



AGREED PROGRAMME  
FOR GOVERNMENT  
1989 - 1993

Published by the Progressive Democrats  
25 South Frederick Street, Dublin 2

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## Overall Framework

Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats have agreed in the national interest on a four-year Government programme for economic and social progress.

The Programme will be reviewed after two years, and annually thereafter.

The document contains a statement of agreed objectives, which with the objectives set out in the Fianna Fail document *National Recovery - The Next Phase* constitute the programme to be implemented by the new Government.

This programme will form the basis of Government policy over the next four years, together with the Programme for National Recovery and the National Development Plan submitted to Brussels.

The new Government will fully honour all the commitments entered into with the Social Partners in the Programme for National Recovery.

Over the coming months, the new Government will begin discussions with the Social Partners to seek a new agreement to succeed the current Programme for National Recovery and to build social consensus into a permanent way of managing our affairs.

## Employment

Job creation will be the major priority of the new Government. The economic background for increased employment has improved dramatically since 1987, but to create and maintain an environment genuinely favourable to employment the new Government are determined to :

- Achieve pro-jobs tax reform;
- Reduce disadvantages represented by access costs, energy costs and internal transport costs;
- Reduce anti-competitive and restrictive practices at all levels in the economy;
- Exploit the full potential of the Single Market within the EC;
- Reduce disincentives and bureaucratic burdens for small business;
- Use the additional Structural Funds from Europe to create additional jobs in internationally traded goods and services sectors;
- Gross job creation will be accelerated under the National Development Plan, to at least 35,000 jobs per year;
- Pursue macro-economic policies to keep interest rates and inflation to the minimum.

### Competition Law

The incoming Government will introduce legislation to give effect in domestic law to provisions similar to Articles 85 and 86 of the Treaty of Rome after the Fair Trade Commission has presented their Report to Government.

This legislation will represent a significant part of the incoming Government's attempt to prepare Irish companies for the increased competition which will follow on the completion of the Internal Market in 1992.

### Public Liability

The new Government are fully committed to getting down public liability insurance costs and to this end will immediately enter talks with the industry to effect a new partnership to tackle these costs which are a burden on industry - predominantly small industry.

### Commercial State Enterprise

The new Government are committed to the maintenance of a viable and profitable commercial semi-State sector. Any changes in the ownership structure of particular State companies will only take place, if it is in the public interest and in the best interest of the company and its employees, and following consultation with the Social Partners. The Government decided last year to restructure the Irish Life Company which was originally in the private sector. The process is in train. The options after restructuring will be further examined.

## Tax Reform

### Public Finances

The overall budgetary framework for tax reform will be a reduction of the Exchequer Borrowing requirement to at most 3 % and the debt/GNP ratio to at most 120% by 1993. If economic and budgetary circumstances permit, the Government will move to reduce the level of borrowing and the burden of debt further.

### Tax Objectives

To reduce the standard rate of Income Tax to 25% by 1993 and move towards a single higher rate of tax.

The Government's objective is to achieve these tax targets on a phased and sustained basis, starting in 1990, as economic and budgetary circumstances permit. The purpose of these changes is to promote employment and to facilitate the moderation of costs.

The Government are satisfied that the achievement of the tax reforms outlined can, as with tax reforms to date, be funded by continued expenditure control, by broadening the tax base including increased tax yield from the corporate sector, by further improvement in tax collection and enforcement, including a sustained attack on tax evasion in the black economy, by the continued improved management of the National Debt, and by sustained high growth rates under the National Development Plan.

### **The Needs of the Lower Paid**

In order to provide targeted help for the special needs of part-time and lower paid workers and their families, further improvements will be made in tax exemption limits and the Family Income Supplement.

### **1992 - Tax Harmonisation**

The implications for taxation of European Community tax harmonisation will have to be taken into account in the light of the ultimate shape of the Community system and in particular the comparative situation with the United Kingdom. The negotiations in progress involve problems for many Member States, and the Madrid European Council recognised those difficulties.

The continuing negotiations will, therefore, have to take account of the fact that, on present proposals, our revenue loss would amount to some 3% of GNP annually. The new Government will continue discussions with the European Commission on this particular budgetary problem which Ireland faces and will pursue the negotiations vigorously with a view to achieving an acceptable solution.

## **Health Services**

### **1. Acute Hospitals - Action this year**

The new Government are committed to an urgent action programme this year in relation to the health services to tackle problems in the area of acute hospitals, and also in relation to hospital services, with special reference to unacceptably long waiting lists.

To this end the incoming Government intend to increase the overall level of service in major hospitals by opening further beds in acute voluntary and Health Board hospitals.

A comprehensive examination of waiting lists nationally will be undertaken to identify where major difficulties exist, and an urgent action programme will be prepared to achieve major reductions in all waiting lists, particularly the backlog in child deafness procedures and hip replacement operations, and to provide an accident and emergency and casualty service on a 24-hour basis in the major Dublin hospitals from 1 September next.

The new Government are providing a provisional allocation of an extra £15 million for the above purpose, within existing budgetary limits.

### **2. Health Structures - Improved Management of the Health Services**

Following receipt and consideration of the recommendations of the Commission on Health Funding, the new Gov-

ernment will decide upon and put into place any revised arrangements for financing the health services.

The new Government are committed to reviewing the entire system of management of the health services nationally, including the health boards, to ensure an adequate, efficient public health service providing the best possible patient care.

### 3. Health Care Evaluation

While management information is improving, further new systems will be put in place to provide the necessary detailed information, so as to facilitate and improve decision-making processes in the service and ensure that appropriate resources are identified and directed to areas of greatest need in terms of patient care.

### 4. Drugs Refund Scheme

The new Government will implement the new Drugs Refund Scheme to benefit persons on continuous medication who have large outlays of money each month for their medication to be introduced during the Summer.

The Scheme will ensure that no person on continuous medication will have an outlay of more than £28 per month for their drugs. This Scheme will be continuously monitored, refined and improved.

### 5. Drug Costs

Negotiations will be continued with the Irish Pharmaceutical Union on the implementation of the Drugs Refund Scheme and "mark up" arrangements on the other Schemes. The prescribing of generic drugs by GPs will be encouraged in line with a National Drugs Formulary to be published shortly by the Department of Health and the IMO.

### 6. Haemophiliacs

The new Government will enter into discussions with the Haemophiliacs Society and in the light of these discussions is willing to provide as necessary up to a total of £1m. this year through the Aids Fund.

### 7. Equality of Access to Health Services

The Government are committed to examining systems which will achieve equality of access to basic health care.

## Social Welfare

Means Tests will be standardised and self-assessment introduced where practicable with adequate controls and allowances for special categories.

A separate Social Welfare Appeals Office will be set up so that the the appeals system is perceived to be fair and independent.

The policy of providing special increases for the long term unemployed over and above the level of inflation will be continued, as resources permit. In particular, to reduce the incidence of poverty, special increases will be given to families with dependent children, and special account will be taken of the needs of small farmer households.

The payment of an allowance to persons who need assistance to care for elderly and handicapped relatives in their own home will be considered. This follows the recent provision which allows the payment of the prescribed relatives allowance directly to the carer.

The complex range of different welfare payment will be further simplified with particular reference to social assistance schemes for the unemployed and the sick, and with the eventual aim of introducing a single payment for one-parent families.

The number of rates of child dependent payments has already been reduced from 36 to 12. The restructuring of rates to differentiate between younger and older children will be examined, with a view to having higher rates for older children.

The structure of the payment system, including the rates of payment, insofar as it applies to dependent spouses, will be reviewed taking into consideration the findings of the Review Group on the treatment of households in the social welfare system.

### **Special Measures For the Unemployed In Urban Disadvantaged Areas**

The new Government are committed to greater community involvement in the planning and implementation of special schemes of assistance in urban disadvantaged areas with high unemployment levels.

One of the priorities in establishing FAS was to develop a training and employment service on a regionalised basis capable of responding promptly and effectively to local needs with a detailed knowledge of local needs and problems of youth unemployment. Examples of the assistance provided by FAS in less advantaged areas include the training centres, skills-training, the Youthreach Programme (including skills foundation programme, workshops and the progression year), building on experience training, social employment schemes, Community Youth Training Programme and the Community Enterprise Programme.

The new Government will implement the following measures:

1. Expand existing training and employment programmes.
2. Introduce special full-time Social Employment Schemes on a pilot basis, subject to consultations with ICTU.
3. FAS to sponsor/manage Social Employment Scheme projects.
4. FAS to sponsor/manage Teamwork projects.
5. Workspace grants under the Community Enterprise Programme to be reintroduced.
6. Workspace and other facilities to be provided through the Community Youth Training Programme with the cost of materials coming from the Lottery.
7. More backup support to be provided for Enterprise Allowance Scheme participants through the provision of experts and support from training centres.
8. Pay double premiums under Employment Incentive Scheme for persons living in those areas.
9. Improve quality and duration of existing training for long term unemployed.
10. Expand CERT programmes for the unemployed.

A number of these measures can be carried out within the 1989 allocations. The net cost in future years will be minimised through assistance from the European Social Fund, savings in social welfare, and if necessary through a reallocation of priorities in the Labour area.

## Housing

At present the areas where there is most acute shortage of housing are being assessed on a national basis, and the new Government will give special priority to the areas concerned in the public housing programme.



## Education

The pupil teacher ratio at both primary and post primary level will be reduced in the context of demographic decline.

As agreed already with the Central Review Committee, the new Government will implement a reduction of 1 point at primary level to commence in September 1990 from 27.6:1 at present to approximately 26.7:1. A continuing review of the pupil-teacher ratio at primary and post-primary levels will take place in consultation with the Central Review Committee with regard to the feasibility of a further reduction under a new Programme for National Recovery.

The new Government will consider in consultation with the Central Review Committee ways to recognise and assist the needs of pupils in disadvantaged areas, by providing extra teacher allocations including additional remedial teachers and the establishment of pilot projects for a schools psychological service for primary schools.

Extra measures for the disadvantaged will take effect from September 1989 and will be encompassed within the existing budgetary allocation.

Efforts will be made to improve the level of funding for capitation grants in primary and post-primary schools, as resources become available.

The new Government are committed to reforming the Third Level Grants Scheme with a view to ensuring greater social equity in the distribution of grants and a fairer distribution of grants in terms of the occupational status of families.

Income eligibility limits will continue to be index-linked and to be adjusted to take account of cases where more than one member of a family is concurrently seeking third-level funding.

An intensive language training programme at second level has begun in schools. This programme to promote the study of German, Spanish, Italian and French will be accelerated and enhanced by the E.C. Lingua Programme recently adopted by the Council of Ministers.

When the Government-appointed primary curriculum review body issues its report this Autumn, this report and its specific recommendations with regard to Irish language teaching will receive active attention from the new Government with a view to their early implementation.

At second level, the Irish syllabus for the new junior certificate courses will start this September, and will place much greater emphasis on oral and communicative skills. This will be reflected in the curriculum, the method of teaching and the subsequent examination. These changes will make the study of Irish more modern and attractive.

## The Environment

### **New Office for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment and an Independent Monitoring Agency**

A new Office for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment on a similar basis to the existing offices for Trade and Marketing, Science and Technology, Horticulture, and Food will be established under a Minister of State.

The new Government will also establish an Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency to deal essentially with policy issues and to have an advisory and monitoring role. It would carry out studies and prepare and publish reports and recommendations. It will monitor all aspects of pollution. This includes responsibility for existing monitoring of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coasts, beaches and atmosphere and improving and extending it as necessary.

The Office and the Minister will have responsibility for:

- All pollution legislation, reviewing existing legislation and preparing new legislation as necessary.
- Establishing a new nationwide inspectorate to guard and take action, including anticipatory action, against pollution (if possible using former Land Tax and Teagasc officers who are agricultural science graduates and who are based around the country).

- Drawing up environmental programmes on a county basis e.g. removing unsightly ruins, tree planting, landscaping, cleaning beaches etc.

- Fully supporting the European Community proposal to establish a Community Environmental Protection Agency and co-operating fully with it when established.

### **Local Authority Reform**

A Select Committee of the Oireachtas will be established to examine and report on the whole question of local authority funding, structures, functions and report within a year.

### **Unfinished Development**

Planning law enforcement will be improved by providing for: -

(a) access of all parties to the Circuit Court (as well as the present access to the High Court) to obtain an injunction against unauthorised development;

(b) explicit provision for the imposition of planning conditions to dictate the sequence and timescale of works, with the objective, if feasible, of restricting occupation of structures until the overall development is completed and/or all planning conditions are satisfactorily fulfilled.

### **Planning Compensation**

The compensation provisions of the LOCAL GOVERN-

MENT (PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT) Act, 1963, will be amended so as to exclude the possibility of compensation where planning permission has been refused because the proposed development would contravene the zoning requirements of the land in question. This amending legislation will not contain exemptions for existing landowners or for persons who acquire land through inheritance, except where zoning is changed adversely to the interest of the property owner after acquisition, e.g. residential to agricultural.

#### **Environmental Impact Assessment As a Condition of Mining Development**

The EC Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment requires that projects in the extractive industry, including mining of minerals and ores, be subjected to an assessment of their environmental impact before development consent is given to them, if they are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The provisions of the Directive were brought into operation from July, 1988 in accordance with administrative arrangements notified by the Department of the Environment.

The new Government will finalise by the Autumn of 1989 comprehensive regulations under the European Communities Act, 1972 to incorporate the requirements of the Directive explicitly into Irish law. The effect of the regulations in relation to mining will be to require the carrying out of detailed environmental impact assessment studies for mining development. Thresholds and criteria to determine the environmental significance of developments will be incorporated in the regulations, prior to issuing mining licences.

#### **Nuclear Power**

Ireland will continue to strenuously oppose nuclear power developments that may pose a potential threat to the health and safety of the Irish people and to the environment.

The new Government will examine all legal options under the Euratom Treaty, and in particular will use its Presidency of the EC to promote the establishment of a safety inspection force.

E.C.

**EC Structural Funds - Role for the Regions**

The seven Advisory Groups at Sub-Regional level in the National Development Plan representing local authorities and economic and social representative bodies will continue.

They will receive reports from Government Departments, local authorities and State agencies, explaining the progress planned in their sub-region under each of the Operational Programmes which will be published when they have been approved by the European Commission.

They will meet at least twice a year to review progress with the Plan in their sub-region.

The objective is to make the present system of participation more effective through improved communication and exchange of information between the Government and the sub-regions.

The Advisory Groups will be able to monitor and assess progress and to raise directly with State agencies any problems, difficulties or complaints they have about the progress being made, so that there is greater involvement by the sub-regions in the implementation of the National Development Plan.

The seven sub-regional Working Groups will also be re-

tained to meet regularly to co-ordinate programmes, projects and expenditure.

The Working Groups are representative of local authorities, Government Department and State agencies charged with implementing the Plan. This arrangement will ensure that at sub-regional level the programmes and expenditures will dovetail together effectively and efficiently.

**Agriculture**

The new Government will concentrate on the following objectives:

- promoting the viability of the maximum number of farms, through encouraging increased efficiency, reduction in costs, improvement in product quality, and diversification of production, while protecting the environment and natural surroundings with the assistance of an operational programme to eliminate farmyard pollution and solve the associated problem of shortage of animal housing and fodder storage facilities following negotiation in Brussels;
- increasing the effectiveness of the agri-food sector to enable it to reach its maximum potential;
- increasing headage payments as far as possible and extending the areas in which they are made;
- promoting the forestry and fisheries industries;

- stimulating non-agricultural activities in rural areas;
- providing the necessary human resources and technology base.

The new Government are determined to look after rural needs in isolated areas and inhabited offshore islands and make special provision for them.

#### **Increased Headage Grants and New Appeals System**

Decisions on increased rates of Community financing are expected before the end of the year, and following completion of current area surveys the new Government's aim will be to increase and reorientate headage grants and to negotiate with the EC on a maximum extension of the disadvantaged areas. An appeals system will be introduced for borderline areas, so that the justification for decisions in particular cases can be understood and subject to scrutiny.

#### **Off Farm Income Limits in Disadvantaged Areas**

The new Government will abolish the off-farm income conditions from 1 January 1990.

#### **Programme for Integrated Rural Development**

The new Government will introduced a full-scale national programme for integrated rural development, on the solid basis of experience gained during the operation and management of the Pilot Programme over a two-year period.

## Forestry

The new Government are committed to the rapid development of forestry, which can yield very significant job opportunities. A doubling of planting over the next five years will create an estimated 2000 additional new jobs. Downstream developments will further enhance the high added value in the industry and have a significant impact on our balance of trade.

## Fisheries

The new Government will pursue in the run-up to the review of the Common Fisheries Policy in 1992 all possible avenues with a view to achieving a better matching of the fishery resources in Irish territorial waters and the Irish catch allowed to Irish vessels under the European fisheries regime.

# Tourism

## Air Transport Liberalisation

It will be a priority of the new Government to pursue the liberalisation of European air transport during the Irish Presidency next year. The priorities insofar as Ireland is concerned are to move as far as possible towards a fully liberalised system with major emphasis on relaxed controls, lower fares, less restrictions on fifth freedom rights, improved access to new routes, and increased capacity.

The new Government will seek to secure rights to additional points in the US, particularly on the West Coast, preferably Los Angeles.

## Development of Regional Airports

Further infrastructural investment at the regional airports together with the development of an extensive range of international services will be undertaken.

## Tourism and the Environment

The new Government are strongly committed to maintaining a clean environment, which is essential for the tourist industry. The new Government will further develop the following initiatives to enhance tourism developments:

- special local task forces to control water pollution, reducing pollution incidents attributable to agriculture, fish kills

and increasing the number of prosecutions;

- licensing of industrial plant to control atmospheric emissions of pollutants;
- considerably increased glass and can recycling;
- urban renewal programmes;
- a beach development programme;
- improved signposting along major tourist routes;
- strong promotion of the use of unleaded petrol.

## New Rural Tourism Scheme

The new Government will develop a country-wide rural tourism scheme as envisaged in the National Development Plan, following the agri-tourism grant scheme under the Revised Western Package announced in April.

A range of grants supported by EC funding will be provided for facilities such as horse riding, pony trekking, fishing, sailing, for the refurbishing or expansion of visitor accommodation, for quality craft work on the farm, and for the preservation of distinctive rural cultural traditions.

## Energy

The new Government will seek to secure and maintain competitive energy supplies, which are absolutely essential for economic development. Particular priority will be given to the maximum development of indigenous energy resources.

The diseconomies of the existing oil refining and supply arrangements must be addressed. The new Government are committed to upgrading the Whitegate Refinery with third party participation so that oil product consumers in Ireland, and notably business consumers, by the eventual removal of obligatory uptake, are not put at any disadvantage relative to overseas competitors.

The new Government will seek the best feasible link-ups with the existing Community-wide energy grids as soon as possible.

Within the terms now on offer for oil and gas exploration, every effort will be made to facilitate accelerated drilling programmes.

Bord na Mona will be given every encouragement to continue with its new developmental policies to ensure that the maximum quantity of peat is delivered at increasingly competitive prices.

## Transport

### New Transport Legislation

The new Government recognise the necessity of good public transport, and the need to achieve the highest possible efficiency in the national transport system, and will continue to support the role of Bus Eireann, Bus Atha Cliath and Iarnrod Eireann in providing essential services.

A new Bill to replace the outdated Road Transport Act 1932 will be introduced. The planned changes will bring in the liberalisation of the bus transport industry to provide greater competition and increased flexibility in the range of services.

## Law & Institutions

### Law Reform

The present process of law reform needs to be speeded up. The new Government are determined to embark on a major programme of civil and criminal law reform and to change procedures, where necessary, and to ensure that this is done at a reasonable pace. The process of codifying the criminal law will be started, and new laws, removing the death penalty; changing the libel laws; and governing telephone tapping will be introduced. A process of court reorganisation will be undertaken, including the establishment of a new civil court of appeal. The new Government proposes to establish a scheme for family courts and will be guided by the Report of the Law Reform Commission on this matter.

### Oireachtas Reform

At the end of 1989 the new Government will bring forward detailed proposals for the reform of the Oireachtas, and in that process will examine, among other issues, the following: the procedure for the passage of legislation through the Dail and the Seanad, the Committee System, Question Time, and the sub judice rule. The new Government proposes that MEPs qualify for membership of the Oireachtas Committees relevant to EC affairs.

### Terms of Reference for new Constituency Commission

The following will be the terms of reference for a new Constituency Commission:

"To advise and report on the formation of constituencies for the election of members to Dail Eireann.

In making its report the Commission should take account of the following: -

- (a) the membership of Dail Eireann to be not less than 164 and not more than 168;
- (b) geographical considerations, in that the breaching of county boundaries should be avoided, if possible, and that larger-seat constituencies should preferably be situated in areas of greater population density,
- (c) other well-established characteristics in the formation of constituencies such as clearly-defined natural features,
- (d) the retention of the traditional pattern of three-seat, four-seat, and five-seat constituencies, and
- (e) the desirability of effecting the minimum changes".

### Ministerial Pensions

A Bill to implement the Gleeson Report on Ministerial Pensions, which is at its final drafting stage, will be introduced by the Government at an early date.

### Defence Forces' Pay

In December 1988 following the first major review of Defence Forces remuneration in ten years the Government



## Northern Ireland

The new Government are fully committed to working the institutions and procedures of the Anglo-Irish Agreement for the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland, to promote peace, stability and reconciliation.

The priorities for further action identified in the Review of the Working of the Conference will be actively pursued. Intensive work will continue in areas of fundamental importance to the people of Northern Ireland, including the administration of justice and relations with the Security Forces.

The new Government will renew their attempts to seek political dialogue with leaders of the Unionist community without pre-conditions and to promote greater economic and social co-operation between North and South in the context of 1992.