

# EUROPE MATTERS



## EUROPEAN MANIFESTO 2024





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## FOREWORD

Europe Matters. Fifty years into Ireland's membership of the European project, and with our society and economy having been transformed by that union, it might be tempting to think that this goes without saying.

That would be a mistake. At a time of global instability, conflict and change, the European Union, and our place within it, is arguably more important than at any other time in the last half century.

Our economy, security and continued societal progress are inextricably linked with our membership of the European Union and our constructive and energetic participation in its institutions. The high quality of representatives that we send to the European Parliament to speak on our behalf, therefore, is critical.

As Leader of the Fianna Fáil party, I am very pleased that in all three constituencies, we are offering candidates of the very highest calibre and character. Candidates who, if elected, will make Ireland's case and pursue our agenda with vigour and integrity, reflecting the country's strong pro-European ethos.

In this document, we set out what that agenda will be: an ambitious manifesto for delivery on the big issues facing Ireland and the world. A strong team of Fianna Fáil MEPs will strengthen Ireland's voice in Europe, to the benefit of our entire country.

Go raibh maith agaibh,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Micheál Martin".

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Micheál Martin TD  
Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fianna Fáil MEPs will work within our political grouping of Renew Europe colleagues to build a European Union that delivers for Irish and European citizens. We will focus on achieving the following aims:

### **Keeping Ireland competitive**

- Defend Irish tax sovereignty.
- Ensure a fair and effective EU Budget.
- Create a common market for insurance.
- Complete the banking union.
- Support mutually beneficial trade deals.
- Address youth unemployment.
- Develop youth entrepreneurship.
- Protect the right to use cash.

### **Advancing Irish priorities in Europe**

- Preserve peace in Northern Ireland.
- Maintain Ireland's military neutrality.
- Put Irish citizens at the heart of EU decision making.
- Cement the status of the Irish language in Europe.
- Attract new EU agencies to Ireland.
- Secure geographical protection for Irish craft products.

### **Building a Fair and Firm Migration Process**

- Enter the EU Migration and Asylum Pact.
- Step up cooperation with third states.
- Invest in communities hosting asylum seekers.

### **Protecting EU Values**

- Link EU funding to the upholding of core values.
- Combat violence against women.
- Put disability rights at the heart of EU policy.
- Deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Tackling climate change**

- Ensure the EU meets its climate targets.
- Bring about a just transition.
- Diversify our energy supply.
- Implement an EU-wide circular economy.
- Ban green washing.
- Tackle plastic waste and microplastics.
- Create a European Blue Deal.

### **Strengthening our agrifood sector**

- Guarantee food security through a strong CAP budget.
- Cut red tape.
- Protect farmers' access to the Single Market.
- Retain our nitrates derogation.
- Implement fair nature restoration measures.



- Invest in new technologies.
- Build a fair Common Fisheries Policy.
- Support rural communities.

### **Establishing a European New Deal on housing**

- Support a European New Deal on Housing.
- Establish an EU Housing Co-operation Platform.
- Tackle long-term use of Air BnB (Short-Term Lets).
- Release European Investment Bank (EIB) funding for student housing.
- Strengthen the role of the EIB in financing affordable and social housing.

### **Embracing the digital revolution**

- Boost research and innovation.
- Increase funding for the EU Space programme.
- Collaborate on semi-conductor production.
- Protect children from digital threats.
- Make online media safer for users.
- Implement the AI Act.

### **Standing with Palestine, Ukraine and international law**

- Work towards a two-state solution in the Middle East.
- Continue to work to urgently chart a way out of this Israel-Hamas war.
- Maintain support and solidarity for Ukraine.
- Promote democracy and human rights.
- Engage proactively with China.
- Provide climate finance to developing states.

### **Promoting education and youth engagement**

- Strengthen Erasmus+
- Expand the free interrail initiative.
- Embrace the EU Aid Volunteer Initiative & the European Solidarity Corps.
- Promote engagement with the EU in schools.
- Twin secondary schools.
- Support Ukrainian youth.

### **Supporting our cultural sector**

- Reinforce EU cultural initiatives.
- Create a 65+ interrail pass.
- Launch an EU culture pass.
- Fund EU-wide sporting competitions.

### **Cooperating on public health**

- Build a Public Health Union.
- Ensure Pandemic Preparedness.
- Strengthen EU health agencies.
- Guarantee equal access to treatments.
- Encourage European innovation.
- Promote health education.



## KEEPING IRELAND COMPETITIVE

Europe Matters because it has played a central role in fostering the prosperity of Ireland since we joined in 1973. Our economy has benefited immensely from the European Single Market and from the unprecedented levels of foreign direct investment, which stems from our EU membership. As a nation we must never take this for granted and must always work to preserve our prosperity and competitiveness.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Defend Irish tax sovereignty.
- Ensure a fair and effective EU Budget.
- Create a common market for insurance.
- Complete the banking union.
- Support mutually beneficial trade deals.
- Address youth unemployment.
- Develop youth entrepreneurship.
- Protect the right to use cash.

### **Defend Irish tax sovereignty**

Ireland has played a leading role in establishing the Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion Profits Shifting at the OECD and will continue to ensure companies pay the tax rate set by our State. Fianna Fáil MEPs, as they have done in the past, will oppose any efforts by other MEPs to attack Ireland's reputation. We will continue to oppose any erosion of Member State competency in tax and ensure companies in Ireland have tax planning certainty at an internationally competitive rate.

### **Ensure a fair and effective EU Budget**

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) sets out the financial priorities of the EU. The European Parliament has a central role in confirming the MFF, to which Ireland is now a net contributor. Fianna Fáil MEPs will ensure that Ireland receives adequate funding to advance our economy and society. We will support additional payments from Ireland only if our priorities, upholding of the Rule of Law and commitment to the green and digital revolutions, are protected and advanced.

### **Create a common market for insurance**

Fianna Fáil believes that the EU can play a role in fostering more competition to help drive down costs. EU wide data sharing, standardised monitoring and regulations should be rolled out to encourage more companies into the Irish insurance market, which should reduce consumer costs.

**Complete the banking union**

Mortgage rates in Ireland can be up to double the Eurozone average. Fianna Fáil will promote the completion of the banking union to facilitate cross-border services and foster competition in the Irish banking market, which will benefit Irish customers by cutting costs and providing more competitive mortgage and loan rates.

**Support mutually beneficial trade deals**

Fianna Fáil supports viable EU free trade deals. With 1.3 million Irish jobs depending on the EU's trade links, international trade is vital for our small, open economy. Trade agreements are the EU's main lever for influence with third countries in terms of climate action, human rights and democratic reform. Any free trade agreements should uphold European quality standards in sustainability, food safety and labour rights. Trade deals should also benefit SMEs, not just large corporations.

**Address youth unemployment**

The effects of youth unemployment are far reaching, with the impact on income continuing over a lifetime. Fianna Fáil believes that all EU Member States must implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee. We will identify key apprenticeship opportunities in Member States and enable young people to access them through the ERAMUS+ programme, particularly where there are insufficient opportunities in their home country.

**Develop youth entrepreneurship.**

Young people launching a start-up or taking over a family business must be provided with opportunities and training, as well as facilitated access to finance. Technical assistance provided by the EU for stimulating the digital and green transition should prioritise young entrepreneurs. Fianna Fáil supports the creation of a one-stop-shop in each Member State for young entrepreneurs that would provide information on how to start your own business and how to apply for EU funding. We believe more funding should be allocated to Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme.

**Protect the right to use cash**

Fianna Fáil believes that access to cash, and the right to use it in society, must be protected. We will support changes to EU regulation that protects the right to use cash in key sectors such as utilities, medical and pharmaceutical suppliers and in the grocery sector.



## ADVANCING IRISH PRIORITIES IN EUROPE

Europe Matters for Ireland. Ireland has always promoted the values of equality, diversity and cooperation with other nations. These values allowed us to seize the opportunities of EU membership and transform our society. Guided by these values, we will continue to advance Ireland's place at the heart of the EU.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Preserve peace in Northern Ireland.
- Maintain Ireland's military neutrality.
- Put Irish citizens at the heart of EU decision making.
- Cement the status of the Irish language in Europe.
- Attract new EU agencies to Ireland.
- Secure geographical protection for Irish craft products.

### **Preserve peace in Northern Ireland**

The EU is a key guarantor of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Fianna Fáil will continue to engage with EU partners to properly implement the Windsor Framework and the Protocol on Northern Ireland, facilitate all-island trade and to ensure that we never return to a hard border. As prosperity is vital in safeguarding peace, we will ensure that EU PEACE PLUS funding, which is investing €1.145 billion in Northern Ireland and the border counties, is retained.

### **Maintain Ireland's military neutrality**

Fianna Fáil is proud of Ireland's tradition of military neutrality which is characterised by non-membership of military alliances or common mutual defence arrangements. We will preserve our neutrality while we work towards peace support operations and crisis management development through the United Nations and the European Union. We will ensure that any involvement Ireland has with the European Defence and/or PESCO is guided by our policy of military neutrality.

### **Put Irish citizens at the heart of EU decision making**

Ireland has a proud record of service in the EU institutions, which we must build upon. Fianna Fáil will promote information on EU job opportunities in universities. We will promote secondments from the Irish public service to EU institutions to encourage exchange of expertise and to ensure that Irish voices are heard at all levels of EU decision-making.

### **Cement the status of the Irish language in Europe**

The Irish language is a distinct thread in the rich cultural fabric of Europe. We will seek additional EU support for Erasmus Gaeltachta, which gives third-level students the opportunity to spend a semester with Gaeltacht families.



**Attract new EU agencies to Ireland**

With the digital revolution, it is expected that a number of new EU agencies will be required. Ireland's geographic position as the gateway to Europe, our expertise in tech services and our highly educated workforce will allow Fianna Fáil MEPs to make a strong case for Ireland as the location for the proposed EU AI Office or any other new agencies.

**Secure geographical protection for Irish traditional craftwork**

Fianna Fáil fully supports EU efforts to protect the geographical indication of Irish products. For example, Donegal tweed can and should be among the first products to receive this protection to prevent producers, who are not located in Donegal and/or not using Donegal wool, from marketing their product as Donegal tweed. This will safeguard Irish jobs and ensure that only authentic, high-quality products are sold, thereby upholding the craft's global reputation.



## BUILDING A FAIR AND FIRM MIGRATION PROCESS

Europe Matters in managing migration flows and upholding a fair, rules-based system. The challenges presented by migration cannot be effectively addressed by any one state acting alone in a globalised and interdependent world. We need a coherent approach, fit for the 21st century, across the EU to migration, asylum, integration and border management.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Enter the EU Migration and Asylum Pact.
- Step up cooperation with third states.
- Invest in communities hosting asylum seekers.

### **Enter the EU Migration and Asylum Pact**

We need a fair, rules-based immigration system, which respects both the integrity of our EU borders and the dignity of people trying to access better lives in Europe. This is reflected in the new Migration and Asylum Pact. Under the pact, applications for asylum will be quickly assessed at the EU's external border, to determine if such an application is admissible or not. There will be tight timelines to allow for faster decisions. Those who are not entitled to asylum will be returned home swiftly, allowing those in need of asylum to access protection without undue delay.

The Pact introduces mandatory solidarity for Member States ensuring equal burden sharing. States can choose relocation or financial contributions as their method of solidarity. This gives Ireland the option to provide financial assistance, rather than accept relocations. It also will allow Ireland to obtain financial assistance when needed. There is going to be at least €1.9 billion allocated by the EU to ensure that the pact works as intended.

Our MEPs will work to improve human rights safeguards in the Pact, to guarantee no arbitrary detention and will push for an EU Search and Rescue service in the Mediterranean Sea. We will also continue to encourage an EU clamp down on migrant smuggling networks who are continuously exploiting the desperation and vulnerability of migrants seeking to escape armed conflict.

### **Step up cooperation with third states**

The EU has developed tailor-made Action Plans for ten key countries in the Southern Mediterranean and the East of Europe. These Actions Plans will be key to managing irregular and forced migration and preventing people from undertaking perilous journeys.

We will continue to implement preferential trade deals with our neighbouring countries, which can boost their economies and provide employment opportunities, thereby decreasing irregular arrivals into the EU.

### **Invest in communities hosting asylum seekers**

Communities in Ireland hosting considerable numbers of asylum seekers must be supported. We will advocate for additional EU funds to invest in these communities to ensure that they have the infrastructure and services that they need.



## PROTECTING EU VALUES

Europe Matters because in an increasingly volatile world, the EU fights to uphold democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These are our core values, which help us maintain a society in which pluralism, tolerance, solidarity and equality prevail.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Link EU funding to the upholding of core values.
- Combat violence against women.
- Put disability rights at the heart of EU policy.
- Deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Link EU funding to the upholding of core values**

The erosion of judicial independence, media freedoms and fair electoral processes in certain Member States is extremely concerning. This democratic backsliding cannot be tolerated. Fianna Fáil will ensure Member States who undermine these values are financially disciplined.

Equally, the provision of EU funds to Member States must be inextricably linked to the equality of treatment of all minority groups within that State. Safeguarding minority rights must be a pre-condition for EU membership, with no exception made for any candidate country.

### **Combat violence against women**

Every day, two women in the EU are killed by an intimate partner or relative. This shameful statistic lays bare the urgent need to tackle gender-based violence. Fianna Fáil will work to ensure that the Directive on Combating Violence Against Women is implemented by Member States. We will also make this directive stronger. In particular, Fianna Fáil will help to revise it to include a European definition of rape based on lack of consent, so that rape can be effectively prosecuted across borders.

### **Put disability rights at the heart of EU policy**

People with disabilities still face considerable barriers in society. At EU level, we will ensure that ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a pre-requisite for accession. We will seek the speedy implementation of the EU Disability Card and an EU Parking Card for persons with disabilities. Our MEPs will also support legislation to guarantee the availability and affordability of assistive technologies for persons with disabilities.

### **Deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals**

The EU was instrumental in the development of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through which countries collectively pledged to undertake action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. We want the EU to continue to take action, both at home and around the world, by prioritising assistance to those countries who are furthest behind through development aid, international partnerships and investment in infrastructure. Fianna Fáil MEPs will continue to fully commit to the action necessary to bring about this global transformation by the 2030 deadline, ensuring no one is left behind.



## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Europe Matters in the fight to mitigate the climate crisis and to ensure a just transition for all. Climate change is the defining challenge of our time. Faced with the uncertain policies of the other global powers, the EU is embracing its role as the leader in climate action.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Ensure the EU meets its climate targets.
- Bring about a just transition.
- Diversify our energy supply.
- Implement an EU-wide circular economy.
- Ban green washing.
- Tackle plastic waste and microplastics.
- Create a European Blue Deal.

### **Ensure the EU meets its climate targets**

Fianna Fáil will ensure that the EU fully adheres to the Paris Agreement and meets the targets it has set: to achieve a 55% reduction in emissions relative to 1990 standards by 2030 and to fully decarbonise by 2050.

### **Bring about a Just Transition**

Certain EU regions are disproportionately impacted by the necessary shift away from carbon intensive activities. The Just Transition Fund must continue to provide for these communities. We will seek to increase the fund so that it can be used to attract new industries, finance training opportunities and support local employment initiatives.

### **Diversify our energy supply**

Europe's over reliance on the importation of oil and gas was exposed when Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine led to energy price hikes across the continent. The EU must reduce its supply of imported fossil fuels and move towards sustainable energy sources. The EU's Solar Energy Strategy is part of the plan to phase out Russian fossil fuels and accelerate the green transition. Fianna Fáil supports the strategy and further cooperation at EU level, which can help us meet our national target of 8GW of solar connections by 2030.

Wind is Ireland's most reliable energy source, saving us billions in gas imports. Fianna Fáil believes that with increased offshore wind energy production, Ireland can achieve energy independence and, in the coming decades, become a net exporter of renewable energy.



Floating offshore wind is particularly well suited for the south and west coasts of Ireland. Its development should be fast tracked. Our MEPs will ensure that floating offshore wind and other renewable energy projects, receive adequate funding and resources.

Fianna Fáil MEPs will support increased energy connectivity to continental Europe, similar to the Celtic Interconnector, to ensure we have the capacity to transport excess electricity to other markets. This will be essential if Ireland is to capitalise on the potential for cooperation on green hydrogen with Germany.

### **Implement an EU-wide circular economy**

The New Circular Economy Action Plan charts a pathway for us to move away from the linear take-make-waste model. The Plan will ensure that waste is prevented and that resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible. Fianna Fáil supports the Plan and will ensure that citizens see the results, including the rollout of the common charger (USB-C) for handheld digital devices, the implementation of right to repair for common household appliances (washing machines, TVs etc), ending of the destruction of unsold clothes and textiles and the reduction in packaging waste.

### **Ban green washing**

Fianna Fáil will continue to support the European Parliament's ambitious efforts to tackle green washing; a harmful marketing tactic whereby companies mislead consumers into believing that their products are sustainable. New legislation will ban the use of phrases like "environmentally friendly" and "eco" without sufficient proof of the product's credentials.

### **Tackle plastic waste and micro-plastics**

The long-awaited revision of the REACH Directive will provide an opportunity to reduce micro-plastics in our environment. Fianna Fáil will focus on action to phase out the use of PFAS (forever chemicals) – our MEPs have already succeeded in banning PFAS in the manufacturing of toys and will campaign for their full elimination in the European Union.

### **Create a European Blue Deal**

Ireland's waters are our most precious resources. They provide thousands of people with a livelihood. However, they are under threat from climate change and uncontrolled commercial activity. Fianna Fáil supports the establishment of a Blue Deal for European waters that will balance the need for economic development with environmental protection.



## STRENGTHENING OUR AGRIFOOD SECTOR AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Europe Matters for our agrifood sector. Joining the EU allowed Ireland to diversify our export market and increase agricultural productivity. Now the sector faces challenges; no community is being hit harder by climate change than our farmers and the wider agrifood industry. We need our farming community and we need to work with them to enable medium and long term sustainability. Europe needs sustainable food production. New technologies, direct aid and real partnership for change is Fianna Fáil's commitment to secure the future for Irish farming and food production. This is what we will fight for in the European Parliament.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Guarantee food security through a strong CAP budget.
- Cut red tape.
- Protect farmers' access to the Single Market.
- Retain our nitrates derogation.
- Implement fair nature restoration measures.
- Invest in new technologies.
- Build a fair Common Fisheries Policy.
- Support rural communities.

### **Guarantee food security through a strong CAP budget**

Fianna Fáil understands that reconciling food security and action on climate change is a defining challenge of our time and that we must support farmers in this. Ireland's agrifood sector is already amongst the most environmentally friendly in the world. Given this, and that the world population is set to increase to 10 billion people by 2050, it is crucial that countries such as Ireland, which has the capacity to grow food sustainably, is supported to do so.

The CAP budget must be significantly increased to ensure food security and to ensure that farmers are backed in terms of income for the vital service they provide. Fianna Fáil will ensure Irish family farms are supported in continuing to produce much needed food for the domestic and export market, while supporting farmers strongly to reduce the emissions footprint of how this food is produced.

### **Cut red tape**

Fianna Fáil supports the European Parliament's work on Simplification of certain CAP rules. This review relates to soil cover during sensitive periods, crop rotation, non-productive features, targeted exemptions to allow ploughing, as well as different levels of compliance.

We must ensure that the next CAP is more simplified with a strong budget. Fianna Fáil MEPs will work to ensure that a reduction in the regulatory burden is delivered and made a reality on the ground for farmers.



### **Protect farmers' access to the Single Market**

Irish farmers must not be prohibited from selling in the Single Market by anti-competitive measures, notably arbitrary maximum journey times for live animal exports. Our agri-sector needs to be able to export excess animals for both market and climate requirements. Fianna Fáil believes that increasing animal welfare standards, as well as protecting the ability of Ireland to export live animals can be achieved. We support increased veterinary oversight, improved technologies in the areas of climate control and feeding, as well as enhanced training for drivers.

### **Retain our Nitrates Derogation**

Our current Nitrates Derogation runs until the end of 2025. Derogation farmers undertake environmental training, implement additional water quality actions on farms and are subject to a higher level of inspection, as required under the Commission Implementing Decision granting Ireland's Nitrates Derogation. Fianna Fáil MEPs and candidates are absolutely committed to working in every way possible to make sure that Ireland retains its derogation. They will robustly advocate through the European Parliament the valid geographical reasons why Ireland's derogation should be continued and the work underway at farm level to ensure the water quality improves.

### **Implement fair nature restoration measures**

Approximately 80% of habitats across the EU are substantially degraded. Fianna Fáil supports fair nature restoration measures that reward the hard work farmers are undertaking to tackle biodiversity loss that has been seen over the last generation.

Fianna Fáil policy is that landowner participation in the delivery of the EU Nature Restoration Law is voluntary. We know how committed farmers are to biodiversity and the importance of their contribution, but also recognise that it is crucial that the asks on farmers are proportionate. Fianna Fáil MEPs will support the call for farmers to be provided with strong funding, separate to CAP, to ensure that they are rewarded for Nature Restoration activity that they engage in.

As a result of interventions made by Fianna Fáil Ministers during Council negotiations on the law, the proposed law encompasses significantly altered rewetting obligations to ensure that all rewetting targets can be delivered entirely from State-owned lands well into the 2040s. Fianna Fáil policy is that the recent recalculation of the national inventory - lowering the area of drained peat grassland soils - is reflected in any national rewetting targets.

### **Invest in new technologies**

To foster an environment where farmers can thrive and seize opportunities, whilst mitigating the challenges of climate change and keeping food affordable, we must invest in breakthrough technologies. Much work is under way in the areas of fertiliser, genotyping and anaerobic digestion which should be supported by CAP.



Our MEPs will work to ensure that research projects making groundbreaking advancements in agriculture and biodiversity receive Horizon Europe research funding.

### **Build a fair Common Fisheries Policy**

Our coastal communities are reliant on an effective Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to preserve their livelihoods. The CFP must ensure the needs of the fishing industry are met, without jeopardising fish stocks for future generations. It must also provide a guaranteed income for fishermen and ensure top-quality seafood at reasonable prices for consumers. To safeguard the future of the sector, the CFP should support it in facing wider, global challenges such as the impact of climate change and the energy transition.

Our MEPs will highlight the challenges experienced by the Irish seafood sector. Fianna Fáil will also continue to fight for maximum sustainable quotas for the Irish fishing industry in the annual fixing of EU catches and quotas. The ability of Member States to share or transfer unused quotas on an annual basis must be implemented.

There needs to be a comprehensive analysis of the impact on the Member States' fishing opportunities as a result of quota transfers under the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement. Fianna Fáil will continue to fight to ensure that the disproportionate burden of Brexit on Irish fishers is addressed at EU level.

### **Support rural communities**

The EU plays a key role in strengthening and supporting our rural communities. Our towns, coastal areas and communities have benefited from investment from European Structural and Investment Funds, CAP Funds, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) and Horizon Europe funds. Fianna Fáil will continue to advocate for investments which empower community-led local development, such as LEADER programmes, boosting rural infrastructure, social inclusion, job creation and sustainable economic development.





## ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN NEW DEAL ON HOUSING

Europe Matters because of the supporting role it can play in housing policy. Housing is a challenge for all Member States, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine and global market trends. There are currently many directives that apply to planning and given the challenges on access to funding it is important that there is a common EU approach to help our citizens access housing. We believe that the European Investment Bank should reinforce its support for Housing.

With Housing for All Fianna Fáil has doubled home building and will double it again. Ireland now has the fastest growing home building sector in the EU. Housing is a national competency, but we believe that the EU can help drive our ambitions.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Support a European New Deal on Housing.
- Establish an EU Housing Co-operation Platform.
- Tackle long-term use of Air BnB (Short-Term Lets).
- Release European Investment Bank (EIB) funding for student housing.
- Strengthen the role of the EIB in financing affordable and social housing.

### **Support a European New Deal on Housing**

Member States share common challenges with providing affordable housing. While respecting the principle of subsidiarity, Fianna Fáil will support increased co-operation on affordable housing at EU level, as well as use of EU funds, such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and Invest EU to tackle the housing shortage.

### **Establish an EU Housing Co-operation Platform**

An EU Housing co-operation platform should be set up to provide practical on-going support across all levels of the provision of housing and governance. This could involve upskilling housing providers, encouraging partnerships on key housing issues and sharing best practise. The Platform would underpin EU efforts to support national and local housing policies, by simplifying access to information on EU instruments, including funding.

### **Tackle long term use of Air BnB**

Short-term let platforms like AirBnB and Booking.com are impacting the supply of long-term rental units. European compliance measures have stalled Ireland's ability to introduce changes nationally for the past three years and these type of delays must be removed given the housing challenges. Our MEPs will ensure that tackling housing issues like short-term lets is prioritised by the Commission.



### **Release European Investment Bank (EIB) funding for student housing**

Students in the EU are struggling to find housing. This puts undue stress on students and their families. Student housing initiatives must be supported at EU level. Fianna Fáil will advocate for the use of the ESF+ to build affordable student housing.

### **Strengthen the role of the EIB in financing Social and Affordable Housing**

Fianna Fáil will advocate for the restructuring of the European Investment Bank (EIB) to offer financial tools to support social and affordable housing. This would leverage private sector funding to maximise home building.



## EMBRACING THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Europe Matters in the digital transition. The EU sets global standards in new and emerging technology and seeks to regulate the tech space in an ethical manner. We must continue to harness our knowledge and capacity to create a Europe fit for the digital age.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Boost research and innovation.
- Increase funding for the EU Space programme.
- Collaborate on semi-conductor production.
- Protect children from digital threats.
- Make online media safer for users.
- Implement the AI Act.

### **Boost research and innovation**

Fianna Fáil fully supports Horizon Europe, which, with a budget of €95.5 billion, funds research and innovation across the EU. In Ireland, Horizon has funded research on, amongst other areas, the microbiome, dementia and defence against cyberattacks. We believe that small companies must be supported more in applying for Horizon funding.

### **Increase funding for the EU Space Programme**

The EU Space Programme drives entrepreneurship. Fianna Fáil supports increased spending on the EU Space programme, in conjunction with further co-operation with the European Space Agency, to boost European innovation and provide opportunities for the Irish space sector.

### **Collaborate on semi-conductor production**

Semi-conductors are key components in electrical devices. Currently, most of Europe's supply of these essential chips is imported from countries in Asia, where political instability could disrupt the export market. Fianna Fáil supports the European Commission's aim of creating a state-of-the-art European ecosystem of chip production. Supported by the EU, Ireland can become a major player in the global chip sector; we are home to over 100 semiconductor companies, with 25,000 people employed in the sector. The sector was worth €15.5 billion to the Irish economy in 2023.

The Microelectronic Circuits Centre Ireland (MCCI) is hosted at the Tyndall National Institute in Cork. The Tyndall has called for a National Chips Strategy, with an ambitious target of more than doubling the size of the semiconductor industry in Ireland by 2030. Fianna Fáil supports this and firmly believes that we can vastly increase domestic production, reduce our reliance on imports and make Ireland the chip capital of Europe.



### **Protect children from digital threats**

Threats to the wellbeing of children from constant online activity is an urgent priority for Fianna Fáil. Working with our colleagues in the Renew Europe group, we will support initiatives from both a public health and education perspective to assist parents and schools in making the right choices. Fianna Fáil supports the banning of smartphones during school hours to provide time and space to socialise and engage offline. Our MEPs will support legislation to compel social media platforms to get underage children off their apps if they do not do so themselves.

### **Make online media safer for users**

Ireland is home to many of the world's leading technology companies. They contribute much to our economy and their employees are an important and dynamic part of Irish society. However, Fianna Fáil believes that the sector needs robust EU regulation to prevent illegal online activity. We will continue to support and improve the EU's Digital Services Act as it regulates dangerous online behaviour. For the protection of citizens, we will continue to enforce compliance with GDPR and domestic laws. We will also advocate for a ban on recommender system algorithms that can be used to promote self-harm, suicide and violent extremism.

### **Implement the AI Act**

Fianna Fáil supports the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, the world's first comprehensive legislation on AI. The Act bans AI systems which pose unacceptable risk to society and makes users aware when they are interacting with generative AI or deepfakes.



## STANDING WITH PALESTINE, UKRAINE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Europe Matters because of its unparalleled contribution to peace and its unwavering adherence to international law. Faced with conflicts at our borders and threats to democracy, the EU's role in the wider world is more important than ever.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Work for a two-state solution in the Middle East.
- Continue to work to urgently chart a way out of this Israel-Hamas war.
- Maintain support and solidarity for Ukraine.
- Promote democracy and human rights.
- Engage proactively with China.
- Provide climate finance to developing states.

### **Work for a two-state solution in the Middle East**

Ireland formally recognises Palestine as a sovereign independent State, with effect from May 28th 2024. Fianna Fáil has always supported a two-state solution which respects the 1967 borders and guarantees peace and security for both Palestine and Israel. As the main financial donor to Palestine, the EU has a major role to play in the two-state solution. The EU must increase humanitarian aid to Gaza and be ready to assist in post-conflict reconstruction.

Fianna Fáil's clear position over recent decades has been for Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory to end and for Palestinians to enjoy the same freedom and right to self-determination as others. In Government, Fianna Fáil led Ireland to become the first EU Member State to declare that a solution to the conflict in the Middle East had to be based on a fully sovereign State of Palestine, independent of and coexisting with Israel. That position was launched in 1980 by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan Snr, who said that the Palestinian people "had a right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State in Palestine".

### **Continue to work to urgently chart a way out of this Israel-Hamas war**

Fianna Fáil has consistently condemned the actions of Hamas on October 7th. We believe that EU leaders should exert maximum pressure to bring about a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the unconditional release of all hostages and a massive surge in humanitarian aid. Fianna Fáil has been clear and consistent in its condemnation of violent settler activity in Occupied Palestinian Territory, and our MEPs will continue to advance the case for sanctions and travel bans for those engaged in such activity.



### **Maintain support and solidarity for Ukraine**

Russia's illegal war has had appalling consequences for the Ukrainian people, as well as wider implications for security on the European continent. Fianna Fáil fully supports the EU's aggressive sanctions and will continue to seek ways to punish Russia financially and diplomatically and to reinvest their monies on rebuilding Ukraine. We are unwavering in our support for Ukraine and will continue vital political, financial, and humanitarian assistance.

Fianna Fáil supports a European future for the people of Ukraine and views EU membership as a long-term security guarantee. We actively lobbied for and support the decision to open accession negotiations.

### **Promote democracy and human rights**

The EU must take the lead in promoting democracy and human rights. Fianna Fáil MEPs will support EU democracy promotion initiatives, such as funding for civil society, Election Observation Missions and the European Endowment for Democracy.

### **Engage proactively with China**

Fianna Fáil remains committed to engagement with China and to working together constructively on climate change and sustainable development. In our engagement, we underline China's responsibility to uphold the UN Charter and protect human rights.

We must ensure that the Single Market is not harmed by any trade practices. The European Commission sees China as both a partner for cooperation and a systemic rival. We support this view and the EU policy of de-risking which aims to limit Europe's excessive dependencies on China.

### **Provide climate finance to developing states**

Developing states are the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. By 2025, Ireland will have met our commitment to provide €225 million annually in climate finance. This, combined with contributions from other EU states, will help mitigate the worst impacts for those countries on the front line. Fianna Fáil will ensure that the EU, as the largest donor of climate finance globally, continues to support vulnerable communities.



## PROMOTING EDUCATION AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Europe Matters for our young people. Young people in Ireland today have access to numerous opportunities and an important part of this has been various EU initiatives, which must continue to be adequately resourced.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Strengthen Erasmus+.
- Expand the free interrail initiative.
- Embrace the EU Aid Volunteer Initiative & the European Solidarity Corps.
- Promote engagement with the EU in schools.
- Twin secondary schools.
- Support Ukrainian youth.

### **Strengthen Erasmus+**

Erasmus strengthens language skills, improves education outcomes, enhances life experience and increases employment opportunities. Fianna Fáil believes that every young person should have access to Erasmus+.

We welcome the programme's expansion to encompass work placements, as well as the increased focus on mobility for people with disabilities. However, we must do more to ensure that Erasmus+ is open to all, with targeted actions to support students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds to take part. We are also committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland, Ukraine and Palestine retain access to Erasmus.

### **Expand the free interrail initiative**

Interrailing is important to allow as many young people as possible to explore the continent of Europe. The DiscoverEU pass, which offers a free interrail ticket, a return flight to and from Ireland, as well as discounts on cultural attractions is a very positive initiative which should be supported and expanded. Fianna Fáil will campaign for every young person to receive a DiscoverEU pass upon turning 18, including all 18-year-olds from Northern Ireland. We will also take steps to ensure that young people with disabilities have full and equal access to the scheme.

### **Embrace the EU Aid Volunteer Initiative & the European Solidarity Corps**

Given our strong tradition of assistance to developing countries, Ireland can play a lead role in the EU Aid Initiative and the European Solidarity Corps. We will promote both programmes in schools, universities and workplaces to encourage more young people to get involved.

### **Promote engagement with the EU in schools**

Primary and secondary school students should also experience what the EU has to offer. Fianna Fáil wholeheartedly supports the European Movement Ireland's Blue Star Programme, which teaches primary school children about the EU and other Member States, as well as the provision of the Big Friendly Guide to the European



Union to all primary school children. Equally, we support the European Parliament Liaisons' Office's EPAS in secondary schools to promote the work of Irish MEPs. Fianna Fáil will continue to promote the European Youth Parliament and visits to the European Parliament for secondary schools.

### **Twin secondary schools**

Town twinning is one of the biggest successes in European cultural initiatives. Twinning should be expanded to secondary schools to foster links between young people across the EU. This will allow students to gain language skills and experience other cultures.

### **Support Ukrainian Youth**

The young people of Ukraine must be prioritised – they are the country's future. Along with our Renew Europe colleagues, Fianna Fáil MEPs will seek EU support for counselling services, focused on young people affected by Russia's war and young military personnel transitioning back to civilian life. Volunteers with the European Solidarity Corps should be deployed to Ukraine when safe to do so to help with post-conflict reconstruction and youth engagement.





## SUPPORTING OUR CULTURAL SECTOR

Member States are responsible for their own cultural and sporting policies. However, the EU plays an important role in preserving and promoting European and Irish culture.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Reinforce EU cultural initiatives.
- Create a 65+ interrail pass.
- Launch an EU Culture pass.
- Fund EU-wide sporting competitions.

### **Reinforce EU cultural initiatives**

Fianna Fáil supports EU cultural initiatives, such as the Capital City of Culture and Creative Europe, which supports the audio-visual sector. We welcome rules obliging streaming platforms to have a minimum 30% European content available, as this provides opportunities for the Irish audio-visual sector. Our MEPs will seek support for cultural spaces for independent artists and organisations.

### **Create a 65+ travel pass**

Fianna Fáil will advocate for a discount card, similar to DiscoverEU, offering discounted travel from Ireland to the continent, discounted train travel across the EU and access to cultural attractions for all EU citizens aged 65 and over.

### **Launch an EU culture pass**

Along with our Renew Europe colleagues, Fianna Fáil advocates for a European culture pass app. This would provide young people turning 18 a virtual pre-loaded card to redeem against European books, films and video games or purchase tickets for museums, theatre, festivals, concerts etc.

### **Fund EU-wide sporting competitions**

Sport strengthens bonds across all sectors of society across Europe. A new EU fund to support cross-continental sporting competitions should be established. It should be available for those competing in sport at all ability levels.  
Cooperating on public health.



## COOPERATING ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Europe Matters because it helps the Member States achieve our public health goals. The speed at which the EU was able to attain and distribute COVID-19 vaccines proves that we are stronger when we work together.

### **Fianna Fáil will:**

- Build a Public Health Union.
- Ensure Pandemic Preparedness.
- Strengthen European health agencies.
- Guaranteeing equal access to treatments.
- Encourage European innovation.
- Promote health education.

### **Build a Public Health Union**

Working collaboratively on public health measures can improve health outcomes. Fianna Fáil supports a limited sharing of competences with the EU in the area of public health, as it will support the development of innovative treatments.

### **Ensure pandemic preparedness**

Fianna Fáil supports increased cooperation on cross-border health threats. This will assist Member States in their preparedness in the case of another pandemic. Cooperation should include joint procurement of medical products, particularly medicines in short supply.

COVID-19 laid bare the need for Member States to stress test the resilience of their health systems. Tests should be carried out under criteria set at EU level to ensure the highest standards.

A digital platform should be established to facilitate exchanges on epidemiological data and best practice between the Member States.

### **Strengthen European health agencies**

With Renew Europe colleagues, Fianna Fáil will advocate for increased resources for both the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to ensure that they can efficiently carry out their vital work.

### **Guaranteeing equal access to treatments**

Fianna Fáil believes that the EU should create a comprehensive pathway for treatments from development to access, which balances innovation and affordability and reduces delays for patients. The pathway must provide access to complex therapies, such as Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products, that can only be delivered in a few specialised centres throughout the EU.

**Encourage European innovation**

The pharmaceutical industry is a major contributor to the European economy. We need to support its competitiveness. Currently, 80% of global pharmaceutical manufacturing takes place outside the EU. To fight shortages of medicines and medical devices, we will encourage industries to relocate to Europe. We must increase the attractiveness of the EU, especially Ireland, as a destination for clinical trials, so people living with rare diseases can have the earliest possible access to innovative treatments. Equally, we must encourage EU innovation and provide research funding to our domestic pharma industry. This will make it easier to produce generic medicines at cheaper prices for our citizens.

**Promote health education**

Every year, vaccination prevents 2.5 million deaths worldwide. Large-scale vaccination campaigns brought about the eradication of many infectious diseases and significant decline in many others. The worrying phenomenon of disinformation on vaccination must be addressed. Fianna Fáil will use science

