



LABOUR

IRELAND'S FUTURE IN

SOCIAL EUROPE



**LABOUR'S EUROPEAN
MANIFESTO 2019**

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Foreword

The 2019 European Parliament elections are critically important for Ireland's future and the future direction of the European project. Labour is offering three of our best as candidates for the European Parliament.

Labour and our allies want a Social Europe that recognises the failings of the current model and dedicates itself to improving people's lives. European workers need a pay rise, after years of wages not keeping pace with economic growth, and they need public investment to restore health care, education and other public services that have been deprived of money for far too long.

Europe needs to engage in a massive programme of investment to improve aging infrastructure and to reverse the growth of inequality that is alienating millions of people from the benefits of European co-operation.

Our track record is one of strengthening workers' rights, fighting for better pay and conditions, and supporting sustainable growth in the economy.

Labour's particular focus at this critical time is to protect Irish people's jobs and livelihoods from the effects of the UK leaving the European Union. We also want decisive action on climate change. And Labour's group in Europe is committed to using European funding to help build more affordable public housing in Ireland.

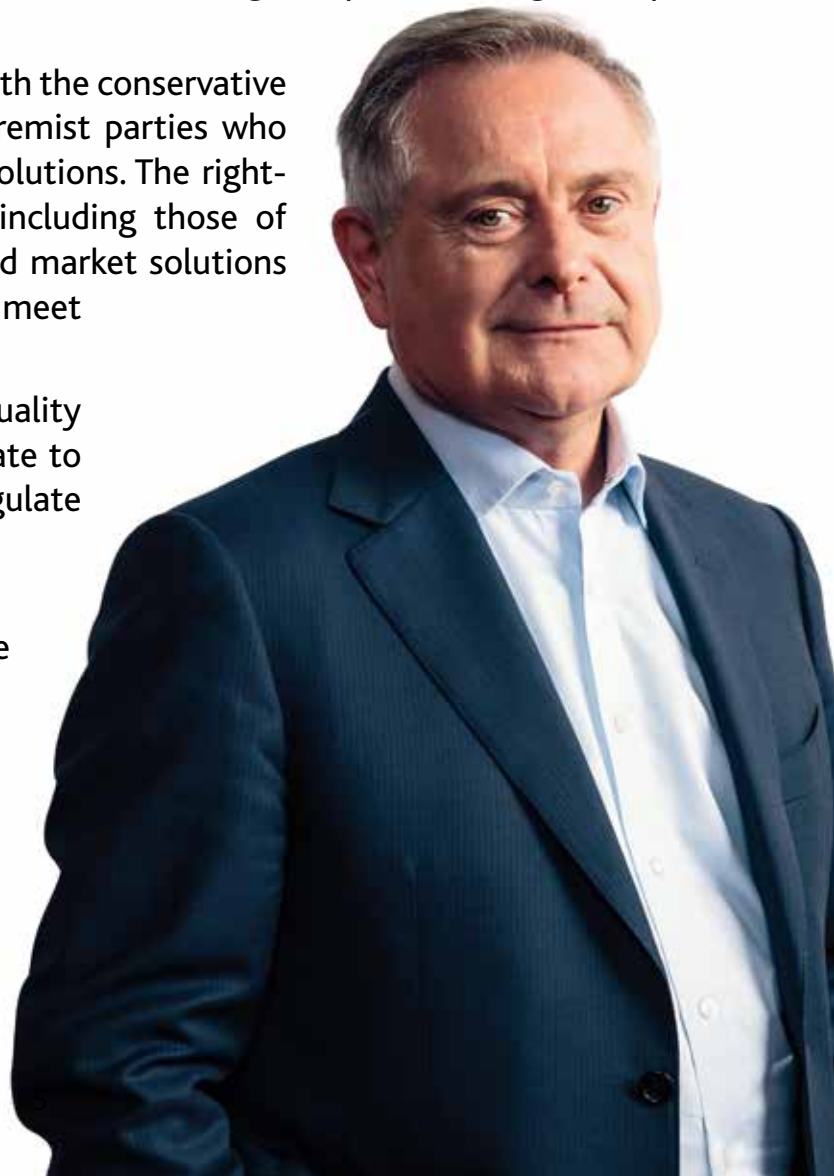
Democracy in Europe is under threat from both the conservative ideology of free markets and from the extremist parties who exploit people's anger but provide no real solutions. The right-wing groups in the European Parliament, including those of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, offer cold-blooded market solutions whereas Labour parties are concerned to meet people's human needs.

Labour wants a Social Europe based on equality and fairness, with a stronger role for the State to counterbalance the market and to better regulate private corporations.

In 2019, the Irish and other European people will together decide if they want more of the same from the conservatives who currently dominate Europe, or if they want to help Labour and its sister parties to build a truly Social Europe.



Brendan Howlin TD



1. Limiting the Harm from Brexit



Labour's first priority is to protect people's jobs and livelihoods. Decisions at EU level will be very important to help Ireland overcome the economic challenges of Brexit, especially for jobs and businesses that export to the UK or rely on the UK as a source of raw materials.

While our preference was always for the UK to stay in the EU (or to re-join), we have also pursued practical measures to protect jobs and businesses from the damaging effects of the United Kingdom leaving the EU.

HOW WE CAN LIMIT THE EFFECT OF BREXIT ON IRELAND:

- **We will always ensure the Good Friday Agreement is protected**
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will champion the Good Friday Agreement at European level. We will continue to outline the unique circumstances on our island and ensure that Brexit does not prevent the free movement of people and businesses' activity in Ireland
 - ◆ EU PEACE funding, which helps reinforce peaceful community relations, needs to be continued in Northern Ireland

- **Irish workers and businesses that are affected by Brexit need real support from Government and the European Union**
 - ◆ Labour fully supports the call of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to allocate at least €500 million to deal with the negative consequences of Brexit. This will help stop businesses from going under and help prevent job losses, such as through financial support for short-time work schemes
 - ◆ Measures need to be put in place to protect sectors that are most vulnerable to Brexit. The agri-food, fisheries, tourism, transport and retail sectors all need specific plans to help them thrive in a post-Brexit environment. To do this we need flexibility on State Aid limits on public funding for those sectors that are hardest hit
 - ◆ We will insist that changes are made to the EU Globalisation Fund to ensure Irish workers affected negatively by Brexit can access financial and up-skilling supports
 - ◆ We need to ensure that additional supports are available to farmers and workers in agri-food industries and fisheries, through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
 - ◆ We will continue to support and seek expansion of the EU's Structural and Investment Funds in the period 2021-27, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and renewal of Horizon 2020 investment in science and technology

- ◆ European Union funding and support is needed for the development of more direct transport links between Ireland and continental Europe. This must include ferry services, so we can reduce Ireland's heavy reliance on haulage and freight that crosses Britain
 - ◆ People who work in Irish fisheries need enhanced protections as some EU members may look for more access to Irish waters if there is a loss of access to fishing in British waters
 - ◆ Irish exporters will need extra help to replace UK markets with markets inside the EU, and to enhance Irish trading and cultural links with other EU members, including trading via the Internet
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will look for a supports package to enhance maritime industry and ports, and regional airports and public transport, and to assist the development of rural broadband, renewable energy and connectivity to European electricity grids
- **Labour will insist on an open Irish border**
 - ◆ The Labour Party is fully behind continued EU support for an open border on the island of Ireland
 - ◆ European Union rules need to be flexible to support existing businesses engaged in cross-border trade on our island. We need to make it as simple as possible for people to do business, with as little paperwork as possible
 - ◆ The EU must recognise the mutual rights of Irish and UK citizens as part of the Common Travel Area – including the rights of Irish citizens who are living in the UK and British citizens who live here in Ireland – especially if there is a no withdrawal agreement between the EU and UK
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will demand that Irish citizens' EU rights – including social security and pension entitlements, and recognition of educational qualifications of those living in Northern Ireland and Britain – are fully protected after Brexit
 - **The EU and the UK need to have a good working relationship in the future. Irish Labour MEPs would be well placed to promote this**
 - ◆ If there is no second Brexit referendum held in the UK, then we need to ensure that any future relationship the EU has with the UK is as close as possible to one where Britain is a member of the Single Market and Customs Union

- ◆ We will fully back any initiative from a future UK government for the UK to re-join the EU
 - ◆ It is vital that we continuously monitor how Brexit will impact wages and working conditions. If the UK engages in a race-to-the-bottom economic model, Labour MEPs will insist on measures in any future EU-UK trade agreement to counter-act any move to drive down wages in Ireland as a result of the UK's trade policies
 - ◆ Under no circumstances should Ireland be exposed to low standard consumer products or food (such as chlorinated chicken or hormone-treated beef) which may be permitted into the UK market after Brexit
 - ◆ With our colleagues in the trade union movement, Labour MEPs will seek to ensure that the UK at least keeps the equivalent of EU standards into the future when it comes to important areas such as workers' rights, consumer protection and for the environment
- **There needs to be continued EU funding for Ireland and Northern Ireland**
 - ◆ European Regional Development Funding has benefitted so many rural communities in Ireland. We need to make sure that this funding stream continues
 - ◆ We will advocate for EU funding programmes in Northern Ireland to be maintained post-Brexit, particularly the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes

2. Leadership on Climate Action



Labour believes that meaningful co-ordination and co-operation at EU level is essential so that all member states, including Ireland, can meet our obligations to reduce carbon emissions in time to limit the devastating effects of climate change.

The EU as a whole emitted 4,441 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2018. Our collective commitment is to reduce that to net zero by 2050, which is incredibly ambitious, although the EU is making progress in that direction and has been a champion of the Paris Agreement on climate change on the world stage.

Alongside the serious challenges and risks of climate change, there are opportunities too. Europe has the technological capacity to research and develop ways to reduce the extent of climate change, and to achieve a Just Transition where we train our workers to adapt to new, sustainable jobs and new technology in the workplace. Done right, a Social Europe can be a world leader of a Green New Deal for job creation and sustainable economics.

HOW WE CAN STOP CLIMATE CHAOS:

- **Labour representatives both at home and in Europe will be at the forefront of taking serious action on climate**
 - ◆ The European Union must make fighting climate change for the benefit of future generations one of its main priorities, alongside greater social justice and solidarity
 - ◆ Having signed the Paris Agreement on climate change on behalf of Ireland, the Labour Party will demand that the EU's climate ambition is at the very least in line with the Paris Agreement and the latest science, with the aim of becoming climate-neutral by 2050 at the latest
 - ◆ Labour supports the creation of an EU Sustainable Development Pact that promotes strict social and ecological targets alongside economic aims
 - ◆ We will get behind EU-level strategies, budgets and performance indicators to drive the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Agenda and Goals by 2030
 - ◆ It is incredibly important that children and young people are involved in any kind of Europe-wide consultation on how we can reduce the impact that climate change is having. Labour MEPs will ensure that young people get their say in how we can protect our planet from further damage
 - ◆ We will push for agencies, such as the European Investment Bank and the European Central Bank, to be given a greater role to invest in support of meeting the EU's climate change targets and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals
 - ◆ The Labour Party is a strong believer in the need for additional investment in clean energy. That is why we will look for additional EU support and funding for the ambitious development of affordable clean energy, particularly wind and solar power, and the interconnection of national electricity networks
 - ◆ Additional support is needed from the European Union to speed up the development of affordable electric vehicles. Working with Labour Councillors, Labour MEPs will push for funding for the necessary infrastructure for electric vehicle charging

- **It is time for Europe to prepare for a Just Transition for workers who will be affected by climate change. Europe needs to take calls for a Green New Deal seriously**
 - ◆ The Labour Party will campaign for the EU to set up Just Transition Funds for training and new job creation, to assist workers affected by the necessary changes towards a low carbon economy, such as in the midlands, and to help prepare our industries and workers so they benefit from the green transition
 - ◆ We will support the taxing of greenhouse gases in a socially fair way, making polluters pay and using the funds to directly assist lower income households to overcome energy poverty and to make home retrofitting, clean technology and electric vehicles more affordable

- **It is clear that the EU needs stronger environmental policies**
 - ◆ There needs to be greater consistency and cooperation when it comes to upholding environmental standards across the EU. This can be done with strong legislation across member states
 - ◆ There needs to be greater support from the EU on recycling, particularly recycling plastic. Labour MEPs will work to push for better laws on reducing non-biodegradable packaging and will support waste reduction measures like bottle and container deposit schemes
 - ◆ We support including sustainable production methods, better nutrition, targets for reduced food waste, better animal welfare, climate protection and the preservation of biodiversity in the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)
 - ◆ The CAP must be progressive and focused on the future. It must promote sustainable land management and small-scale farming
 - ◆ We will work to find measures to protect nature and to ensure we preserve Europe's diverse plant and animal species
 - ◆ We will continue to support measures at EU level to curb pollution of the air, water and soil, with strong protection for workers potentially exposed to toxins

3. Greater European Support for Public Housing



Labour's view is that the State must provide affordable public housing, and we will work to enhance European supports for a state-led resolution of Ireland's housing affordability crisis. All around Europe, cities and other public authorities build and provide quality public housing that is affordable and available to all. In some European cities more than half the population rents high quality public housing. Public housing can and should be a much more prevalent option in Ireland too.

Housing is recognised as a fundamental right in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has been ratified by all EU member states (including Ireland in 1989). The provision of housing is and should always be a public good, not a commodity for market speculation.

Frans Timmermans (currently First Vice-President of the European Commission and the candidate of Labour's group in the European Parliament) has pledged to allocate EU structural funds to match spending by municipalities on public housing if he is elected as the next President of the European Commission.

HOW WE CAN GET GREATER SUPPORT FROM THE EU FOR PUBLIC HOUSING:

- **The European Union needs stronger rules to support public housing**
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will work with all parties in the European Parliament to facilitate the State provision of quality, sustainable public housing
 - ◆ We will look to change, if needed, any EU rules that diminish the State's ability to provide public housing and seek reforms to EU State Aid rules to ensure essential public needs like housing can always be met by State action in the economy
 - ◆ We will make sure that European rules and supports for the return of residential services by public authorities (such as waste collection or water) to public control
- **We strongly believe that the European Union must provide significant funding for public housing**
 - ◆ The European Structural and Investment Funds and the European Investment Bank must provide funding for public housing.
 - ◆ Labour TDs and MEPs will demand that more flexibility about how investment in public housing is treated in relation to national debt and compliance with EU budgetary rules
 - ◆ We are in favour of a single EU market for housing finance, to help drive down construction and mortgage costs
 - ◆ We will look for money to be invested to create a EU-wide plan for Affordable Housing and Clean Public Transport, with co-ordination between EU structural funds and EIB funding
 - ◆ The Labour Party will promote rules for universal design in housing and to ensure that neighbourhoods are fully accessible to people with sensory and mobility disabilities
 - ◆ As our populations gets older, we will look to the EU to provide policies that promote better housing and living standards for older people

4. Supporting Workers' Rights, Jobs and Enterprise



Labour and our sister parties across Europe are leading the fight to restore a Social Europe, through initiatives like the elimination of zero-hours contracts and bogus self-employment, and stronger measures to support workers whose jobs are at risk of being displaced by new technology.

Across Europe, the share of national income going to workers has declined in recent decades. The numbers of working poor are on the rise and people are at risk of poverty because prices are increasing, hourly contract jobs in the "gig economy" are more insecure, and public services are being reduced and starved of funding. There is an urgent need for wages across Europe to rise, with faster wage rises needed in the countries with lower pay. There is a persistent gender pay gap across Europe that must be closed. All of this would boost demand, enable sustainable and inclusive growth, reduce in-work poverty and reduce inequalities.

The European Union, in the past, was led by socialists and social democrats, and as a result ensured higher standards of worker protection than existed in the United States or other major economies. However, as technology and the nature of work have changed, and as the EU has become more dominated by right-wing governments across Europe, rules to protect workers have not kept pace, and the EU has become narrowly focused on deregulation, market liberalisation and competition law. We need Labour parties to be stronger in the European Parliament, and in member states, to force economic policies to go in a new direction.

HOW THE EUROPEAN UNION CAN SUPPORT WORKERS' RIGHTS, JOB CREATION AND ENTERPRISE:

- **There needs to be sufficient investment to create good quality, sustainable jobs in Ireland and across Europe**
 - ◆ Labour representatives will campaign for a long-term EU Investment Plan that supports regional development, State industries, infrastructure, research and innovation, training and life-long learning. The ultimate goal of this plan would be creating the conditions for quality jobs that are sustainable in the context of the green transition, the digital revolution and the growth of artificial intelligence
 - ◆ We will seek investment to help integrate people with disabilities into the workforce
- **In a race-to-the-bottom economy where precarious work is becoming the norm, workers' rights must be protected and strengthened**
 - ◆ Working with our sister parties across Europe, we will demand stronger European rules that uphold and promote the right of workers and trade unions to engage in collective bargaining, including a Framework Directive entitling every worker in Europe to the right to be represented by a trade union in negotiations with their employer on their pay and terms of employment, if they so wish, and ensure employers must engage with trade unions
 - ◆ The new European Labour Authority needs to be a body with proper teeth when it comes to protecting workers. That's why Labour will call for it to have strong powers to prevent social dumping and to promote fair labour mobility
 - ◆ Workers who are in precarious work in the gig economy or are contracted into dodgy bogus self-employment arrangements need to have better protections. This can be achieved by building on the recently agreed European Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions
 - ◆ There needs to be an EU-wide definition of "work" and "worker" to help underpin legal protections for people involved in new forms of precarious work and other paid activity in the gig economy
 - ◆ The Labour Party will make sure that there is proper implementation of common EU rules for all workers to have written contracts in a language they understand, and for fair salaries, with a ban on zero-hours contracts and bogus self-employment

- ◆ We will seek binding EU rules to require employers to give workers a minimum level of pension cover, and we will seek EU standards on the quality and security of pensions, including measures to curb the creeping extension of retirement ages, especially for manual workers
- ◆ There needs to be greater enforcement of rules on the recognition of European workers' qualifications, including the qualifications of workers with a disability
- ◆ We will call for the participation of workers, such as in European Works Councils
- **Labour will campaign for a European floor of workers' rights**
 - ◆ The adequacy of European law when it comes to Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation and robotics needs to be reviewed
 - ◆ We will explore the possibility of taxation on robots/AI where they are displacing jobs
 - ◆ We believe that workers should have a right to retrain if their jobs are replaced by technology
 - ◆ There needs to be greater protection for workers against excessive scrutiny, including electronic scrutiny, and the unfair pressure of unreasonable work targets
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will back proposals to alter European rules to support workers' right to disconnect outside of working hours, in a context where email and other work activity has encroached into people's private time and is unremunerated
 - ◆ Working with our colleagues in the trade union movement, we will promote the merits of a four-day working week or six-hour day (without loss of pay) to counter-balance the growing amount of required work done outside of regular hours, such as work done at home or through mobile devices
 - ◆ Building on the recently agreed European directive on work-life balance, there needs to be improvements to work-life balance for parents and carers, including equal status between part-time workers and full-time workers, and Labour will promote EU rules to enhance flexibility about working hours, to allow families to manage caring responsibilities without their career progression or incomes being penalised

- ◆ We will strengthen Social Europe and the social dimension of European policy by supporting more Qualified Majority Voting by member states on matters relating to anti-discrimination, social security and social protection of workers, the protection of workers who are made redundant, workers' and employer's representation, and employment conditions for third-country nationals

- **It's time to reform the Eurozone**

- ◆ There needs to be real and meaningful change to European fiscal rules. We will advocate for the revision of the Fiscal Compact Treaty to ensure that States can always take strong action in the event of high unemployment or other economic crises, including climate change
- ◆ As part of our contributions to the design of the European budget, we will put forward ways that will make sure that low pay and precarious work are better addressed by the EU
- ◆ We will amend the basic mandate of the European Central Bank (ECB), so that it must base its decisions on the need to reduce unemployment as well as to maintain a low level of inflation
- ◆ The ECB inflation target needs to average 2-3%, rather than be rigidly set below 2%
- ◆ We will call for structural and institutional changes of the ECB to make it more democratically accountable
- ◆ We believe that there needs to be a review of the ECB's ability to issue bonds to assist States to better manage their debt levels and to attain lower cost borrowing, and to assist private banks for special categories of investment such as retraining, start-ups, social housing and climate change

- **There must be greater equality for all workers**

- ◆ Working people deserve a pay rise, especially those on low pay. Working with our sister parties in the Party of European Socialists we will work to reverse the recent trend where the share of economic growth going to workers has declined
- ◆ We need a mature discussion across Europe about implementing an EU wide living wage policy that would benefit all workers. This would provide a higher social floor for minimum wages that would guarantee workers a decent standard of living

- ◆ The EU must make resources available to aid a national action plan to revitalise our towns. This will advance economic and community development, and enhance employment, public services and quality of life
 - ◆ We will seek additional European investment to provide high quality, affordable early years education and care services, provided by better paid workers, so that all children have access to high quality services and so that parents can take up employment
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will be at the centre of the campaign for a renewed European Maternity Directive, to include statutory provision of one year's leave and minimum payments aligned to existing salary, alongside more comprehensive general parental leave to allow a greater sharing of parenting
 - ◆ The rules around wages need to change. That's why we will demand enforcement of stronger EU rules on equal wages for the same job being done in the same place, such as in construction and in maritime work, and advocate for the use of European registration cards and/or Safe Pass schemes to ensure all workers are paid equally, and insist on tighter rules on the reflagging of ships to prevent inequalities of pay and conditions for workers doing the same jobs
- **We will work towards a European Social Action Plan**
 - ◆ We believe that the European Pillar of Social Rights should be transformed into binding rules that strengthen welfare systems, respect labour market models and improve living standards
 - ◆ Labour will call for a specific funding strand within the next round European Social Funds Plus (ESF+) (2021-2027) to support the implementation of an EU Social Action Plan
 - ◆ There must be minimum standards of social protection and welfare across Europe. We will push to raise welfare rates and standards across member states, with the aim of developing a European minimum income guarantee
 - ◆ In the event of a rapid increase in unemployment, we will seek an EU-level unemployment insurance mechanism, to support member states

- ◆ Following the work of Labour in the European Parliament in the past we will look to extend the Youth Guarantee of a job, traineeship or education, to ensure full employment for young people and to reduce social exclusion. We will promote voucher schemes (European Culture Cheques) that support young people's access to culture
 - ◆ There must be protections for interns, trainees and apprentices to eradicate the exploitation of younger workers, and a greater range of apprenticeship options, linked to industry, for young people leaving secondary school
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will work to establish a European Skills Guarantee, so that people who are unemployed will have guaranteed access to training to help them acquire the skills they need for re-employment and social inclusion
 - ◆ Support reinforcement of Erasmus 2021-27 and seek for it to benefit people from all social backgrounds by extending it to all post-secondary education, training and apprenticeships
- **We must end tax evasion**
- ◆ There has to be a common European approach to prevent tax evasion by big corporations and to avoid member states being played against one another by multinationals engaged in aggressive tax planning and tax avoidance
 - ◆ The Labour Party is in favour of digital taxation and Financial Transaction Tax at European level
 - ◆ We will defend Ireland's autonomy in relation to tax policy, while actively supporting EU measures to close tax loopholes and to ensure corporations pay their fair share of taxes

5. Improving Quality of Life for All



Labour – and the Party of European Socialists – has prioritised social justice, especially for all children and families. Labour will take practical steps to reduce poverty at local, national and European level, so that every child has a decent start in life.

One in four children are at risk of poverty across the EU, including in Ireland, with all that implies in terms of missed opportunities to learn and develop in childhood, and the risk of personal and social problems later in life.

Decent healthcare, social protection, housing and education are issues that people care deeply about. While the EU has limited powers in these social areas, it does have influence. We will make sure that the EU's influence in social policy is a force for good.

HOW A SOCIALIST EUROPEAN UNION WOULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL:

- **We believe that there needs to be a new Social Contract for Europe**
 - ◆ Labour and our sister parties from across Europe will provide the necessary leadership by demanding a Social Europe that will prioritise equality, poverty reduction, the creation of quality jobs, security in old age, supports for people with disabilities and the best possible start for all children
 - ◆ We will make sure that EU economic policy focuses on the elimination of poverty and social exclusion with binding targets and fines for non-compliance. There must be a focus on eliminating inter-generational poverty and social exclusion by enhancing people's opportunities
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will represent urban and rural areas. That is why we will call for a much greater economic balance between rural and urban areas, such as through investment in rural transport and broadband

- **We will demand a fair start for every child**
 - ◆ We'll demand that the EU prioritises the elimination of child poverty as part of its prioritisation of social justice and solidarity, with binding targets and monitoring of performance across member states
 - ◆ The rights of children must be recognised. That is why we want to see a European Child Guarantee that recognises the rights of a child, with the aim that every child would be free from abuse and have access to quality healthcare, childcare, education, housing and healthy meals
 - ◆ We will look to extend EU funding to support the rapid diagnosis and treatment/support for children with disabilities to limit their loss of educational attainment and life opportunities
 - ◆ Labour will work to extend EU funding to organisations who are involved in promoting the uptake of breastfeeding, while seeking stricter rules on the advertising of replacement products

- **We will provide extra support to European workers' families**
 - ◆ There needs to be extra protections to assist transnational families; for example, ensuring leave opportunities to care for a family member in another country
 - ◆ We will call for it to be easier for children to move schools between member states
 - ◆ There must be additional measures to support inter-culturalism in mixed areas
- **Labour supports social innovation**
 - ◆ We will support the development of social innovation in the European economy, and provide new opportunities for co-operatives, social enterprises and non-profit organisations to promote new solutions to meet people's needs
 - ◆ We'll seek increased EU funding and supports from the EIB for start-ups, SMEs, community organisations, and municipal authorities that seek to resolve social problems
 - ◆ We'll seek EU supports for structures that facilitate greater co-operation between public authorities and private organisations seeking to resolve social problems, including incubators and innovation hubs operating at local level
- **In a Social Europe, there must be shared European public services**
 - ◆ There must be a role for European funding of public healthcare and social security, building on the Youth Guarantee model
 - ◆ The Labour Party completely supports healthcare provision for all and for the provision of vaccines. We will seek a European minimum standard of guaranteed healthcare for all, including cancer screening programmes and availability of the HPV vaccine to all children
 - ◆ There must be further development of shared healthcare services of a highly specialised nature, where the populations of smaller member states would not be large enough to develop them in isolation, such as for very specialised surgical procedures, the development of "orphan drugs", and treatment for rare diseases and genetic disorders
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will ensure that there is a European minimum standard of fair and equal access to education for all

- ◆ We favour enhanced networks at EU level to share best practice in education, healthcare, disability services and social security

6. Delivering Labour's Vision of Equality and Fairness



Labour parties and the Labour movement across Europe have consistently fought for a Social Europe based on socialist democracy. We have fought for better conditions and pay for workers, women and local communities, a social floor of civil, economic and rights, and strong social protection for pensioners, people with disabilities and those seeking work. We have a clear vision of a fairer, better Europe, which we can achieve by working with our sister parties across Europe.

EU institutions should be as diverse as Europe's diverse population. We believe we can only address European issues if all European voices play a role in decision making within our institutions and governing bodies. We believe that women, migrants, the LGBTQI community and people living with disability should be as well represented within the EU institutions as they are in modern European society.

Labour has a long and proud history of fighting for the equal rights of women, LGBTQI people and minorities, and the European Union has helped Irish people to secure their rights, notably equal pay for equal work and equal access to employment when Ireland first joined in 1973. Any form of discrimination is unacceptable and Labour will continue to seek equality for all.

HOW WE CAN DELIVER OUR VISION OF EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS AT A EUROPEAN LEVEL:

- **We will continue to work towards delivering a Social Europe**
 - ◆ The EU must strive to deliver a genuinely Social Europe, based on justice, equality and solidarity
 - ◆ Your rights must be put before those of corporations' economic freedoms. It is vital that a Social Progress Protocol is inserted into EU treaties which put a fair and decent standard of living for all at the heart of European policy making
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will protect and promote digital rights for all. Access to the internet, personal privacy online, and protection from online bullying and harassment must all be guaranteed
 - ◆ We will demand that minimum standards of social protection are upheld for older people, for carers and for anyone unable to work for whatever reason
 - ◆ The EU needs to strengthen partnerships with developing countries, including supporting the creation of a comprehensive European Investment Plan for Africa
 - ◆ We firmly believe that overseas aid budgets should be increased to at least meet the agreed target of 0.7% of GNI
 - ◆ The Labour Party will promote a progressive form of globalisation, based on trade agreements that are binding in terms of social and environmental standards, human rights, consumer protection and workers' rights
 - ◆ We will stand against private arbitration as part of trade agreements in favour of open, democratic control over trade disputes
- **The EU must stand strong against discrimination and promote equality at all levels**
 - ◆ Labour representatives have been leading the charge in ending the Gender Pay Gap in Ireland. Labour MEPs will continue this work at European level by proposing and supporting measures to close the gender pay gap and to ensure women receive equal pay for equal work, and equitable pensions, with specific measures to include a requirement for multi-national corporations to publish data on pay by gender and a directive to ensure people gain pension credits for time spent parenting

- ◆ European laws must seek to make discrimination in the provision of goods and services illegal, based on the same grounds as in Ireland, including gender, age, disability, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and family/marital status
- ◆ We will push for there to be better rules around making public and private sector boards and senior management more diverse and reflective of the European population, with provision for punitive damages
- ◆ We will push for European political groupings to only receive public funds if they meet binding gender quota targets
- ◆ Female MEPs should not be deterred from running for office because of poor maternity leave. We will push for a directive on maternity cover for all elected representatives
- ◆ It is time for a significant EU Gender Equality Strategy, that looks to end pay and pension gaps, combat sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and ensure that everyone has access to their full sexual and reproductive rights
- ◆ Working with our European sister parties, we will push for strong initiatives at EU level to help combat domestic violence and violence targeting intimate partners and/or children, to include peer review mechanisms, promotion of best practice and funding to be dedicated to provide the necessary services
- ◆ The EU must recognise that period poverty is a very real issue for many women
- ◆ A year on from the referendum to repeal the eighth amendment, we are now calling for EU rules to ensure minimum standards for maternity and termination services that are of high quality and that afford women choice
- ◆ Labour MEPs will call for the full implementation at EU level of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and work with disability organisations to achieve this
- ◆ We will promote and support measures to ensure that all persons with disabilities have access to inclusive education, with personalised supports, and an inclusive workplace in the open labour market with a fair wage, reasonable accommodation, and access to an effective social protection system
- ◆ The EU must take a strong stance on ending the segregation of persons with disabilities in institutions, and support measures to assist people to transition from institutional to community-based living

- ◆ We will advocate for new EU rules to remove legal and societal obstacles for LGBTQI people to live freely, equally and with respect
- **The Labour Party will continue to fight for a fair system of migration and refugee integration**
 - ◆ We will fully support fair common EU asylum and migration policy that will ensure effective control of EU borders while fighting human trafficking and the criminal exploitation of people, and enhancing the protection of those in need of asylum
 - ◆ We will seek European rules that would ensure Ireland's system of Direct Provision is replaced with a more humane reception and integration system
 - ◆ Migrant workers should not be exploited by unscrupulous employers. That's why we will work for stronger workers' rights that strengthen pay and conditions
 - ◆ Better funding of integration policies and greater supports are needed

7. Strengthening European Democracy and Public Engagement



Labour parties across Europe continue to be at the forefront of fighting to strengthen democracy and individual rights.

Social Europe is under threat from right-wing economic policies that have eroded decent pay and conditions for workers by prioritising corporations over people. As economic inequality has grown, extreme nationalists and populists have played on public anger and stoked fears, but they offer no real solutions. Labour's sister parties in the European Parliament have always been to the forefront in insisting on strong social and environmental protection in EU policy, and we have promoted many policies to strengthen workers' rights and to raise wages. We also initiated sanctions against Hungary's extreme nationalist government led by Fidesz, which has been indulged as a member of the European People's Party (EPP) group, of which Fine Gael is a member. Labour's Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group has always taken steps against any member parties that cross the line by doing deals with the far right.

Right-wing economic policies promote commercialised news media over public service journalism. The EU plays a vital role in shaping Ireland's future, and it is essential that Irish people have the opportunity to follow EU political news. Labour wants to increase people's awareness of European decisions, and make it clear that the European Union is an arena in which political battles play out on a daily basis.

The European elections will be a fight between those who believe in people's democratic rights, workers' rights and minority rights – and those who clearly do not. Labour is determined to ensure that we influence European decisions in a way that benefits the interests of working people.

STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY AND INCREASING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN PROJECT IS VITAL:

- **Now more than ever, we need strong action to promote and reinforce European democracy**
 - ◆ The European Union needs better means to defend the rule of law and human rights in all member states
 - ◆ We will fight racism and xenophobic rhetoric in society as well as in politics, and oppose racist and xenophobic anti-migrant policies
 - ◆ Strong EU measures are required to counteract hatred, intolerance and discrimination against others
 - ◆ Fake news must be tackled. Labour will demand measures to counteract the manipulation of public debate
 - ◆ Labour has always fought to protect whistle-blowers. With our colleagues in the S&D group, we will build on the recently agreed Whistle-blowers Directive
 - ◆ We will advocate for Ireland's tradition of military neutrality and safeguard our opt-outs from EU common defence policies
 - ◆ The European Union must support public service broadcasting and journalism. We will promote public access to official documents, freedom of information laws and open access to research findings when the research was publicly funded
- **A better Europe is possible. We can demonstrate this to citizens across Europe**
 - ◆ We will continue to work closely with the Party of European Socialists, and the Socialists and Democrats group in the European Parliament, to build public awareness of the real debates and divisions that exist on European policies
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will work to promote a progressive vision of the European Union, based on equality, freedom, human rights, protection for workers and high standards of environmental protection
 - ◆ Labour will help demonstrate to the public that many perceived barriers to State action in the economy are often not due to EU rules but are the policies of right-wing governments and their tendency to blame "Brussels" for their own unpopular decisions

- **We will always support democracy at all levels of government**
 - ◆ Labour believes that that decisions should be made as close as possible to the people affected. We fully support the transfer of powers to local, regional and national government where appropriate
 - ◆ We will look for greater linkages and two-way exchanges between the European level of government and local government, including enhanced European networks for local representatives and local government management
 - ◆ Citizens should be able to participate in the decision-making processes of the EU. We will back proposals to introduce forums for citizen participation with a status similar to the European Committee of the Regions
- **In order to have social policy that works for all of our citizens, it needs to be funded properly**
 - ◆ Labour MEPs will support progressive plans to grow the EU's core budget, as long as that money is for the purpose of a Social Europe that will improve living standards throughout Europe and reduce inequalities between people, regions and member countries
 - ◆ Strong measures must be put in place to prevent any misuse of EU funds
- **There are many benefits to the EU that are often left unknown because the language can be hard for many to understand. We promise to always be clear and open when discussing the European Union**
 - ◆ Labour MEPs and representatives will use Plain English when talking about the European Union institutions and decision-making
 - ◆ EU rules around consumer protection are very important to Irish people. We will make sure that they are always maintained
 - ◆ Ireland has among the least public holidays in the European Union. We think it is time for another to celebrate European solidarity. We back calls for Europe Day on 9 May to become a public holiday in all member states, to celebrate peace and unity in Europe

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