

**A draft document between  
Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael  
to facilitate negotiations with other parties  
on a plan to recover, rebuild and renew Ireland  
after the COVID-19 Emergency**

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We are at an unprecedented moment in the history of our State.

Many families have lost loved ones; many more have been affected by illness; and hundreds of thousands of people have either lost their jobs or had their employment thrown into jeopardy.

There is fear and anxiety deep in every home, with grave uncertainty about the future. The global economy now faces massive challenges, with significant consequences for our small and open economy. Society and the world we once knew has been severely disrupted.

However, our State and people have reacted with unity, purpose and determination.

As a nation, we have a proud tradition of community, solidarity and decency. We have seen this in every community across our country during this Emergency. Sacrifices have been made by all for the greater good. As has been done in so many parts of the world, we have shown, in Ireland, that we put the health, safety and security of all our people first.

We know that there is no going back to the old way of doing things. Radical actions have been taken to protect as many people as possible, and new ways of doing things have been found in a time of crisis. The importance of the well-resourced, properly functioning and responsive State has never been clearer.

We are an island nation, bound together by solidarity, united in our determination to play our part in the world. As a committed member of the European Union (EU), we will work with our European colleagues to fully mobilise budgetary and monetary resources to help each other during this time of crisis, and as we rebuild our economies.

The European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity are needed today more than ever.

We now commit to rebuilding for the future and ensuring a fair recovery for Ireland, socially and economically. We must work together to achieve a stronger, more inclusive Ireland – an Ireland that gives meaning to our belief that our best days are still ahead.

In the middle of this Emergency, people and communities have come together to help each other and to save lives. This spirit must guide any new Government that is formed – one that mobilises the best ideas from the parties and groupings involved and puts aside the differences of the past for the overriding objective of rescuing our economy, rebuilding our country, and renewing our society.

As we face these challenges, Ireland will again have a significant budget deficit. The essential step in repairing this will be returning our citizens back to work. All decisions with regard to our national finances must be fair and sustainable.

To face the crisis of a lifetime, we must all play our part. We need a Government with a clear majority that is strong enough to develop and deliver a programme of national recovery across its lifetime – one that can channel its collective talents for the greater good. We also recognise the need for a strong

Opposition to hold the Government to account – one that can contribute, critique, challenge, and change policies.

In this way, politicians across all parties and none can play their part in helping to build a better future for our country.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have each governed Ireland at different times. Both are proud of the part that they and other parties in Government have played in advancing the Irish nation.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have engaged bilaterally to draw up this document, which has at its core 10 missions that all centre on the wellbeing of Ireland's citizens. The ideas behind this document seek to build on ideas from all parties and none.

As we emerge from this Emergency, we will continue to be guided by, and act on, the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

Our approach will be built on the fundamental values of community and solidarity. These are the values which have been central to our shared national response to this Emergency and they must be the values that drive the work of the next Government.

With a view to forming a historic coalition, we now invite other parties and groupings to enter discussions on building a Programme for Government.

Our citizens deserve a Government that works for the good of Ireland and its people – a Government that lasts.

Let us build it together.

## A focus on wellbeing

Our overriding focus is to improve the wellbeing of the Irish people and society. In achieving this, the immediate challenge for us is to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Emergency, and the havoc that it has brought to the lives of people and to the social and economic security of families.

Beyond this, our focus is to respond decisively to the agenda of change in terms of housing, health, climate action and quality of life, which came through so clearly from the General Election.

To achieve this, we are setting 10 new missions for a new Government:

- Reigniting and Renewing the Economy
- Universal Healthcare
- Housing for All
- A New Social Contract
- A New Green Deal
- A Better Quality of Life for All
- Supporting Young Ireland
- Opportunities through Education and Research
- A Shared Island
- At the Heart of Europe: Global Citizenship.

To assess the performance of a new Government, we must look beyond economic indicators. We will create new, credible, quality-of-life measures of individual and societal wellbeing and progress.

## Mission: Reigniting and Renewing the Economy

The impact that the COVID-19 Emergency has had on Ireland's employment and public finances is unprecedented in its speed, breadth, and depth. We have moved from a situation of having the highest ever level of employment, and a strong surplus, to having the biggest ever increase in unemployment, and a large deficit. The State has reacted to this crisis with large income and business supports.

When we gradually move back towards normality, new actions of similar ambition will be required, in order to restore confidence and demand to the economy, promote employment, and safeguard the public finances.

We will do this in a way that reflects Ireland's strong legacy of having a vibrant private sector and pro-enterprise policies, and being open and attractive to foreign direct investment. We will tackle issues that will potentially undermine our recovery, such as the cost of insurance. While recognising the reality of financial constraints, the overarching objective of Government will be to rebuild the economy and get people back to work.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Launch a National Economic Plan, with input from employer and employee representative bodies, to build a new economy for Ireland that is based on good-quality jobs and income growth; and coordinate with the EU, so that our national efforts can achieve more.
- ii. Prioritise capital investment by borrowing, if necessary, to stimulate demand domestically; grow employment; respond to social need; and improve our national health, transport, education and housing infrastructure.

- iii. Support businesses and self-employed people to resume trading and employment.
- iv. Value those who are in low-paid employment, by progressing to a living wage over the lifetime of the next Government.
- v. Exercise sound management of the public finances, by reducing our deficit as the economy grows; and comply with the EU Fiscal Rules and the Stability and Growth Pact.
- vi. No increases in income tax and/or Universal Social Charge (USC) and no cuts to established core social welfare rates.
- vii. Enable businesses to prepare for the post-COVID-19 environment, which will have a long legacy and be different from previous experience, with greater emphasis on remote and flexible working and the consequences of social distancing.
- viii. Develop a series of sector-specific responses through the National Economic Plan (e.g. retail, tourism, hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, construction etc.), based on engagement with all stakeholders and the capacity of each sector to recover and expand good-quality employment in the short and medium term.
- ix. Recognise the importance of agriculture, fisheries, tourism and other sectors that support balanced regional development and employment in rural Ireland.
- x. Identify and support potential areas of growth for the post-COVID-19 world economy (e.g. cloud computing, medical technology, proteins, green technology, etc.).
- xi. Prioritise the development of our small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector, focusing on its competitiveness, productivity and durability.

## Mission: Universal Healthcare

The COVID-19 Emergency has brought a focus to the standard and capacity of healthcare services across the world and Ireland. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to those who work in our health service for their past and future actions, dedication, and leadership. Once the Emergency has passed, we will review our national response and see what lessons can be learnt, and how this can improve our future healthcare provision.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Expand our health infrastructure and expedite the implementation of a universal healthcare service, as recommended in the *Sláintecare Report*.
- ii. Expand universal access with a focus in the first instance on paediatrics and women's health.
- iii. Increase bed capacity, diagnostics and staff numbers to provide community and hospital care more quickly.
- iv. Ensure that all new consultant contracts in the public health service are public only.
- v. Prioritise primary care, so that patients can be diagnosed and receive care in the community, including mental health.
- vi. Invest in public health infrastructure, in order to help return society to normality, as we emerge from the COVID-19 Emergency, and to manage future public health threats, such as other pandemics.
- vii.** Promote healthy living, good mental health, and better diet; and enable people to be physically active across their lifespan.



## Mission: Housing for All

Too few people have access to affordable and secure housing and feel that the ambition of home ownership is outside their reach and that of their children. We will change that and will do so by placing the State firmly at the centre of the Irish housing market. Through bold action, we will tackle land costs and provide the stimuli for home-building in what will be, post-COVID-19, a much-changed market. We know that these actions will reduce the numbers of people who are currently in emergency accommodation, as well as preventing more from becoming homeless.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Prioritise the reduction of family homelessness, providing long-term secure accommodation for those in emergency accommodation and preventing new cases of homelessness.
- ii. Reduce the cost of land to improve the affordability of housing, employing all measures up to and including referenda.
- iii. Empower and fund the Land Development Agency to build homes on public and private land, to deliver new homes for affordable and private purchase, social housing, and cost-rental accommodation.
- iv. Prioritise home ownership and affordable purchase schemes, which will enable more people to own their homes and increase the number of new social houses.
- v. Develop the cost-rental model in all our cities and for student accommodation.
- vi. Create a new deal for renters, which is focused on providing more long-term security, stable and affordable rents, and greater choice.

- vii. Expand Housing First as an effective way to reduce long-term rough sleeping.

## Mission: A New Social Contract

Ireland requires a new national social contract between citizens and the State. This new deal will provide each citizen with accessible and affordable health care, housing, education, childcare and disability services, as well as a living wage, upskilling, and a dignified retirement. It will provide for greater security for individuals and communities and will be founded on the principles of equality and ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to contribute to, and achieve, their potential.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Introduce affordable improvements to benefits and protections under the social insurance system; and introduce a pension auto-enrolment system.
- ii. Reform and modernise the childcare sector, to improve accessibility, reduce costs, raise standards, and provide childcare workers with a sustainable career pathway.
- iii. Tackle domestic and sexual violence.
- iv. Acknowledge the importance of carers to our society.
- v. Increase parental leave, to give parents more time with their children at the start of their lives.
- vi. Build strong and safe communities in every part of Ireland, through continuing to expand the numbers and by implementing the reforms of the Gardaí.
- vii. Prioritise gender equality, by involving more women in decision-making roles.
- viii. Work with all stakeholders to ensure that every citizen has a dignified retirement and can retire in financial security.

- ix. Empower all people with special needs or a disability to progress, to reach their full potential, and to play a full part in society.

## Mission: A New Green Deal

The climate crisis is the most pressing existential crisis. The response domestically and internationally to the Covid-19 Emergency illustrates our capacity to react comprehensively and imaginatively to fundamental challenges. We must utilise the radicalism of the response to this Emergency to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis, and we shall do this through implementing a New Green Deal for Ireland and our commitment to the European Green Deal. Actions being taken across Government must align with this New Green Deal and carbon neutrality by 2050.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Set new carbon reduction targets, identifying and implementing early significant changes and underpinned with a clear road map for delivery.
- ii. Ensure that the recovery at domestic and European levels is carried out through a green lens.
- iii. Take immediate action in response to the biodiversity crisis and protect ecosystems on land and at sea and also convene a Citizens' Assembly to further inform that work.
- iv. Make Ireland a European leader in offshore wind energy, exploiting the potential off our west coast, in particular.
- v. Deliver a strong Just Transition, which ensures that no citizen or region is left behind.
- vi. Invest in public transport across Ireland, electrifying the public and private transport fleet and focusing on significantly increasing the number of daily journeys being taken by foot and bicycle, with investment in cycling infrastructure and better road safety.

- vii. Increase the carbon tax, in line with the agreed cross-party trajectory of €80 per tonne by 2030.
- viii. Plant 440 million trees by 2040.
- ix. Roll out an ambitious home energy retrofitting programme.
- x. Continue to recognise and support Irish agriculture in its ongoing transition to emission efficiency.

## Mission: A Better Quality of Life for All

We are committed to drawing on the sense of community and solidarity that has been displayed in such strength throughout the Covid-19 Emergency. We will use this to provide a basis for improving the quality of life for individuals and families across Ireland, reflecting the anxieties of citizens around commuting, regional imbalance, and a lack of time with family. The importance of parks, green spaces and other outdoor recreation is clearly essential to the wellbeing of the Irish people.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Prioritise balanced regional development across Ireland in policy-making, ensuring that every part of the country has a chance to prosper.
- ii. Implement the National Broadband Plan (NBP).
- iii. Mandate public sector employers, colleges and other public bodies to move to 20% home and remote working in 2021 and provide incentives for private sector employers to do likewise.
- iv. Develop initiatives to reduce dereliction and to bring vacant properties back into use in our urban areas.
- v. Support the building of new affordable homes in our towns and villages.
- vi. Prioritise the upkeep and expansion of parks and green spaces for community enjoyment across Ireland.
- vii. Support community groups, arts and cultural bodies, sports clubs, voluntary organisations, charity groups and voluntary bodies to recover and grow in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Emergency.
- viii. Recognise the role of the arts, culture and the Irish language in our personal and community wellbeing.

## Mission: Supporting Young Ireland

As we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis, we must show all citizens that the State can help to deliver a better future for them. Young people have displayed immense fortitude and generosity in their response to this crisis, and we will act now to build new ladders of opportunity for them. We will not allow the younger generation to carry the long-term economic consequence of this Emergency, in terms of lost opportunities, emigration, and unemployment.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Ensure that young people have access to affordable housing, and that homeownership is a realistic aspiration for them.
- ii. Develop mechanisms, through a new youth strategy, for the voice of young people to be part of decision-making at community, county and national levels.
- iii. Work with the EU to develop new employment initiatives, to ensure that school leavers and under-25s are helped to secure good-quality employment.
- iv. Prioritise improvements in our mental health services for all age groups, but with a particular focus on adolescents and young people.
- v. Give every child the opportunity to develop their creativity, appreciate the Irish language, and learn history.
- vi. Focus efforts to reduce child poverty and disadvantage.
- vii. Protect children and young people from online abuse, cyberbullying, and other forms of online harms.
- viii. Enable young people with disabilities or special needs to live as independently a life as possible.



- ix. Work with young people to respond to the challenges of addiction and substance abuse.

## Mission: Opportunities through Education and Research

Our education system plays an invaluable role in ensuring that everyone has a fair start in life, and that our future economic prosperity and social strength are secure. We are committed to building a world-class education system from primary-school to higher-level education, offering ladders of opportunity to all students.

Ireland's future will be far brighter if we expand and renew our investment in research and development. Investment in knowledge has been our greatest national enabler. For a truly modern, resilient and prosperous Ireland, we need to continually push the frontiers through advanced research.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Support all students (especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs), with a particular focus on restarting their educational journeys post the COVID-19 Emergency.
- ii. Grow apprenticeships and traineeships, to give young people more choice and to respond to a changed jobs market.
- iii. Agree a long-term sustainable funding model for higher-level education, with no increase in the student contribution.
- iv. Increase parental choice in education at primary and secondary level.
- v. Ensure that no adult is left behind, with a strong emphasis on adult literacy, digital and numeracy skills.
- vi. Invest in research, development and innovation, to ensure that world-class research takes place in Ireland.
- vii. Ensure that students with special needs are given appropriate, targeted supports to help them reach their full potential.

- viii. Enhance and nurture creativity, culture and the arts from the earliest years by working with the wider artistic community.

## Mission: A Shared Island

We are committed to working with all traditions on the island, to build consensus around a shared future. This consensus will be underpinned by the terms and institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and by absolute respect for the principle of consent enshrined therein. We will establish a Unit within the Department of An Taoiseach to work towards a consensus on a united island.

This unit will examine the political, social, economic and cultural considerations underpinning a future in which all traditions are mutually respected.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Prioritise protection of the Peace Process and the all-island economy, in the context of the future UK-EU Brexit agreement.
- ii. Ensure that the Northern Ireland deal, *New Decade, New Approach*, is implemented. This will include investing in cross-border infrastructure, such as the A5, the Narrow Water Bridge, cross-border greenways, the Ulster Canal, as well as examining high-speed cross-border rail services.
- iii. Expand the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC), to strengthen north-south and east-west links.
- iv. Ensure mechanisms are put in place to deal with the legacy of the Troubles, as outlined in the Stormont House Agreement.
- v. Enhance, develop and deepen all aspects of north-south cooperation thus strengthening the all-island economy.
- vi. COVID-19 has reinforced the need to protect public health for everyone on the island of Ireland, we will continue to deepen and strengthen

north-south health links as recently outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

- vii. Continue to mark the Decade of Centenaries, in an inclusive, appropriate, and sensitive manner.
- viii. Implement the PEACE IV Programme in full and secure PEACE Plus to succeed it.

## Mission: At the Heart of Europe: Global Citizenship

Throughout the century of our State's history, we have consistently sought to play a constructive role in global affairs and we have been committed to the United Nations (UN) and the multilateral international order. As we emerge from the COVID-19 Emergency, we believe that the EU's founding values of solidarity, greater cooperation, free movement, free trade and democracy are more important than ever before. Over the lifetime of the next Government, we will mark 50 years of Irish membership of the EU, as we are committed to being at the heart of Europe.

In order to do this, we will:

- i. Following Brexit, seek to achieve an ambitious, zero-tariff, zero quotas, free trade agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom (UK) with a level playing field in terms of standards, state aid, workers' rights and environmental protections.
- ii. Work at an EU level to reform the Union so it can respond effectively to the COVID-19 Emergency and its aftermath, based on solidarity between Member States.
- iii. Be willing to contribute more to the EU budget, to advance the ideals of the EU including for example the common agricultural policy (CAP), Erasmus+, Horizon, and Interreg.
- iv. Support further EU enlargement and integration to the benefit of our citizens; deepen and reform monetary union; complete the Single Market and the Digital Single Market; and enhance security cooperation.
- v. Reflecting the deep personal, social and economic ties between our islands, continue to value and enhance the close friendship and strong working relationship with the UK.

- vi. Seek to achieve the target of 0.7% of the gross national income (GNI) being put towards Overseas Development Assistance by 2030.
- vii. Double Ireland's global footprint.
- viii. Maintain and support the Irish Defence Forces, which play a key role in projecting our values abroad through their active engagement with peacekeeping.
- ix. Maintain our strong friendship with the United State of America (USA) and continue to act as bridge between the EU and the USA.
- x. Support efforts towards a durable, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

