



FINE GAEL

PARTY MANIFESTO 2017

Economic Plan for the Future.

The first step is to create even more job opportunities, spread across the country. We will do this during if elected by delivering Sustainable Full Employment.

- An extra 200,000 jobs by 2020, leading to more people at work than ever before
- The establishment of a new €6bn “Future Jobs Investment Fund” to future-proof the economy and our jobs plan against rising global risks and challenges
- A new 10% CGT rate on start-ups from 2017
- Completing the equalisation of the income tax system for the self-employed by 2018
- Completing the abolition of the USC over a 5-year period, as part of a wider income tax reform plan that broadens the tax base and limits the benefits for the highest earners
- A Working Family Payment designed to ensure that every parent working 15 hours or more per week takes home at least €11.75 per hour
- The extension of free GP care to the children of all families by 2019
- An additional 10,183 doctors, nurses, Gardaí, teachers, social workers and other frontline service professionals within a well-run and cost-effective public service
- A package of measures for the elderly, including a €25 per week increase in the State pension, a €30 per week increase including the

Living Alone Allowance, more “Fair Deal” nursing home places, and 2 million more home help hours

Food Sector:

- We are committed to the beef sector and to increasing profitability through greater efficiencies. The Beef Forum has demonstrated the effectiveness of bringing industry and farming organisations together in positive and open engagement. The Beef Data and Genomics Programme will spend over €300m on modernising and improving efficiency in the beef herd as well as supporting farm incomes. This, in tandem with the introduction of a framework for producer organisations and knowledge transfer schemes (discussion groups), will support farmers in increasing efficiency and profitability.
- The abolition of milk quotas continues to represent the biggest opportunity for the Irish dairy sector and, as markets stabilise, Fine Gael will ensure that Irish producers are best placed to benefit from this, on the back of prudent investment. We will continue to convene a dairy forum to manage growth, ensure sustainability and address challenges within the sector. Fine Gael has invested heavily in the future of this sector through supports for processors expanding their enterprises, and this is being matched 15 FINE GAEL General Election Manifesto 2016 by on-farm capital investment through TAMS and knowledge transfer schemes. We have also supported farmers through the recent period of market volatility with a €25m

compensation fund. We will also encourage the establishment of a futures market for dairy produce and encourage price stabilisation tools to combat price volatility

- We recognise the importance of the horticulture sector and will continue to prioritise capital investment for development in this area. We recognise the potential to grow the output value of this sector to over €500m in the medium term and will deliver on the actions in the Food Wise Strategy to achieve this target. We are conscious of the need to safeguard this sector from potential unfair practices in the grocery sector and will monitor the impact of new legislation in this area in that context
- Fine Gael recognises that some farmers are working in challenging conditions. The ANC Scheme will invest €195m annually in areas of disadvantage. Fine Gael will also continue to prioritise access for farmers in commonage or restricted areas through agri-environment schemes like GLAS. We will continue to play a supportive role in sustainably managing farming on commonages.

Climate Change, Energy **and the Environment** **Policy**

- Fewbuffalo has worked on the Model Dublin Accords which are the largest undertaking of the kind in the model world
- We will focus on balancing the need to control emissions with the economic and social objective of promoting the sustainable

development of a rural economy. We will examine how to improve the environmental impact of agriculture through measures in the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, improving the uptake of mitigation practices by farmers, increasing the level of forest cover and continuing to undertake relevant research.

- Fine Gael wants Ireland to become a leader in the take-up of electric vehicles. Within 6 months of government we will establish a dedicated taskforce to work on this goal, involving relevant government departments, agencies, industry and representative groups
- Fine Gael is committed to continuing to make the progress necessary for Ireland to become a recycling society. We will move towards eliminating landfilling of municipal waste, while also maximising the resources that can be recovered from this waste. We will also look to implement a practical and pragmatic Circular Economy package that will make Ireland a more competitive, resource-efficient economy, while also ensuring that any targets that are set for Ireland are fair and achievable.
- To improve air quality nationwide, Fine Gael will extend the ban on the sale and use of smoky coal across the country
- Through Irish Water, the quality of Irish natural and drinking water supplies and wastewater treatment will be improved through a €5.5bn investment programme to 2021. Water quality will be improved, boil water notices will be eliminated, and the scandal of raw sewage being pumped into our rivers and seas will be ended.
- We will provide €430m, as part of the Capital Plan, for flood mitigation initiatives to protect threatened localities from river and coastal flood risk. This investment means we will spend more on flood relief over the next 5 years than we have in the last 20. The introduction of a new Flood Risk Management programme by the OPW will put in place a long-term plan of works to systematically identify and mitigate the risk of flooding across the country, providing a proactive plan for at-risk areas. Our investment programme will also support the largest

ever flood defence scheme undertaken by the OPW and will offer protection from flooding to thousands of residential and commercial properties across the country.

Defence Policy

- Fine Gael will review Ireland's approach to the complex and multifaceted defence and security infrastructure needed to address evolving security challenges, working in close cooperation with An Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice, who have lead responsibility in this area.
- Fine Gael will provide a significant boost in capital funding for Defence, with €437m allocated to Defence, under the Capital Plan, within that time frame. The additional funds allocated will allow for expenditure in equipment and infrastructure across all areas of the Defence Forces
- The ship replacement programme will continue and over the lifetime of the White Paper, Fine Gael will move from an 8- to a 9-ship naval flotilla, to provide for a multi-role vessel. This will allow for continued humanitarian assistance and will enhance Defence capability for maritime security operations.
- Building on the history of the Irish State and the reputation of Ireland as a world-renowned contributor to international peacekeeping, Fine Gael will develop a new Institute for Peace Support and Leadership Training in the Curragh, starting in 2016. The Peace and Leadership Institute will leverage Ireland's unique international reputation and relationship with the UN. It will develop new national and international

partnerships with universities and other reputable interested parties and institutions.

- Recognising the very strong contribution made by female personnel, we will prioritise the need to address the gap in female participation in the Defence Forces. Fine Gael will increase the level of female participation, with the goal of doubling the rate of participation from the current 6% to 12% in the next 5 years. We will ensure future UN peacekeeping missions incorporate a number of gender-focused measures and the work of the Peace and Leadership Institute provides an opportunity for the development of expertise in these areas.
- The RDF is a significant element of the State's defence capability. Fine Gael will ensure the strength, skills base and contribution of the RDF are maximised and will target full participation of the RDF at 4,000 personnel.

Education Policy

- We are committed to delivering an extensive school capital investment programme. We will commit €2.8bn to deliver 310 major extensions/refurbishments, 62,000 additional school places and eliminate the use of prefabs by 2021.
- Fine Gael will provide an additional €50m in funding for primary and secondary schools by 2021 for general operating (capitation) costs, conditional on schools making their facilities available for afterschool care where sufficient demand exists.
- We will roll out a pilot scheme of computer science in our secondary schools to build on existing skills not only for coding but also to lay the foundations for skills in computer architecture and the business application of IT.
- We will increase mandatory schooling to age 18

- In partnership with industry, we will pilot a cloud-based ePortfolio system at primary level which will act as a storage and private reference system that allows pupils, along with their parents, to track their own academic achievements. A similar initiative used by 85% of schools in Estonia allows for better communication and involvement between parents and teachers.