

**WORKING TOGETHER**  
**FOR IRELAND**  
**IN EUROPE**



# Working Together for Ireland in Europe

## Labour's Priorities for Europe

1. Putting Decent Jobs and Growth first in Europe
2. Securing the best deal for Ireland in Europe
3. A More Democratic Europe
4. A Europe that protects its Citizens
5. Ensuring a Greener Europe
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## Foreword by Eamon Gilmore



On 23rd May, in the European Parliament elections, your vote will give you the opportunity to deliver a Europe that puts jobs first, a Europe that protects its citizens, a Europe that delivers.

In government, Labour has put relentless focus on growth, creating jobs and tackling the economic crisis left by the previous administration. There has been positive and encouraging progress. 5,000 new jobs are now being created each month, a stark contrast to the 7,000 jobs that were being lost each month up to 2011. 70,000 new jobs were created since the peak of the economic crisis.

In 2013, Labour ensured that jobs and growth was put at the heart of the Irish Presidency of the European Union, particularly by securing agreement on a €940 billion EU budgetary framework for 2014-20 aimed at achieving the Europe 2020 strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Labour's MEPs and candidates are dedicated to fighting for a secure future for you and your family. It was through the leadership of Labour MEPs and MEPs from our sister parties in the European Parliament, that important measures such as the European Youth Guarantee to help get young people in Ireland into quality jobs, education or training were secured.

Labour was centrally involved in securing the three main social achievements of the outgoing European Parliament identified by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) in April 2014 – the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the European Youth Guarantee and setting a minimum (20%) allocation for tackling poverty under the 2014-20 European Social Fund.

## May 23rd- Europe's first General Election

The 23rd May European elections are the most important yet – they are Europe's first General Election.

The European Parliament now plays a much more significant role at European level than ever before. And this year's European elections will be the first to determine who becomes President of the European Commission, and who will set the EU's agenda for the next five years.

Labour with our sister parties across 27 countries are part of the influential and progressive Socialists & Democrats (S&D) Group. Over the last five years of a conservative majority in the EU, we have fought for a strong, socially just and democratic Europe. By voting for Labour you can make the S&D the strongest group in the European Parliament and ensure that Labour's progressive nominee, Martin Schulz, becomes the next President of the European Commission. This will put Europe's primary focus on growth and jobs, protecting workers and families, social Europe, and on getting the best deal for the people of Ireland in Europe.

A vote for Labour and our sister parties across Europe is the best chance of challenging and halting the rise of the extreme right. Because only we believe that Europe must do more to promote jobs and growth, and stem the politics of fear and hatred, that Europe must be grounded in the solidarity that is the fundamental value of our movement.

Our programme for the next five years of the European Union is based on growth and job creation, a productive economy, a sense of community and respect for people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eamon Gilmore".

# 1. Putting Decent Jobs & Growth First in Europe

Labour's relentless focus in Government is on job creation. We are tackling the legacy of the recent economic crisis that has left too many people without work, including a significant amount of our young people.

Encouraging progress is being made. 5,000 new jobs now being created each month and the Live Register dropping to its lowest level in five years. This is our first and main priority: all citizens, women and men, must have the chance of a decent job that allows a good quality of life. Ireland is at last heading in the right direction.

Labour knows that Europe has an important role in Ireland's recovery, to ensure a real recovery for our people and to achieving our goal of full employment. 54% of all the exports which go out through our ports and airports go to member states of the European Union. Jobs in Ireland, the success of Irish businesses and Irish living standards all depend on the health of the European economy.



## A Threshold of Decency at Work

Labour in government has strongly focused on maintaining a threshold of decency for workers. We renegotiated the Troika programme left by Fianna Fail; restored the Minimum Wage; took 330,000 lower paid workers out of the USC tax net, and restored the Joint Labour Committee system for the setting of fair rates of pay above the statutory minimum wage for workers in sectors such as retail, hospitality, catering, security, contract cleaning and agriculture.

We want an EU that promotes social justice and fairness and that allows all citizens to participate in the economy as equals.

We will:

- Build upon the 2014 European Quality Framework for Interns to raise standards for all internships.
- Ensure all trade agreements are bound to the protection of people's human and social rights, decent work, environmental standards, as well as corporate social responsibility and fair trade principles.
- Promote better cooperation at European level on labour inspections, including by ensuring better protection for whistle-blowers reporting abuses.
- Continue to campaign for the adoption of a comprehensive EU health and safety strategy for 2014-20.



## Tackling Youth Unemployment

Creating more and better jobs for young people is the greatest crisis facing Ireland and facing Europe. This remains a key priority for us as part of our long-term commitment to achieving full employment.

Labour have been at the forefront of delivering €6 billion for the European Youth Guarantee. Around €130 million has been secured to start the implementation of Ireland's Youth Guarantee programme in 2014 and 2015 and an important pilot is already being rolled out in Ballymun. Central to our youth job strategy is the full implementation of our Youth Guarantee plan.

- We will seek to increase EU funding for the roll-out of the European Youth Guarantee using the European Social Fund, other EU Funds, the European Investment Bank, the re-direction of unspent EU funds, and by ensuring additional funding during the mid-term EU budgetary review in 2016.
- We will use the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the new Erasmus+ programme to improve Ireland's apprenticeship system, particularly in identified 'jobs-rich' sectors such as the green economy, healthcare and ICT.

## Supporting SMEs

Ireland's small and medium-sized enterprises are the lifeblood of the Irish economy.

In government, and at European level, Labour has prioritised the needs of this vital sector of our economy.

- The EU budget and the European Investment Bank must play a bigger role in expanding credit to fund investment and employment in Ireland. Europe needs to do more to help Irish SMEs break into new international markets. We will:
  - Seek to use the new €2.3 billion Competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) programme for the benefit of Irish SMEs in tackling the problem of access to finance, and to improve access to markets for SMEs across Europe, and beyond, as well supporting entrepreneurs and the establishment and growth of new businesses.
  - Campaign to reduce and eliminate unnecessary and disproportionate red tape so as to promote investment, employment and prosperity.
  - Seek to ensure that the 2014-20 Structural and Investment Funds show greater awareness of the needs of SMEs, which do not have the same capacity or resources as larger firms to prepare detailed applications for EU support.
  - Encourage Irish access to the €800 million Employment and Social Innovation Programme which will provide micro-finance to help business start-ups through its Microfinance Facility to micro-entrepreneurs.
  - Seek to secure funding for Irish researchers from the €80 billion Horizon 2020 programme.

## 2. Securing the Best Deal for Ireland in Europe



### Legacy Bank Debt

Since entering government, Labour has focused on keeping its promise to the Irish people to fix the broken economy. Last year we successfully renegotiated the Promissory Note. Since then we have also shut down Anglo, exited the bailout and said goodbye to the Troika. We are now working on getting a reduction on Ireland's legacy banking debt issue so that it does not threaten the economic recovery which is well underway.

In March 2014, Labour secured the first ever European Parliament recognition that the private losses of private banks were placed on the shoulder of Irish taxpayers in order to minimise the risk of contagion to the wider Eurozone and unequivocally endorsing Ireland's campaign to lessen the legacy debt burden. This was another important milestone in lessening the legacy debt burden that arose from the blanket bank guarantee in 2008.

We will continue to strongly make Ireland's case with the key European institutions, including launching a dedicated campaign within the Economic and Monetary Committee, to secure a deal on reducing the toxic bank debt left by Fianna Fail.

### Getting the Best Deal for Ireland in Europe

Labour supports the Euro and Ireland's continued membership of the single currency. We believe in stable public finances, in bringing down deficits and in managing public debt in a sustainable and fair way.

The European Parliament must be fully involved in the exercise of the democratic control over these policies.

We will be tough guardians of the spending of EU funds, cutting out waste and fraud and directing expenditure to areas where it can make the greatest impact and get the best value for citizens.

### Putting the financial sector at the service of citizens and the real economy

Irish citizens have had to endure a heavy burden for the disastrous blanket bank guarantee imposed by the previous government.

Indeed, citizens across Europe have had to pay dearly for the mistakes and irresponsibility of an unregulated financial sector.

Regulation of the financial sector has been significantly strengthened at national and at EU level. But we believe it can be strengthened even further and we are committed to putting in place an even stronger framework that will make the financial sector work for the real economy and for employment.

We will:

- Fight for further regulation of the banking sector, to curb financial speculation and implement adequate firewalls between Commercial and Investment Banking.
- Insist on the creation of an independent and public European Credit Rating Agency.
- Continue our efforts to ensure access to credit in Ireland and across Europe.



### 3. A More Democratic Europe

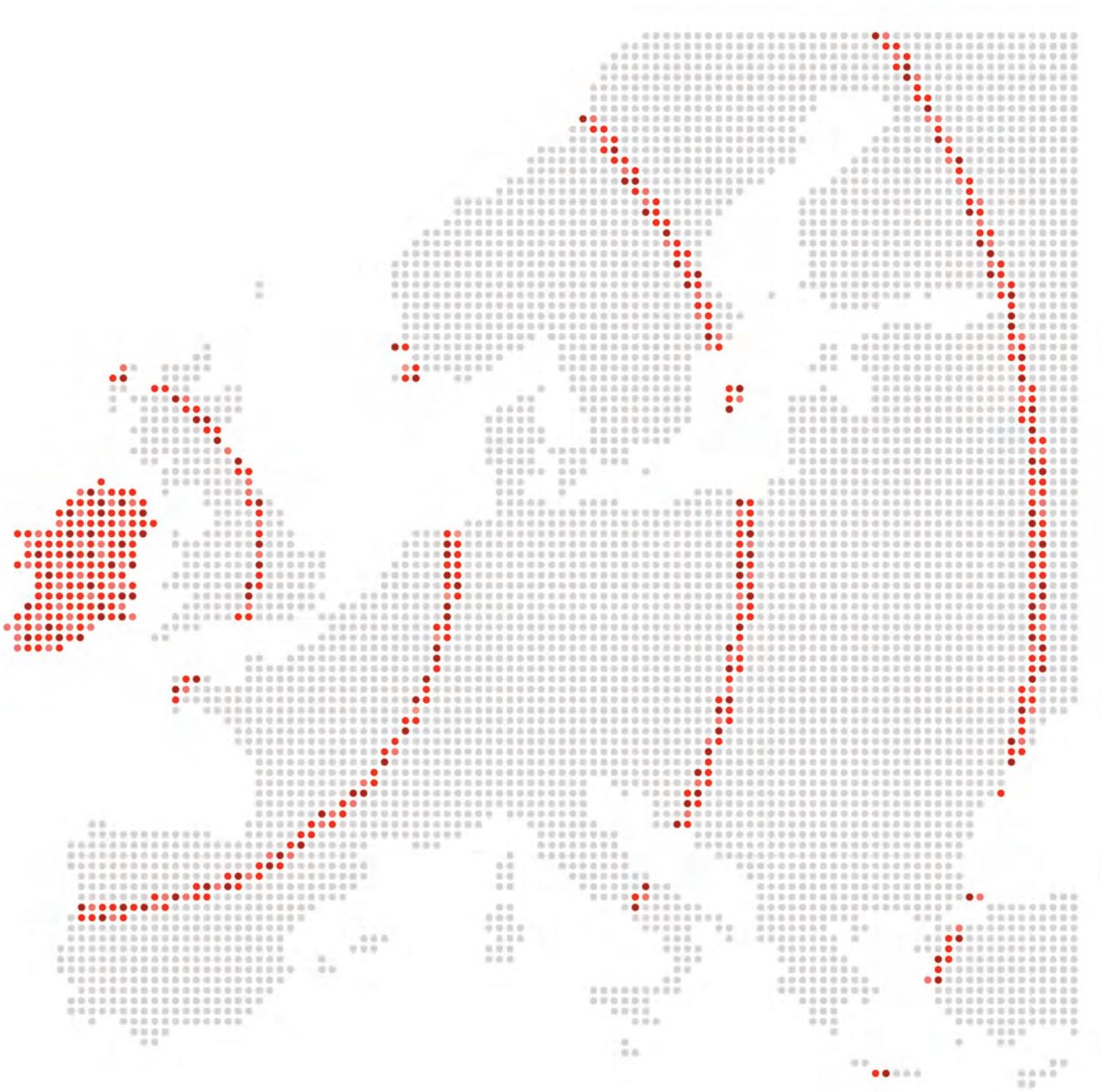


Europe must be made more democratic and more responsive to the needs of its citizens. That is why we, with our sister parties, put forward a common candidate, Martin Schulz, as our nominee for European Commission President.

For the first time in EU history, you will have a direct say in who runs Europe but we must work towards more democratic participation and control for citizens over European Union decisions.

#### Enhanced Role for European Parliament

We want a more prominent role for the European Parliament, which must exercise real democratic control. Decisions must be taken at the most appropriate level, be it regional, national or European, in the interest of European citizens. All policies must be efficient, respect democratic values, fight corruption and serve citizens in an open and transparent way. We will put in place effective European responses to breaches of fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law.



## 4. A Europe that Protects its Citizens



The EU has a strong track record on promoting equality, workplace rights and environmental protections.

- We believe more must be done to fight for a Europe that leaves no one behind and that tackles all forms of discrimination.
- We will work for the adoption of a coherent European anti-poverty strategy.
- We will work for the adoption of European Social Pact, that lays down common standards to be guaranteed in all member states - on fundamental labour and social rights, social protection and equal pay and conditions for work of equal value.
- We will continue to work for the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.
- We will be relentless in our fight against all forms of homophobia, transphobia and intolerance
- We stand for the values of equality and of non-discrimination between women and men.

### A Safer and Healthier life for all

- All citizens deserve to live a safe and healthy life. We want stronger rules that give consumers' more power. We will strive for safer food, safer products and a safer living environment.

### Tackling Crime Across the EU

- The EU should guarantee citizens' right to security by promoting cooperation in the fight against organised and cross-border crime. Implementation of the revised directive on the confiscation of the proceeds of crime should be used to promote the social re-use of seized criminal assets, in line with the recommendations Labour MEPs secured in the European Parliament's 2013 resolution on Organised Crime.

### Protecting Citizens' Privacy

- We will support EU legislation on the protection of citizens' personal data and access to information.

### Towards an Age-Friendly Europe

- We will campaign for Europe to become more age-friendly by seeking to create age-friendly economies and societies, including measures on carers' leave for workers with informal care duties.

### Safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of children

- We support the establishment of a permanent mechanism within the European Parliament with an explicit responsibility for protecting and promoting children's rights across all EU policy areas, both within the EU and externally.

### A Europe for persons with disabilities

We support a Europe that protects and promotes the enjoyment of human rights of all persons in Europe with a disability. We will:

- Support the establishment of mechanisms with the EU institutions to mainstream the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Seek to ensure enhanced EU recognition and support for sign languages in member states, including through EU education and citizenship programmes.

### Protecting Against Extremism & Combatting Racism

- Against rising extremism, we will fight for a Europe that respects everybody's rights and obligations, not one that is based on prejudice, hate and division.

### Reinforcing the Fight Against Human Trafficking

- The fight against human trafficking must be reinforced. We will support the adoption of a comprehensive EU strategy towards the eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings, to follow-on from the existing strategy which expires in 2016.



## 5. Ensuring a Greener Europe

The EU must regain global leadership on the protection of nature and natural resources and the fight against pollution and climate change. We will support clean technology and environmentally friendly production. We support further binding targets on the reduction of carbon emissions, the increased use of renewable energy and improved energy efficiency.

### Supporting the Green Economy

- We will promote appropriate investment in the green economy, renewable energy and technology. This way we will reduce pressure on scarce natural resources and help citizens to reduce their energy bills and their ecological footprint.

### Tackling Climate Change and promoting a sustainable Europe

Labour in government has driven the process of establishing landmark climate change legislation which sets out a clear path for tackling climate change, in line with our EU 2020 targets. Under this legislation, Ireland will be one of the first Member States to adopt climate change legislation and put a legal obligation on its Government to develop policies to plan for existing, and future, climate commitments.

We will campaign for separate, ambitious and binding EU targets for 2030 for renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency and will work with towards reaching an ambitious new global climate agreement in Paris at the end of 2015.



## 6. Supporting Farming Families & Rural Ireland



Farming and rural economies continue to be at the heart of Irish society and economy. Labour has always worked to secure the best deal possible for Irish agriculture and rural communities. We recognize the key strategic role of agriculture and fisheries for Irish society, and will promote a sustainable and thriving rural development.

### Supporting Agriculture & the Rural Economy

Labour MEPS and Ministers helped secure a reformed Common Agricultural Policy which will provide a total of €12.5 billion in EU and national funding to support farming and to assist rural development and aid economic recovery in rural areas to 2020. We are determined to ensure that we get the best deal possible for farming families and communities in Europe in the 2014-2020 period and we will:

- Use CAP to create growth and employment in rural areas.
- Ensure that funding allocated to Ireland under the 2014-2020 CAP agreement is fully used for the benefit of agriculture production and farm incomes.
- Work to resolve all outstanding issues in terms of the implementation of the recent CAP reform process.
- Reduce unnecessary and disproportionate red-tape on the farming sector.
- Provide greater incentives and support for young farmers in particular.
- Challenge cartel-like behaviour that exploits farmers and pushes up prices for consumers.
- Support measures to ensure that there is more equitable balance in the food chain supply especially in relation to small and medium sized producers.
- Prioritise equality of food standards and a fair deal for Irish producers in all EU trade talks.
- Encourage agri-food businesses to utilise funds available to support Irish SMEs to break into international markets – smaller “craft” food and drink producers should be particularly supported.
- Ensure that food entrepreneurial businesses are properly represented in terms of accessing funding and support at EU level.
- Work with community stakeholders and organisations to encourage the provision of clinics or workshops for young farmers on how to access funding for innovative farm practices at EU level.
- Encourage the use of EU funding secured by rural or isolated communities for the development of community projects - such as community centres which would act as a hub for all age groups - in unused publicly owned buildings.

## Ensuring Balanced Regional Development & Supporting the Border Region



No region or part of the country should be left behind when it comes to development of EU polices and access to EU funding. During the Irish EU Presidency, Eamon Gilmore led negotiations on new seven-year budget for the EU and secured €150 million in funding for a new PEACE programme. A new INTERREG programme to support the region will also soon be finalised.

- We will work to leverage EU and European Investment Bank funding to ensure balanced regional development to drive growth and jobs in all regions.
- We will drive support for the Border region, in particular in terms of funding for cross-border initiatives to support local job creation and the local economy.
- We will push for a focus on young people who are not in employment, education or training in the new PEACE programme.
- We will focus new INTERREG funding of over €200 million on Research and Development, sustainability and social inclusion in order to diversify the local economy and increase opportunities in the Border region.

### Fisheries and Coastal Communities

We have a unique marine heritage and the fisheries sector provides vital local employment and is a driver of economic activity in coastal communities all around Ireland. Labour MEPs will continue to use the enhanced decision-making role for the European Parliament on European Fisheries policy to support and promote coastal communities and our unique maritime sector.



## 7. A Europe that promotes peace, security and development



The European Union must respect the universal principles of democracy, peace and respect for human rights, including women's and children's rights. In a globalised and changing world, with conflicts and growing inequalities, Europe must live up to its global responsibilities. We want Europe to have a strong voice and the proper tools to lead in promoting peace, democracy, and shared prosperity throughout the world.

We reaffirm that Ireland's commitments under the treaties are fully compatible with our policy of neutrality and we believe that we Europe must support peace, security and development at a global level.

- We support the people struggling for democracy, social justice, non-discrimination and freedom against any form of occupation everywhere in the world, in particular in Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean region.
- We will continue to support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Europe has been actively and consistently encouraging the parties to the conflict to engage in genuine negotiations. While continuing to provide humanitarian and development aid to Palestinians, Europe must reiterate its calls for Israel to halt the expansion of settlements, lift the siege of Gaza, and cease house demolitions.
- We will promote a sustainable and just world, where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential.
- We remain committed to achieving the target of 0.7% of Gross National Income allocated to international development cooperation. While recognising the present economic difficulties, we should move towards the 0.7% target when our economy improves.
- We must fight global inequality and poverty by promoting policy coherence for development and making the Millennium Development Goals and the UN post-2015 global development agenda a success.



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