



Irish Democratic Party Platform

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***I**n an expression of our members' shared values and ideas, we present the Platform of the Irish Democratic Party. Members of the IDP have diverse backgrounds and represent a broad cross-section that we believe is at the ideological centre of Irish society. While embracing diversity and valuing new insights, we have strived to reach a common position on many issues. The vision described in this document is the result of this process.*

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Preface

***L**et us not lose sight of the enormous potential on this island. As a future generation of leaders breaks new political ground, we can finally move forward and leave the empty rhetoric, vested interests and cronyism of the old political order behind. The People of Ireland must rally behind any political movement that stands for genuine political reform to build the foundations of a Republic worthy of their children and grandchildren. Today's difficulties will soon be yesterday's as opposing groups discover common goals, and break down the barriers to achieving them. The silent majority at the centre of Irish society will finally discover true representation in the democratic institutions of our Republic.*

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***T**rust can be restored in our political system. Many of us have realised that the leadership needed to achieve this was not to be found among a tainted political class. We are a group of citizens, who, disillusioned with a failed system, realised that no existing group could truly represent us. Rather than resign ourselves to apathy, we established the Irish Democratic Party as a group to express our vision. We do not pretend to stand for everyone. We endeavour to offer a voice for many of the silent majority, who are largely without vested interests or a political lobby, and who, we believe, share our vision. Rebuild your Republic with us.*

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Please note: This document is in summary format, and many policies are listed as points, not described in paragraphs. Further details and background to policy choices will be included and expanded upon in future versions of this document and in other related IDP documents.

Please check our website www.irishdemocraticparty.ie for the latest version of this document.

IDP and You!

In this section we present some of the questions that are commonly asked when people are unsure if the IDP is the group that best represents them.

The Irish Democratic Party is one of several new and existing political groups in Ireland. Taking a position on a particular issue is usually favourable to some people and unfavourable to others. We do our best to take a balanced approach where possible but are not afraid to tackle vested interests.

What is your ideology?

Ideological labels are often misleading, divisive and counter-productive. Many labels exist to describe ideology, which are then further qualified by sub-labels. They often overlap, and some have a completely different meaning depending on the context. We embrace aspects of several different ideologies. If you could describe yourself as centrist or centre-left / centre-right, and of course, democratic, then that's a good start.

See the section on Core Values for further information.

I feel strongly about...

Today, most people have busy lives with little time for complex political issues. Some issues, however, will be personally very important to you, depending on your background and personal experiences. This is your **baseline** platform and is what you should look for in the policy platform of any political group. First, skim through this document to see if your key issues are represented. If so, then the IDP may be for you.

If the IDP platform doesn't reflect your *baseline* but you think we're on the right track, then we'd love to hear your ideas! Otherwise, the IDP may not be for you. There are other groups with different platforms that may better represent your ideas.

I don't agree with some of your ideas

The IDP maintains a position on many policy areas and there will inevitably be some which do not reflect your personal wishes. A political movement cannot be all things to all people - it must base its identity on its core values and its overall policy platform. Once you decide that the IDP reflects your baseline platform, the next consideration is not so straightforward. You must judge whether the IDP platform is the one that, on balance, best fits your personal wishes - it's not always a clear YES or NO.

Why don't you have a position on... ?

Among the stated proposal summaries, there will be some notable absences. There are several reasons for this.

Constitutional: If this relates to an issue of fundamental human rights, the political system, or another issue that concerns the Constitution, then it should be addressed by holding a referendum. In that case, the people decide, and not their elected representatives.

The IDP holds firm views on some of these issues, political reform in particular, and we would take a firm stance on these during a referendum. For issues we do not address with policy, our members may have differing opinions, and express these as their personal opinions.

Conscience: The IDP identifies a few select issues as being "conscience issues". These are typically issues of a very personal or contentious nature, and currently include issues such as abortion, the legalisation of "soft" drugs and prostitution. Any future IDP representatives would be allowed a "free vote" on these matters. In the case of a constitutional amendment, they would be free to choose whether or not to support a Bill involving a referendum.

During an election campaign, voters choosing between election candidates on the basis of these "conscience issues" should ask the individual candidate for their personal position on these matters.

The IDP aims to keep the number of "conscience issues" to a minimum and ensure that the overall IDP Platform encompasses comprehensive measures for many policy areas.

Trade-off: The IDP, in contrast to some other groups, intentionally does NOT aim to address all issues. A society has limited resources that have to be allocated both fairly and productively. It is irresponsible for a political group to promise what they cannot ever hope to deliver. Society loses and ultimately, the political system loses the trust of the people.

Smart policy must both fit with the wishes of the electorate, AND be realistic and based on priorities. This can lead to some perfectly good and deserving proposals being postponed and not included in the proposed Programme for Government.

Pending: There are some areas that remain to be studied, and they await being addressed by IDP members and the IDP Policy Team. In some cases, the IDP does not have particular expertise within our party membership to properly address some policy areas.

We are happy to welcome new members into the IDP - especially those with an educational background or professional experience in a particular area. You can help us to develop and improve our policy platform - we'd love to hear your ideas!

Some of your ideas seem unrealistic

Possibly, however, some policies are long term goals while others are more immediate proposals that we feel should be implemented as soon as possible. As the IDP considers political reform as one of its main objectives, constitutional change will be required. Many IDP policy proposals will need to be consolidated into a proposal for a referendum.

It is also true that today's reality of limited resources and necessary trade-offs and sacrifices currently facing Ireland threatens to check the really big ambitions that involve engagement at a global level. There is, however, a very significant resource that we do not use.

The IDP does not identify itself as either pro-European or Eurosceptic, but instead recognises that we are part of a greater community in terms of geography, culture and trade. The European Union is imperfect but rather than isolating ourselves, we should seek to shape and improve it. By leveraging our EU membership, Ireland can project its influence far beyond our borders and achieve what we could not do alone.

I don't have the time

Don't worry! All our registered members help the party to achieve official recognition and increase our influence. There are no obligations to commit time or resources to our activities. Some members who are in a position to take more active roles become involved in policy development, canvassing, promotion and fundraising. The level of participation is completely up to you.

Where do I sign up?

Great! If you attend one of our meetings, you can complete an application form. Otherwise, please use the membership form on our website www.irishdemocraticparty.ie. Optionally, specify any activities you would like to participate in, and get in touch. If you have a background or particular expertise in a specific policy area, let us know - we may have an opening on one of our policy research teams. Finally, spread the word!

Core Values

Members of the IDP include centrists, liberals, reformers and constitutional republicans. The core values and resulting platform of the IDP are informed by these principles. The IDP upholds equality and secular government while respecting the traditional ethos of families and communities. Economically, our policy is centrist overall with a mix that we believe is cohesive and effective in achieving prosperity, while striving for social justice and the common good.

Democratic Ideology

The Irish Democratic Party believes in **representative democracy** based on **popular sovereignty**, the **common good**, **civic virtue**, **civil liberties** and **social justice**. These worthy, but occasionally conflicting values must be reconciled through fair and balanced policy, and by selectively adopting aspects of several philosophies. In order to achieve fairness and integrity, there should be a balance between **citizens' rights and responsibilities**. Any government must uphold these values and be **accountable** to the People. This can only be achieved with true political reform **through the democratic process**.

Republicanism

Republicanism in its classical sense has many virtues, however, its contemporary meaning has diverged from this substantially, especially in the context of Irish history, or politics in the United States. The IDP condemns terrorism and fully supports the Good Friday Agreement and St Andrews Agreement.

Ireland is a *republic*, based on popular sovereignty and the will of the People as opposed to the rule of a monarch. We believe in many aspects of *constitutional republicanism* in the classical sense, where the power of government is limited by both the Constitution, and checks and balances between separate branches of government. *Civic virtue* and the *common good* are often stated as key values of *classical republicanism*.

Liberalism

Liberalism in a modern European context is often used to describe parties with a *progressive* and *centrist* ideology. At its core are the rights of the individual including tolerance and freedom of conscience, openness, private enterprise and vigilance of those in power.

Traditionally, civil liberties and free markets were paramount, however, *modern liberalism* in Europe has evolved to espouse equality of opportunity, social justice, the common good and market regulation to check monopoly power. More recently, liberalism has developed further to embrace the values of sustainable development and environmental protection, which prevail over *laissez-faire* exploitation of natural resources and unchecked development.

Economy and Jobs

The IDP recognises private enterprise as the main job creator and driver of economic growth. The government should ensure competitive markets and fair trading, but public sector commercial activity should be limited to cases of market failure and stimulation of new economic sectors. We believe in open, competitive and fair markets that have the benefit of consumers at its focus and a robust commercial law system to ensure their sustainability.

We would promote continued investment from multinationals to deliver high quality Irish jobs. To balance this approach, economic policy should prioritise the development of indigenous SMEs as the foundation of Ireland's economic future. Ireland has the skill, the talent and now the experience that can be leveraged to successfully grow indigenous enterprise in lucrative domestic and international markets and to significantly expand employment.

The IDP would foster a positive business environment through improved infrastructure and telecommunications, reduced energy costs and streamlined public services. The entrepreneur would benefit from measures to ease the transition from PAYE status to self-employed. We would abolish local authority commercial rates and replace with a more business-friendly tax. Innovation-based business clusters would be established to spur growth.

The financial crisis has exposed the weaknesses of national finances. Front line services and programmes for the disadvantaged suffer severe cuts while social welfare and pay for senior public servants are deemed untouchable. "Quangos" numbers have expanded unchecked and often have dubious benefits. The tax system suffers from lack of transparency as revenue is centralised in the Exchequer before redistribution. Taxpayer funds are wasted by welfare fraud.

The IDP would implement a fair, sustainable and incentivising tax and welfare system. The IDP advocates reducing inequality and we oppose the philosophy of "trickle-down" economics. Everyone should pay some tax, however, tax rates should be cut for the lower paid and increased for the wealthy. We would significantly broaden the tax base without raising overall rates. Spending cuts would be reviewed with priority given to front-line services over senior public sector pay and social welfare benefits.

We believe that reasonable taxation is justified when high quality public service is delivered. We would require ring-fencing of taxes for related expenditure. Welfare fraud would be treated as a serious crime. Public bodies would be restructured as needed. The IDP would defend the interests of the taxpayer.

The banking crisis, a result of light-touch regulation and an unwarranted faith in market efficiency, would be addressed effectively. No unsecured, unguaranteed bonds would be redeemed for banks rescued under the government guarantee. The IDP would ensure accountability by pushing for resolution of the investigation of alleged white collar crime, and breaches of company law and banking regulations. We would introduce a comprehensive system to facilitate bank insolvency while protecting taxpayer interests and the stability of the financial system.

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Economy and Jobs sections

- Enterprise and Science
- Finance
- Banking and Corporate Governance
- Infrastructure and Energy

Enterprise and Science

- Create a positive business environment
 - Increase the availability of staff with skills in languages, sciences, engineering and other technical subjects through changes to education syllabus and incentives (see Education)
 - Encourage increased competition in energy market to reduce energy costs, and maintain a transparent long term energy strategy (see Infrastructure & Energy)
 - Continuously develop transport and communications infrastructure to meet business needs (see Infrastructure & Energy)
 - Support new entrepreneurs and allow welfare entitlements to be kept when changing status from PAYE worker to self employed
 - Direct the Competition Authority to step-up level of investigations of alleged unfair trading practices, and increase funding accordingly
 - Ensure timely and efficient processes for the creation, administration and dissolution of businesses
 - Lower the bureaucratic burden on businesses of Government Department and Agency processes and develop an e-government Business Service Portal (see Public Administration)
- Stimulate economic recovery
 - Ensure any stimulus funds are spent on labour-intensive projects with clearly defined and achievable benefits
 - i.e. a nation-wide home insulation scheme; school building projects, etc
 - avoid "prestigious" white elephant projects unless clearly and demonstrably advantageous on the basis of cost-benefit analysis and positive externalities
 - Ensure that the Personal Insolvency Bill 2012 adequately and fairly addresses the shortcomings of current bankruptcy law (see Banking and Corporate Governance)
 - Study the legal possibilities to invalidate upward-only rent review clauses for existing leases
 - Address the issue of local authority rates and seek to shift some of our tax burden from productive businesses to other sectors such as commercial landlords (see Finance)
- Foster the growth of e-commerce (both business-to-business and business-to-consumer), especially of domestic providers and suppliers
 - Implement a nationally administered, digital signature-based authentication scheme using two-factor authentication integrated into the proposed optional National ID Card (see Public Administration)
 - Improve administrative and legal support for e-commerce and recognition of digitally-signed documents that use any commercial or government digital certificate authority
 - Streamline the market for logistics, express mail and other courier services to improve physical delivery for online orders
 - Strengthen the legal protection for intellectual property, balanced by limiting the unnecessarily broad scope of recent legal measures (see Justice)
- Expand quality employment in high-growth sectors
 - Introduce new tax credits for research & development
 - Focus on Life Sciences and Medical Devices, Materials Sciences, Clean technologies and Information & Communications Technology

- Promote riskier transformative and interdisciplinary ventures and avoid pigeon-holing projects into one research area
- Launch an export credits guarantee scheme for indigenous Irish businesses seeking to expand internationally
- Leverage existing supplier networks of multinational companies to consolidate domestic industry in high-growth sectors
- Coordinate with European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn concerning Irish participation in EU research projects
- Review the progress on commercialisation and practical application of outputs of research projects and success of links between industry and academic / research bodies
- Develop the capability of the Irish government to devise sophisticated industrial policy and project evaluation methods based on up-to-date economic trends and more representative measures
 - Supplement GDP and existing narrow financial measures with a more holistic approach
 - Incorporate sustainability measures, health statistics, environmental impact assessments and various measures of well-being and quality of life
 - Monitor developments in international markets such as the commoditisation of certain product categories due to capacity building and market saturation
 - i.e. solar energy technology following entrance of Chinese state-sponsored companies into the market
 - Develop economic strategy to target emerging markets and newly developed economies in
 - BRIC+MK countries: Brazil, India, Russia, China, Mexico, South Korea
 - CIVETS countries: Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa
 - Central and Eastern Europe - Poland in particular
- Establish true Innovation Clusters: businesses geographically centred on a scientific research institution, focused on a particular area of innovation, developing key skills, competitive advantage and economies of scale and scope in that area
 - Identify successful programmes already in place and increase funding, such as:
 - Immunology Research Centre at TCD, Solid State Pharmaceutical Cluster at UL, Tyndall National Institute at UCC, CTVR Telecommunications Research Centre (collaborative), Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre at UCC
 - Establish new research institution(s) targeting research areas identified as opportunities
 - Modify the mission of Science Foundation Ireland to focus the funding of research proposals, weighting decisions to target the appropriate Innovation Cluster
- Develop new strategy for tourism (see Culture and Heritage)
- Build a meaningful bond with Irish diaspora abroad
 - Offer real incentives to rebuild relationship with diaspora such as allowing them to vote in elections subject to conditionality (see Foreign Affairs and Defence)

Finance

- Adopt a balanced, sensible approach to the necessary budget cuts
 - Prioritise essential front-line services and related facilities above all else (essential & emergency medical treatment, teaching, carers for vulnerable members of society, etc)
 - Departments accounting for large proportion of expenditure such as Social Welfare cannot be exempted
 - Consider bringing public sector pensions into line with the EU average, adjusted for cost of living
 - Decline to redeem all remaining unsecured, unguaranteed subordinated and senior bonds issued by the IBRC (Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide Building Society)
 - Renegotiate the interest rate to be paid on promissory notes issued to the ECB
 - Moderate budget cuts by reducing subsidies paid to the wealthy (see below)
 - Eliminate loopholes and exemptions that unreasonably favour the wealthy and pursue tax exiles to ensure they pay their fair share
- Ensure sustainable public finances
 - Adopt counter-cyclical budget policy (surplus in times of economic growth, moderate deficit in times of economic contraction)
 - Broaden the tax base instead of increasing rates, and diversify with use of site value tax (see Housing)
 - Reduce administrative government expenditure and abolish unnecessary government agencies / "quangos" (see Public Administration)
 - Increase the adoption of "e-Government" processes in order to save costs and increase efficiency
 - Replace the Public Service Agreement (Croke Park Agreement) with a strategy to create a fairer and more productive, merit-based public sector that can also deliver required cost savings (see Public Administration)
 - Introduce a more efficient and cost-effective regional structure to deliver on projects and services
 - Collectively pool spending, common projects and joint administration of current local authorities at the level of the proposed regions (see Municipalities and Regions)
 - Develop contingency plans to respond to the impact on Ireland of international economic instability such as the collapse of property and credit bubbles in other regions
- Resist spending on vested interests or unnecessary programmes
 - Increase the transparency of the budgetary preparation process and relevant Oireachtas debates
 - Cut programmes flagged as failing or under-delivering by proposed Director of Government Accountability (see President and Government Accountability)
 - Require details of all procurement of substantial value to be published online, along with a ROI / value for money evaluation at all levels of government - national, regional and municipal
- Ensure that taxes are fair and ring-fence spending
 - Oppose the introduction of any regressive tax which favours the wealthy
 - Require taxation to be justified by delivery of high quality public services

- Spend tax revenue on projects / activities related to source of tax where possible (i.e. motor tax for roads / public transport, etc)
- Decentralise some expenditure to regions and municipalities without increasing overall tax levels (see Regions and Municipalities)
- Address exemptions that possibly unfairly favour particular sectors (semi-state companies, property investment, etc)
- Require any property tax to be levied on owners, not occupiers (see Housing)
- Ring-fence regional and municipal tax revenue for regional and local expenditure
- Enhance monitoring, fraud prevention and control measures for public expenditure
- Ease the financial burden on businesses that contribute to economic growth
 - Replace the current system of local authority rates (levied on occupiers of commercial property) with site value tax levied on property owner (not necessarily the occupier / tenant)
- Lobby against the proposed EU Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB)
 - Develop contingency plans to deal with possibility of future tax regime changes
 - Maintain the existing 12.5% corporation tax for at least 10 years (independent of CCCTB)
 - Gradually refocus economic policy on other factors attracting multinational FDI (see Enterprise and Science)
- Reduce the cost of tax collection by simplifying the system and reviewing types of taxation
- Focus investment on creating an environment conducive to job creation, rather than on subsidies
 - Cut agricultural subsidies for wealthy land owners and large scale farming businesses
 - Lobby the EU to reduce the subsidies, which were €58 billion in 2010
 - Aim to achieve savings of 35% of this amount, targeting the richest beneficiaries
 - Return 60% of the savings to member states *pro rata* (reducing Ireland's contribution accordingly) so that Ireland can lessen the hardship suffered by those in much greater need
 - Invest 40% of the savings in rural development in disadvantaged rural towns and villages
- Eliminate tax breaks and sector-specific initiatives such as car scrappage schemes and activities such as property investment that
 - a) do not contribute to sustainable, long-term prosperity
 - b) do not significantly address issues of social solidarity or environmental protection
 - c) could be classified as "rent seeking" in economic terms

Banking and Corporate Governance

- Reduce risk levels generally in the Irish banking sector
 - Enforce sensible loan-to-value ratios for property-related lending (including mortgages)
 - Formulate and require due diligence procedures, risk sharing and collateral for loans exceeding a certain threshold
 - Monitor and enforce compliance with Basel Accords and EU Capital Requirements Directive
 - Align the remuneration of banking executives and financial traders to bank's long term financial sustainability with 30% to be paid in the form of stock options that mature after at

- least 5 years
 - Avoid the risk of "regulatory capture" by recruiting regulatory staff from a distinct professional stream, segregated from commercial banking sector
- Uphold the principle of accountability for management of banks that were rescued by the government, and limit the effects of moral hazard
 - Dismiss key executives and directors identified as having performed inadequately or irresponsibly
 - Require shareholders and bondholders to assume financial burden instead of the taxpayer (see bank insolvency procedures and financial system robustness below)
 - Legally invalidate "golden handshakes" clauses
 - Cap remuneration at €200,000 and eliminate bonuses for staff of banks availing of the government guarantee
 - Bring the investigation concerning the financial crisis to a resolution and ensure that any incidences of white collar crime are prosecuted (see Justice)
- Tackle the problem of distressed financial institutions effectively
 - Normalise insolvency procedures for financial institutions, similar to the FDIC in the U.S.
 - Renegotiate EMU-IMF rescue programme to facilitate default on unguaranteed, unsecured senior debt and deposits
 - Maintain protection for depositors with guaranteed fund covering deposits up to €100,000
 - Wind down and close non-systemic banks
 - Restructure the finances and organisation of insolvent banks that are of systemic importance, and replace their management, to ensure the continuation of their lending activities
- Ensure the robustness of the financial system in the event of a major bank failure
 - Require the use of contingent convertible bonds with bail-in clauses triggering conversion to shareholder equity in the event of major financial problems
 - Limit any government guarantees to only new debt issues and allow default on existing debt in the event of any future banking crisis
 - Limit cross holdings of financial securities among domestic financial institutions and increase proportion of capital raised from foreign sources to reduce contagion risks
- Ensure that the Personal Insolvency Bill 2012 adequately and fairly addresses the shortcomings of current bankruptcy law
 - Ensure that bankruptcy resulting from legitimate financial difficulties incurred honestly and in good faith does not result in social stigma or exclusion from markets over the long term
 - Apply a reasonable period for discharge from bankruptcy of 3 years
 - Monitor any Dáil amendments to the Personal Insolvency Bill 2012 before enactment
 - Review the effectiveness of the provisions of the Civil Law Act 2011 relating to bankruptcy until the Personal Insolvency Bill is enacted
- Facilitate a faster and more transparent process of business liquidation
 - Balance this by holding company directors accountable for predatory business practices and who abuse liquidation procedures
 - i.e. property developers abusing bankruptcy to nullify guarantees repetitively or dishonestly

- Ensure that any ECB quantitative easing is used moderately to avoid provoking "stagflation" (high inflation combined with stagnant economic growth)

Infrastructure and Energy

- Adopt more effective principles for developing strategically important infrastructure for sectors that are characterised as natural monopolies and suffer from market failure
 - Public-ownership of infrastructure, but developed and managed by private contractors
 - Competitive operation of services using this infrastructure by private commercial service providers
- Ensure any capital investment decisions are based on sound reasoning
 - Base investment decisions largely, but not exclusively on objective cost-benefit analysis
 - Also ensure consideration of positive and negative extraneous factors and externalities (often unquantifiable) such as
 - sustainable development (lower car dependency, etc)
 - environmental impact
 - consequences for public health
 - Ensure viability and sustainability of projects by considering population density as a primary factor when determining routes and locations for new transport infrastructure
- Require all public transport to be integrated, and have
 - compatible ticketing systems
 - coordinated timetables
 - multi-modal transport hubs enabling easy connections
- Ensure all public-private partnership contracts protect taxpayer interests to avoid excessive costs
 - Stipulate clause for government buyout if deemed necessary
 - Design provisions to ensure reasonable risk sharing between public and private parties
 - Require public consultation and review by proposed Director of Government Accountability and Reform
 - Consider guidelines of European PPP Expertise Centre
- Increase broadband availability to meet the needs of an advanced economy and modern society
 - Roll out advanced fibre broadband infrastructure to all towns with a population over 1,500
 - Launch program of accessible satellite and WIFI broadband access for small rural settlements, offering consolidated Irish rural market to private service providers
- Build an sustainable energy sector fit for the 21st century
 - Promote development of a smart electricity grid with a more localised pattern of electricity generation
 - Adopt long term goal of 80% renewable energy generation
 - Create an Institute of Advanced Energy Research in Ireland
- Consider negative externalities of fossil fuel dependence when devising energy policy such as

- a) car dependence, and resulting impact on sustainable planning, community development, public health and air quality
- c) impact on Balance of Payments and having to forego the multiplier effect of spending on local sources
- d) long term upward trajectory of oil and gas prices compared to continuously improving energy yields per euro invested in maturing sustainable energy technologies
- e) dependence on foreign energy sources with consequential vulnerability to geopolitical instability (esp. in Middle East) and unpredictable volatility in energy prices
- Introduce financial incentives for home insulation to reduce energy consumption by homes (currently 40% of total) and which is a labour intensive activity
- Aggressively pursue development of Irish industrial capability in renewable energy technology from maritime and related sources
 - Support the new Irish Maritime and Energy Resource Cluster (IMERC)
 - Leverage the leadership of UCC's Hydraulics and Maritime Research Centre of the EU MaRINET research programme
 - Develop expertise in integrated offshore wind energy
- Promote low energy LED lighting for residential, commercial and government use
- Expand and stimulate the development of infrastructure supporting electric vehicles
- Enhance regional and national rail networks where demonstrated to be viable
 - Allow regions to decide whether large subsidies are justified if the project is an element of that region's development plan, but finance subsidies from regional taxes
 - Facilitate new rail links to North West region if the regional government supports the project and the above conditions are met
 - Increase proportion of the national transportation budget invested in electrified rail infrastructure
 - Establish rail as a viable and competitive alternative for freight transport
 - Develop seamless intermodal connection between Ireland the rest of the Trans European Transport Network by integrating ferry services with train services at Dublin Port / Dun Laoghaire and the Port of Holyhead
- Modernise financing of road infrastructure
 - Eliminate Vehicle Registration Tax and balance this by increasing Motor Tax on high emissions vehicles
 - Modernise motorway infrastructure financing with increased per-usage tolling
 - Devolve authority to develop and levy motor tax policy to the regions to fund spending on regional network
- Create new National Spatial Data Office to manage the Irish Spatial Data Infrastructure
 - Implement modern system of postcodes as provided for in the Communications Regulation Act 2011
 - Integrate spatial data from local authorities, Ordnance Survey, An Post, ESB, Bord Gáis, Valuation Office and all telecommunications companies into one federated geospatial database
 - Offer infrastructure network planning services to these and similar organisations

- Make geographic data available online for free to organisations and individuals, both private and public, for commercial and non-commercial use, but charge license fee for reproduction of the data (atlases, google maps, etc)
- Collaborate with National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA)

Political Reform

Political reform is a key pillar of the Irish Democratic Party Platform. The events of recent years have exposed the dysfunctional nature of the political system and highlighted the need for reform, of which accountability must be an integral part. Many incumbent politicians, however, have a vested interest in resisting any reforms, because their influence would be diminished.

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The Seanad is a powerless forum that is not truly democratically representative. Even the Dáil, the legislative body of government, is entirely controlled by the Taoiseach and their Cabinet. A combination of Cabinet members and backbenchers of Government parties hold the majority of Dáil seats and therefore control the legislative agenda. The Dáil often merely acts as a rubber stamp for Cabinet policy. Furthermore, it suffers from an excessive focus on local issues.

The IDP would separate leadership from law-making to ensure adequate checks and balances. The Taoiseach, as Ireland's leader, would be directly elected. Government stability would be guaranteed as the Office of the Taoiseach would have its own mandate and not require Oireachtas support. We propose to redefine the Seanad as a forum for the representation of the proposed Regions. We would introduce a hybrid PR voting system for Dáil elections to rebalance voter consideration of political platforms and individual personalities.

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The President, although a respected Office, is a symbolic figurehead. The IDP advocates empowering the President as a fourth branch of government, separate from the Oireachtas and Taoiseach, while maintaining its non-political status. The President would oversee constitutional matters and the reintroduced Citizens Initiative process. The President would, through the Director of Government Accountability and Reform, uphold government accountability and defend the interests of the taxpayer.

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True local government does not exist in Ireland. Existing local authorities are merely offices of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, with many policy decisions made by a County Manager. There is no democratic accountability at regional and local level and small localities or remote regions are often simply ignored. The existing county-based structure is too small to handle many regional issues and too remote to address local matters.

The IDP proposes to establish up to ten new regional assemblies, directly accountable to their citizens, with the authority to control their own affairs. The IDP would also establish municipal government councils at the level of each locality, which would have the power to address local matters. Regional and municipal governments would have the power to raise taxes to ensure their financial independence and taxes would be ring-fenced for regional and local spending.

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Political Reform sections

- Oireachtas
- Taoiseach
- President and Government Accountability
- Citizens Initiative
- Regions and Municipalities

Oireachtas

- Eliminate the practice of national policy decided around local issues, and reduce the consequential administrative burden on Government Departments and time wasting in the Oireachtas
 - Establish a system of genuine local government to address local issues (see Municipalities and Regions)
 - Introduce a party list element for elections to the Dáil as part of a hybrid voting system (see below)
 - Require the Dáil Ceann Comhairle and Seanad Cathaoirleach to correct any member for unwarranted focus on local issues
 - Limit parliamentary questions that focus on local issues or individual constituent cases that are not of national consequence
 - Permit 1/3 of the members of either House to appeal to the Supreme Court in case of alleged serious distortion of House business by local issues if unaddressed by Ceann Comhairle or Cathaoirleach
- Redefine the Seanad by making it more representative and granting it some additional powers
 - Represent each region in the Seanad by two directly elected senators from single regional constituencies
 - Introduce a new overseas constituency for Irish citizens abroad who were never permanently resident in Ireland, represented by two additional Seanad seats and conditional on minimum threshold of overseas votes cast (see Foreign Affairs and Defence)
- Enhance the role of Dáil committees as initiators of legislation
- Promote balanced and adequate debate of House Bills
 - Balance consensus with informed dissenting opinion
 - Require 2/3 support of present members plus Ceann Comhairle approval to pass "guillotine" motion but maintain time limits on total and individual speaking time
 - Allow the Ceann Comhairle or 1/3 of House members to pass a motion to postpone a debate if relating to a recent event or current media attention to allow "cooling off period"
- Grant investigative powers to Oireachtas Joint Committees, subject to
 - a) prescribed balance between rights of individuals and public interest
 - b) rules governing fair procedure as determined by the President and subject to judicial approval
- Introduce a hybrid PR voting system for Dáil elections to balance voter consideration of individual politicians with party political platforms
 - Modified version of the Mixed-Member Proportional Representation system
 - 60% of members elected by the existing Single Transferable Vote system
 - fewer but bigger constituencies with 4-6 seats
 - 40% of members elected proportionally by a party list system at national level with seat numbers compensated by party seats already won in the local constituency vote
 - 4% minimum threshold for representation via party list to increase political stability, and to avoid extremism
- Consider reducing the number of TDs given that this would be mitigated by providing Senators a bigger role in the legislative process

- Task the Constituency Commission to redefine constituency boundaries
 - a) with minimum of 4 seats per constituency to ensure proportional representation
 - b) taking into account reduced TD numbers and the proposed 40% of TDs to be elected by national party list
- Empower the Houses of the Oireachtas appropriately as the first Branch of Government:
 - a) to initiate legislation and propose referendums
 - b) to override a veto of the Taoiseach upon approval of 2/3 of both Houses
 - c) to ratify international treaties negotiated by the Taoiseach unless requiring an amendment to the Constitution, with discretion to delegate treaty ratification powers to the Taoiseach for specific negotiations
 - d) to have sole authority to declare war or a state of emergency upon approval of 2/3 of both Houses
 - e) to initiate impeachment proceedings against the Taoiseach or President, upon approval of 2/3 of both Houses, via referral to the Supreme Court
 - f) to fully devolve legislative powers to the regions for specific matters that are currently shared competences and not the exclusive competence of the national government (see Regions and Municipalities)
- Require the House that initiates a Bill to submit it to the other House for review, which can either
 - a) reject the Bill, and optionally send it back to the initiating House with proposed amendments, or,
 - b) approve the Bill and submit to the Taoiseach for consideration
- Empower the Dáil, as the people's primary representation:
 - a) to approve appointments by the President to constitutional posts
 - b) to pass a Bill or ratify an international treaty on behalf of the Oireachtas, overriding Seanad opposition, if the Dáil approves the Bill by 2/3 majority
 - c) to petition the Taoiseach to override Seanad opposition to a Bill or treaty if the Dáil approves but support is lower than 2/3 majority
- Require Bills to be submitted to the Taoiseach for review who may then either approve or veto the Bill (see Taoiseach)
- Ensure gradual political transition with staggered 5 year terms
 - Hold elections to the Dáil jointly with the Presidential election
 - Hold elections to Seanad jointly with the Taoiseach election, staggered at mid term of the Dáil / Presidential term
- Ensure that the democratic mandate given to political parties by voters are respected by allowing them sufficient control to implement their Programme for Government / Policy Platform
 - Replace the Party Whip system with a more flexible adaptation
 - Adapt it to a reformed hybrid voting system (described above), with more freedom for TDs elected by PR-STV, but less for TDs elected by party list
 - Allow future IDP TDs and other representatives to have free votes in some cases, in particular for issues that the IDP considers "conscience issues" (see "IDP and You!")
- Increase the proportion of women TDs by addressing barriers to participation
 - Support gender quota funding requirements for Dáil election candidates per political party as

- provided for in Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Bill 2011
- Limit these measure to three Dáil terms or until each gender occupies at least 1/3 of Dáil seats
- Automatically re-activate these measures if representation of either gender falls below 20% of Dáil seats
- Rely on fair, non-discriminatory measures in the long term to address the "five Cs" childcare, cash, confidence, culture, and candidate selection
- Introduce family-friendly timetables and procedures
- Make local government responsible for the coordination of childcare facilities, with voluntary participation by carers / creches
- Attract talented people into politics and highlight the worthwhile contribution to society the right people could make as politicians
 - Increase awareness in secondary schools about the politician's role in society
 - Introduce family-friendly policies for TDs and Senators
 - Raise the quality of debate, both in the Oireachtas and in the media
- Adopt more professional working timetables for the Oireachtas and require approval of any further changes by the proposed Director of Government Accountability and Reform
 - Maintain the reduced length of Dáil and Seanad recesses
 - Adopt a regular Monday to Thursday working week with attendance requirements, and reserve Friday for constituency work

Taoiseach

- Separate leadership from law-making at national level by giving the Office of Taoiseach and the Dáil distinct roles
 - Directly elect the Taoiseach as the country's executive leader, focusing on the daily business of government
 - Facilitate the Taoiseach to set his Office's political and policy agenda and to lobby Oireachtas members to initiate Bills to introduce it
 - Empower the Taoiseach to implement the laws passed by the Oireachtas and enacted by the President
 - Designate the Taoiseach as the Government's representative and leader for any non-ceremonial matter
 - The Taoiseach would direct the Attorney General and its Office of the Chief State Solicitor to litigate on behalf of the Government of Ireland and respond to legal challenges
- Require the appointment of a merit-based cabinet
 - Disqualify members of the Oireachtas from ministerial cabinet posts
 - Subject cabinet appointments to Dáil approval
- Guarantee government stability by directly electing the Taoiseach and not requiring Oireachtas support.
 - Taoiseach elections would be held every 5 years, jointly with the Seanad, and staggered at mid-term of the Dáil
- Tackle cronyism by prohibiting political appointments to boards of public bodies where appointments are not in compliance with Government Accountability and Reform procedures

- Empower the Taoiseach:
 - a) to approve an Oireachtas Bill and pass to President for enactment, or veto and return to Oireachtas (only once on unamended Bills)
 - b) to override or uphold the opposition of Seanad to an Oireachtas Bill or international treaty if petitioned by the Dáil
 - c) to request the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute indictable criminal offences on behalf of the President / Government following an investigation by the Gardaí or another government law enforcement agency
 - d) to negotiate and sign, but not ratify international treaties (unless explicitly delegated limited ratification powers by Oireachtas for specific negotiations)
 - e) to manage the tactical and strategic direction of the Irish Defence Forces upon delegation by the President, and to hold responsibility for military leadership in the event of a national emergency or war
 - f) to appoint the directors and board members to boards of public bodies in accordance with selection procedures established by the Director of Government Accountability and Reform (see President)
 - g) to enact secondary legislation within the Taoiseach's executive power or regulations proposed by government departments and Execute Government Agencies, in accordance with national statute law (see Oireachtas)
 - h) to submit proposals for Bills to the Dáil as formulated by government departments and other public bodies
- Grant the Minister for Finance on behalf of the Taoiseach the exclusive right to levy any tax except property tax (such as the proposed site value tax), subject to Oireachtas statute legislation
- Require Dáil consultation prior to high level international and EU Council meetings

President and Government Accountability

- Transform the Office of the President into a true branch of Government, separate from the Oireachtas, that must stand above politics
- Empower the President:
 - a) to monitor the activities of the Office of the Taoiseach, the Oireachtas, and the public administration
 - b) to instil Government accountability and standards in Public Office
 - c) to promote fair access to the Courts and an expeditious judicial process
 - d) to champion and defend Ireland's natural and cultural heritage (see Culture and Heritage)
 - e) to monitor and uphold freedom of the Press (see Culture and Heritage)
 - f) to monitor and uphold freedom of information
 - g) to appoint Council of State and the proposed Director of Government Accountability and Reform
 - h) to appoint (subject to Oireachtas approval) Supreme Court judges, Director of Public Prosecutions, Financial Regulator, Attorney General, and Chairperson of the Legal Services Commission
 - i) to approve schedules for elections and referendums in order to avoid attempts to gain unfair political advantage by excluding certain voter profiles
- Appoint the President as Head of the Defence Forces to maintain their role as serving the Republic with

tactical and strategic direction delegated to the Taoiseach

- Assign responsibility for oversight on Constitutional matters to the President
 - Assign the responsibility for impartial oversight, judicial referral and activation of the Citizens' Initiative process (see Citizens Initiative))
 - Empower the President, as defender of the Constitution, to take legal action in the event of failure to legislate in a timely manner following an amendment to the Constitution
 - Designate the President as Chairperson of a new Constitution Review Commission, which will be broadened to span all branches of Government and will include the existing Oireachtas Constitution Review Group Committee
 - Maintain the existing practice of the Chief Justice selecting the Chair of the Referendum Commission and Constituency Commission from eligible Supreme Court and High Court judges
- Oblige a President-Elect to renounce any political affiliations before entering office
- President elected directly by the people
 - a) using existing Single Transferrable Vote system
 - b) for a term of 5 years renewable once
 - c) with elections held jointly with Dáil Elections
- Establish office of government oversight - the Director of Government Accountability and Reform, enshrined in the Constitution
 - Amalgamate into this new office, or include as constituent elements the existing
 - Office of Comptroller and Auditor General
 - Office of the Ombudsman
 - Information Commissioner
 - Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
 - Standards in Public Office Commission
 - Commission for Public Service Appointments
 - Director selected by and accountable to the President
- Empower the Director of Government Accountability and Reform:
 - a) to determine remuneration levels for members of the Oireachtas or the Taoiseach and the length of Dáil and Seanad recesses
 - b) to establish selection procedures for board or director-level public appointments to public bodies
 - c) to prohibit corporate political donations to members of any public body or political institution
 - d) to address any anomalies in political remuneration such as ensuring that payments of leader's allowance to independent TDs are fully vouched
 - e) to determine transparency and disclosure obligations for Members of the Oireachtas and the Taoiseach
 - f) to create rules for lobbying government officials and requirements for lobby group registration
 - g) to respond to complaints from individuals and organisations concerning public bodies
 - h) to carry out financial and procedural audits of government bodies

- i) to undertake investigations within its area of competence and, if necessary, take legal action
- j) to assess and report on the Government's progress in meeting stated budgetary targets
- k) to establish regional branches to oversee regional and municipal controls where existing accountability measures are deemed inadequate

Citizens Initiative

- Reintroduce a modified form of the Citizens Initiative process, which was provided for in the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State
 - a) to include a moderate element of direct democracy by empowering citizens to petition for a referendum on a constitutional matter
 - b) with safeguards to moderate its impact, and to avoid disruption and abuse
- Require collection of verifiable signatures of 6-8% of registered voters
- Permit the establishment of a non-profit campaign group solely for the purpose of the proposal campaign
- Prohibit funding of petitioner and the campaign group except by individual citizen donations limited to €5,000 per donation
 - Require a donations register and expenses to be published
- President accepts the signatures in an impartial capacity and determines the proposal's validity and constitutionality by optionally referring to Supreme Court for determination
- President activates the corresponding process by calling a referendum and setting up a Referendum Commission, for constitutional amendments
- Require Citizen Initiative referendums to take place at 5 year "cooling off" intervals, waiting at least one complete period to ensure due consideration
- Avoid disruption by holding Citizen Initiative referendums as joint ballots
- Allow the timing of a referendum to be brought forward, or delayed by, at most, 6 months in order to avoid general election periods, or disruption to any other important business as determined by the Oireachtas

Regions and Municipalities

- Facilitate true democratic representation at local and regional level by establishing Municipal and Regional Government as provided for in article 15.2.2 of the Constitution
 - Ensure zero net increase taxation or public sector employment by reallocating some taxation and expenditure, and public sector workers from national government to regional and municipal governments
 - Represent the regions at national level in the Seanad with two seats per region (see Oireachtas)
 - Require regional governments to consult with and consider inputs from local government
 - Designate any competence of regional government as being a competence that is shared with national government unless explicitly exclusive to national or regional government
- Ensure the financial independence of municipal and regional governments by granting tax raising powers and ring fencing revenues for local and regional expenditure
 - Minimise administration costs by facilitating optional central collection by the Revenue Commissioners on their behalf and transferred to them (see Finance)

- Municipal government may levy site value taxes based on unimproved site values within municipal boundaries (see Housing)
- Regional governments may levy site value taxes on any land not within any municipal boundary
- Regional governments may levy income tax based on the registered place of work of the individual
- Regional governments may levy motor tax based on the home address of the vehicle owner
- Empower regional governments to determine regional policy
 - Grant the Regions authority to enact secondary legislation (regulations, etc) in any area of policy that is not the exclusive the competence of national government or the EU (international trade, banking regulation, defence, foreign policy)
 - Establish an Administrative Court System to arbitrate cases concerning regional secondary legislation such as regulations
 - Allow the establishment of regional police forces to enforce regional law
 - Minimise costs by facilitating the optional pooling of resources or joint programmes between regions, or by delegation of responsibility for the provision of specific services to the national government
 - Ensure regional regulation does not impose an unwarranted bureaucratic burden on private enterprise (see Enterprise and Science)
 - Maintain a single national process for business registration, administration and dissolution
 - Maintain common national standards for accounting and financial reporting
- Appoint a Regional Boundary Commission to determine boundaries and territorial jurisdiction of the proposed regions and municipalities
 - a) based on empirical studies and on submissions it receives
 - b) subject to factors for consideration in its terms of reference (viability, historical boundaries, population balance, cultural integration, physical coherency, function and consistency with existing *de facto* settlements)
- Restrict officials elected to a regional assembly or municipal council from being a member of another municipal, regional or national government institution.
- Streamline local administration from 34 local authorities to 6-10 regional governments
- Empower regional governments:
 - a) to possess the sole authority to levy site value tax on owners of land outside municipal boundaries, including agricultural land (zoned for cultivation, pasture, forestry, etc)
 - with the exception of land within national park boundaries or owned by the Department of Defence or other assets controlled by the national government
 - b) to collect tax on behalf of constituent municipalities and transfer funds corresponding to the municipal rate
 - c) to make County Managers democratically accountable to the proposed regional governments
 - d) to define a regional development plan and urban planning guidelines
 - e) to provide an audited verification service for citizens not availing of proposed optional national ID card residing within the Municipality for Citizens' Initiative petitions (see Citizens Initiative)

- f) to levy water and waste charges on a strictly per-use metered basis
 - Require the revenue to be spent on water, waste, recycling and related expenditure
- Bring day-to-day decision making concerning communities closer to the people by establishing municipal government councils
- Empower municipal government councils:
 - to possess the sole authority to levy site value tax on owners of zoned commercial and residential land within municipal boundaries
 - May delegate collection to the regional administration in order to lower costs
 - to make urban planning and design decisions in keeping with the regional plan and guidelines
 - to deliver and fund local public pre-school and primary school services subject to general regional and national standards
 - to ensure local availability of accessible and low cost premises for small businesses and entrepreneurs as part of urban development plan
- Coordinate policy development and implementation between regional and municipal governments concerning
 - a) local public clinics and centres for long-term residential care
 - b) public amenities, sports facilities and recreation areas
 - c) water supply, waste disposal and sewerage system
 - d) environmental protection and conservation
 - e) local unemployment issues and training requirements
 - f) local crime patterns and other social order issues
- Ensure appropriate size of subdivisions to ensure viable and economic services
 - Subdivide City Municipalities into Districts with each represented on the Municipal Government Council
 - Require rural municipalities to reach a minimum population threshold of 20,000 by grouping rural communities into Collective Municipalities where necessary

General Policy

General Policy sections

- Health
- Education
- Family and Social Affairs
- Local Community Affairs
- Housing
- Justice
- Public Administration
- Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Culture and Heritage
- Foreign Affairs and Defence

Health

- Introduce comprehensive health education from school to life
 - a) education and prevention vs. cure
 - b) balanced diet, active lifestyle
- Promote local patient care
 - a) patients to receive care / treatment at most local level permitted by resources
 - b) opt for home care over hospital admission whenever possible
- End overcrowding
 - a) Limit bed-occupancy to no more than 90% capacity
 - b) Postpone any rationalisation involving closures and service reallocation until sufficient resources are made available to hospitals intended to take over services
- Establish a true universal public health system including a primary care system and hospital care provider system, that
 - a) is transparent and with universal access to avoid issues like the NHS “postcode lottery” in the UK
 - b) is available for all, including the self employed
 - c) ends co-location of private operations in public facilities
 - d) includes coverage for
 - i. primary care
 - ii. essential treatment & medication
 - iii. emergency & ambulance services
 - iv. dental treatment for under-18 year olds
 - v. loss of income protection
- Establish a universal public system of primary care in each Region to handle all routine medical care
 - Require regional governments to establish public clinics in all localities in coordination with proposed municipal governments
 - Ensure universal access by charging low nominal fees (under €10), including for GP consultations, and waive fees for the disadvantaged
 - Adopt minimum care standards
 - Develop public health plans for all residents, focusing on children and seniors
 - Delivered at regional level and managed by the proposed regional governments
 - Regional government to set GP and specialist remuneration in primary care system
- Establish a universal system of hospital care providers care based on social solidarity and progressive financing
 - a) based on licensed private, non-profit care providers (for example, returning St Luke's Hospital from HSE control to its former private, non-profit status)
 - b) no risk-selection of patients regardless of pre-existing conditions
 - c) system 50% funded by insurance premiums paid by the individual to the insurer

- d) remaining 50% funded by income-related contributions to central health insurance fund, introducing the solidarity provision
- e) all patients to be charged the same premium by insurers (per insurance company and plan), with the insurer to be compensated for additional costs by risk equalisation payments from the central fund
- f) assistance with premium costs for the low-paid
- Guaranteed standards and ensure customer choice and cost effectiveness
 - a) patients to choose their care provider and insurance provider
 - b) competition between insurers for customers, and between independent healthcare providers for patients (via contracts with insurers)
 - c) negotiation of care plan contracts between insurers and healthcare providers
- Establish government regulator for care providers ensuring
 - a) solidarity & equality
 - b) high standards and strict hospital and care provider license controls
 - c) availability of care
 - d) competitive markets
- Geographic coverage of health facilities
 - a) depends on population and guaranteed by government regulator
 - b) at least one general hospital in each region
 - c) at least one public clinic and one centre of long-term residential care in each municipality
- Reduce cost of pharmaceuticals through greater use of generic drugs
- Adopt a more flexible and holistic approach to healthcare
 - Promote integrative medicine, and complementary therapies and practices where demonstrated as beneficial
 - Ensure that the system is more fluid and capable of adapting to change and innovation as they occur without being encumbered by bureaucracy or limited mindsets
- Require health screening for residency visa applicants

Education

- Establish a publicly-funded, universally accessible, non-ethos based education system, and also facilitate ethos based privately-funded education
- Prepare students for life, not exams
 - Emphasise critical thinking, discussion, problem-solving, innovation, ideation and creativity
 - Emphasise educational performance in literacy and numeracy, especially in primary school
 - Focus rote learning on "foundational knowledge", with greater use of associative and active learning methods
 - Discourage standardised tests such as SIGMA-T and MICRA-T, and reduce emphasis on homework at primary level
 - Rebalance assessment at secondary level with 40:60 exams:continuous assessment ratio

- Review possible variations to CAO points system and tackle the reduced numbers of students opting for subjects perceived as "harder" to maximise points
- Empower talented teachers and raise teaching standards
 - Ensure that teacher remuneration is sufficient to attract the best candidates when public finances allow
 - Free talented teachers to choose teaching methods and topics, subject to general regional and national curriculum standards
 - Limit this flexibility to teachers who were recruited or re-evaluated according to more rigorous standards and apply stricter control to under-performing teachers
 - Empower regional governments to certify teaching qualifications and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications between regions
- Ensure teachers have a stake in the success of a school
 - teachers should be employed by the school, not the Department of Education
- Require publicly funded schools to be non-ethos based, with community involvement and promote Educate Together school model
 - Eliminate theological and religious instruction and symbols from public school system
 - Transfer ownership of school land and buildings to municipal and regional governments, under direction of school boards
- Provide choice to parents by facilitating ethos-based, privately-funded schools and ethos-based community groups
 - Make public schools available to all groups including religions or ethos-based groups after school hours
 - Investigate the possibility of financial support to parents choosing private, ethos-based education for their children (i.e. capped tax credits / voucher system)
- Address educational inclusion
 - Reverse any cuts to the DEIS scheme for disadvantaged schools
 - Prioritise funding for School Support Programme
 - Ensure activities of Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme are continued
 - Introduce a voucher scheme to assist with purchase of school books and uniforms
- Ensure the primary and secondary education systems are fully funded and meet local and regional needs
 - Assign responsibility over public education service provision to
 - municipal governments for primary education
 - regional governments for secondary education
 - Amalgamate common services at these levels including funding, financial administration and buildings maintenance
 - Invest in new school buildings for any additional capacity that will be required for over two years, and to replace prefabs that have been in use for over four years
 - Study possibility of co-locating buildings and facilities shared between primary and secondary schools on one single campus
- Ensure accountability for standards of literacy and numeracy

- Link independence of regional education policy to performance
- Link regional funding and / or headmaster tenure for individual schools to school performance
- Reform secondary syllabus
 - Improve language skills
 - compulsory study of English, Irish and at least one foreign language in junior cycle
 - compulsory study of any two of English, Irish or a foreign language in senior cycle
 - Refocus study of Irish as a living language
 - Prioritise conversational approach at junior and senior cycle
 - Ensure students choose to learn Irish willingly and not out of obligation, with Irish as an optional subject in senior cycle
 - Incentivise more school trips to gaeltacht areas and assist gaeltacht regions with funding to develop sports and recreational facilities where needed, to attract school trips
 - Promote the study of higher level mathematics and maintain ordinary or higher level mathematics as a compulsory subject until the Leaving Certificate
 - Consider extending the Junior Certificate subject Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) into late-primary level and leaving certificate level as an optional subject (remaining compulsory for junior cycle)
 - Consider expanding scope of CSPE or introduce new subjects for topics such as private transit education, consumer rights & markets, personal finance, environmental responsibility, etc
 - Refocus syllabus of "Religion" course from current theological and religious instruction, to empirical religious studies (philosophy, comparative religion, anthropology, sociology)
 - Introduce a new subject on Information & Communication Technologies where not already available
 - Review the entire Leaving Certificate programme
 - Maintain the existing curriculum and teaching methods where demonstrated as successful
 - Consider whether certain subjects should be compulsory (other than Mathematics and any two of English, Irish or a foreign language)
- Establish international connections to facilitate written and verbal language exchange with foreign students online
- Encourage physical education, health awareness and general physical condition by
 - a) awarding points for verified regular physical activity and / or participation in school sports
 - b) requiring validation of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) attendance and participation and ensuring topics covered include nutrition, exercise, dangers of substance abuse, physical & emotional health, and other related topics
- Promote science, mathematics and engineering-related subjects in second and third level education
 - Complement this with the promotion of science and engineering careers
 - Require publicly funded bodies to organise "open day" (school trips of secondary schools given preference) and to publish project / activity information in accessible format for students
- Study ways to ensure that everyone who leaves the education system has an "employable" skill set
 - Ensure those who leave after the Junior Certificate are prepared for employment

- Expand access to post-secondary vocational training for sectors with skills shortages
- Introduce an effective system to fund the development and operation of our third level institutes
 - Financing to be shared fairly between taxpayer and third level students with partial public financing to fund university and college investment projects (new buildings, etc)
 - Allow third level institutes to determine their level of fees to finance their operations and balance capacity with demand, subject to government oversight
 - Discourage excessively high fees by charging levy on universities where fees exceed a certain threshold
 - Ring fence levy revenues in order to fund grants for disadvantaged students
 - Implement a fair public student loans system with a low real interest rate, repayment amounts determined as 7-10% of post graduation income, and any remaining balance after 25 years to be written off
 - Assist students by deferring repayments until after student completes third level education
 - Supplement funding with revenues from commercial spin-offs and patenting
- Ensure professor and lecturer tenure is conditional on continued high level teaching performance, in addition to academic research results and publications
- Leverage research centres in universities and institutes of technologies to spur the creation of innovation and business clusters (see Enterprise and Science)
- Formulate a joint strategy with Enterprise Ireland to market Ireland as an international centre of higher education
 - Align student visa policy to facilitate the arrival of foreign students
 - Fast track permanent residency visa for advanced researchers

Family and Social Affairs

- Ensure a fair, equitable and just society irrespective of creed, heritage, gender or sexual orientation
- Clarify ambiguity to allow for same-sex marriage
- Promote equality of opportunity, regardless of wealth or background, with economic reward based on hard work and ability
- "Flexicurity" - combining job security with labour market flexibility to create jobs
 - Maintain low barriers to employment and costs to employers
 - Increase retraining opportunities and continuous skills acquisition for workers
 - Transform redundancy from traumatic upheaval into employment mobility opportunity
- End welfare dependency and ensure that "working pays"
 - Allow welfare recipients to continue receiving some benefits when new employment does not reach a specific income threshold
 - "Activate" those unemployed longer than 6 months with retraining programmes or convert welfare payments into employment subsidies to avoid skills degradation
- Modernise parental leave and study ways to include other parental situations such as surrogacy
 - 16 weeks maternity leave on full pay
 - 4 weeks paternity leave on full pay

- 10 additional weeks on full pay for one of the parents
- 16 weeks unpaid leave that can be shared
- Establish a system of public pre-school education under the control of municipal governments
- Introduce a more inclusive policy for citizens who have emigrated by granting right to vote overseas (see Foreign Affairs and Defence)
- Convert social welfare benefits into system of tax credits and universal payments
 - Protect the low paid and unemployed by making credits refundable
 - Abolish means testing, which is expensive, often unfair and discourages saving
- Reduce inequality through opportunity and social mobility rather than relying entirely on social welfare
- Focus social welfare funds on those most in need by treating welfare fraud as a serious crime and punished accordingly
- Tackle the root causes of anti-social behaviour
 - Educate children about dangers of substance abuse (see Education)
 - Increase local employment opportunities
 - Nurture a sense of community so everyone has a stake in their neighbourhood
 - Channel youth energy positively by creating local amenities catering for their age group (see Local Community Affairs)
- Elevate the status of carers and charity workers, and improve their conditions
 - Provide sufficient respite care either at home or at a care provider service
 - Establish formal channels with insurers and healthcare providers in order that the carer can manage healthcare issues and expect a timely response
- Adopt a pragmatic approach to immigration (see Justice)
 - Foster support networks for newly-arrived immigrants to assist with their integration in the community
 - Make residency visas conditional on learning English or Irish to an acceptable level
 - Discourage the formation of single-group ethnic "ghettos"
 - Match visa allocations with skills requirements in coordination with the proposed regional governments
- Promote the co-operative form of organisation with extensive stakeholder involvement

Local Community Affairs

- Foster a strong civic aspect to community life and stakeholder participation in municipal government
 - Encourage volunteering in the community
 - Introduce an official register of local community groups to facilitate funding and consultation
- Create a sense of "place"
 - Encourage better urban design, lighting, local squares
 - Foster vibrant central community areas with quality services and pedestrian zones
 - Cluster facilities (town hall, transport, library, school, clinic, etc) around a main square

- Foster the establishment of neighbourhood café-bars at walkable distances by modernising licensing laws
- Ensure that population density is sufficient to facilitate viable and economical public services and public transport
- Establish municipal markets (see below)
- Support local businesses and address the issue of "hollowed-out" town centres with high levels of vacant units (see also Enterprise and Science)
 - Restructure City and County Enterprise Boards and amalgamate at regional level
 - Bring business closer to customers and decrease costs by establishing minimum proportion of central residential developments to have commercial units at ground level
 - Establish municipal markets in central community zones to facilitate small local traders and regular farmers markets
 - Promote consumer awareness of regional farm produce to increase demand in local markets
 - Explore ways to minimise impact of large-scale "shopping mall" styled commercial retail centres on small, centrally located businesses
 - Discourage the practice of basing town centre renewal on these commercial retail developments
 - Prohibit the practice of naming of retail developments as a "town centre"
- Develop sustainable local transport network
 - high quality, maintained cycle paths and bicycle parking
 - traffic calming measures
 - improved access for disabled and seniors
 - pedestrian / cyclist-prioritised traffic light sequences
- Ensure the independence of urban planning decisions from speculator interests
- Coordinate road and infrastructure works (water, sewage, gas, telecommunications, electricity) to minimise disruption and reduce duplication and costs
- Improve and diversify recreational opportunities and amenities to cater for all age groups (see Culture and Heritage)
 - use parks and green areas for amenities and sports facilities, not just aesthetics
 - launch a Municipal Sports Programme to enhance local sports facilities and increase the choice of available activities
- Require consultation with representatives of Seniors groups for local decision making
- Engage seniors in mentoring programmes for actual and potential young entrepreneurs
- Reform public liability legislation to balance prudent precaution with vibrant community life.
 - Restore life to school yards and children's playgrounds.
 - Seek to minimise risk, not eliminate it at the expense of everything else

Housing

- Transform renting into a secure and attractive choice for both tenants and landlords
 - Enhance tenant rights and security to make renting a more desirable choice of tenure
 - Establish extra-judicial arbitration process to streamline process of handling landlord-tenant disputes and dealing with problem tenants (see Justice)
 - Implement a transparent scheme for rental deposit protection and link it to dispute arbitration
 - Enforce better building standards and fire safety regulations, especially for apartments and other high density development
- Tackle the problem of "unfinished" estates by irresponsible or bankrupt developers
 - Require adequate public facilities to be in place or at an advanced stage of construction before granting development permission:
 - local schools, clinics, amenities, public transport, completed access roads & paths, water, sewage, electricity, etc.
 - Prevent the commencement of building work on units until the developer has completed paving, landscaping and other community development tasks
 - Task the proposed Housing and Business Premises Authority to oversee new residential developments (see below)
- Replace the regressive Household Charge (and Local Authority Rates) with a Site Value Tax to achieve a stable and fair source of local government revenue
 - Avoid penalising home improvements and rewarding speculators by only taxing unimproved site values, not property values
 - Protect the home with a low basic rate for primary residence, and higher rate to non-primary residences and commercial property
 - Compensate home owners who paid stamp duty in previous 7 years through non-refundable tax credits for the first €20,000 of stamp duty paid
 - Create a sensible system of site valuation based on a database of property transactions and considering other factors as determined by the Municipal Government
 - Charge apartment owners and other multi-dwelling, multi-storey developments on a *pro rata* basis
 - Share the tax burden by applying this tax to owners of all types of zoned land, not just residential property owners
 - Recognise that owners, not tenants, accrue gains from public investment through higher property values
- Make home buying more transparent and accessible
 - Tackle problem of opaque bidding processes such as "phantom" bidders by registering formal bids in the Housing and Business Premises Authority's property database (see below)
 - Discourage speculation by maintaining the existing 80% CGT for rezoned land
 - Introduce "conveyancing" as a new, specialised legal profession
- Establish one national Housing and Business Premises Authority
 - Merge the existing Property Services Regulatory Authority, Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency and Valuation Office

- Monitor housing prices and make recommendations concerning house price trends affecting accessibility and sustainability
 - Report to the Minister of Finance, Central Bank and Director of Government Accountability and Reform (office of current Irish Fiscal Advisory Council)
- Regulate property management companies effectively
 - Set minimum standards for multi-dwelling developments
 - Reduce property management fees by stimulating competition and increasing market transparency
 - Direct the competition authority to investigate the Irish Property and Facilities Managers Association
- Improve on the proposed property database by
 - a) including data on: property transactions, registered bids, current site value estimation, characteristics, type of tenure, planning applications, post code
 - b) linking to corresponding data in the National Spatial Data Office databases
 - c) making data public but maintain owner anonymity except for between parties involved in a legal transaction
- Support financially distressed mortgage holders through the continuation of the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears

Justice

- Crack down on white collar crime such as corruption, fraud and breaches of company law
 - Link penalties to financial amount involved and level of responsibility
 - Increase the severity of sentences for people convicted of white collar crime
 - Remove protection from assets of criminals or insolvents where transferred to spouse or family member
 - Increase resources available to the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation and the Director of Corporate Enforcement
- Accelerate the investigation of former management of banks identified as having seriously breached company law and banking regulations
- Require the registration of lobby groups and publish details of meetings with elected officials
- Broaden the scope of Freedom of Information applications and repeal the excessive limitations introduced by the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003
 - Apply Freedom of Information to Garda Síochána administrative functions and NAMA, and review the possibility to include financial offices such as the Central Bank and NTMA
 - Reduce the fees charged for making a Freedom of Information application
 - Task the Office of the Information Commissioner with establishing streamlined procedures to assist civil servants in responding to Freedom of Information applications
- Maintain the existing reforms protecting legitimate home defence against intruders (Castle Doctrine) as provided for in the Criminal Law (Defence and the Dwelling) Act 2011
 - Monitor its effects to ensure proportional defence - reasonable, non-lethal use of force, in particular when threatened, while not requiring the resident to retreat

- Ensure that no loopholes exist granting trespasser right to sue the resident for civil damages
- Review the provisions to tackle abuse by protecting invited guests or victims lured to enter the aggressor's home
- Adopt a balanced approach to anti-social behaviour
 - Focus on the root causes (disadvantaged backgrounds, lack of opportunity, substance abuse...)
 - Local community consultation in community policing
 - Address local community issues (see Local Community Affairs)
 - Make social housing tenancy conditional on good behaviour in the community
- Confront the problem of gangs and organised crime
 - Increase police resources
 - Reduce the scope for acquittal based on legal technicalities
 - Fight the narcotics trade with increase patrolling by the Naval Service along the Irish coastline and tougher control measures at all ports
 - Increase resources for the Naval Service and the Air Corps (or proposed Army Air Wing) to perform the required patrolling (see Foreign Affairs and Defence)
 - Negotiate with the EU to provide funding to help end Ireland's status as a major EU entry point for narcotics
- Increase the garda presence in crime afflicted areas
 - Free up gardaí from administrative work by increasing dedicated administrative and clerical staff levels
- Introduce the long-awaited whistleblower protection charter
 - Special emphasis on public sector and regulated sectors
 - Enact the Whistleblowers Protection Bill 2011 into law if the final amended version is sufficiently robust
- Ensure that the Personal Insolvency Bill 2012 adequately and fairly addresses the shortcomings of current bankruptcy law (see Banking and Corporate Governance)
- Reform the penal system and adopt balanced approach to increasing enforcement of existing laws
 - Place greater emphasis on non-custodial sentencing, and only resort to imprisonment for serious crime to reduce costs to the taxpayer
 - Make greater use of community service sentencing for non-payment of fines and summary offences
 - Divert some prison funding to rehabilitation programmes
- Guarantee online freedom of expression by ensuring the proposed amendment to the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 by statutory instrument does not grant unreasonably broad, non-specific powers to corporate interests
- Tackle fraud, especially involving taxpayer funds
 - Facilitate better cross-departmental sharing of data to identify fraud
- Facilitate swift justice by increasing the scope of cases dealt outside the conventional court system, while maintaining possibility of recourse to the higher courts
 - Establish municipal arbitration committees for minor, summary offences punishable only by fine or community service

- Introduce a system of semi-administrative courts at national and regional level for specialised legal areas or routine legal procedures, such as commercial law, environmental protection, consumer rights, asylum applications, tenancy, planning law, data protection and freedom of information
- Establish a system of regional family law courts
- Study ways to reform public liability legislation to balance prudent precaution with vibrant community life (see Local Community Affairs)
- Enhance tenant rights and streamline the process handling landlord-tenant disputes (see Housing)
- Investigate the supply of drugs to prisons
- Lower the cost of justice in Ireland and make it more responsive and efficient
 - Liberalise the professional accreditation of barristers and solicitors
 - Establish a new profession of conveyancers in Ireland
 - Subject legal services to competition law and require the Legal Services Commission (see below) to refer suspected cases of price fixing and other anti-competitive practices to the Competition Authority
 - Require clear price and service information to be made available to clients
 - Introduce competitive tendering for legal services provided to the government
 - Remove restrictions preventing barristers from advertising factual information
- Establish an independent Legal Services Commission with a President-appointed chairperson to avoid the negative consequences of self-regulation
 - Assign responsibility for regulation and legal education standards to the Legal Services Commission
 - Allow consultation with the Law Society, the Bar Council and other stakeholders
- Establish a system of regional law to codify regional policy
 - a) Formulated as secondary legislation subject to supremacy of national statute law or national secondary legislation / government agency regulations
 - b) Arbitrated by regional, semi-administrative courts concerning regional secondary law / regulations and also delegated national legislation (see Regions and Municipalities)
 - c) Facilitated by national primary statute law and national secondary law such as government agency regulations by
 - i. identifying specific details that have universal effect
 - ii. providing for flexibility in choice / range of possible policy implementations
 - iii. requiring national government agencies to advise regional governments concerning the corresponding national regulations
- Remove blasphemy from the Constitution
- Ensure immigration and asylum controls are robust and efficient
 - Introduce single EU-wide procedure and uniform asylum status to end conflicting asylum regimes in different EU member states
 - Avoid waste of resources on opportunists and "welfare shoppers"
 - Increase cooperation with Schengen countries and improve access to international databases of known criminals

- Enact the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010 into law

Public Administration

- Transform public sector bodies into productive, merit-based organisations and align them more closely with the private sector
 - Introduce performance-related pay to reward capable and hard-working public servants
 - Increase opportunities for merit-based career advancement
 - Avoid further across-the-board pay cuts and possible involuntary redundancies based on length of term or random selection
 - Ensure any involuntary redundancies are based on merit
 - Conserve funds available for public sector pay by dismissing those that are damaging to the public sector
 - Establish fair procedure for dismissal on grounds of gross misconduct, incompetence, absenteeism, criminal conviction of a nature compromising to professional responsibility, and other substantial grounds
 - Invalidate any entitlement to "golden handshakes" when dismissed
- Ensure that reforms and cutbacks are fair, effective and realistic
 - Apply any necessary public sector pay cuts to semi-state companies, government agencies, local authorities, and other publicly funded bodies
 - Restructure public sector pay cuts and apply progressive cuts, with a higher percentage cut to the higher paid and lower percentage to the lower paid
- Abolish any unreasonable taxpayer liabilities resulting from Public Service Agreement (Croke Park Agreement)
 - End the practice of redeployment of redundant former staff of "quangos" and other services that are cut, to achieve real taxpayer savings, unless a vacancy exists and the candidate is considered highly suitable
 - Balance this by offering mentoring to help establish new businesses for staff of any privatised services, in addition to existing social welfare and retraining programmes
- Streamline services provided by Government Departments and Agencies
 - Require public bodies to consider impact of new regulation on businesses and other private and civil bodies and to issue Regulatory Impact Assessments
 - Reduce the number of procedures required to apply for business permits and licenses
 - Transform e-Government from token implementations and marketing propaganda into true end-to-end online delivery of public services where possible
 - Unify Government databases across Departments and Agencies and facilitate sharing of data subject to strict privacy controls and Presidential oversight
 - Implement the proposed Unique Business Identifier to facilitate more efficient processes
 - Make greater use of video conferencing to reduce travel costs of public administrations and telecommuting for more flexible and family-friendly working practices
- Study the possible introduction of national ID card on strictly voluntary, opt-in basis, which would:
 - a) reduce costs for businesses and other organisations who need to verify their customers' / members' identities

- b) enable the use of the proposed e-government Business Service Portal (see below)
- c) facilitate e-commerce and online identity verification by featuring an integrated digital certificate
- Develop an e-government Business Service Portal featuring:
 - a) a register of every license, permit, regulation and administrative procedure, with list of certified practitioners (solicitors, accountants, etc), categorised by business activity
 - b) personalised accounts for each business recording all pending and outstanding procedures
 - c) online submission of digitally signed documents
 - d) digital authentication and authorisation of company secretary and any authorised company officers if they have opted for the proposed national ID card
- Staff of public bodies such as schools or regional primary healthcare services would be employed by their respective organisations (school board, hospital trust) and not a government department
- Merge government agencies / eliminate public funding / abolish and transfer responsibilities to the corresponding government department where:
 - a) administrative costs are greater than 10% of budget
 - b) management has record of incompetence or inefficiency
 - c) no clear benefit is demonstrated (economic or otherwise)
 - d) funding can be easily channelled more directly to beneficiaries (researchers, patients, conservationists, etc)
 - e) activities overlap with another body (public or private, non-profit) with proven record
 - f) activities complement those of another body (public or private, non-profit) and are suitable for merger
- Save costs in merged public bodies by unifying
 - a) financial administration and human resource management
 - b) quality management procedures and standards compliance
 - c) information technology support and administration
 - d) legal services
- Implement international best practices and public policy measures identified by the proposed Office of Public Policy and Administration Liaison (see Foreign Affairs and Defence)

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

- Empower the consumer by improving labelling and traceability of food products
 - Include nutrition, intolerance and allergy advice, production methods, production location, origin of principal ingredients
- Increase earning opportunities for farmers by diversifying into new markets
 - Direct Teagasc to research new plant varieties and livestock breeds, and efficient organic production methods compatible with conservation goals
 - Establish farmers markets offering local produce at all towns with a population of over 1,500
 - Explore ways to increase margins for farmers by reducing retailer margins and /or eliminating intermediaries

- Provide the infrastructure (power, plumbing, docking bays, storage) that is necessary for market logistics and operations
 - Promote consumer awareness of local produce at regional level to support market demand
- Promote ecotourism and active rural recreation as new sources of revenue for farmers
- Improve the trading environment for food suppliers through stricter control of unfair trading practices by supermarkets (including "hello money")
- Negotiate reform of Common Agricultural Policy subsidies at EU level
 - Target a 35% reduction of subsidies with savings to be redirected to rural development, innovation, infrastructure & job creation policies
 - Maintain the current policy of subsidies decoupled from production levels
 - Align subsidies more closely with responsible environmental practices and adherence to set-aside obligations, and expand the REPS and Native Woodland Schemes
 - Ensure farmers with lowest incomes receive proportionally greater benefits from Single Payments Scheme (SPS)
 - Lower SPS for large-scale commercial farming operations
- Favour agricultural operations that are in strict compliance with organic production standards
 - Balance this with a 25% set-aside conservation policy for organic farms and a 15% set-aside conservation policy for large scale commercial farming operations
- Incentivise public and private land owners to create "wildlife corridors" and "wildlife crossings" that link formerly fragmented habitats in order to establish more viable consolidated ecological habitats
- Convert the set-aside scheme into system of habitat credits that are tradable within regional markets in order to reduce habitat fragmentation and make farming more efficient
 - Enable farming operations to become more efficient by buying credits from farmers who choose to increase their set-aside area
 - Grant additional credits for set-aside practices that create wildlife corridors and crossings
 - Link habitat credits with the length of time without intervention, and increase, reduce or cancel credits accordingly
 - Exclude and protect areas of notable ecological value
- Prohibit biofuel production or importation where:
 - a) it is demonstrated to significantly increase food prices due to diverting crop cultivation from food to fuel production, and where
 - b) harvested land that was ecologically important habitat has been destroyed, such as palm oil plantations in Indonesia
- Task regional governments with addressing degradation and soil erosion on public and common land and bring common land under their control
 - a) Introduce obligatory insurance for scrub burning to cover wildfire control and damage compensation
 - b) Protect 50% of common land for habitat regeneration with no grazing permitted
- Ensure Irish fishermen benefit from fishing rights in Irish waters by changing from the current EU quota system to an Irish ownership system
 - Fishermen would have a direct interest in sustainable management of fish stocks, as in the

- cases of New Zealand and Iceland
 - Benefits small fishery operations
 - Negotiate the transition to new system with the EU, and once approved, direct the Irish Naval Service to enforce territorial fishing rights
- Protect the livelihoods of workers in the Fishing Industry through sensible management of fish stocks
 - a) Address the high level of "discards" by requiring the use of bycatch reduction devices
 - b) Direct Bord Bia to promote species that have healthy and sustainable populations
 - c) Prohibit fishing for cod and other locally endangered species until stocks recover
 - d) Prohibit bottom trawling in ecologically sensitive areas
 - e) Increase monitoring of trawling equipment and mesh sizes
 - f) Lobby the EU to reform the Common Fisheries Policy and shipping regulation (see also European Union)
 - g) Base any necessary quotas (after switching to ownership system) entirely on independent scientific data and recommendations
 - h) Tackle infringements by reallocating funds from vessel modernisation to data collection and control measures
- Protect the marine environment by preventing oil-spills and other maritime pollution, both intentional and accidental
 - Lobby the EU to enforce maritime regulations by prohibiting the passage of ships flying flags of convenience from non-EU countries suspected of non-compliance with MARPOL and minimum EU standards (Liberia, Panama, etc)
 - Blacklist fragile and single-hulled vessels
 - Prosecute anyone found guilty of releasing untreated solid and liquid waste
- Support the expansion of forestry industry across the entire value-chain and increase employment in the sector
- Introduce ecologically sound forestry practices for Coillte plantations and other publicly funded / grant-assisted plantations
 - Prohibit clear-felling
 - Bring plantation areas under proposed set-aside system of tradable habitat credits
 - Require 50% of plantation to be of mixed, native species
 - Maintain the higher levels of forestry grants for plantations of native species
- Prioritise the conservation of national parks
 - Establish a new national park and expand existing parks
 - Prohibit livestock grazing and prosecute unlicensed hunting within national park boundaries
- Delegate animal welfare and hunting policy to the proposed regional governments
- Develop an integrated, cross-border ungulate management plan to
 - a) account for absence of apex predator
 - b) address disease control and forest regeneration issues
 - c) generate hunting revenues for rural residents if sanctioned at regional level

- Tackle invasive species
 - Adopt better environmental screening methods on imported goods
 - Regulate the shipping practice of ballast water discharges
- Adopt a "polluter pays" policy and end taxpayer liability for environmental damage
 - Levy a universal Emissions Tax on all harmful emissions of gas and liquid into the environment by private vehicles (non-zero emissions), and also industrial and agricultural entities
 - Calculate tax based on a weighted average of various harmful emissions (not just CO2)
 - Apply a basic rate of Motor Tax to all road vehicles, irrespective of category in order to ensure sufficient revenue for related expenditure (roads, etc)
 - Eliminate exemptions from motor tax and emissions tax for all land vehicles and marine vessels, with no special exemptions for particular sectors
- Revise packaging standards to improve recyclability
 - Apply these standards to any product with over 25,000 annual unit sales, or 1,000 annual unit sales where value is over € 300
- Advocate right-of-way through uncultivated land for recreational activities and address insurance liability issues
- Increase transparency and improve access to information concerning environmental matters by fully implementing Aarhus Convention

Culture and Heritage

- Transform the national trust for Ireland, An Taisce, into a presidential office with broader remit and greater powers (see President and Government Accountability)
 - Bring related bodies under control of An Taisce including the existing Heritage Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Biodiversity Data Centre
 - Environmental Protection Agency remains under control of the Taoiseach
- Foster a free and independent press, with oversight by the Office of the President
 - Support investigative journalism that actively contributes to fighting injustice and corruption
 - Require press and broadcast journalism organisations to be free of significant concentrations of corporate control
 - Establish a Joint Oireachtas Committee to determine the appropriate balance between press rights and freedom on one hand, and individual privacy rights on the other
- Transform the Irish language into a living and dynamic language
 - Improve teaching methods and syllabus with emphasis on conversational skills
 - Establish a Joint Oireachtas Committee to explore the options for increasing the use of Irish on a daily basis
 - Debate the choice between adopting Irish more broadly, possibly with positive discrimination, and the alternative of recognising English as the primary language of Ireland
- Recognise the importance of sports in society, and the positive impact of sports on young people in particular
 - Increase funding for sports and active recreation relative to other activities such as greyhound racing, and finance by introducing a betting levy

- Launch a Municipal Sports Programme to build new local amenities, enhance existing facilities, and diversify choice of activities
- Increase funds available to sports clubs, with additional funding for youth and junior teams
- Expand the remit of the Irish Sports Council to include a broader range of active recreational pursuits
 - Coordinate with An Taisce, and the municipal and regional governments to develop networks, trails, facilities and programmes
- Improve support for elite Irish sports people competing at international level
- Build upon Irelands tradition of literary creativeness and coordinate with tourist promotion
- Develop a new strategy for tourism
 - Focus on quality and recognise that Ireland cannot compete on price
 - Attract international fairs and events to Ireland
 - Focus on ecotourism, gourmet holidays, activity breaks
 - Promote GAA and Irish rugby internationally
 - Identify and address factors that deter tourists such as
 - a) unattractive town centres without main squares and with many vacant premises due to competition from out-of-town retail developments
 - b) poor quality of public transport
 - c) unfriendly or inflexible accommodation rates (high single person supplements, per-person pricing for multiple occupancy, etc)
 - d) blight of single dwelling developments in scenic areas
 - e) scarcity of natural settings without human intervention

Foreign Affairs and Defence

- Uphold the Good Friday Agreement and St Andrews Agreement which enshrines the right of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland to determine their status as part of the United Kingdom or a united Ireland
 - Implement any outstanding elements of both agreements
 - Build upon achievements across the island of Ireland
 - Work towards expanding cross-border cooperation
- Ensure that overseas aid has a genuine positive impact and does not foster dependence
- Revitalise the dialogue regarding Ireland's place in Europe
 - Defend Ireland's interests more vigorously in negotiations with our EU partners
 - Recognise that being an active EU member is compatible with determined criticism of the flaws of current EU institutions and design
- Balance the current EU political centre of gravity (France-Germany)
 - Build closer relations with other small EU member states and identify common interests
- Strengthen powers of the European Parliament to enhance democratic accountability of the EU
 - Promote the introduction of a single, directly elected president of both EU Council and

Commission

- Veto any EU tax-raising powers and common defence treaty proposals, at least until democratic deficit has been addressed
- Require the Dáil to review any new EU directives before their introduction into Irish law via statutory instruments while the issue of democratic accountability remains unresolved
- Establish an Office of Public Policy and Administration Liaison with other countries to facilitate research of comparative policy and public administration in other countries
 - Identify and adopt potentially useful new measures and best practices
- Leverage EU membership for objectives that need to be addressed at EU level, and enable Ireland to "punch above its weight"
 - Remove any remaining trade barriers for goods and services within the European Union in order to allow Irish companies to grow in a much deeper and broader market.
 - Lobby and negotiate with our EU partners to influence EU policy and achieve our declared objectives where the EU has exclusive competence, especially concerning innovation, banking and the environment
 - Build capacity to project positive influence beyond Europe, especially concerning humanitarian and environmental issues
 - Facilitate access by Irish MEPs to relevant Oireachtas Committees and Government Agencies
- Grant the right to vote to Irish citizens abroad in Oireachtas, President, Taoiseach and Regional elections with measures to moderate the political impact and ensure fairness
 - Facilitate voting via Irish Embassies and Consulates
 - Ensure fairness by requiring those who vote overseas to have paid 1% income tax to the Irish Government in each of the three years prior to the ballot
 - Limit overseas voting to passport holders only
 - Grant to citizens born or formerly resident in Ireland the right to:
 - a) vote on the ballot paper corresponding to the Dáil or regional constituency of the voter's last place of residency
 - b) vote in referendums
 - Designate a new overseas constituency represented by two Seanad seats for those who acquired Irish citizenship by virtue of decent but have never been permanently resident in Ireland
 - Limit this group of voters to Seanad and Presidential elections only (no participation in Dáil / regional elections or referendums)
- Promote links between domestic and foreign policy groups, scientific research groups, business groups, think tanks and task forces
 - with liaison through Irish citizens abroad in coordination with embassies and consulates
- Reopen the dialogue regarding Ireland's unresolved status of neutrality
 - Ensure that Irish defence and foreign policy is compatible with our declared status for issues such as foreign military use of Shannon Airport
 - Recognise the incompatibility between credible neutrality and the current low levels of military investment
 - Review the "Triple-Lock" convention on military deployments and consider why a Chinese, Russian or US veto in the UN Security Council should determine Irish peacekeeping

operations in European or neighbouring territories

- Enhance the capabilities of the Irish Defence Forces and study the possibilities to redesign the organisational structure
 - Invest in new naval ships and light reconnaissance aircraft for improved coastal security and counter-narcotics operations
 - Examine the possibility of transferring Air Corps assets and personnel to a new Army Air Wing to streamline administrative and operational structures and reduce costs
 - Transfer the CASA maritime patrol aircraft to the Naval Service
 - Maintain the army at the new two-brigade structure
 - Introduce employment protection measures for reservists
- Continue with the respected contribution of Irish Defence Forces to UN-mandated peacekeeping and peace enforcement efforts

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