

# Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands

Opening statement by Ms. Rosarii Mannion, Chair  
Designate Pobal

Wednesday 22 September 2021



## Opening Statement

Good morning Chairman and thank you for your invitation today.

I have had the honour of serving on the Board of Pobal since December 2020 and I am very privileged to have the opportunity to lead the organisation forward as Chairperson.

I come from a small rural town Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim, a border County. I believe passionately in rural communities, in community development and in social inclusion. I have seen first-hand the impact of the work of Pobal. My lived experience is that diversity, equality, justice and inclusion make for a stronger society. I know that these values give chance and opportunity to those who would not otherwise enjoy it.

In terms of my educational background, I hold a BA, HDip, MA Public Policy, MSc Organisational Development. I have studied Equality and Human Rights and recently become a Chartered Director with the Institute of Directors, studying governance, leadership, finance and strategy.

I have served on Boards at local, National and International level and I am currently serving as Treasurer on the Board of the International Coaching Federation.

I hope that these skills will help me make a better contributor as Chairperson of Pobal.

Passionate about community development and the rural economy, I was a member of the Offaly County Development Board and have served as a volunteer with the National Adult Literacy Agency.

A key interest area of mine is the role of women in society, the role of carers and gender equality.

Professionally, I have held key leadership roles in the public sector, most recently as National HR Director in the Health Service Executive. I am a Chartered member of the CIPD and a qualified Mediator. I believe passionately in supporting individuals and teams and in developing supportive coaching cultures.

As Chairperson of Pobal a key role for my board colleagues and I will be to support, to challenge and to lead our excellent and committed staff to deliver on government policy, to deliver on our programmes and to remember one fundamental thing. Pobal is not an end in itself. It is not the object of the exercise. It is a means to an end and that end is a stronger society. It is communities across the country where people - especially the most vulnerable – are better supported.

My time as a Pobal board member and my appointment as Chairperson coincide with the conclusion of our current Strategic Plan which covers the period 2018–2021. My colleagues and I, together with the executive team are deeply engaged with writing and agreeing a new Strategic Plan, a process that is now in its concluding stages.

The importance of this work, of positioning Pobal to deliver on government policy in ways that helps communities most, is critically important. There are a lot of metrics by which we can measure outputs, but we must remember a fundamental fact. We exist to help people. The scale and importance of that help, and its importance in people's lives is very large. In 2020,

- 26,178 individuals and 2,687 local community groups were supported through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
- 16,939 new participants were approved as part of the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS)
- 1,891 young people with disabilities were supported through the Ability Programme through 27 organisations nationally since the programme commenced

- 582 community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises received COVID 19 Stability Fund support enabling them to continue to provide critical supports and services
- 9,123 individuals were supported on Tús and 3,385 participants were supported on the Rural Social Scheme
- Subsidies were administered to 46,606 children from 36,236 households under the National Childcare Scheme (NCS)
- 105,975 children were supported under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme during the 2019 / 2020 Programme year.

This is a sample of the scale of what Pobal is delivering and its reach into people lives is large. Every programme is about people and every life situation is unique. We are there to be a helping hand and a real support. If the programmes we support are effective, people's lives are enhanced. That is the context in which my board colleagues and I are working on our Strategic Plan 2022– 2026.

The framework for our new plan will revolve around our vision, our mission and our values. It is about delivering continuous improvement and agility in our delivery. Pobal is now in the process of drafting the content for the new Strategic Plan across a set of four pillars underpinning our strategic ambition. Those pillars are People, Systems and Processes, Customers and Partners, and Governance.

As we conclude the development of our Strategic Plan for the next five years, Pobal has been engaged in the Periodic Critical Review (PCR) process. This periodic deep dive into public organisations is a very welcome opportunity for Pobal to reflect and to take account. As a relatively new board member, about to become Chairperson, I have learnt a lot and taken considerable assurance from the rigor of the process.

A key strategic priority for me as Chairperson will be ensuring that the recommendations of the Periodic Critical Review are implemented and that Pobal continues to provide a highly effective service for managing Government grants and payments to communities. This must be underpinned by high standards in accountability, in financial management, and in the support we provide to all those we work with.

Work to date on the Periodic Critical Review evidences that Pobal engages and consults with supported organisations on an on-going basis to ensure the effective implementation of the programmes they manage. The ongoing Periodic Critical Review process and our new five-year Strategic Plan will be the impetus for the standards and the vision the Board and I as Chairperson want for Pobal.

Pobal matters because every day, in towns and villages across Ireland, there are Pobal staff on the ground working with communities. They are delivering services locally to combat social exclusion and enhance lives. Pobal makes a difference to people's lives and communities every day and it is a positive difference I am convinced can be increased and built upon.

As Chairperson I will:

- define, clarify and agree expectations
- invest in open, regular communication
- respect the experience and input of stakeholders
- in partnership with the CEO lead a values based organisation
- support and challenge as required and be responsive
- ensure delivery of a value for money service for Government which makes a difference for people and communities

- lead a Board that is focused both on the highest governance standards and on excellent performance.

As Chair Designate, I want to acknowledge the excellent leadership and commitment to Pobal of every member of the Board and in particular our outgoing Chairman, Professor. Deiric Ó Broin. Deiric has contributed enormously, and I express my sincere thanks to him.

I want also to commend the work and dedication of the CEO Ms. Anna Shakespeare and all staff of Pobal, working alongside local and national community organisations to build stronger communities, to support families, to assist individuals and to nurture children every day.

I am deeply honoured to have been nominated by the Minister of Justice, Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands, Deputy Humphreys as Chair Designate for Pobal. I am conscious of the responsibility I have undertaken and I come here today Chairman to you and members of the Committee to present my credentials and to pledge my utter commitment to the role.

As with other boards, I hope to demonstrate strategic leadership and to offer an approach that is collaborative and effective. I very much see the relationship between the Board of Pobal and that of this Oireachtas Committee as a two-way process. I would be very pleased to provide regular briefings that are appropriate and useful to you.

Thank you for inviting me today, for your time and I look forward to engaging with you in the future.