



**Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile
Irish Federation of University Teachers**

MEDIA RELEASE

**IFUT calls for clear commitment to Higher Education by
election candidates**

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The Higher Education system is like a first-class, high-performing car that is running out of petrol and requires an immediate injection of funding and resources, the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) said today in a message to all political parties and candidates in the General Election.

IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings, said that staff numbers in Higher Education are down well over 1,000 in two years while student numbers have increased by at least 10,000. In addition, state funding of the sector is down by 14.8% in the past two years alone – only Latvia has a worse record.

IFUT is not aligned to any political party but is urging its members to highlight the needs of the education system and to counteract misrepresentations of the people who work hard in the sector.

“Even at the height of the Celtic Tiger years, Ireland’s education spend was the fourth-lowest in the OECD at 4.7% of GDP, compared to an OECD average of 6.2%,” Mike Jennings said.

Key issues that IFUT wish aspirant TD to address are:

- More students than ever are being educated in Higher Education with hugely reduced numbers of staff;
- What do they think that the ‘Smart Economy’ phrase means and implies for public investment?;
- If they promote an increase in the numbers of overseas (non-EU) students as an income generating opportunity, are they aware how much extra attention such a student needs if he/she is to thrive in a foreign environment?;
- Are they happy as future members of Dáil Éireann to allow decisions on the future direction of our Higher Education system to be dictated by private interests rather than the public good as articulated by an elected Government?;

- Would they accept an academic's starting salary when entering the Dáil?

IFUT says that the recent Hunt Report on Higher Education, although un-thought out and poorly researched in many aspects, concedes that:

- “The current system is delivering above average outcome at below average funding.”
- “We need €500 million additional funding.”
- “Ireland is number one for graduate employability and number two for graduate quality.”

“IFUT will be pressing strongly for a commitment to adequate funding and facilities for Higher Education in the interests of our society and economy in any new Programme for Government following the General Election,” Mike Jennings said.

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