



## European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland

# Guide to the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil for Anti-Poverty Groups



*'EAPN Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty and social exclusion. Our objective is to put the fight against poverty at the top of the European and Irish agendas'*



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## ***Introduction***

This Guide has been produced by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland and builds on the Guide to the 30th Dáil published by the Network in 2007. It is intended as a short briefing on the functioning of the Dáil and a simple explanation of specific areas that may be of interest to people operating in the community/NGO sector in attempting to make the best use of the Dáil.

In addition to providing some background information about the make-up of the Dáil and when it is in session, this briefing outlines how legislation is passed in the Dáil and how you can impact on proposed legislation; how parliamentary questions are put and how to lobby Dáil Committees. The Guide also outlines the role the Dáil plays in engaging with EU policy proposals.

More information can be found on the Oireachtas website, [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie), which is an excellent source of information. The previous day's Dáil debates are published there every day, and transcripts of Committee meetings are also available.

At the end of this document, there is a full list of party spokespersons and Ministers the along with a current list of Oireachtas Joint Committees and their members, and a summary of the programme for Government which outlines the Governments commitments for their term in office.

## *Ireland's parliamentary system*

Ireland has inherited much of its parliamentary system from Britain with a lower house (Dáil) and an upper house (Senate or Seanad). Ireland has both a President and a Prime Minister (Taoiseach), but the role of the President is largely ceremonial and executive authority lies with the Government cabinet of ministers, headed by the Taoiseach.

Dáil Members are elected from 43 constituencies with between three and five seats available in each constituency. The constituencies must be revised at least once in every twelve years and are generally revisited on the publication of the results of each census of population. There are 166 seats in the Dáil. Once the 166 seats are filled a Government is formed by the party holding the majority of the seats or as is more common by a coalition of parties and/or independent Teachta Dála (TDs). Once a successful vote is held on who the Taoiseach is to be, the President will then formally ask the new Taoiseach to form a Government. Elections have to be held at least every five years but elections can be held sooner if the President is asked to dissolve the Dáil for one of a variety of reasons e.g. decision by the Government to hold an early election or a successful vote of no confidence in the Government.

In the Dáil the Government members (TDs) sit on one side of the house and opposition members on the other. The Ceann Comhairle, who is one of the 166 elected members, is the neutral chairperson of the business in the Dáil. Therefore, there are 165 voting members in the Dáil.

## ***The Irish Parliament and the European Union***

The laws and policies of the European Union have an important effect on EU member states. For this reason, the Dáil and Seanad monitor EU developments closely. When the European Commission makes a proposal or publishes a policy paper Ministers are obliged under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002 to provide the Oireachtas with details of the proposal. Under the Act the relevant government department provides an Information Note to the European Scrutiny Committee on each proposal which sets out certain specific information including the policy implications of the proposal, its consequences for Irish legislation and the likely impact of implementation on Ireland.

Two Oireachtas Committees are instrumental in examining EU policies. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny (membership is detailed on page 14) decides if a proposal merits further scrutiny and then designates it to the appropriate Oireachtas Committee. The Joint Committee on European Affairs carries out oversight and monitoring of broad EU policies and programmes. Following its examination of the issues, the Committee prepares reports, setting out its opinions and observations and including recommendations, to the Houses of the Oireachtas and to the European Commission.








The Lisbon Treaty contains a protocol strengthening the role of national parliaments in relation to the European Union. Under the Lisbon Treaty, National Parliaments would be given at least eight weeks to consider any proposed EU legislation before it is put to the European Council. National parliaments can vote to issue a 'reasoned opinion' on whether or not a Commission proposal respects the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity means that the EU does not take action (in areas of shared competence) unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level.

Each of the EU Member State's national parliaments has two votes in this system (in Ireland the Dáil and the Seanad will each have one vote). If at least one-third of these votes seek to amend the Commission's proposals (or one quarter, where the proposed EU measure concerns freedom, justice and security), the Commission's draft must be reviewed (but the Commission is not obliged to amend or reject the proposal). If the Commission opts to maintain the proposal it must justify how the proposal complies with the principle of subsidiarity. If a majority of national parliaments oppose a Commission proposal as a breach of subsidiarity, and the Council or the European Parliament agree with them, then the proposal can be struck down.

Along with other reforms related to how the Oireachtas carries out its business the Programme for Government (see appendix 3) commits to increased engagement with the EU.

## Membership of 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil

Membership of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil is as follows

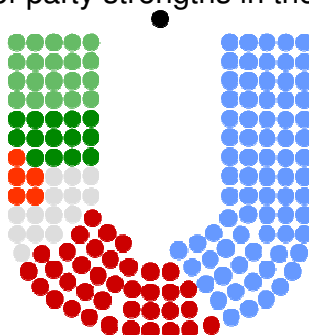
Party	Seats
 Fine Gael	75
 Labour Party	37
 Fianna Fáil	20
 Sinn Féin	14
 United Left Alliance	5
 Independents	14 <sup>1</sup>
 Ceann Comhairle	1

In the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil Fine Gael and the Labour Party have formed a coalition Government.

While there are four political parties and one political grouping (United Left Alliance<sup>2</sup>) with members in the current 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil (2007-2012), under the Dáil's procedure, a party must obtain a minimum of seven seats to be entitled to speaking time and to put questions to the Taoiseach and Government Ministers. Parties or TDs with less than seven members can come together to form a Technical Group, which entitles them to be treated like a party with regard to Dáil entitlements. It is **not** a political alliance, but a marriage of convenience that allows the smaller parties and Independents greater opportunities to engage in Dáil debate. There is a Technical Group in the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil made up from the United Left Alliance and all but three<sup>3</sup> of the independent TDs. Speaking time in the Dáil is divided between the Government parties (Fine Gael and Labour) and the Opposition parties (Fianna Fail, Sinn Fein) and Technical Group who split their speaking opportunities and allocations of questions between them in proportion to their size.

The Ceann Comhairle is Sean Barrett, a Fine Gael TD for the Dun Laoghaire constituency. As Ceann Comhairle he is responsible for chairing the Dáil in a neutral manner and does not vote or speak on issues. He is automatically re-elected at the next general election.

Diagram of party strengths in the 31st Dáil.



- Note that this is not the official seating plan.

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Donnelly, Luke 'Ming' Flanagan, Tom Fleming, Noel Gealish, John Halligan, Michael Healy Rae, Michael Lowry, Finian McGrath, Mattie McGrath, Catherine Murphy, Maureen O'Sullivan, Thomas Pringle, Shane Ross and Mick Wallace

<sup>2</sup> Alliance of the Socialist Party, People Against Profit and the Workers and Unemployed Action Group (South Tipperary).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Healy-Rae, Michael Lowry and Noel Gealish

## ***Dáil Sessions***

The Dáil's year is divided up into three terms.

- Autumn session: end of September to Christmas
- Spring session: end of January to Easter
- Summer session: after Easter to the beginning of July

During those months when the Dáil is not sitting, TDs rarely attend other than for occasional committee meetings and they can be difficult to get hold of at their Leinster House offices.

When in session, the Dáil typically sits three days a week:

- Tuesday from 2.30pm to 8.30pm
- Wednesday from 10.30am to 8.30pm
- Thursday from 10.30am to 4.45pm

Often the Dáil will sit late on those days and/or on Fridays when the Government is trying to finalise legislation through, or to facilitate debate on a matter of national importance.

## ***A Brief Guide to Legislation***

All legislation starts as a bill in the Oireachtas. Most bills are introduced by the Government. Though the opposition has the power to propose bills, they cannot propose any that might have a financial cost, and their opportunities to debate their own bills are extremely limited. So in practice the vast majority of bills that are discussed are proposed by the Government.

### **The Legislative Process**

To become law, a bill must pass through five stages in the Dáil and then stages two to five are repeated in the Seanad. The second and third stages are the most important. Although less common a bill may also be initiated and go through the five stages in the Seanad with stages two to five then repeated in the Dáil. At each stage Members must vote to allow the bill to proceed to the next stage. The summary below focuses mainly on bills initiated in the Dáil.

#### **First Stage**

The First Stage is simply a technical formality, where it is announced to the Dáil that the bill is being put forward.

As a general rule, bills may be initiated in either the Dáil or the Seanad. Exceptions to general rule are:

- Money bills (Dáil only)
- Bills to amend the Constitution (Dáil only)
- Private bills (Seanad only)

There are two ways that a bill may be initiated:

- In the Dáil, only the Government, and groups provided for in standing orders (seven or more deputies), may present bills (one bill at a time from each group). In the current Dáil the groups are Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and The Labour Party.
- In the Seanad, the Leader of the Seanad may present a bill on behalf of the Government. Groups provided for in standing orders (five or more Senators) may also present a bill, but only one bill at a time from each group. In the current Seanad the groups are Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Independent Group.

#### **Second Stage**

The Second Stage is generally the longest. The bill is debated in the Dáil by all parties in a general fashion. Members outline their opinion of the bill, what they welcome, what they oppose and what they would like to see changed.

- Individual speaking times are limited
- The proposer may also reply to the debate
- Other members may speak once only

#### **Third Stage**

This is the first opportunity Members will have to actually change the bill. This can be quite an intensive process, involving going through the bill section by section, and often line by line either in:

- Committee of the whole house or
- Responsible Select Committee or
- Special Committee.

In case of the Dáil, Select Committee is the norm (*See section on Committees on page six*). Each Select Committee corresponds to the Minister in whose portfolio this legislation is dealt. Members may speak more than once on each question (i.e. on each section or amendment) and the proposer usually replies to the members.

#### **Fourth Stage**

Once it has passed the Third Stage, the bill returns to the Dáil again for further amendments, arising out of the third stage. This is generally a tidying up exercise as amendments that were not agreed at Third Stage, or which the Minister promised to think about, are decided on. Members may speak only twice on each amendment, the second contribution being limited to 2 minutes. The proposer of an amendment may reply to the debate.

#### **Fifth Stage**

This is the final stage where the bill, as amended at previous stages, is voted on. Debate takes place on a motion "That the Bill do now pass". The proposer may also reply to the debate. Other members may speak once only.

Once the bill goes through all these stages, in both the Dáil and the Seanad, it is considered an Act and goes to the President for his or her signature.

The length of time available for this is under the control of the Government. A bill can go through both Houses of the Oireachtas in a day if the Government rushes it through and it is relatively short and non-controversial. If a bill is not considered priority, the Government might provide only small amounts of time every now and again for the bill and it can take years to complete its progress.

#### **Impacting on Legislation**

If you are looking to make changes to proposed legislation, an important mechanism is to seek a meeting with the respective party spokespersons to brief them on your concerns. You should also, if possible, bring the amendments you want to make to the legislation and explain why they would improve the bill. If a meeting is not possible for whatever reason, a briefing document and cover letter should be sent, clearly and concisely setting out your arguments. You could also seek a meeting with the Minister and his/her officials. It is important to ensure the Government Minister likewise gets a copy of your briefing document. This material should be sent as early as possible in the process.

The Third Stage is the best opportunity to get amendments accepted. Committee members, Government and Opposition, should be given a list of amendments you want passed and the arguments supporting that position. You could encourage supporters or other organisations to write or phone TDs in support of your amendments. Bear in mind, the Government has a majority on all Committees so this process is about convincing them to take your position on board. Alternatively, you might propose an amendment the Government is unlikely to accept in order to force them to take a position on an issue, or to highlight the matter in the press.

Committee meetings are held in public and you are entitled to attend if a TD or Senator signs you in, which they are generally happy to do.

Copies of bills are available on the Oireachtas website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie), as are transcripts of the debate at every stage.

## ***Dáil Committees***

**Joint Committees** are made up of members of both the Dail and Seanad and each one deals with a different portfolio area. Most Committees meet on a weekly basis when the Dáil is in session. Their main role is to monitor developments in their area of expertise, invite in organisations to give evidence on issues of concern, listen and question submissions from NGOs etc. They will also meet regularly with the Minister or senior civil servants to discuss new initiatives and will examine EU directives in their area of responsibility. Some Committees are busier than others depending on whether a lot is happening in their portfolio and the enthusiasm of the Committee Chair. Each Committee is supported by a Clerk who helps to organise Committee business and is an important contact for NGOs who want to contact or make a presentation to a Committee. A full list of the current Joint Oireachtas Committees and their members is included in Appendix 2 below.

There are also **Select Committees**. These are basically the same as Joint Committees but Senators cannot attend. Their role is to examine in detail any legislation that comes before the Committee and amend it if necessary. If you have an interest in upcoming legislation and are looking for changes in what has been proposed, the Committee Stage of the bill, when it is discussed by the Select Committee is your best opportunity. Many NGOs give suggested amendments to Committee members ahead of these debates, along with arguments for their acceptance.

A very useful exercise for many NGOs is to give a briefing to a Joint Committee. Sometimes, if a Committee is investigating a specific area, they might write to NGOs they believe would have a contribution to make and invite them to attend. More commonly however, groups and organisations write to the Committee asking for an opportunity to make a presentation.

As Committees meet only once a week, it can take some time to get an opportunity to make a presentation and the Committee might say it is too busy to meet with you. The best way to overcome this is to approach individual members of the Committee and ask them to lobby the Chair of the Committee to ensure your group gets an opportunity to make a presentation.

## ***The TD in the Dáil***

The role of the TD is to provide a democratic link between the Government, Parliament and constituents. The TD represents the people of their constituencies in many ways, including in the Dáil and through membership of committees, but also at the local, constituency level, by meeting with local people and organisations. Deputies hold advice clinics in their constituencies where constituents can meet the TD and address their concerns to that person. The deputy may use procedures as set out below, such as Parliamentary Questions to receive help with their problem.

### **Parliamentary questions**

The members of the Dáil are available by Constituency on the Oireachtas website at [www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators/tds](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators/tds). Your TD has a number of different ways he or she can raise an issue in the Dáil. The most common of these, and possibly the most useful, is through putting a parliamentary question, which is submitted either for oral/priority answer or for written answer.

## Priority and Oral Questions

Every day the Dáil is in session a different Government Minister answers questions in the Dáil on his or her portfolio. After he answers the question put to him, the TD who asked the question gets to come back and put further supplementary questions or criticise the response. It is a good way of getting a detailed answer to a question and then trying to tease out the specifics. The member of Government must be given 4 days notice for oral questions and 3 days notice for written and priority questions. In the event of a sudden, urgent matter, the Ceann Comhairle may accept questions about an urgent issue at very short notice. These are called “Private Notice Questions” and are taken at the end of Question Time.

Every TD is allowed to put two Oral Questions to each Minister, which is far too many for the short time, generally about an hour, to answer all the questions so the order of questions is done by lottery. If an Oral Question is not answered, the Minister’s answer is given in written form, and there is no opportunity for follow up. Five questions can be nominated for Priority, and the Minister is obliged to answer those questions. These questions are divided up between the various Opposition parties and Technical Group according to strength.

The Taoiseach answers questions on Tuesdays and Wednesdays only. The other members of the Government take turns to answer questions – this rota repeats itself every five weeks and can be subject to change. You can keep yourself informed of these changes by consulting the Oireachtas website, [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie)

## Written Question

These are the most common kind of questions put to a Minister. Each TD can put as many written questions to any Minister as he or she likes and will receive a response within three Dáil sitting days. It is a way of holding government accountable and being able to demonstrate this to voters, as well as obtaining information, data and statistics.

Below, please find some sample questions recently put to various Ministers to give you an idea of the format used, which is the same for written, oral and priority questions, and the kind of issues that can be raised:

‘To ask the Minister for Education and Skills if he will examine and reverse Circular 0017/2011 with regard to the withdrawal of resource teacher for traveller posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter’. (24<sup>th</sup> March 2011)

‘To ask asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the additional training and education places provided for in Budget 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter’. (24<sup>th</sup> March 2011).

‘To ask the Minister for Education and Skills if it is his intention to continue with the cap on special needs assistants for September 2011 leaving new entrants and newly diagnosed children with special needs without SNA support in mainstream classrooms; and if he will make a statement on the matter’. (24<sup>th</sup> March 2011).

‘To ask asked the Minister for Enterprise; Trade and Innovation the position regarding the review of Employment Regulation Orders and Registered Employment Agreements as set out in the National Recovery Plan; when he intends to publish the review findings and if he plans to make provision in the legislative programme for any legislative changes that may occur’. (29<sup>th</sup> March 2011)

'To ask the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will ratify the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; if he will change the employment permits system to grant permits to workers within designated job categories with the right to freely change employer; and if he will make a statement on the matter'. (29<sup>th</sup> March 2011)

'To ask the Minister for Social Protection if she will elaborate on the commitment in the Programme for Government to examine family and child income supports and if all cuts in child benefit are absolutely precluded by the Programme'. (30<sup>th</sup> March 2011)

Generally speaking, it is best to approach the Opposition spokespersons shadowing the Minister you want a question put to. It is an advantage if you have the wording of the question you want asked.

Government TDs can put parliamentary questions but do so fairly rarely, especially Oral Questions. They tend to prefer writing privately to the Minister or department concerned.

### **Speaking in the Dáil**

TDs have other chances to raise issues of concern to you in the Dáil.

**Order of Business** This is a daily event when the Dáil formally agrees the agenda for the day. There is also an opportunity for a TD to ask the Taoiseach when promised legislation is going to be published or brought forward. This can be useful if you are interested in a specific Bill the Government has promised to bring forward, or if a bill has been delayed for a long time, you can ask the TD raising the issue to call on the Government to bring it forward and maybe get some publicity for the issue.

**Matter on Adjournment.** At the end of the Dáil day, four TDs are given an opportunity to speak on an issue of local or national importance for five minutes with a Government Minister responding. The TDs are picked by the Ceann Comhairle from those who have requested such an opportunity. Since there is no opportunity for following up the Minister's response, it is not quite as useful as an Oral Question, but it does oblige the Government to give a substantial enough statement on its position.

**Speaking on legislation** All TDs have the right to speak on legislation, generally at the Second Stage. Speaking time is allocated in 20 minute slots that alternate between Opposition and Government speakers. Generally the parties split the speaking time between their members to maximise the number of people who can speak. Campaigners could lobby TDs asking them to speak on legislation to express concerns they might have.

**Voting on legislation** All parties in the Dáil use a 'whip system' so that TDs are expected to vote the way their party decides. A TD might have a different position to that of the political party, but he or she is expected, once the decision is made, to follow the party position. Pressure can be put on TDs to vote against their party, or abstain, but it is extremely rare and generally only when there is the potential of dire electoral consequences for the TD if they back their party position.

**Speaking on statements** As well as legislation, the Government will sometimes convene debates to discuss matters of major national importance. These are structured debates without any vote or decision being made, but give parties and TDs the opportunity to express their opinions and sometimes to ask questions of the Taoiseach or Minister. Most often, statements are done on major reports, especially the Tribunals, or in the lead up to EU Council meetings.

## ***Opportunities to meet TDs***

There are a number of opportunities to meet with TDs and senators inside Leinster House to lobby on a particular issue or bill.

As highlighted earlier you can write a letter or email members and if necessary follow up with a telephone call in order to try to set up meetings with them individually or a number of members from one party. In order to do this you will need to clearly spell out your position in a letter and briefing paper. This is particularly useful in meeting Ministers or opposition spokespersons. There is obviously added complexity in meeting Ministers.

There is also an **Audio Visual (AV) room** inside the grounds of Leinster house which groups can use to make presentations to the TDs and senators. In order to do this you will need the support of a sitting TD or senator to book the room and to sign you into Leinster House. They can also advise on how best to use this opportunity to greatest effect. You then control the agenda and can circulate an invitation to all the TDs and Senators, or those you wish to invite, outlining the issue you wish to address and the agenda for the presentation or event.

## ***Contacting a TD***

### **Postal**

You can write to your representative at:  
Joe Bloggs TD  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

### **Email**

Email addresses for TDs are all the same: [firstname.surname@oireachtas.ie](mailto:firstname.surname@oireachtas.ie) . For example, [enda.kenny@oireachtas.ie](mailto:enda.kenny@oireachtas.ie)

### **Phone**

A full list of phone numbers can be found in the State Directory section in the middle of the telephone directory or online at [www.eircomphonebook.ie](http://www.eircomphonebook.ie) using the search facility. Alternatively, ring the Leinster House switchboard at 01- 618 3000 and ask for the TD or Senator you are looking for.

### **Note**

If you are trying to contact a Minister, you are generally better off going through the Government Department he or she is responsible for rather than Leinster House. Also emails, while quick, are easier to ignore or may get lost. A letter or phone call is the best way to contact a TD, and to make an impression.

## APPENDIX 1: Government Ministers and Party Spokespersons

Government	Fianna Fail	Sinn Féin
<p><b><u>Taoiseach</u></b> Enda Kenny</p> <p>Junior Minister: - Lucinda Creighton - European Affairs</p>	Michael Martin	Gerry Adams
<p><b><u>Chief Whip</u></b> Minister Paul Keogh</p>	<p><b><u>Party Whip</u></b> Seán Ó Fearghail</p>	<p><b><u>Party Whip</u></b> Aengus Ó Snodaigh</p>
<p><b><u>Agriculture, Marine and Food</u></b> Minister Simon Coveney</p> <p>Junior Minister: - Shane McEntee - Food, Horticulture and Food Safety</p>	<p>Michael Moynihan (Agriculture and Food)</p> <p>John Browne (Marine and Fisheries)</p> <p>Seamus Kirk (Horticulture and Rural Affairs)</p>	Michael Colreavy
<p><b><u>Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs</u></b> Minister Jimmy Deenihan</p> <p>Junior Minister: - Dinny McGinley – Gaeltacht Affairs</p>	<p>Robert Troy (Arts and Heritage)</p> <p>Michael Kitt (Housing Planning and Gaeltacht Affairs)</p>	<p>Sandra McLellan (Arts, Heritage)</p> <p>Peadar Tóibín (An Gaeltacht),</p>
<p><b><u>Children</u></b> Minister Francis Fitzgerald</p>	Charlie McConalogue	Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin
<p><b><u>Communications, Energy and Natural Resources</u></b> Minister Pat Rabbitt</p> <p>Junior Minister: - Fergus O'Dowd - New Era Project (Economic and Recovery Authority) (Departments of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government)</p>	Eamon Ó Cuiv	Martin Ferris
<p><b><u>Education and Skills</u></b> Minister Ruairi Quinn</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - Seán Sherlock - Research and Innovation (Department of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation and Department of Education and Skills) - Ciaran Cannon - Training and Skills</p>	Brendan Smith	Seán Crowe
<p><b><u>Environment, Community and Local Government</u></b> Minister Phil Hogan</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - Willie Penrose(Super Junior) – Housing and Planning - Fergus O'Dowd - New Era Project (Economic and Recovery Authority) (Departments of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government)</p>	<p>Niall Collins</p> <p>Michael Kitt (Housing Planning and Gaeltacht Affairs)</p>	<p>Brian Stanley</p> <p>Dessie Ellis (Housing)</p>

<p><b>Finance</b> Minister Michael Noonan</p> <p>Junior Minister: - Brian Hayes - Public Service Reform and OPW (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Department of Finance)</p>		Pearse Doherty
<p><b>Foreign Affairs and Trade</b> Minister Eamon Gilmore Tánaiste</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - Jan O'Sullivan - Trade and Development - Lucinda Creighton - European Affairs</p>	<p>Seán Ó Fearghail</p> <p>Michael Martin (Northern Ireland)</p>	Pádraig MacLochlainn
<p><b>Health</b> Minister James O'Reilly</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - Róisín Shortall - Primary Care - Kathleen Lynch - Disability, Equality and Mental Health (Departments of Health and Department of Justice, Equality and Defence)</p>	Billy Kelleher	Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin
<p><b>Jobs Enterprise and Innovation</b> Minister Richard Bruton</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - John Perry - Small Business - Seán Sherlock - Research and Innovation (Department of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation and Department of Education and Skills)</p>	<p>Willie O'Dea</p> <p>John McGuinness (Small Business Regulatory Framework)</p>	Peadar Tóibín (An Gaeltacht),
<p><b>Justice, Equality and Defence</b> Minister Alan Shatter</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - Paul Kehoe - Defence - Kathleen Lynch - Disability, Equality and Mental Health (Departments of Health and Department of Justice, Equality and Defence)</p>	Dara Calleary	Jonathan O'Brien
<p><b>Public Expenditure and Public Service Reform</b> Minister Brendan Howlin</p> <p>Junior Minister - Brian Hayes - Public Service Reform and OPW (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Department of Finance)</p>	<p>Michael McGrath (Public Expenditure and Financial Sector Reform)</p> <p>Sean Fleming (Public Sector Reform)</p>	Mary Lou McDonald
<p><b>Social Protection</b> Minister Joan Burton</p>	Barry Cowen	Aengus Ó Snodaigh
<p><b>Transport, Tourism and Sport</b> Minister Leo Varadkar</p> <p>Junior Ministers: - Michael Ring - Tourism and Sport - Alan Kelly - Public and Commuter Transport</p>	Timmy Dooley	<p>Dessie Ellis (Transport)</p> <p>Sandra McLellan (Tourism and Sport).</p>

## APPENDIX 2: Joint Oireachtas Committees and their Members

### Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Clerk to the Committee: Ms. Una Langan – Email: Una.Langan@oireachtas.ie  
(until August 2011) John Hamilton from August 2011

Fine Gael	Labour	Fianna Fail	Sinn Fein	Independent/United Left Alliance
Pascal Donohue (Vice Chairman)	Joe Costello (Chairman)	Timmy Dooley	Pádraig Mac Lochlainn	Mick Wallace
Bernard Durkan	Colm Keaveney			
Sean Kyne				
Joe O'Reilly				

#### Senators:

Colm Burke (Fine Gael)  
Fidelma Healy Eames (Fine Gael)  
James Heffernan (Labour)  
Terry Leyden (Fianna Fail)  
Kathryn Reilly (Sinn Fein)

### Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

Clerk to the Committee: Mr. Paul Kelly – Email: Paul.Kelly@oireachtas.ie

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Maurice Cummins (Fine Gael)  
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### Joint Committee on Investigations, Oversight and Petitions

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Peter Mathews	Derek Nolan			Mick Wallace
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## Joint Administration Committee

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## Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Regina Doherty	Eamonn Maloney			
Peter Fitzpatrick				
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 David Cullinane (Sinn Fein)  
 John Gilroy (Labour)  
 Imelda Henry (Fine Gael)  
 Marc Mac Sharry (Fianna Fail)  
 Jillian Van Turnhout (Independent)

## **APPENDIX 3: Key Points from the Programme for Government**

### **Government for National Recovery 2011-2016**

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- Statement of Common Purpose
- Economy
- Constitutional Reform
- Political Reform
- Fairness
- Justice and Law Reform
- Equality and Social Protection
- Foreign Affairs and Overseas Development

#### **Statement of Common Purpose**

A Government that will restore our country's finances, will radically reform an Out-dated system of administration and will rebuild Ireland's reputation on the international stage. In doing so, both our parties are committed to protecting the vulnerable and to burden-sharing on an equitable basis. Fianna Fáil presided over an unequal and increasingly divided Ireland. We are both committed to forging a new Ireland that is built on fairness and equal citizenship.

The Government for National Recovery will strive to ensure that every one of our citizens has an effective right, free from discrimination, to contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of the nation. Our aim, when our legislative and constitutional changes are implemented, is that Ireland will be a transformed country. By the end of our term in Government Ireland will be recognised as a modern, fair, socially inclusive and equal society supported by a productive and prosperous economy.

Our country deserves a fresh start from the failed politics of the years past. It also deserves a new hope that a new Government guided by the needs of the many rather than the greed of the few can make a real, positive difference in their lives.

#### **Economy**

On this basis, both parties to the new Government sought, and secured, a strong mandate from the Irish electorate to renegotiate a more credible package that is better for both Ireland and Europe.

The overall aim of renegotiation must be to secure a Programme of Support and solution to the banking crisis that is perceived as more affordable by both the Irish public and international markets, thereby restoring confidence, growth, job creation and the State's

access to affordable credit from private lenders. The Parties to the Government recognise that there is a growing danger of the State's debt burden becoming unsustainable and that measures to safeguard debt sustainability must be urgently explored.

A range of measure related to banking and the EU/IMF Programme including:

- seek a reduced interest rate on the EU/IMF Programme of Support as part of a credible re-commitment to reducing Government deficits to ensure sustainability of our public finances.
- defer further recapitalisation of the banks until the solvency stress tests are complete and known to the new Government.
- a smaller banking system that reduces its reliance on funding from the Irish and European Central Banks and volatile market sources.
- end further asset transfers to NAMA.
- ensure that an adequate pool of credit is available to fund small and medium sized businesses in the real economy during the re-structuring and down-sizing programme.
- seek to dispose of the public stakes in the banks as soon as possible at the best possible return to the taxpayer.
- create an integrated decision making structure among all relevant State Departments and Agencies to replace the current fragmented approach of State bodies in dealing with the financial crisis.
- ensure that the investigations into failures in the banking system are adequately resourced.

### **2011 Jobs Programme**

Within the first 100 days – resource a Jobs Fund which will

- Provide resources for an additional 15,000 places in training, work experience and educational opportunities for those who are out of work;
- Cut the 13.5% rate of VAT to 12% up to end 2013;
- Halve the lower 8.5% rate of PRSI up to end 2013 on jobs paying up to €356 per week;
- Reverse the cut in the minimum wage;
- Abolish the Travel Tax as part of a deal with airlines to restore lost routes;
- Implement a number of sectoral initiatives in areas that will create employment in the domestic economy;
- Initiate a long-term strategy to develop new markets in emerging economies;
- Secure additional resources for the national housing energy retrofitting plan, as part of plans to phase out subsidies in this area by 2014;
- Expand eligibility for the back to education allowance; and
- Accelerate capital works that are 'shovel ready' and labour intensive including schools and secondary roads.

## Labour Market Policy

- Develop new graduate and apprentice internship scheme, work placement programmes and further education opportunities for our young unemployed providing an additional 60,000 places across a range of schemes and initiatives.
- Provide a range of initiatives to increase access to further higher level education for the unemployed.
- Make Literacy and basic workplace skills a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into wider variety of further education and training. Within this total provide 30,000 additional training places across the education and training system, distributed in line with the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.
- We will replace FAS with a new National Employment and Entitlements Service so that all employment and benefit support services will be integrated in a single delivery unit managed by the Department of Social Protection. This integrated service would provide a 'one stop shop' for people seeking to establish their benefit entitlements; looking for a job; and seeking advice about their training options. It will:
  - process citizen entitlements such as supplementary welfare allowances, higher education grants and welfare allowances.
  - manage as much as possible means testing for State entitlements.
  - be responsible for employment referral and training supports provided by FÁS. This service will offer users a higher level of personalised employment counselling, with more frequent face-to-face interviews. Those on the live register who are identified as being most at risk of long-term unemployment will receive priority treatment for more intensive support.
  - ensure active case management for people in need of assistance.

## Increasing Exports

The Programme states that Ireland's economic recovery must be export-led and outlines a number of measures to support this.

## Innovation and Commercialisation

**A broad range of measures are outlined covering areas such as** implementing the recommendations in the Trading and Investing in the Smart Economy Report; promoting and supporting investment in technology research, removing barriers to and supporting innovation and accelerating exploitation of new technologies; engagement with the 'Innovative Union' proposals as one of the seven flagship initiatives under EU2020 Strategy. It includes a number of measures to support research and development.

The Programme also includes a range of measures related to **supporting SMEs and Financial Services and Credit to Business**. This includes promoting a greater appreciation of the co-operative model as a distinct form of organisation, ensure a level playing field between co-operatives and the other legal options structuring enterprise activities, and provide a conducive framework for the full potential of the co-operative model to be realised, including in areas such as childcare, education, housing, energy retrofitting, environmental protection, transport and healthcare.

## Sectoral Strategies

The Programme includes strategies for specific sectors such as in agri-food, tourism, International Education, green jobs and the social economy. This includes:

- double funding for home **energy efficiency and renewable energy** programmes until the end of 2013, after which time these schemes will be ended. After 2013 roll out a 'pay as you save' scheme to continue home energy efficiency retrofitting work without recourse to public funding.
- promoting the development of a vibrant and effective **social enterprise** sector. Instruct agencies to view social enterprises as important stakeholders in rejuvenating local economies. Continue support for social innovation projects for young people through education, community and voluntary structures.

## Investment Strategy

Draw up a **new National Development Plan** that reflects Ireland's changed economic circumstances, covering the seven-year period 2012-2019. The plan will be based on a comprehensive study of Ireland's public investment priorities over that period. It will include:

- In the initial years, when resources will be most heavily constrained investment in school building, non-national roads, healthcare, and in job-creation will be prioritised.
- creating a holding company to manage the state's holdings of the semi-states, and to coordinate investment in key priority areas identified by the Government, including energy, water and forestry.
- creating a Strategic Investment Bank that will become a provider of finance to large capital projects, a conduit for venture capital and a lender to SMEs.

## Social Enterprise

The Government will promote the development of a vibrant and effective social enterprise sector. They will instruct agencies to view social enterprises as important stakeholders in rejuvenating local economies. They will continue support for social innovation projects for young people through education, community and voluntary structures.

## New Economic and Recovery Authority (NewERA)

The Government plans to restructure semi-state bodies in the area of energy, broadband, forestry and water. They will target up to €2 billion in sales of non-strategic state assets drawing from the recommendations of the McCarthy Review Group on State Assets when available. This will be reinvested as part of the role of the New Economic and Recovery Authority (NewERA).

## Constitutional Reform

Prioritise putting to the people by referendum a number of urgent issues related to reforming the constitution. These will be looked at by a Constitutional Convention which will carry out a wider review. This list includes:

- Abolition of the Seanad
- The Dail electoral system

- A referendum to amend the Constitution to reverse the effects of the Abbeylara judgment to enable Oireachtas committees to carry out full investigations.
- A referendum to amend the Constitution to ensure that children's rights are strengthened, along the lines recommended by the All-Party Oireachtas committee.
- Reducing the presidential term to 5 years and aligning it with the local and European Elections
- Provision for same-sex marriage.
- Amending the clause on women in the home and encourage greater participation of women in public life.
- Possible reduction of the voting age.

## Political Reform

### Political/Dail Reform

- Open up the Budget process to the full glare of public scrutiny in a way that restores confidence and stability by exposing and cutting failing programmes and pork barrel politics.
- Restore the Freedom of Information Act to what it was before and extend its remit to public bodies.
- Enhance the parliamentary relationship with the European Parliament in conjunction with Ireland's MEPs. These arrangements will include regular attendance by MEPs at relevant Dáil committees.
- Give the Oireachtas responsibility for full scrutiny of EU draft proposals, for proper transposition of EU legislation and for holding the Government accountable for the decisions it takes in Brussels. All Oireachtas committees must share the burden of dealing with EU policies and legislative proposals.
- Systems must be put in place to ensure that Ministers do not bypass the Oireachtas and make decisions in Brussels on EU matters before these matters are subjected to scrutiny by the Oireachtas.
- The Taoiseach will be obliged to brief the Oireachtas prior to attending European Council meetings and to engage with the Oireachtas in debate on EU issues of national significance and concern.
- The Oireachtas will devote a full week each year to debating major EU issues of concern to Ireland such as the Draft Annual Work Programme, Green and White Papers and proposals for EU budget co-ordination.

### Local Government

- Move many of the functions currently being performed by agencies – such as community employment and enterprise supports – back to local government and ensure that all property related revenues are part of the income stream of local government.
- Committed to a fundamental reorganisation of local governance structures to allow for devolution of much greater decision-making to local people. We will give local

communities more control over transport and traffic, economic development, educational infrastructure, and local responses to crime and local healthcare needs.

- Merge local enterprise and job support functions of local, regional and national agencies into a single business and enterprise unit within Local Authorities. This will allow streamlining of local job creation and support functions, increased shared knowledge capability and resources while saving on administration costs.
- Reduce the number of public sector employees by between 18,000 and 21, 000 by 2014 and by a further 4,000 by 2015.

## Fairness

### Health

- Universal Health Insurance and equal access to care for all. End the two-tier system of access to hospital care. Access will be according to need and pay according to ability to pay. Insurance with a public or private insurer will be compulsory and related on ability to pay. The state will pay insurance payments for people on low incomes and subsidise payments for people on medium incomes.
- Introduce Universal Primary Care which will remove fees for GP care and introduce access to care without fees for all in the term of the Government.
- Investment in the supply of more and better care for older people in the community and in residential settings will be a priority.
- Commitment to reducing the stigma of mental health and ensuring early and appropriate intervention. Policy on mental health incorporates the recommendations of A Vision for Change. Ring-fence €35m annually for community mental health teams and services.

### Education

- Maintain and improve the quality of the free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Development.
- As resources allow invest in a targeted early childhood education programme for disadvantaged children.
- Endeavour to protect frontline services in education and seek efficiencies and work practices, in line with the Croke Park Agreement.
- No child should leave school unable to read or write. As a matter of urgency develop a national literacy strategy for children and young people.
- Consider recommendations in the review of the DEIS programme and use it as a platform for new initiatives to deliver better outcomes for students in disadvantaged areas.
- Support diversity in education of children with special needs.
- Encourage schools to develop anti-bullying policies and in particular, strategies to combat homophobic bullying to support students.

- Improve co-ordination and integration of delivery of services to the Traveller community across all Government Departments, using available resources more effectively to deliver on principles of social inclusion, particularly in areas of Traveller education through the DEIS programme.
- Lifelong learning, community education and vocational training for jobseekers will be a high priority.

### **Housing, Distressed Mortgages, Repossessions etc:**

- Introducing a two year moratorium on repossessions of modest family homes where a family makes an honest effort to pay their mortgage.
- Fast-tracking personal bankruptcy reform needed to bring us into line with best international standards, such as introducing a flexible discharge period for “honest bankrupts”, defined as one that has materially complied with the Tax, NAMA and Companies Acts among others.
- Converting the Money Advice and Budgeting Service into a strengthened Personal Debt Management Agency with strong legal powers. The agency will support families who make an honest effort to deal with their debts, including non-mortgage debt, providing protection from their creditors where appropriate, so that they have time to sort out their affairs. In order to do so, the Personal Debt Management Agency will have quasi-judicial status.
- Making greater use of Mortgage Interest Supplement to support families who cannot meet their mortgage payments, which is a better and cheaper option than paying rent supplement after a family loses their home.

### **Social Housing**

- Introduce a staged purchase scheme to increase the stock of social housing, while achieving the best possible value for public investment. Under the terms of this scheme, leased dwellings will revert to the ownership of local authorities and housing associations at the end of the leasehold period.
- We will enable larger housing associations and local authorities to access private sector funding for social housing by issuing ‘social housing bonds’, secured on the value of their existing housing stock when market conditions allow.
- We are committed to urban regeneration to revitalise communities in areas such as Limerick to give families a better quality of life.

### **Homelessness:**

- Committed to ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough.
- In line with our Comprehensive Spending Review, we will alleviate the problem of long term homelessness by introducing a ‘housing first’ approach to accommodating homeless people. In this way we will be able to offer homeless people suitable, long term housing in the first instance and radically reduce the use of hostel accommodation and the associated costs for the Exchequer.
- Take measures that aim to prevent, as much as possible, problems like homelessness.

## Justice and Law Reform

- End the practice of imprisoning people who cannot pay fines or debts and introduce a system which takes a small amount of money from wages or social welfare by 'attachment order' to pay off a fine or debt over time, as an alternative to imprisonment people who refuse to pay.
- Introduce consolidated and reformed domestic violence legislation to address all forms of domestic violence, threatened violence and intimidation in a manner that provides protection to victims.
- Introduce a comprehensive reform of the immigration, residency and asylum systems, which will include a statutory appeals system and sets out rights and obligations in a transparent way.

## Community and Voluntary Sector

- During a time of recession and deep unemployment the Government acknowledges the vital role of the community and voluntary sector working in partnership with local communities, State agencies and local authorities.
- Establish a new model of financing social interventions – called Social Impact Bonds – that share audited exchequer savings with charitable and voluntary Organisations

## Equality and Social Protection

### Minimum Wage

- Reverse the recent cut in the national minimum wage.

### Tax, Social Welfare and Poverty

- Review the Universal Social Charge.
- Maintain social welfare rates.
- The Commission on Taxation and Social Welfare will examine and make recommendations on the interaction between taxation and the welfare system to ensure that work is worthwhile. In particular, it will examine family and child income supports, and a means by which self-employed people can be insured against unemployment and sickness.
- The elimination of poverty will be an objective of this Government. Committed to achieving the targets in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion to reduce the number of people experiencing poverty.
- Adopt a new area based approach to child poverty, which draws on best international practice and existing services to tackle every aspect of child poverty. Initially roll this model out in ten disadvantaged communities.
- Complete and publish a strategy to tackle fuel-poverty.
- Examine the social protection system with a view to identifying and eliminating **poverty traps**. including:

- amending the 30 hour rule for Rent Supplement and Mortgage Interest Supplement for people moving from welfare to work.
- activating people on a reduced week who refuse extra day(s) employment.
- over time, One Parent Family Payment will be replaced with a parental allowance (or family income based payment) that does not discourage marriage, cohabitation or work.
- Tightly regulate **moneylenders and debt collectors**.
- A zero tolerance approach to **welfare fraud**
- Reduce reliance on Rent Supplement and move eligible recipients to the Rental Accommodation Scheme.
- Raise the issue of Child Benefit in respect of non-resident children at EU level, and seek to have the entitlement modified to reflect the cost of living where a child is living.

### **Equality**

- Require all public bodies to take due note of equality and human rights in carrying out their functions
- We will enact legislation to amend tax and social welfare law in respect of civil partnerships. We will amend the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabiting Couples Act 2010 to address any anomalies or omissions, including those relating to children.

### **People with Disabilities**

- Following wide consultation publish a realistic implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy.
- Carry out a Comprehensive Spending review to examine all provision for people with disabilities with a view to determining how users can get the best services.
- Move a proportion of public spending to a personal budget model so that people with disabilities or their families have the flexibility to make choices that suit their needs.

### **Older People**

- We will complete and implement the National Positive Ageing Strategy so that older people are recognised, supported and enabled to live independent full lives.
- Local Authorities will be required to establish Older People councils, where members of the community can raise local concerns or issues of importance.
- Support older people in living in their own homes and communities for as long as they wish and will facilitate this by ensuring that the eligibility criteria for the home help and the Home Care Package Scheme are applied consistently. We will also develop and implement national standards for home support services which are subject to inspection by the Health Information and Quality Authority.
- Reform the pension system to progressively achieve universal coverage, with particular focus on lower-paid workers, to achieve better risk sharing, and to provide for greater flexibility for those who wish to retire on a phased basis.

## **Foreign Affairs and Overseas Development**

### **Overseas Development**

- We are committed to the 0.7% of GNP target for Overseas Development Aid. We will seek to achieve this by 2015.

### **Ireland in Europe**

- Fully committed to the Europe 2020 Strategy and its creation of employment and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth



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