

# Towards a New Democratic Programme

## Reinventing and saving the European Union

- Establish a European Insurance Social Fund based on a 1 per cent levy on all member states. This Fund would pay for training and income of EU workers made redundant over a fixed period of time.
- Establish a European Climate Fund based on a community carbon tax applied across all member states at a rate of 1 per cent of GDP. This fund would be used to invest in renewable energy and inter-connectors to peripheral states as well as public transport.
- The EU should take up a 'Marshall Plan for Europe' as advocated by the German trade unions. This could be funded by a European-wide financial transactions tax and would target green public transport across the union.

## Taking work seriously

- Impose a cap of half a million euro on top salaries in the private sector. This could be part of a new social contract: the ratio of top pay to the minimum and the median should not exceed an agreed European-wide norm. A high pay commission should monitor and advise on norms for high pay in particular sectors including banking.
- Roll out a guaranteed work or training programme at EU level beginning with a programme applied to persons under 30 years of age.
- A target rate of island-wide employment (20–64-year-olds) of 80 per cent by 2025.
- Extend paid parental leave up to six months to be set at 80 per cent of sick pay levels. This could be paid, in part, from a European social insurance fund.
- Outlaw zero-hour contracts across the island of Ireland and ensure a right to a stable level of working hours supplemented, if necessary by paid training leave.

- Action to better monitor and understand the gender pay gap and identify sectoral and enterprise specific areas where follow-up is required.
- Provide stronger legal and constitutional rights for collective bargaining and trade union membership.
- Raise the minimum wage to 60 per cent of median earnings by 2025 across Ireland.
- Put in place a more effective labour market monitoring system to root out bad employment practice and failure to comply with legal standards.
- Aim for 95 per cent rates of educational attainment equivalent to upper secondary or higher among the adult population by 2030 across Ireland.

### **Taking the ‘social wage’ seriously**

- Introduce a European Cost Rental Model for the Republic of Ireland. This would offer the option of secure, affordable and quality rental accommodation to a mix of households. A public commercial company – provisionally called The Housing Company of Ireland – could work alongside the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
- In line with the Sláintecare Report, a universal healthcare system modelled along European lines to provide a top-class cradle-to-grave healthcare service on the basis of need and not ability to pay.
- Invest in a public transport system fit for a population of 10 million on the island and operating on a zero-carbon basis.
- Provide a lifelong learning plan to work with the grain of the brain by providing a greater mix of theoretical, applied and workplace-based learning. This plan should ensure that everyone is equipped to keep on learning no matter what age they are.
- Create a People’s Fund to subsume the existing ‘rainy day fund’ and the social insurance fund. This would be an active and dynamic fund driving innovation and meeting long-term social needs.
- Raise and hold public spending at 45 per cent of modified national income by 2025.

- Begin a stepwise increase in social insurance in the Republic of Ireland over a 10-year period to reach EU norms to pay for pensions and income during periods of reduced participation in the labour market. The first step should include a targeted increase in employer social insurance contribution in respect of earnings by the top 10 per cent of wage earners.
- In Northern Ireland use whatever limited revenue-raising discretion exists to reform local property taxes to pay for local infrastructural projects including investment in alternative energy sources.

### Taking tax reform seriously

- We need a root-and-branch reform of taxation.
- Prioritise an accelerated plan to increase community carbon taxes up to 2025.
- Simplify the income tax code by removing unnecessary tax reliefs and introducing a range of tax rates with a more gradual increase in personal tax (rather than the cliff-edge effect on the threshold between the lower and higher rates).
- Apply a minimum effective rate of 5 per cent to corporate income
- Review local property and other capital taxes with the aim of increasing tax yield.