

IPRT initial response to BUDGET 2011 announcements

8th December 2010

The Irish Penal Reform Trust, Ireland's leading penal reform campaign group, has joined other organisations concerned with social justice to express its dismay at a disastrous budget which will disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged. Cuts to social welfare, child benefit, education, health and other critical areas of support will further punish those disadvantaged communities from which the majority of prisoners come, and to which they return.

Furthermore, as outlined clearly in the IPRT statement in advance of Budget 2011, **Spending Cuts and Crime Implications**, there is clear evidence, both national and international, that cuts to services in such critical areas are likely to contribute to higher crime-rates, and ultimately prove to be counter-productive from a financial perspective.

On the other hand, the shifting of resources away from criminal justice and towards marginalised communities, with particular focus on prevention and early intervention, is proven to be of more social and economic benefit to society in the longer term.

IPRT is currently seeking more detail on the allocations to both the prisons and youth justice budgets, and will issue a more considered statement in time. In the meantime, here is the initial response from IPRT Executive Director, Liam Herrick:

"The main problem with Irish crime policy for many years has been a wasteful overemphasis on imprisonment and an underinvestment in crime prevention measures. This imbalance will be dramatically exacerbated by this budget.

"The retention of most of the Probation budget is very welcome; however the decision to slash the youth justice budget is short-sighted and likely to prove counter-productive. In recent years, initiatives such as the Garda Diversion projects have succeeded in reducing youth offending and limiting the numbers of young people going into detention saving millions.

"This is a clear example of false economy as the consequence of these cuts will be increased demand for prison building in the medium term, costing a multiple of the modest youth justice savings."