



COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Four Tests for the next Government, 2016-2021

The Community Platform is a network of 28 of the main national organisations working to address poverty, social exclusion, and inequality. Our objectives are to facilitate solidarity amongst the organisations involved, organise community sector participation in partnership arrangements with the State, and establish a critical voice for equality, rights and anti-poverty interests at a national level.

The Community Platform presents these four tests of the seriousness of the next Government in addressing the causes and consequences of poverty, social exclusion and inequality in Ireland in its Programme for Government and in its implementation over the next five years. Achieving these tests would move Ireland closer to achieving the Goals it committed itself to in September 2015 under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

These tests reflect the analysis presented in 2015 in the [Future Perspectives](#) of the Community Platform which describes the impact of the economic and social crisis, and the policies to address it, on the most marginalised in our society. It proposes a detailed set of policy priorities and changes to structures that are needed in order to bring about a more inclusive, sustainable and equal Ireland.

Test 1: Will the Government redistribute income towards the poorest 20% of the population?

The Community Platform believes the next Government should:

1. Provide adequate funds to reduce poverty and fund quality public services. This will require a tax system that is more progressive and equitable, with overall tax take increased towards the EU norm. This includes closing tax loopholes and ending tax-breaks which cannot demonstrate a social benefit and which undermine the effective rates of corporation tax and of income tax.
2. Increase social welfare levels to a level which allows people to live in dignity and meet a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.
3. Invest the returning bailout funds from banks in areas which address the deficits in our public service infrastructure, particularly in areas which will help address poverty and social exclusion.

Test 2: Will the Government strengthen access to quality employment?

The Community Platform believes the next Government should:

4. Improve measures to address the quality of employment, ensure that all workers have a living wage, and terms and conditions which provide them with dignity in the workplace and good work life balance. This would include the abolishing of zero hour and precarious work contracts.
5. Move employment services from a service centred approach to a person centred approach. This will require the provision of quality supports for those who need it, including quality education and training, and ultimately access to decent and sustainable jobs.

Test 3: Will the Government restore and strengthen public services which are of particular importance to people on low income?

The Community Platform believes the next Government should:

6. Scale up and invest in building culturally appropriate, accessible and diverse social housing to a level which will clear the waiting list during this term of Government. All options must be explored to deliver social housing to ensure sustainable and integrated communities.
7. Reverse cuts in publically funded transport to meet the needs of people living in urban and rural areas.
8. Invest in a publically funded health care system which addresses health inequalities. This system must facilitate equality of access, participation, with outcomes based on need and not ability to pay. The causal pathways to health inequities must also be urgently addressed using a “social determinants of health” approach. Appropriate disaggregated data must be collected to monitor the outcomes. Services must be flexible in working with particularly hard to reach groups
9. Increase public-funding for comprehensive, quality and affordable early years and after school care infrastructure towards the international norm and ensure that childcare staff have quality training, decent pay and work conditions.

Test 4: Will the Government support mechanisms to ensure that all areas of policy and decisions work to reduce poverty and inequality?

The Community Platform believes the next Government should:

10. Ensure that policies and decisions are effective in prevention and addressing poverty, inequality and social exclusion through:
 - putting in place effective and transparent impact assessment procedures at design and implementation phases.
 - providing adequate resources to the community and voluntary sector.
11. Exempt programmes that address poverty, social exclusion and inequality from competitive tendering on the basis that they are providing social services of general interest, and ensure that all other commissioning models are designed to ensure best outcomes for communities/targets rather than focusing on cost-saving measures.
12. Address human rights and equality deficits through:
 - holding a referendum to enshrine economic, social and cultural rights in the Constitution.
 - legislating to transpose international commitments to economic, social and cultural rights into domestic law.
 - ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.
 - adding socio-economic status as a ground in Ireland’s equality and human rights legislation.
 - giving legal recognition to Travellers as an ethnic group.
13. Put in place measures to more effectively support the integration of migrants including the ending of the Direct Provision system for Asylum Seekers

Community Platform

The Community Platform is a network of 28 national networks and organisations in the community and voluntary sector working to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

- Age Action Ireland
- All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland
- Community Action Network
- Community Work Ireland
- Cairde
- Debt and Development Coalition
- European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland
- Focus Ireland
- Gay & Lesbian Equality Network
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Refugee Council
- Irish Rural Link
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- National Network of Women’s Refuges & Support Services
- National Traveller Women’s Forum
- National Women’s Council of Ireland
- Pavee Point
- Rape Crisis Network Ireland
- Sign Language Interpreting Service
- Simon Communities of Ireland
- Threshold
- Voluntary Drug Treatment Network
- Vincentian Partnership for Justice
- Women’s Aid

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