

MAKING EUROPE WORK FOR YOU

**European Parliament
Elections 2019 | Manifesto**

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Foreword

The story of the EU is one of unprecedented co-operation and success. The Irish part in that history is marked by transformative infrastructural investment, positive social change and rich economic growth. The recent Brexit chapter, characterised by misinformation and dangerously narrow nationalism, cannot be allowed to define the next stage of the EU's remarkable development. Fianna Fáil firmly believes that Ireland must continue to place itself at the heart of Europe. This means electing a strong EU Parliamentary team that is committed to delivering for Ireland through constructive politics.

We must look beyond the daily turmoil of Brexit to take on the other critical issues that will shape the continent for decades to come. The EU must be at the forefront of global efforts to rise to the challenge of climate change, particularly after the revoking of any responsibility by the current US administration. The swift expansion of Big Tech into more and more areas demands a co-ordinated response that defends consumers and creators alike. We must protect our children as well as our democratic institutions. Within the EU itself, the fraudulent and fake approach of populist parties threatens to unravel decades of progress and co-operation.

The EU must strongly defend its values: the rule of law; institutional independence; and free trade. It must live up to its historic legacy as a social Europe that invests in its citizens, boosts economic opportunities and enshrines equality. It must become a true global leader, drawing on the collective strength of its members states.

The Fianna Fáil European team brings with them a wealth of experience. They are united by a shared commitment to decency, fairness and constructive politics. They know the issues facing our regions from the Common Agricultural Policy to Brexit negotiations and our tax sovereignty. They are committed to working with our ALDE colleagues in Europe to fight our corner and ensure that extremist politics do not hijack the EU. Our team will work to find solutions rather than just resorting to protest politics.

Our European team will ensure that Europe works for you.

Yours sincerely,



Micheál Martin TD

UACHTARÁN FHIANNA FÁIL



Executive Summary

Fianna Fáil is proud of our role in leading Ireland into the EEC in 1973 and the immense contribution that it has made to Irish life. However, Brexit marks an unprecedented blow to the most successful transnational union in the history of the world. The 2016 rejection by British voters of the EU was a deeply disappointing decision that risks immense damage to the UK, Ireland and EU on a whole. Fianna Fáil believes in the EU and believes that Ireland should remain at the heart of it. We need to strengthen and reform the Union to ensure that it is a positive force in the lives of Irish citizens. Fianna Fáil's candidates are committed to working with our ALDE colleagues in building a reformed EU that delivers for all its 500 million citizens.

FIANNA FÁIL'S EUROPEAN TEAM WILL FOCUS ON ACHIEVING THE FOLLOWING GOALS.

- Putting Ireland at the heart of Europe
- Fighting for the EU's values in the world
- Creating a Europe of Equals
- Tackling climate change
- Protecting the Common Agricultural Policy
- Delivering Prosperity for all
- Building a strong Eurozone
- Preparing for Brexit
- Regulating Big Tech

To meet these ambitions, we will prioritise:

PUTTING IRELAND AT THE HEART OF EUROPE

- Putting Irish citizens at the heart of European decisions
- Embracing the EU Aid Volunteer Initiative
- Expanding the free EU Rail Initiative
- Creating a fund to promote EU-wide sporting competitions at all ability levels
- Strengthening EU Cultural funding
- Expanding EU Twinning Initiatives to include secondary schools
- Deepening Oireachtas links with the EU Parliament
- Building on EU-wide health initiatives
- Tackling cross border and international crime
- Securing the Irish language's status in Europe

FIGHTING FOR THE EU'S VALUES IN THE WORLD

- Fully maintaining our neutrality status
- Supporting the creation of a European Agency for the Protection of Democracies
- Backing the establishment of a Conference for Europe to set out the future of the EU
- Linking EU funding to upholding the rule of law in each member state
- Helping to address the migrant challenge
- Working towards a two-state solution in Palestine
- Putting the Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of EU policy
- Increase funding for the EU Space Programme

CREATING A EUROPE OF EQUALS

- Implementing EU Gender Quotas for company boards
- Introducing EU Election Gender Quotas
- Linking EU funding in member states to equality of treatment for LGBTQI groups
- Putting Disability rights at the heart of EU expansion and foreign policy

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

- Supporting ambitious EU climate change targets
- Putting climate change at the heart of each EU institution's mandate
- Launching a new EU Climate Bank to finance carbon transition projects
- Establishing a Just Transition Fund
- Launching an EU-wide circular economy

PROTECTING THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

- Protecting CAP funding
- Ensuring a fair CAP with a €60,000 limit on direct payments & measures supporting young farmers
- Building a fair Common Fisheries Policy

DELIVERING PROSPERITY FOR ALL

- Defending our Corporate Tax rate and tax sovereignty
- Ensuring a fair and effective EU budget
- Funding a new EU Innovation Council
- Creating an EU-wide Insurance market to reduce costs for consumers
- Establishing an EU mortgage market to cut costs for borrowers
- Increasing European Investment Bank loans for projects such as housing and transport
- Supporting SME-friendly trade deals
- Addressing youth unemployment
- Boosting Research, Innovation & Development Investment

BUILDING A STRONG EUROZONE

- Rebuilding the Economic and Monetary Union to prevent a future crisis
- Completing Banking Union with a Eurozone Deposit Insurance Scheme
- Establishing a European Monetary Fund
- Building a real Fiscal and Transfer Union
- Changing the fiscal rules to allow for greater capital investment

PREPARING FOR BREXIT

- Giving the UK time and space to move forward to agree the Withdrawal Treaty
- Protecting the Good Friday Agreement and preventing a hard border
- Amending state aid rules to support SMEs affected by Brexit
- Securing funding for regions and sectors impacted by Brexit
- Continuing PEACE & INTERREG Funding and defending Northern Irish Citizens EU rights

REGULATING BIG TECH

- Promoting a "Green Data" ethos in technology regulation
- Protecting children from on-line pornography and gambling
- Creating a new EU Digital Bill of Rights
- Ending unfair Geo-Blocking
- Protecting Creator's and Publisher's Value ■

Putting Ireland at the heart of Europe

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- **Put Irish citizens at the heart of European decision making**
- **Embrace the EU Aid Volunteer Initiative**
- **Expand the free EU Rail Initiative**
- **Create a fund to promote EU wide sporting competitions at all ability levels**
- **Strengthen EU Cultural funding**
- **Enhance EU Twinning Initiatives to encompass secondary schools**
- **Deepen Oireachtas links with the EU Parliament**
- **Build on EU wide health initiatives**
- **Tackle international crime**
- **Secure the Irish Language's status in Europe**

Joining the EU has been an overwhelming success for Ireland. However, Brexit has underlined how the story of the EU needs to be about more than just economics. We want to build a positive engagement about EU values and our place in Europe that goes beyond markets. Fianna Fáil believes that being Irish and being European are inextricably and positively linked. To help cement Ireland's place at the centre of the EU we will:

PUT IRISH CITIZENS AT THE HEART OF EUROPEAN DECISION MAKING

We need to ensure that Irish citizens make the most of the job opportunities at the heart of the EU institutions. We have a proud record of public service in the core EU bodies over the past half a century that we should continue to build upon. Fianna Fáil will promote an information campaign in universities about EU job opportunities such as the Stagiaire programme. Secondments from the public service to EU bodies will also be further promoted to build up experience and encourage a crossover of new ideas and expertise.

EMBRACE THE EU AID VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE

The Peace Corp in the USA has been a success in broadening horizons for hundreds of thousands of Americans and fostering

US ideals while adding real value to the mission countries. The EU Aid Initiative has the same potential for EU citizens and values. Ireland should play a leading role in that drawing on our strong tradition of assistance to developing countries. We will promote the EU Aid Initiative in schools, universities and workplaces to drive on Irish participation levels.

EXPAND THE FREE INTERRAIL INITIATIVE

The Interrail pass is a deeply enriching tradition for students across the EU that stretches back decades. It is an immensely positive way to see the continent and meet a wide variety of young people from across the EU. It's important that as many Irish students as possible have access to this enriching cultural experience. The InterRail pilot program should be expanded and developed to enable more young people to enjoy this special experience. Additional steps should be taken to allow students with a disability to fully access the scheme.

CREATE A FUND TO PROMOTE EU-WIDE SPORTING COMPETITIONS AT ALL ABILITY LEVELS

Sport is a common language that speaks across national boundaries. It strengthens bonds across the EU in a way few other endeavours can. The EU should encourage and actively facilitate sporting competitions at all ability levels across the EU. A new EU fund to support cross-continental sporting competitions that amateur organisations can access should be established. The ERASMUS+ programme should be expanded to facilitate connections among sporting, educational and training organisations across the EU.

STRENGTHEN EU CULTURAL FUNDING

The EU has an important part to play in promoting the arts and culture sphere. Fianna Fáil will support initiatives to boost funding for cultural programmes across a wide range of areas and encourage EU-wide state initiatives to strengthen links between citizens. We will link capital investment to Arts projects similar to the Irish Percent for Arts scheme.

ENHANCE EU TWINNING INITIATIVES TO ENCOMPASS SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The Europe for Citizens programme has been successful in driving on twinning programmes between EU towns. This should be further deepened with a specific secondary school twinning programme to link young people together. This will promote a stronger sense of EU identity and language learning. An EU-wide information campaign to promote twinning should also be launched to encourage more towns and cities to participate across the continent.

DEEPEN OIREACHTAS LINKS WITH THE EU PARLIAMENT

The populist backlash against the EU has a wide range of causes. One major factor has been a growing sense of alienation from EU decision making. Deeper engagement is needed so that we can tackle this widening gulf. Our Fianna Fáil team will ensure citizens are connected to their representatives and that the EU is working for them. Regular Oireachtas updates on the work of the EU will help to bridge that divide and enhance democratic oversight.

TACKLING INTERNATIONAL CRIME

Crime is global and cybercrime, sex trafficking and drug smuggling all spill across national boundaries. Furthermore, the threat of violent attacks from a disparate web of terror groups does not stop at borders. Defending the values that Ireland and the EU share from the encroachment of criminality and the direct assaults of terrorism means a connected, co-operative network of EU police forces. An Garda Síochána needs to be fully equipped and plugged into their international counter parts to identify and neutralise a multiplicity of criminal threats. We will support the reform of the Internal Security Fund to develop and strengthen cross border operations, best practise exchange and quick information transfers.

BUILD ON EU-WIDE HEALTH INITIATIVES

Providing quality healthcare should remain a central responsibility of each member state. However, there is further scope for the EU to improve cross border healthcare, enhancing outcomes for patients and reducing the cost for states. Ireland should be at the forefront of these efforts. Fianna Fáil will support a range of measures to build on and strengthen existing EU health policies.

WE WILL:

- Launch an EU-wide information campaign on Cross Border Health access
- Strengthen EU-wide efforts to tackle tobacco use
- Promote investment in health promotion and disease prevention, patient-centred approaches, digital literacy, health workforce sustainability, patient safety and the respect of patients' rights
- Work to tackle healthcare associated infections (HAIs) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
- Encourage the use of vaccines using science not politics as the basis for persuasion
- Facilitating the sharing and dissemination of best practices in healthcare and mental health care among member states
- Encourage EU-wide legislation to protect human health from environmental exposures

SECURE THE IRISH LANGUAGE'S STATUS IN EUROPE

Our national language is an invaluable cultural asset and intrinsic part of our nation. It is a distinct thread in the rich, diverse cultural fabric of Europe. In 2005 Fianna Fáil secured official status for the Irish language in the EU as part of our efforts to promote its use.

Building on this our team in Europe will endeavour to use the Irish language in Parliament as much as possible to show leadership on the issue. We will fully support the process to end derogation by 2021 to allow the language to become a fully functioning working language of the EU. ■

Fighting for the EU's values in the world

FIANNA Fáil WILL:

The remarkable success of the EU in achieving an unprecedented era of peace and prosperity across the continent is a beacon of light for the globe. With mounting global uncertainty due to the irresponsible attitudes adopted by the current US administration, the rise of China and growing threats to democratic institutions, the EU's role as a global leader is more important than ever.

SUPPORT THE CREATION OF A EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR THE PROTECTION OF DEMOCRACIES

The EU is founded upon human rights, international co-operation and democratic values, and the rule of law. The Cambridge Analytica scandal, the use of fake news by Russia to manipulate foreign elections and the use of social media in stoking ethnic tensions in Asia all highlight the risk that social media can pose to democracies. Foreign agents or domestic threats can use the internet to wage asymmetrical digital war on the institutions that sustain our democracies.

In a time of global uncertainty, the EU should take the lead in defending democracy. Fianna Fáil supports the creation of a European Agency for the Protection of Democracies to lead this critical challenge. This agency will be responsible for setting EU-wide standards on banning foreign money and influence in EU member state elections. It will aid and assist in efforts to defend against cyber-attacks and digital manipulation.

BACK THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE TO SET OUT THE FUTURE OF THE EU

Brexit has marked an unprecedented reversal of the historic trend of expansion of the EU. It cannot be allowed to generate an era of stagnation and decline. The EU is more important than ever in defending core democratic values and fostering economic growth and prosperity. We need to take stock and chart a new path forward for the Union that recognises the complexity of today's world. A Conference for Europe would present an opportunity to move our gaze beyond Brexit to the long-term future of the Union.

FULLY MAINTAIN OUR NEUTRALITY STATUS

Fianna Fáil is proud of Ireland's tradition of neutrality that stretches back to the Second World War. It has enabled us to play a leading role as independent peace keepers across the globe, untainted by military associations. Fianna Fáil is opposed to the creation of an EU-wide army as it would breach our central principle of neutrality. Any role Ireland plays in European Defence Agency programmes should be guided by this core policy of maintaining our neutrality, underpinned by the triple lock mechanism.

LINK EU FUNDING TO UPHOLDING THE RULE OF LAW IN EACH MEMBER STATE

Democratic backsliding within the frontiers of the EU cannot and should not be tolerated. We must uphold the highest standards for member states in order to protect the core values that keep the Union together. Worrying developments including the erosion of judicial independence and the undermining of a free media in Hungary and Poland are reminders that vigilance must be constant. EU funding under Cohesion funds or other EU led initiatives should be linked to maintaining the basic standards of the EU.

HELP ADDRESS THE MIGRANT SITUATION

Conflict, climate change and economic desperation are the driving factors in migrant flows that will continue to escalate over the decades. We need a humane policy that respects the human dignity of people trying to access better lives in Europe while maintaining the integrity of our borders and the states they protect. A humane, collective EU-wide asylum process should provide an expedited mechanism to process applications in every state. Additional funding is needed for the Green Climate Fund and European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to address root causes of the migrant challenge as well as fair trade deals with source countries to create new economic opportunities. Migrant centres in host countries outside of the EU should be adequately funded to maintain high standards and illegal human traffickers must be stamped out with military force.

PROMOTE MIGRANT INTEGRATION ACROSS THE EU

Ireland has been broadly successful to date in integrating “new Irish” communities. However, we cannot become complacent and let the sinister rot of racism gain a foothold. The growing migrant challenge propelled by climate change and a lack of economic opportunity will continue to put pressure on how we effectively integrate new arrivals across the EU. The EU should assist member states in drawing together the disparate strands of migrants in their countries. Fianna Fáil will support continued EU funding across a wide array of migrant integration streams.

WORK TOWARDS A TWO-STATE SOLUTION IN PALESTINE

The humanitarian crisis in Palestine remains an open sore in international relations. In light of the US’s current irresponsible position, the EU has an important role to play in revitalising peace efforts. Fianna Fáil believes in a two-state solution. The EU should move to end trade of products sourced from illegal settlements as a measure to end the aggressive annexation of Palestinian land and subsequent threat to a viable Palestinian state.

PUT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AT THE HEART OF EU POLICY

The UN Sustainable Development Goals charts a pathway to a greener and fairer future for the planet. The seventeen goals set out a clear vision of how to address some of the most pressing global challenges of our time. We all have a responsibility to tackle global poverty, inequality and climate change. The EU as the most successful transnational organisation in history should place these goals at the heart of its policies.

INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE EU SPACE PROGRAMME

Space represents an exciting opportunity for exploration, technical innovation and global co-operation. Fianna Fáil will support increased spending on the EU Space programme in conjunction with further co-operation with the EU Space Agency which Ireland has been a member of since 1975. ■

Creating a Europe of Equals

FIANNA Fáil Will:

- Implement EU Gender Quotas for Company Boards
- Introduce EU Election Gender Quotas
- Link EU funding in member states to equality of treatment for LGBTQI and all minority groups
- Put Disability rights at the heart of EU expansion and foreign policy

Europe has been a leading light in enshrining the rule of law and advancing the rights of all citizens regardless of gender, religion or sexual orientation. We will ensure that it will continue to build and expand upon this central role.

IMPLEMENT EU GENDER QUOTAS FOR COMPANY BOARDS

It is unacceptable that corporate boards continue to lack female representation. There remains an onus on the EU to press forward with new policies to boost female participation in the workforce. The EU should take the lead in setting gender quotas of 40% for boards of listed companies, as has been done in Norway, France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands.

INTRODUCE EU ELECTION GENDER QUOTAS

Achieving enhanced parity of representation is important in maintaining public faith in democracy. Currently 36% of MEPs are female but the national representation varies widely across each member state. Rolling out EU-wide gender quotas for candidates standing under recognised political parties would help to bolster the numbers and widen the representation across the Union.

LINK EU FUNDING IN MEMBER STATES TO EQUALITY OF TREATMENT FOR LGBTQI AND MINORITY GROUPS

Throughout its history, it has been a goal of the EU to defend vulnerable groups from unfair treatment. EU funding to each member state must be inextricably linked to maintaining the core values of the EU. Policies and legislation that breach the common standards of the EU should be financially punished. In addition, minimum standards of sexual health supports should be available in each member state.

Furthermore, LGBTQI rights must be encompassed in the criteria of EU expansion and international aid programmes. This will entrench the EU's role as a global leader in defending minority rights.

PUTTING DISABILITY RIGHTS AT THE HEART OF EU EXPANSION AND FOREIGN POLICY

People with a disability should not be forgotten about in assessing the international priorities of the EU. This means setting standards for disability rights in countries applying for EU membership as part of the core qualifying criteria. In addition, EU international aid programmes must also encompass disability rights in their central objectives. ■

Tackling climate change

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- Support EU Climate Change targets
- Put climate change at the heart of each EU institution's mandate
- Launch a new EU Climate Bank to finance carbon transition projects
- Establish a Just Transition Fund
- Launch an EU wide circular economy to create new job opportunities
- Carbon cost EU Policy
- Expand European Central Bank powers to publish financial institutions climate change exposure

Climate change is the defining challenge of our time. It constitutes an existential threat and a moral, economic and social test for every state. The deeply disappointing decision of the USA to exit the Paris Climate Change agreement underlines the need for the EU to fully embrace the role as global leaders in tackling climate change.

SUPPORT AMBITIOUS EU CLIMATE CHANGE TARGETS

The EU must become the global champion of the Paris climate change agreement. We cannot allow the irresponsible position taken by the US administration to jeopardise this critical agreement. The EU should fully adhere to the ambitious targets it has set to decarbonise by 2050 and work to accelerate this time frame by reducing emissions by 55% in 2030 relative to 1990 standards.

PUTTING CLIMATE CHANGE AT THE HEART OF EACH EU INSTITUTION'S MANDATE

A silo-based approach to climate change will not yield the results we need. The need to address climate change should be a central thread linking all aspects of EU policy. Fianna Fáil will work with all EU institutions and policy remits to ensure that each body upholds that central focus.

We welcomed the latest EU rules in relation to the use of single use plastic products by 2021 and we will prioritise initiatives to reduce marine waste by ensuring a more stringent approach to the "polluter's pay" principle.

It is totally unacceptable that plastic is now entering our food chain and damaging marine life because of the vast quantities of plastic being dumped in the sea, beaches and elsewhere. Our team will do its utmost to ensure that Ireland will achieve a 90% collection target for plastic bottles by 2029 and that all plastic bottles will contain 25% of recycled content by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Producers and consumers will have to play their part in reaching these targets.

LAUNCH A NEW EU CLIMATE BANK TO FINANCE CARBON TRANSITION PROJECTS

The European Investment Bank has been successful in funding a wide array of capital investment projects across the EU. This idea should be broadened out to establish a new Climate Change focused bank. This Bank owned by the member states would be charged with financing the wide array of climate transition investments needed over the coming decades. Both public and private bodies would be eligible for funding through low interest rates.

ESTABLISH A JUST TRANSITION FUND

Climate transition will present a major challenge to how we treat citizens fairly. Certain areas will be disproportionately affected by the necessary shift away from carbon intensive activities. For example, the loss of Bord Na Mona jobs in the mid-lands warrants a targeted response. A Just Transition Fund should be rolled out across the EU to support these areas and communities. The fund will help attract new industries, finance educational opportunities and support local employment initiatives.

IMPLEMENT EU-WIDE CIRCULAR ECONOMY TO CREATE NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Shifting away from the traditional “take-make-waste” economic model is a critical departure in addressing the challenge of climate change. Reducing waste and reliance on finite resources that are growing increasingly volatile will have beneficial economic and environmental consequences. The circular economy process is a durable system to reduce resource consumption and drive on economic innovation. It will help secure broader objectives of creating new job opportunities, supporting economic growth and minimising environmental impacts.

Creating a regulatory and taxation framework to incentivise and facilitate business and government bodies to transition to a circular economy must be a priority for the next government. We will fully implement and monitor an EU wide Circular Economy drawing on existing EU Commission work on the issue.

CARBON COST EU POLICY

Each individual EU policy should be subjected to a rigorous carbon cost analysis. This means setting out in detail what the cost of an individual policy is in terms of the future consequences of climate change of the carbon created or displaced by the policy. This should be integrated in the Regulatory Impact Analysis currently undertaken on EU policy proposals. This mechanism will allow the EU to take fully informed decisions on policies with regard to what the long-term carbon impact of each measure will be.

EXPAND EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK POWERS TO PUBLISH FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS CLIMATE CHANGE EXPOSURE AND ENSURE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK PROJECTS ARE CLIMATE CHANGE PROOFED

Financial institutions have a critical role to play in adjusting their investments to reflect exposure to climate change. In keeping with the European Central Bank’s central mission of “safeguarding the value of the euro and maintaining price stability” we will expand its remit to encompass financial institutions transparency on climate change. Information on the banking sectors exposure to climate change will help to advance shareholder and public debate around where our money goes and highlight any additional hard regulation that may be required to help meet climate change targets.

Furthermore, the investments of the EIB should be climate change proofed to ensure they do not jeopardise the EU’s carbon reduction targets. ■

Protecting the Common Agricultural Policy

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- Maintain CAP funding
- Ensure a fair CAP with a €60,000 limit on direct payments and measures supporting young farmers
- Build a fair Common Fisheries Policy

CAP is a founding cornerstone of the European project. It secures the core incomes of 130,000 Irish family farms and sustains a secure food supply of affordable high-quality goods across the EU. Protecting the role of farmers as custodians of the countryside, ensuring rural communities benefit from economic growth and that quality, sustainable produce is affordable to all families. CAP and the Common Fisheries Policies (CFP) must be protected and adapted to ensure they are fit for purpose in the context of climate change, increased competition, the pressure on resources and the relentless drive to deliver more with less.

MAINTAIN CAP FUNDING

CAP is a cornerstone of the EU. It provides quality, affordable food on a secure basis. It helps maintain the family farm unit as a custodian of the countryside. CAP payments are the backbone of Irish farming, sustaining rural communities and ensuring food security, with payments making up around 75% of total Irish farm income. Average farm income is €31,000, lagging substantially behind the average industrial wage. Any reductions in CAP funding, in particular to Pillar 2 Rural Development funds, must be resisted as they will undermine EU-wide food security and adversely and disproportionately impact upon rural communities

ENSURE A FAIR CAP WITH A €60,000 LIMIT ON DIRECT PAYMENTS & MEASURES SUPPORTING YOUNG FARMERS

One of the weaknesses of the CAP system has been the subsidies paid to large companies. Fianna Fáil believes that ensuring each euro is spent effectively means targeting it better. A €60,000 limit on CAP payments to an individual recipient will impact only a small number. Critically, it will help to re-distribute existing resources more effectively by targeting additional supports to vulnerable sectors and generational renewal.

BUILD A FAIR COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Thousands of families in coastal communities are reliant on an effective Common Fisheries Policy to facilitate their livelihoods and the communities' dependent upon them. The main objective of the CFP is to make sure the needs of today's EU fishing industry are met without jeopardising fish stocks for future generations. It must also provide a guaranteed income for fishermen and ensure a regular supply of top-quality seafood at reasonable prices for consumers while maintaining healthy coastal ecosystems. We will work to uphold a sustainable fishing industry in Ireland as part of the EU.

Fianna Fáil is determined that Ireland's interests will be protected in any reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy and will seek to achieve this in future reviews with a view to expanding fishing opportunities. Securing a level playing field for all fishing activities in Irish controlled waters is another key priority, while introducing a more flexible and proportionate approach to inspections is vital for the future of the sector. We will continue to fight for maximum sustainable quotas for the Irish fishing industry in the annual fixing of EU catches and quotas. ■

Delivering Prosperity

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- **Defend our Corporate Tax Rate and tax sovereignty**
- **Ensure a fair and effective EU Budget**
- **Fund a new EU Innovation Council**
- **Create an EU-wide Insurance market to reduce costs for consumers**
- **Establish an EU mortgage market to cut costs for borrowers**
- **Support SME friendly trade deals**
- **Maximise European Investment Bank loans for capital projects such as Housing and transport**
- **Address youth unemployment**
- **Boost Research, Innovation & Development Investment**

The EU has played a central role in the fostering the prosperity of our country for almost 50 years. With a single market of over 500m people Irish businesses have benefited immensely from EU membership. In addition, it has established our state as a focal point for foreign direct investment (FDI). Extremist politics cannot be allowed to jeopardise the EU's role as an engine of growth and prosperity in Ireland and across the continent.

DEFEND OUR CORPORATE TAX RATE AND TAX SOVEREIGNTY

Ireland's 12.5% corporate tax rate is the cornerstone of our FDI strategy. Many larger member states are eager to undermine this strategy through either a direct change or introducing Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB). In addition, a Financial Transaction Tax or Digital Tax marks an erosion of national tax sovereignty which has been a lynchpin of the EU for decades. Ireland has played a leading role in OECD Base Erosion Profits (BEPS) programme and will continue to ensure companies pay the tax rate set by our state. However, we will not allow competition to be wilfully mischaracterised as the tenets of a tax haven. We will oppose any erosion of Member states veto on these matters and ensure companies in Ireland have tax planning certainty at an internationally competitive rate.

ENSURE A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE EU BUDGET

The Multi-Annual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027 which is due to be decided in Autumn 2019, its mid-term review in 2023 and each annual budget within that framework,

will set out the financial priorities of the EU. The Parliament has a central role in confirming the MFF and agreeing each budget. Ireland is now is a net contributor to the EU with approximately €200m per annum net going into the EU budget since 2014. In the context of Brexit and enhancing EU actions the new MFF will have to change substantially from its predecessor. Subject to negotiations, Fianna Fáil will support additional payments from Ireland if the core priorities outlined in this manifesto are protected and advanced.

FUND A NEW EU INNOVATION COUNCIL

The new EU budget due to be passed in the upcoming EU Parliament term represents an opportunity to put a new focus on driving innovation in Europe. Fianna Fáil supports an ambitious and robust research and innovation programme (Horizon Europe) and the establishment of the European Innovation Council to lead financial supports for businesses.

CREATE AN EU-WIDE INSURANCE MARKET TO REDUCE COSTS FOR CONSUMERS

The EU should always put the consumer at the heart of its policies. Insurance costs in Ireland are far too high and are hampering businesses day to day existence. In combination with domestic efforts to tackle costs the EU can play a role in fostering more competition to help drive down costs for customers. EU wide data sharing, standardised monitoring and regulations should be rolled out to encourage more companies into the market in Ireland.

ESTABLISH AN EU MORTGAGE MARKET TO CUT COSTS FOR BORROWERS

Ireland has amongst the highest mortgage interest rates in the EU. With average interest rates at 3.04 per cent, we are 1.25 per cent higher than the euro zone average of 1.79 per cent. Fianna Fáil has been at the forefront of tackling high interest rates by ramping up central bank powers. The EU has an important part to play in promoting competition and driving down costs for borrowers.

Ireland needs a strong voice in Europe to advocate for a European wide single market for in mortgages that would bring rates down.

European regulations were brought into make the financial system more robust which is welcome. However, certain parts of the regulations are hurting Irish mortgage holders. Risk weighting for example penalises Irish mortgage holders disproportionately. Fianna Fáil will provide a strong voice to fight for Irish customers while maintaining the robustness of European regulations.

SUPPORT SME-FRIENDLY TRADE DEALS

Ireland is a small open economy that has excelled in global markets. This has spurred on prosperity on our island and created immense opportunities for our people across a wide array of enterprises. Trade should remain a central feature of the EU and we should resist kneejerk populist protectionism from either the extreme left or right. Fianna Fáil supports viable trade deals with other trading blocs as a core part of a prosperous EU. However, we also believe that EU trade deals must be fair and protect the position of states and vulnerable sectors. Any agreements must uphold our core quality standards in areas such as agri-foods and labour rights. These trade deals should be focused on promoting and facilitating trade that benefits SMEs not just large corporations.

MAXIMISE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK LOANS SUCH AS HOUSING AND TRANSPORT PROJECTS

The housing crisis demands a mixture of local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) and private developers to build the amount and types of homes required. In March 2018 Eurostat re-classified AHBs as “General Government Sector”. Previously, AHBs in Ireland were classified by Eurostat as “non-profit institutions serving households” (NPISH) in their Institutional Sector Accounts. This technical accountancy change means that future financing for AHBs would impact on the EU Fiscal rules and limit their capacity to borrow and build new houses. The government needs to accelerate the re-classification of AHBs as off-balance sheet. Unfortunately, Fine Gael has made no progress on this to date. In contrast in England, the government successfully reformed the process and secured a re-classification by Eurostat.

Fianna Fáil will work at an EU level to ensure consistency in the classification system and secure housing as an investment rather than

expenditure under EU rules. We will highlight the key role of the EIB in providing funding to Irish Housing projects and secure additional financing.

ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The impact of unemployment on young people can leave a permanent scarring impact with income losses felt over a lifetime of work. It also undermines the central, founding promise of the EU itself of creating a better world for the next generation. The Youth Employment guarantees should be reviewed and expanded to ensure it is delivering for the worst effected pockets of youth unemployment. The European Social Fund should identify key apprenticeship opportunities in member states and enable young people to access ERASMUS programmes where there are insufficient opportunities in their home member state.

BOOST RESEARCH, INNOVATION & DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT

Improving research and development facilities is central to a sustainable economic recovery for Europe. Europe must significantly sharpen the quality of its R&D so it is focused on key unmet societal needs. Health and transport are two areas that could benefit hugely from an improved R&D focus. Fianna Fáil will support:

- Swift agreement at EU institutional and Member State level for the proposed ‘Horizon Europe’ Research and Innovation programme fund to cover the 2021-2027 period.
- Simplifying the application process and reduce the time to grant funding to EU funded Research and Innovation projects to increase the take up of small and medium sized companies’ especially micro firms.
- Reducing any unnecessarily cumbersome processes which can lose sight of the purpose for which they were established in the first place in drawing down EU Research and Innovation programme funding.
- Greater supports for home grown scientific research in Member States.
- Ensuring proportionate funding between commercial and basic research (blue skies research).
- Providing adequate funding to EU information offices in each Member State to promote European Research and innovation funding to increase SME take up. ■

Building a strong Eurozone

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- **Complete Banking Union with a Eurozone Deposit Insurance scheme**
- **Establish a European Monetary Fund**
- **Build a real Fiscal and Transfer Union to prepare for future downturns**
- **Change the fiscal rules to allow for greater capital investment**

The Eurozone crisis rocked the EU to its foundations and inflicted financial misery on countless households. We need to strengthen the defences of the Euro to ensure any future downturn does not cause such a financial disaster again.

COMPLETE THE BANKING UNION WITH A EUROZONE DEPOSIT INSURANCE SCHEME

Over a decade on from the financial crash and Eurozone crisis that rocked the Union more needs to be done to protect the Eurozone. We cannot allow complacency to set in or we risk inviting another financial crash. The missing pieces in the Eurozone framework that were ruthlessly exposed during the financial crisis still need to be addressed. While significant progress has been made on the Banking Union that is vital to underpinning a renewed, fit for purpose Euro more remains to be done. Fianna Fáil will work to complete the banking union with a Eurozone wide Deposit Insurance scheme. This will help to avoid the doom loop of sovereign and banking debt dragging each down in the future.

ESTABLISH A EUROPEAN MONETARY FUND

The Eurozone was ill-prepared for the financial crash and failed to react with the speed and scale of assistance needed in comparison to the USA. The European Stability Mechanism was a belated step to stave off the Eurozone crisis. Bolstering the fund and ensuring it has the flexibility to effectively help embattled member states will be a priority for Fianna Fáil. We will work to revamp the European Stability Mechanism into a new European Monetary Fund to ensure it is fit for purpose in preventing and tackling any future financial crisis.

BUILD A REAL FISCAL AND TRANSFER UNION TO PREPARE FOR FUTURE DOWNTURNS

Tackling economic downturns and financial crisis must involve more than fiscal austerity. The Eurozone needs to be prepared for a rainy day which will inevitably come at some stage in the future. A Eurozone budget and joint bond issues will help to address the imbalance between monetary union and the lack of fiscal union. It will help to ensure the EU is equipped to deal with future downturns. Fianna Fáil will work with our EU colleagues to build up a mutually beneficial Fiscal union.

CHANGE THE FISCAL RULES TO ALLOW FOR GREATER CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The Fiscal Compact and other spending rules were designed to co-ordinate policies and protect the integrity of the Eurozone. However overly stringent rules risk undermining the basis for sound capital investment. With pressing demands in climate change transition and housing we need to facilitate targeted long-term investment. Fianna Fáil will work for a review of the Eurozone spending rules to enable further capital investment in critical infrastructure. ■

Preparing for Brexit

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- Give the UK time and space to move forward
- Protect the Good Friday Agreement and prevent a hard border
- Amend state aid rules to support SMEs affected by Brexit
- Secure funding for regions and sectors impacted by Brexit
- Maintain PEACE & INTERREG Funding and defend Northern Irish citizens EU rights

Brexit cannot be allowed to define the next five years of the EU. However we need to defend and protect Ireland's uniquely vulnerable position. The costs of Brexit range from damaging to disastrous for the Irish economy. It is in Ireland's strategic interest to advocate for a Brexit that is as close as feasible to current arrangements. The integrity of the Good Friday Agreement should be fully upheld in any agreement.

SUPPORT GIVING THE UK TIME AND SPACE TO MOVE FORWARD TO AGREE THE WITHDRAWAL TREATY

While we deeply regret the Brexit vote result, we must respect it and the democratic process in the UK. We will give the UK sufficient space to resolve their internal issues and move forward. Additional extensions to Brexit should be granted where required in order to avoid a disastrous No Deal Brexit scenario. We will fully support the revocation of Article 50 and retention of UK membership of the EU if that eventually emerges from debate in the UK.

PROTECT THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT AND PREVENT A HARD BORDER

It is essential that there is no hard border on the island of Ireland so that the all Island economy can be protected. It is also fundamental that we protect and uphold the Good Friday Agreement. From an economic, social and psychological perspective a hard border would be hugely damaging to the island of Ireland.

It is a strategic priority for Ireland to maintain and protect the Withdrawal Treaty in any future Brexit negotiations. We accept that the integrity of the Single Market must be protected in order to preserve the reputation and market access of Irish goods. The strength of the protection of the single market is vital to preventing chlorinated chicken or other low quality foods and goods infiltrating the Irish market.

AMENDING STATE AID RULES TO SUPPORT SMES AFFECTED BY BREXIT

Ireland's trading relationship with the UK is of vital importance. The UK is our largest trading partner with approximately €1.2 billion in goods and services traded every week. Our common membership of the European Union has underpinned our strong trading relationship. The repercussions for the Irish economy will be profound and long term. While there are opportunities for Ireland arising from Britain's departure from the Single Market, industries such as the agri-food sector and geographic areas will be severely affected and will require targeted support.

Targeted assistance and support will be vital in minimising the damage of Brexit. The EU must expedite their plans in assisting those adversely affected by the economic consequences of Brexit. This could work in the same manner as the EU Globalisation Adjustment Fund which assists workers left unemployed as a result of the effects of globalisation. Ireland has made 10 successful applications to that fund. Revisions to state aid rules will be required in order to enable such supports targeted at SMEs.

- We will work with our EU colleagues to build a new consensus around state aid restrictions to empower businesses to equip themselves to compete directly with Britain in line with the details that emerge from the Article 50 negotiations.

SECURE FUNDING FOR REGIONS AND SECTORS IMPACTED BY BREXIT

The dire economic consequences of Brexit have been comprehensively set out by bodies such as the ERSI. The disproportionate impact of the British withdrawal of specific industries and geographic regions will require a systematic EU response. It is imperative that adequate contingency supports and market disturbance funding is proved at EU level for farmers and fishermen in order to mitigate against harmful impact of Brexit. Complementing the state aid rule changes, targeted EU assistance aimed at assisting the worst effected sectors will be vital in alleviating the worst consequences of Brexit.

MAINTAIN PEACE & INTERREG FUNDING AND DEFEND NORTHERN IRISH CITIZENS EU RIGHTS

The decision of the United Kingdom to exit the EU has left Northern Ireland in a uniquely vulnerable position. This is particularly relevant given that the majority of people in Northern Ireland voted to remain and have a right to EU citizenship by virtue of their right to Irish citizenship.

The EU played a key role in driving forward the peace process and in financing strategic investments in the region. This risks being lost through the UK exit. We need to protect EU funding and the rights of EU citizens in Northern Ireland under the Good Friday agreement. PEACE and INTERREG Funding have played a central part in securing the peace process and need to be fully maintained.

We welcome the commitment of the European Commission to peace funding in Northern Ireland until the end of 2020. We will work with our EU colleagues to ensure the special position of Northern Ireland continues to be recognised in concrete form. This should involve access to targeted EU funding. ■

Regulating Big Tech

FIANNA FÁIL WILL:

- Promote a “Green Data” ethos in technology regulation
- Protect Children from on-line pornography and gambling
- Create a new EU Digital Bill of Rights
- Regulate Big Tech firms
- Roll out 5G across the EU
- End unfair Geo-Blocking
- Protect Creators & publishers’ value

Technology is playing a greater role in every aspect of our day to day lives. However, regulation is far behind making the area a modern-day Wild West. We need to ensure that the standards we expect in the real world are not abandoned in the Digital world that now occupies so much of our economic, political and social lives. “Green data” means regulating technology in an ethical manner that recognises that individual data should be subject to both privacy rights and the common good. It marks a shift away from the unregulated *laisse faire* approach that has characterised much of the advance of technology to date.

PROMOTE “GREEN DATA” ETHOS IN TECHNOLOGY REGULATION

The growth of surveillance capitalism as the core business model of technology firms is bad for society and the economy. Secretly collating, analysing and selling data to the highest bidder on users has had a negative impact creating consumer and political echo chambers.

Fianna Fáil believes Europe should continue to lead the way in “Green Data”, an ethically grounded view of how consumer data should be used. We will build on the roll out of GDPR to copper fasten consumer rights, protect creators’ content, place an onus on businesses to take responsibility and create a sustainable web.

PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ON-LINE PORNOGRAPHY AND GAMBLING

Online pornography, which experts say can damage a child’s development and decision-making, has been seen by 65% of 15 to 16-year-olds and 48% of 11 to 16-year-olds, according to a UK NSPCC report in 2016.

The study also found that 28% of children may have stumbled across pornography while 19% had searched for it deliberately. Some reports put the age that children first view porn at 11.

The scale and ease of access through any connected device means that anyone – children included – can potentially see high-resolution, hardcore pornographic images and videos in just a couple of clicks. To make sure that children are as safe as possible online and help parents feel more in control, we need to put limits in place.

We will work at EU level to ensure adequate protections are put in place to prevent children from accessing unsuitable sites such as pornography and gambling.

CREATE A NEW EU DIGITAL BILL OF RIGHTS

With the exponential growth of the web in people’s everyday lives we need to protect citizen’s rights in the digital age.

Fianna Fáil believes that all EU citizens should enjoy a suite of rights. This Bill of Rights will set out a comprehensive list of what each citizen in the EU can expect as part of our efforts to democratise the internet.

This will include:

- High Speed Broadband Access
- 4G & 5G Access
- Protection for children and vulnerable adults
- Transparency and consent over your data use

REGULATE BIG TECH FIRMS

The concentration of market power in the hands of a handful of tech firms represents a political and economic challenge. Firms that in effect are monopolies due to the nature of the sector need to be effectively regulated similar to other public utilities. This can only be done effectively at an EU wide scale. Any firm reaching a multi-billion threshold should be treated as public utility and regulated accordingly. Mergers should be sanctioned on a severely restricted basis, unwound where required and platform dominance avoided. We need distinct regulations for each sector to ensure that the long-term interests of consumers and citizens are protected. The EU Commissioner for Competition remit should be expanded where necessary to undertake this new role.

ROLL OUT 5G ACROSS THE EU

In keeping with our Digital Bill of Rights we will ensure the EU is at the cutting edge of technological innovation. EU funding should help ensure 5G networks will be rolled out securely across the continent in keeping with broader security objectives to underpin the next generation of tech progress.

END UNFAIR GEO-BLOCKING

The EU has made progress on Geo-Blocking with new rules coming into force from December. We will ensure the rules are rigorously implemented and kept under review to ensure the unfair practice of Geo-Blocking for consumers in the EU comes to an end.

PROTECT CREATORS AND PUBLISHERS' VALUE

We need an even playing field between publishers, content creators and the platforms that hosts them on the internet. The prevailing business model of data value extraction by large tech firms is not sustainable and ultimately will damage democracy, the media and the creative community. Content creators deserve and need to be adequately compensated for their work. Undermining the financial basis for publishing, music and film will eventually suffocate those sectors and remove core pillars of a democratic society. We will uphold and strengthen the recent EU Copyright Directive. ■





FIANNA FÁIL
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