

YOUNG FINE GAEL

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The Way Forward

PRE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2022



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Foreword

Dear Minister,

2021 has been another year dominated by public health restrictions. Governmental efforts to protect public health from Covid-19 have had enormous impacts on all our lives. People have seen their places of work shut down, their social outlets restricted and their interactions with family and friends digitalised.

This pandemic has been particularly challenging for younger people. We have sacrificed opportunities that we can never relive in the national interest. Many of us have experienced college life from the confines of our bedroom for eighteen months. Many of us have lost deposits on rental accommodation or cancelled trips of a lifetime. Many of us went months without meeting our friends or family.

It is in that context that Young Fine Gael presents to you this Pre-Budget Submission. At its heart, we are calling for a renewal of the social contract with our youth and the development of a new deal for young people.

This Pre-Budget Submission, *The Way Forward*, focuses on guaranteeing a sustainable and equitable recovery, centred around job creation and rewarding hard work. It includes a suite of proposals which we believe can hugely improve the lives of people living in Ireland, as well as businesses operating here.

We thank you for taking the time to consider them and hope some of our asks will be included on Budget Day and the development of government policy moving forward.

Art O'Mahony
President of Young Fine Gael
September 2021



Employment, Finance, Tax and Welfare

Our Recommendations:

- ▶ **Young Fine Gael proposes to lower the inheritance tax rate from 33% to 20%**, the 2008 level and then aim to reduce it further in upcoming budgets to the OECD average of 15%. Our current inheritance tax rate is an extreme irregularity at 33%. The average OECD rate is 15% with many countries such as Australia, Canada and Norway implementing a rate of 0%. Our current regime is a form of double taxation, which especially targets those inheriting a family home or farm.
- ▶ **Young Fine Gael also proposes to raise the tax-free thresholds to A – 550,000, B – 75,000 and C – 25,000.** This would put them back in line with pre-crash levels and put them in line with the increase in property prices.
- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls on the government to suspend VAT and excise duty on alcoholic beverages and soft drinks sold in licensed premises for twelve months** in order to boost the sector after the devastation of the recent pandemic.
- ▶ **YFG calls on the government to increase the PAYE standard rate cut-off point to €50,000 for a single person and to €100,000 for a married couple over the lifetime of this government** in line with Fine Gael's core general election pledge.
- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls on the government to abolish the television license in its current form and replace it with a grants-based system for public service broadcasting.** This would eliminate the regressive nature of the flat rate while ensuring the state continues to fund high quality public broadcasting that otherwise would not make a profit.
- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls on the government to increase the Home Care Credit by 25% increase in the income tax free band, raising the lowest threshold from €1600 to €2000,** creating long-term savers for the exchequer as we keep people out of nursing homes.
- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls for a tax credit of up to €10,000 for full-time at-home childcare.** If the childminding is done by a relative of working age such as a grandparent, then the credit can be transferred depending on how many hours childminding. If the parent minds the child part-time then the credit is halved.

Health, Disabilities and Mental Health

Global Health and the pandemic have played a huge part in how life has now become. Young Fine Gael has placed health as a key policy objective, particularly research and mental health.

The importance of health and wellbeing has become ever more present in the last year, we feel that during the pandemic and the many restrictions placed during lockdown, that young people's voice was being lost in the discussions. YFG believes that young people can contribute to policy formation in the area of research on health and preparing for any future pandemic. The introduction of a pandemic readiness fund should be of vital importance not just to the Department of Health but to the population. We believe that if the government wants to soften the blow of any future pandemic and control any possible damage then the government should set up a Pandemic Readiness Fund (PRF) and fund it each year during the budget. Contributing €5 million to the PRF each year for 10 years will leave the government and health department with €50 million if a pandemic occurs ten years from now or it'll leave the health department with €100 million to use to fund PPE for healthcare workers, research into medicine to treat patients and expand hospital usage after 20 years of contributions to the fund. This fund would be a no brainer and would help soften any damage of a pandemic in the future.

Mental Health continues to be one of the most prevalent issues facing young people in Ireland today. While suicide continues to be a leading cause of death among young people, the pandemic has also greatly impacted on the mental health of young people. Some issues facing young

people post the pandemic which may also trigger mental health conditions or exacerbate existing ones include bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear.

Our Recommendations:

- ▶ **YFG calls on the government to reform the means test for the disability allowance.** The means test on earned income creates fear of losing benefits such as medical cards through earning too much. YFG calls for an increase of the maximum personal rate of 23% and an increase of 42.5% in the rate disabled people can work without their allowance being affected.
- ▶ **YFG calls for an increase of 15% in the provision of Speech and Language services for disabilities** as the services have been severely affected by the pandemic resulting in very long waiting lists and those in need not receiving necessary early intervention.
- ▶ **YFG calls on the government to provide funding for one Down Syndrome nurse in each HSE Community Healthcare Organisation.** As Down Syndrome Ireland states in their own Pre-Budget Submission, currently there is one nurse who specializes in DS in the entire country to cover 7,000 people with DS in Ireland.
- ▶ **YFG calls for a 20% increase in the number of Occupational Therapists (OT) employed by the HSE** in order to ensure that integrated primary and social in the community is made possible and that our hospitals and nursing homes are not overcrowded.

- ▶ **YFG calls for the immediate recruitment of seven Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) nationwide** in acute hospital settings, to provide clinical and emotional support to patients who have lost their vision.
- ▶ **YFG calls for the recruitment of 50 additional ophthalmologists** to address the chronic waiting lists for appointments and surgeries in Ireland, currently being dealt with through the National Treatment Purchase Fund.
- ▶ **YFG calls for the removal of VAT on condoms and menstrual cups.** Currently, there is a 13.5% and 23% VAT rate on condoms and menstrual cups respectively. Condoms are proven to reduce the risk of sexual transmitted infections, and the high VAT rate has been described by Irish Health as a 'tax on safe health'. We welcome the commitment in the Programme for Government to provide free contraception for women aged 17-25, however YFG believes that extending this to condoms will make contraceptives more affordable thus reducing the level of infection and crisis pregnancies in young people.
- ▶ **YFG calls on the government to implement the Programme for Government's promise to provide free contraception to women aged 17-25.**
- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls for Mental Health spending to increase to 10% of our national health budget.** Suicide remains the biggest cause of death among Ireland's young people aged 15-24. By March 2021, over 2,700 children were waiting to be seen by CAHMs, and 282 of those had been waiting for over a year. This has increased steadily from 2000 at the end of 2019. Ireland currently spends just 6% compared to 10-13% in countries such as Germany, France Sweden, Netherlands, and the UK.
- ▶ **YFG calls for increased Government funding for Jigsaw.** Jigsaw provides early intervention mental health

services to young people aged 12-25. As most young people are immediately transferred to adult mental health services upon reaching their 18th birthday, Jigsaw provides an important service to young adults. Increased funding to early intervention services will also help to mitigate serious ill-health to young people who may currently wait instead to reach the point of emergency before seeking help.

- ▶ **YFG calls for Counselling services in second level education:** In most secondary schools there exists a guidance counsellor to discuss, among other things, future career options. However, more and more young people are struggling with their mental health, therefore YFG is calling for funding to be ring-fenced for a dedicated emotional support counsellor to be made available to all schools.
- ▶ **YFG calls for greater efforts to incorporate diversity in Mental Health services.** To enable services to have the resources to deliver appropriate interventions and deal with the build-up from the lockdowns. Young Fine Gael calls for Mental Health services to incorporate diversity in their service delivery by having counsellors/clinicians who are able to work with young people from all backgrounds and cultures, rather than only using a translator.

Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to ensure this budget is inclusive and recognises the work by family carers under three key areas

- a) **Increase both Carers allowance and Carers Benefit by €8 per week.**
- b) **Extending thresholds for means-testing criteria**
- c) **Publish an updated National Carer's Strategy.**

Increase of both Carers Allowance and Carers Benefit.

Following the Recommendations of Family Carers Ireland Pre Budget, Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to increase Carers Allowance and Budget by €8 per week.

The estimated cost is €30 million.

Family Carers providing 'full-time care' at 35 hours per week receive €219, €16 more than basic social welfare rates. In the winter of 2019/2020, Family Carers Ireland undertook a national State of Caring survey. The survey revealed that 82% of respondents provide over 90 hours per week and 57% provide 140-168 hours per week. The reality is family carers are working much more than 35 hours per week of care roles. The increase of Carers Allowance and Budget by €8 per week will assist many family carers in covering care costs. This provides the Government with a chance to increase carers with the highest allowance and benefit since pre-austerity with a future aim to ensure no carer is in financial stress due to their caring role.

Extending thresholds for means-testing criteria:

Many family carers providing full time caring roles fall ineligible to receive carers allowance due to mean testing thresholds. A household's total gross income must be less than €37,500 per year to qualify for a full Carer's Allowance. The gross house income must be between €37,500 and €62,000 to qualify for reduced rates. Any household with a gross income above €62,000 (including savings and assets) cannot receive any carer's allowance despite the significant caring roles.

Update of the National Carers Strategy:

The National Carers Strategy 2012 focused on a roadmap for implementation that contained actions on delivering goals and objectives to create a society in which carers will be recognised and respected as crucial care partners. They will be supported to maintain their health and well-being and to care with confidence. They will be empowered to participate as fully as possible in economic and social life. Despite the various implementations from the 2012 strategy, there is a need to update a strategy with new considerations relevant to current society.

Family Carers Ireland suggest it is difficult to estimate how much the National Carers' Strategy is likely to cost until the final action plan is agreed. Family Carers Ireland recommend €5 million in funding allocated to the implementation.

Agricultural and Rural Development

Our Recommendations:

- ▶ **Stamp duty on farms:** In Budget 2018, stamp duty for commercial property was raised from 2% to 6%, and subsequently to 7.5% in Budget 2019, due to the recovery in the prices for property. However, whilst exemptions apply for young, trained farmers, agricultural land is not fully exempt. Young Fine Gael proposes that agricultural land be removed from the definition of commercial property and instead be re-designated into the residential stamp duty rate of 1% up to €1 million and 2% thereafter.
- ▶ **Capital allowances for smart farming:** The potential for smart farming technology to improve farming efficiency and productivity, in areas such as sensors and mobile-phone applications to monitor crop growth, is immense. To accelerate the transition to smart farms, the Government should consider expanding the current Accelerated Capital Allowances categories to include smart farming IoT investments.
- ▶ **Extend Green Cert Courses to Institutes of Technology:** To encourage more participation in agricultural education in colleges, the Green Cert should be expanded to IT's. The Green Cert could also provide automatic entrance to a level 7 or 8 agriculture degree in the same manner that some colleges of further education allow entrance to level 7 courses upon completion and attainment of a certain grade.
- ▶ **Solar panels for dairy farmers:** The Government should consider either grants or low-interest loans for dairy farmers to purchase solar panels, which can be used to power milking parlours. This would not only reduce electricity bills for farmers but also be environmentally efficient.
- ▶ **Incentivising farm safety:** The fatality rate in Irish agriculture is higher than in any other economic sector despite a small proportion of the workforce overall is employed in farming. To try and reduce this incidence of fatal accidents, Young Fine Gael proposes that farm safety equipment should be exempt from VAT.
- ▶ **Farming apprenticeships:** To alleviate labour shortages in the agricultural industry, the Government should consider introducing a formal apprenticeship programme for farming, which could be aided by tax incentives to farm owners who offer apprenticeships.
- ▶ **Equalise the cost of the Green Cert:** Currently, in person full time and part time Green Cert courses cost €1,700, whilst the remote learning option comes at a cost of €2,990 despite not offering any additional benefits. Additionally, to enroll in a part time course, the applicant must be over 23 years old, and this should be equalised to the same age entry of 17 as the full time course.

- ▶ **Fishing equipment upgrades:** The Government should consider enhanced grants for fishermen to allow them to upgrade their nets, vessels, and equipment. This will allow them to thrive in the new era and avail of the many new fishing practices currently being deployed elsewhere, they will also be in a position to create employment. This will also help the fishing communities on the coast that depend on the economic success of fishing for their economic survival.

- ▶ **Implementation of an A B pricing system for milk produced:** This would implement a system whereby a producer would get 100% of the market price per liter up to the quantity of 400,000 litres per annum. Above this threshold there should be a 2c reduction for the price of milk per litre to stabilize milk prices and prevent the decline of the family farm. If implemented, this threshold would award the family farm and allow them to compete in an ever-growing market of factory farming.

- ▶ **Incentivise the return of sugar-beet production in Ireland:** Increasing the return of the sugar-beet industry in Ireland would help diversify our tillage industry and help in maintaining quality in Irish soil. This industry, if returned, would also lessen the need to import large quantities of sugar from sugarcane, whilst also providing export opportunities for surplus production.

Education, Culture and Heritage

Our Recommendations:

▶ **Young Fine Gael calls for a €500 million capital investment for the construction and refurbishment of schools nationwide.**

▶ **Young Fine Gael calls for the expansion of the Visiting Teacher (VT) support service nationwide** to assist children and young people who have hearing or vision impairments.

▶ **YFG calls for the rates of pay for Special Needs Assistants working on July Provision or similar programs to be equalised.**

Currently, SNAs receive approximately one third of the amount that a teacher earns for carrying out identical work. We believe that addressing this issue would increase the uptake of SNAs around the country on the program.

▶ **YFG urges the government to ensure Ireland's documentary heritage is preserved by ensuring that every County Council or Local Authority has a full-time professional archivist.**

The example of Offaly County Archives with its excellent use of local material, enabling access for researchers, should be replicated across the country.

▶ **YFG also proposes a 40% increase in the funding of the National Archives to alleviate staffing shortfalls.**

Widening Accessibility to the SUSI Grant

While we appreciate some people's views on the abolition of Third-Level fees, we would argue that in practice, it would prove to be both an unaffordable and regressive policy; mainly favouring the wealthier minority who do not currently qualify for the SUSI grant.

We would rather make changes to the present system. The method used to determine 'Gross Family Income' under

the SUSI system is an area that we believe needs to be improved. A student would lose between 1,500 and 3,000 in allowances (depending on where they reside) and 1,500 in tuition if their family's wages increased by 10,000 from 40,000 to 50,000. This situation, we feel, is both arbitrary and unjust.

To remedy this, we propose that the applicant student's earnings would not be considered when calculating the Gross Family Income. This would allow students to work without worrying about the consequences to their grant eligibility. Not only is this important for the students who deserve the extra income for taking on more obligations while at college, it is also better for the economy and the labour market.

Compulsory foreign language in primary schools

We welcome Minister Foley's recent commitment to roll out a foreign language pilot scheme for primary schools across the country. This pilot will consist of 6 one-hour long classes delivered over 6 weeks for 3rd to 6th class students.

While this development is laudable, we would like to see foreign languages being taught at earlier ages to all students across the country. We also suggest that this should become a permanent part of the school curriculum and be taught daily, as opposed to as infrequently as is being currently suggested. In 2015 an OECD survey showed that over 84% of primary schools across the EU teach a foreign language while over 5% taught 2 or more. It is not sustainable for us to continue refusing to put off this change. It is necessary not only to cement our place in the EU, but also to provide our children with more valuable skills as they enter a more globalised world.

Environment, Energy and Climate Action

Our Recommendations:

Grants for new hydrogen research and technology

The introduction of a Hydrogen Research and Technology Grant from the Department of Higher Education and Research can advance Irish projects and technologies that can change the foundation of environmental protection. This grant system should be used to also test new transport methods and technologies to decarbonise the transport industry in Ireland and use hydrogen as the fuel of the future. This grant scheme should be introduced to combat climate change and protect the environment. This scheme could also spur jobs growth if the technologies that are funded are worthy of production.

Introduction of congestion charges

The use of congestion charges in cities such as London has been extremely successful in reducing traffic and congestion, not to mention the increased quality of life for local inhabitants. Ireland should follow the lead of other countries and introduce the trial introduction of a congestion charge on private transportation vehicles entering and exiting the Dublin City Administrative Area between 7am and 6pm. The charge could be varied for different times of the day (to reflect peak pressure points) and for busier areas of the city, along with varying exemptions or price reductions for clearly defined categories of entrants. Following this one-year trial, the charge should then be reconsidered based on the experience and extended out to defined areas within the cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford when appropriate.

Introduction of an Environmental Infrastructure Fund

A new fund to contribute more finance and funding to cities and local communities across the country should be set up. This fund would be used to invest in multiple initiatives such as community infrastructure projects that improve sustainability and protect the environment, new funding for electric charging stations across the country and funding for larger initiatives such as light-rail in the main cities of Ireland that can connect the city to the suburbs and other vital transport, business and residential areas. This is also another policy to protect the environment and enhance sustainability. This fund could also be used to achieve energy independence in the future using environmental infrastructure such as solar energy and wind energy to protect the environment as well.

Housing

Our Recommendations:

Create a Citizen's Assembly on Planning

A Citizen's Assembly should be formed in a similar way to previous assemblies, allowing people to debate the issues and come up with policies, after hearing from experts on the subject of planning laws. If the policies are implemented, the primary benefit is the buy-in and inherent democratic accountability inherent in the process. It de-politicizes the issues, given that most of these are difficult and are not approached by any party due to public backlash. This can focus particularly on NIMBYism, the equity of individuals obstructing major developments, and fast-track planning for certain projects.

Establish a Student Accommodation Regulation Board (SARB)

A Student Accommodation Regulation Board (SARB) would establish minimum standards for university-sponsored and privately-owned student housing. There is currently no organization that sets criteria for such facilities. The SARB should and would examine each property once a year, and all student housing firms would be controlled by the SARB. All student housing concerns and complaints would be funnelled via the governing board, which would include members from USI.

Elimination of Tax for Buyers and Builders for New Build Apartments

For newly constructed apartments for first-time buyers specifically, the buyer and builder should both be exempt from paying tax on the newly built property. This would essentially be a continuation of the Help to Buy Scheme and would be administered by the same entity. Ireland's objective is to develop more apartments while also making them affordable, so this should help with both. It would also encourage developers to begin building additional units

now, rather than later. This is also supported by research and evidence. Stamp duty, levies, and VAT are examples of taxes that would be eliminated while at the same time the government would incur no overall financial loss.

Reduce planning board restrictions for garden houses

This should make it simpler to bring modular fast constructions to rear gardens to accommodate new housing arrangements, children moving out of "home," or people using the "rent a room" relief. Height and size restrictions on what can be constructed without authorisation must be strictly adhered to, as long as it is solely used for household reasons and is agreed upon in advance.

Extending student tenancy protections

The Residential Tenancies (No.2) Act of 2021 added extra safeguards for students who live in purpose-built student accommodation. This includes allowing students to terminate a lease within 28 days of signing it and get a full refund if they are unable to use the space. These safeguards, we feel, are beneficial and should now be extended to all student-occupied rental houses. If there are any further lockdowns in the following months, this strategy may become even more important.

Related to this, we propose the creation of a new Student Accommodation appeals process, to exist under the current RTB Dispute Resolution service. There are countless instances of student accommodation being found to be unfit for use. It is our position that as these issues seem to cause particular concern for students, they should have their own panel within the RTB. This would allow for greater speed in the decision-making process, as well as a stick for unscrupulous landlords.

Judicial and Legal Reform

Our Recommendations:

Fund an Increase in Garda Presence

As a measure to deter random acts of violence, YFG is calling on the Government to provide additional resourcing to increase Garda patrols in known 'hot spot' areas for anti-social behaviour and assaults, for example Dublin Boardwalk. The aim should be to establish a visible Garda presence in these areas 24/7. Greater Garda visibility will make citizens feel more at ease in their communities. We should also emphasise the importance of having permanent community Guards, who permanently reside in the area, and engage regularly with community activists.

Improving Cyber Security Infrastructure

YFG calls on the Government to continue to overhaul Ireland's cyber security infrastructure to protect the country and its citizens from the persistent and evolving threat of cyber-attacks. Cybercrime is a relatively new phenomenon, but the cybercrime economy is already worth more globally than the illegal drugs trade. In 2021, Cybersecurity Ventures estimated that cybercrime damages could reach \$6 trillion, a value equivalent to the GDP of the world's third largest economy, finishing only behind the USA and China.

We must ensure that all public and semi-state bodies that are critical to the infrastructure of the country are equipped with improved cyber security measures to protect their systems from future cyber-attacks, such as 'phishing' scams and 'double-extortion' attacks.

This should be done alongside continued investment in anti-cybercrime resources and infrastructure such as the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB), with expansion of the GNCCB's staff and IT capability already taking place, and the National Cyber Security Centre. The

Government should also be encouraging the Gardai to gather more strategic intelligence in the corporate world and increase the number of organisations that are required to report suspicious transactions to the authorities.

Garda Cadetship

YFG would reaffirm our call on the government to introduce a Garda Cadetship programme as part of recruitment into our policing services. We believe that college students who have completed their degrees should be incentivised to enter An Garda Siochana in leadership and intelligence roles where on completion of the Cadetship the ranks of Detective Garda or Sergeant would be granted. Mirroring the Cadetship within the defence forces this would aim to raise the standards of leadership for policing allowing us to increase the competency of the higher ranks in an Garda Siochana.

Hire More Judges for the lower Courts

YFG would call on the government to increase the number of judges presiding over cases from the lower courts to the High Court in order to more effectively move through the backlog of criminal and civil cases on court dockets. This would allow for a swifter and more fair path to justice shortening the time which applicants and respondents have to endure to wait to finalise their verdict. YFG wishes to propose that the number of District Court judges be increased from 64 to 80, the number of Circuit Court from 37 to 45 and the number of High Court judges from 37 to 45. These increases to the Judicial benches would allow for the courts service to effectively run through cases, relieving the burden on those who are on long lists waiting for their cases. This would increase the costs on the courts service by between €4.3m to €5.5m to facilitate the salary of judges which is a small cost to reduce the time of cases.

Fund the Creation of a dedicated Special Family Court

YFG proposes that the government implement the Family Law Court Bill but also to expand on the bill by going further with the creation of a new special family court outside of the current courts system for the sole purpose of deciding family law cases, dealing with the custody of children, separation and other family matters. The current system of the family courts is totally inadequate with the only dedicated courts being present in Smithfield in Dublin. This bill will provide better family mediation services throughout the country with a greater emphasis on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) along with the correct implementation of family law. This proposal would aim to be a user-friendly system which would put families and children first and reduce the stress and complexity of an area of the law which is already very delicate, having major implications on the core unit of our society.

Including the proposals allowed for the Bill, YFG would add:

- ▶ A panel of Judges dedicated solely to the resolution of family disputes in the Special Family Court implemented by this bill.
- ▶ The creation of a Special Family Law Court which would have the sole prerogative of the implementation of family law.
- ▶ A new dispute resolution service dedicated to mediating and resolving issues without the need of going to the courts.
- ▶ The implementation of judicial guidelines on the distribution of assets and the determination of custody agreements for dependant persons.

Migration

Immigration on a large scale is a relatively recent occurrence in Ireland. In the past decade, the percentage of foreign-born people has doubled, which is a fairly quick rise by OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) standards. Ireland's foreign-born population currently exceeds that of nations with a long history of immigration, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, or the Netherlands. Additionally, a distinguishing characteristic of Ireland's immigrant population ECO/WKP(2016)16 is its heterogeneity, with unique problems and demands.

Our Recommendations:

- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls for the government to invest adequate resources towards integration measures that are required to assist immigrants in adapting to Ireland and avoiding economic and social disadvantage.**

Ireland gets three types of immigrants: returning Irish emigrants, migrants from other EU member states, and international migrants. The latter two groups may face challenges such as social isolation. The difficulty for these groups is to fully use their skill sets, which need recognition of formal qualifications earned in their countries of origin. Despite these difficulties, administrative statistics on the proportions of Irish and non-Irish citizens receiving welfare payments in Ireland demonstrate that there is no indication of a significant or systematic overrepresentation of non-Irish nationals among welfare beneficiaries.

- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls on the government to eliminate these inconsistencies and offer more clarity for both immigrants and government authorities about social assistance and support rights, by drafting our clear instructions and showing it on their respective websites.**

While the majority of Ireland's immigrants are highly educated, not all of them are engaged in professions

that completely represent their education levels. High overqualification rates indicate the danger of Ireland entering a cycle of brain gain, waste, and drain, in which the country attracts highly qualified people initially but is unable to properly use their human capital, which depreciates over time. Eventually, these employees will likely relocate to a third nation or return to their native country. Those who come to Ireland abandon the nation at a greater rate than workers from other countries after five years.

Increased assistance for adult language training, facilitation of on-the-job training, and expedited recognition of professional credentials earned abroad would all help to maximise the potential of immigrant workers and promote their seamless absorption into the Irish labour market.

- ▶ **Young Fine Gael calls on the government to run local/online English language programmes to assist migrants to better integrate within their local communities. These can also be voluntary groups funded by the Department of Justice.**

Discrimination has been one of the most significant impediments to labour market integration. Field studies, especially "correspondence tests," are one method to identify and quantify prejudice. Evidence indicates that ethnic minorities get about 30% fewer invitations to interview than the general population. Thus, it is predicted that job applicants with Irish names are more than twice as likely to be called to interview as those with identifiably non-Irish names. This may be due to prejudice or bureaucracy; however, we cannot change mindset, but Critical Skills Work Permits are currently taking more than twelve weeks to process (as per experienced by the migrant community); no business would wait this long to recruit someone.

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