

European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

Press Release- The COVID-19 crisis must be used to build a better future for all as part of the Programme for Government

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The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is calling on Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and any other party involved in Government formation to ensure that any Programme for Government includes a commitment to implementing a strategy to end poverty and builds upon the momentum of Ireland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that an adequate income for all and essential public services are a high-level priority.

EAPN Ireland welcomes the measures which have been taken so far to that ensure income, community supports, and health care are available to all who require them during the Coronavirus pandemic. It also shows that the steps that have been taken indicate that the provision of essential public services and adequate social welfare supports are a political choice and achievable.

EAPN Ireland Paul Ginnell Director states: *"It is more apparent than ever that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the rates of social welfare supports and provision of public services were inadequate to meet the needs of many and therefore reinforced fundamental inequalities in society."*

He goes on to say: *"Some of the measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst very welcome, highlight to us the major gaps in service provision prior to the crisis. For example, the current operation of our health services as a one-tiered system to ensure access to health care based on need rather than the ability to pay. We are also seeing a €350 COVID-19 pandemic unemployment payment as opposed to the €203 per week payment that most previous recipients receive."*

He adds: *"When the immediate crisis is over, we cannot be allowed to return to the days of austerity policy and lower standards. Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, and any other potential coalition partner, need to seize the opportunities presented by the introduction of recent measures and develop a Programme for Government which recognises and responds to the collective need for adequate income and accessible and affordable quality public services that provide for and respond to the needs of everyone in Ireland. It is clear from recent events that this is vital to society at large and something we can strive to achieve if the political will is in place".*

Mr Ginnell concluded: *"Before this crisis hit there were more people in poverty in Ireland than before the last economic crisis over ten years ago. We were failing to build a society that treated everyone with fairness and decency. We need to be more ambitious now and the Programme for Government needs to map out a route that ends poverty and builds a decent future for everyone".*

Ends

- Notes: EAPN Ireland Blog: [Using the Covid-19 Crisis to Build a Better Future for All](#)