NUTSHELL

The well-being lens is a process allowing governments to **think innovatively** and **design climate strategies with the potential to accelerate climate change mitigation while improving wider well-being outcomes.** Building on systems thinking, the process allows **emission reduction opportunities to be unleashed through policies targeting the redesign of systems**[3]**,** which are often absent or at the margin of current climate strategies. By defining outcomes in terms of well-being[4] and making these outcomes central criteria guiding systems' redesign, **it fosters the mainstream of well-being considerations into the decision-making process of climate strategies from the onset.** This allows **synergies to foster,** and reduce trade-offs between climate mitigation and other well-being outcomes, making **climate action more cost-effective, feasible and publicly acceptable.**

THE WELL-BEING LENS PROCESS



SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM SYSTEMSINNOVATIO.IO

[3] Systems thinking is a way of thinking that allows to see systems, rather than just parts. By seeing whole systems, the policymaker can unleash the potential for emission reductions contained in systems' redesign, instead of limiting their scope to optimise elements of parts (e.g. to deal with car-dependency rather than to replace combustion vehicles with electric vehicles in car-dependent systems).
[4] For example, health, equity, climate stability, job opportunities, etc.

The first step – **envision** – is about defining the outcomes that a sustainable system should achieve. The second step – **understand** - is about identifying: i) key dynamics in the systems' structure leading to unsustainable results (i.e. the vicious cycles); ii) relevant actors in the system; and iii) barriers to systemic change (e.g. policies in place, governance, budget allocation, monitoring frameworks). The third step - **change** – is about identifying the policies with the potential to reverse the undesired dynamics identified in step 2, and the way forward for ensuring their implementation.

For more information on the well-being lens, please see "The well-being lens: an innovative process for net-zero strategies".

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The project aims to **provide insights** to the Climate Change Advisory Council on ways in which **climate change mitigation efforts can lead to the transformational change needed** to reach the country's ambitious climate targets, **while improving well-being outcomes** more broadly.

The project applies the well-being lens process to the **surface**[5] **passenger transport sector in Ireland**. Its outputs are described in the next section.

[5] Excluding water transport.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

1. A systemic analysis of the passenger surface transport system in Ireland.

A report (30 to 50 pages), informed by interviews conducted by the OECD team to actors from Ministries, sub-national governments and other stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, etc), and the results of the workshops mentioned below. The report will be structured as follows:

- A discussion on what a sustainable and desirable transport system looks like from a well-being lens **(envision);**
- A description of the particular system dynamics behind car dependency and underlying negative outcomes in the sector in Ireland (e.g. emissions, air pollution, unequal access, poor health, etc.), and quantitative analysis, subject to data availability. This will build on previous OECD work which has identified the key dynamics observed in transport and urban systems across countries, as well as the type of policies locking them into car-dependent paths. The analysis in this output will tailor the results of this work to the Irish context (e.g. policies in place, governance mechanisms, etc.) (**understand);**
- A map of the key stakeholders facilitating or hindering the transition towards sustainable transport systems. Information on the actors' incentives, concerns, and levels of influence will be gathered through interviews and the workshops described below **(understand);**
- An analysis of key barriers to systemic changes (e.g. at the level of the government structure, based on bilateral interviews with government officials and stakeholders and the results of workshop #2 **(understand).**

2. Policy recommendations for net-zero transport systems that deliver well-being.

A short document with key recommendations for transformative climate action in the transport sector. This document will:

- Assess the potential of selected key policies and investments[6] in national or sub-national strategies to reverse the dynamics identified in output 1. Determine whether policies address all, or only some, of the dynamics identified, and highlight misalignments that may impede transformation. The objective is to shed light on whether current or planned climate mitigation efforts trigger change at the level of the system's structure, or if they are being channeled to the optimisation of system's parts (and potentially reinforcing the above-mentioned dynamics) **(change).**
- Identify high leverage points[7] for reversing the unsustainable dynamics identified in output 1, and the policies and actions with the potential to trigger that change. This will highlight opportunities for overcoming some of the barriers described in output 1 **(change).**

[6] Identified by the Irish government/the Council Secretariat.
[7] Leverage points are places to intervene in a system's structure. Low leverage points refer to places where an action generates little change in the system's behavior and results. High leverage points are places where an action triggers important changes in the system's behavior and results. For more, see: https://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/.

3. **Workshops**

Virtual or in-person workshops[8] to build a shared understanding, foster discussion among key stakeholders (to be identified in collaboration with the Irish government/the Council Secetariat), and enrich outputs 1 and 2 above. The size and length of the workshops is to be defined, according to availability and interest.

Workshop #1: Actors mapping
Based on an initial map built through interviews with stakeholders, the aim of this workshop is to discuss who are the actors in the system, where are the potential synergies and trade-offs, and how can synergies be fostered and trade-offs minimised.

Workshop #2: Internal barriers to implement transformative climate strategies
Discussions around governance mechanisms, budget allocation, and monitoring frameworks (including modeling and decision-making tools more broadly). This workshop could be split into 3 short working sessions with key experts/practitioners.

Workshop #3: Towards a transformative Irish climate strategy
This workshop will provide:

- A presentation of the systems dynamics identified in output 1, and a discussion on high leverage points for policy intervention.
- An assessment of whether selected policies in the current or planned climate strategy push on those high leverage points.
- A discussion on which policies and actions need to be prioritised to push on the high leverage points identified, as well as on ways forward to address barriers identified in Workshop #2.

[8] Depending on the sanitary situation and on budget.



PROJECT ORGANISATION

The OECD will lead the development of the outputs described above, incorporating external experts to the team as needed.

Inputs expected from the Irish government/the Council Secretariat include:

- The identification and contact of key stakeholders for conducting the interviews and organising the workshops. Such interventions aim to provide the OECD team with expert and practitioners' knowledge to tailor the systems dynamics analysis to the Irish context, develop a first draft of the actors' map, and identify key barriers to systemic change.
- The selection (along with the OECD team) of the key climate policies to include in the assessment in output 2.

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