



Community Platform Manifesto for the General Election



The Community Platform is an alliance of 31 national networks and organisations in the community and voluntary sector working to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

Platform members believe the upcoming General Election presents an opportunity to address many of the long-term inequalities in our society involving the eradication of poverty, the provision of universal, accessible and affordable public services and decent jobs, and the creation of inclusive, resilient, sustainable and empowered communities.

In the upcoming General Election the Community Platform has prioritised four key areas which it is asking political parties and independents to address.

- 1 The eradication of poverty**
- 2 The delivery of a universal public system of early childhood education and care and school age childcare**
- 3 The implementation of an effective model of collaborative governance**
- 4 The creation of inclusive, resilient, sustainable and empowered communities**



These priorities are rooted in the values of dignity, social and economic justice, equality, solidarity, social and economic inclusion, sustainability, participation, and transparency which we call on all election candidates and political parties to uphold.

We also call on all candidates and political parties to conduct their campaigns in a way that promotes respect for all and does not incite hatred or prejudice on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, 'race' (including skin colour, nationality, ethnicity), religion, membership of the Traveller Community, or socio-economic status.



1



THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Develop and implement an all of Government anti-poverty strategy based on the target of eliminating consistent poverty by 2030 with a range of policy and administrative measures adequate to ensure this target is achieved.

Poverty is a violation of human rights and has a detrimental impact on the capacity of people to live with dignity, leading to social exclusion and physical and mental ill-health.

The national poverty reduction target is based on consistent poverty. The current commitment for poverty reduction, as stated in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, is to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2025. In 2023, 3.6% of the population, or more than 190,000 people, were in consistent poverty.

However, the Platform believes that no-one should live in poverty and the goal should be to eliminate consistent poverty and reduce social and economic inequalities. The impact of poverty on people's lives makes it an urgent priority so this goal should be achieved by 2030. Key to real poverty eradication is reducing the scale of all forms of inequalities across society including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic, addressing inequalities of wealth, income, and access to services.

This would also involve the elimination of consistent poverty for all groups and communities in society, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals commitment to leave no-one behind. Achieving the goal of eliminating consistent poverty will involve a high level of political commitment and policy measures that are adequate to meeting this challenge.

These policy measures should include:

- Income adequacy for everyone, in or out of work, and in retirement.
- Access to quality, affordable and sustainable public services for all irrespective of income level, including public housing, education, transport, utilities, care and health, including the full implementation of Sláintecare.
- Access to a quality job, which provides a decent income, for those who can work.
- Effective and transparent ex-ante poverty and equality impact assessment.
- Effective and proactive measures to prevent all forms of discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights.

2

THE DELIVERY OF A UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SYSTEM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE AND SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE

Design and implement a Public System of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) which is fully inclusive, accessible to everyone and properly funded and resourced.

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) is a key public service and if properly designed and delivered has the potential to contribute to the elimination of child poverty and disadvantage. ECEC and SAC can improve life chances for all children, advance equality for women, benefit educators, while also supporting greater participation in the labour market and benefitting wider society.

The Community Platform proposes a public model of ECEC and SAC based on the six principles of:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✓
Child centred | ✓
State Responsibility | ✓
Investment |
| ✓
Quality Inclusion and accessibility | ✓
Equality | ✓
Decent working conditions |

More details are contained in the Community Platform Principles for delivering a high quality, inclusive and accessible Public Childcare Model.

The policy measures needed to implement a public model of ECEC and SAC that meets these principles are:

- Prioritise investment in the public system and move away from extensive reliance on the private and informal market.
- Engage with all relevant stakeholders, including community childcare providers, in the design and implementation of a public system of ECEC.
- Make childcare provision accessible to all children regardless of income or employment status of parents.
- Substantially increase investment in childcare to at least 1% of GNI* over the course of the next Government, in line with UNICEF recommendations.
- Develop a system that ensures affordable fees for families.
- Resource School Age Childcare, supports for childminding and the forthcoming National Early Learning and Childcare Agency.
- Work towards professional salary scales including sick pay and pensions for educators.
- Introduce professional pay scales that will recognise experience and qualifications (starting with SIPTU recommendation of minimum €15/hour for educators, and 10% increase across all other grades)
- Support and invest in Continuous Professional Development for all educators.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EFFECTIVE MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Put in place a Collaborative Governance Advisory Body, led by the Department of the Taoiseach, and with representatives from across civil society, to oversee the establishment and monitoring of issue specific working groups at departmental level.

3

Irish society faces a number of major shorter and longer-term challenges such as housing, health, care, poverty and the climate transition. Failure to resolve these challenges in a sustainable manner is having a particularly negative impact on those communities and groups in society who are already the most marginalised and socially excluded. These are the same communities and groups that have the least influence in how policy is developed and implemented.

In order to address these social challenges in a way that is effective and sustainable the Government and its departments need to develop and implement a more effective approach to how it collaborates with civil society and particularly those communities most impacted by policy decisions.

Details of the proposals are outlined in Towards A Progressive Model of Collaborative Governance: A Community Platform Discussion Paper

The Community Platform has developed a Discussion paper containing proposals for a more inclusive and progressive model of collaborative governance. This involves the setting up of a Collaborative Governance Working Group led by the Department of the Taoiseach, involving representation from across civil society, including the community and voluntary sector, which would:

- Identify issues or themes of societal importance to be addressed through a collaborative process.
- Liaise with the relevant government department(s) which will take the lead on collaborative processes to agree appropriate mechanisms and structures and set up issue specific working groups.
- Make recommendations to address capacity gaps.
- Be responsible for oversight and maintaining the standards of collaborative governance practices to ensure effective outcomes.
- Monitor and review the agreed processes.

4

THE CREATION OF INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE AND EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES






Build on the pilot Community Development Programme and expedite the establishment of a network of autonomous community development projects in and with marginalised communities.

Participation in the policies, strategies and plans that affect communities is a right, and there is increasing acknowledgement that active engagement of empowered communities provides better analysis of needs and better solutions. Community development is key to providing the conditions to empower, enable and support communities to engage.

The current pilot Community Development Programme has already demonstrated the effectiveness of this work and the projects have made a significant difference to the communities in and with which they are working. Currently with ten projects, there is an urgent need to invest in and expedite the rollout of the programme.

The Community Platform



-  c/o EAPN Ireland, Carmichael House
4 North Brunswick Street Dublin 7, Ireland
-  +353 (0)1 8745737
-  communityplatform@eapn.ie
-  www.communityplatform.ie
-  @CommunityP_IRL

The Community Platform is an alliance of 31 national networks and organisations in the community and voluntary sector working to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

- Age Action Ireland
- All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland
- Community Action Network
- Community Work Ireland
- Cairde
- European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland
- Family Resource Centre National Forum
- Financial Justice Ireland
- Focus Ireland
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Independent Living Movement Ireland
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Refugee Council
- Irish Rural Link
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- National Traveller Women's Forum
- National Women's Council
- One Family
- Pavee Point
- Rape Crisis Network Ireland
- Safe Ireland
- Sign Language Interpreting Service
- Simon Communities of Ireland
- TASC
- Threshold
- Treoir
- Women's Aid
- Women's Collective Ireland