

Tomorrows Ireland..Today!

2011 Budget Submission



Their Lives, Our Future



Youth Work Ireland

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Tomorrow's Ireland...Today!

It isn't always easy being young in Ireland today. The economic downturn and the decline in traditional institutions means everybody is worried about the future. It is often said young people are the Ireland of tomorrow, we disagree, young people are the Ireland of today! All around this country by engaging with young people in our communities our workers and volunteers make Ireland a better place for young people to develop as active citizens.

Our work ensures young people choose healthy lifestyles, engage with their communities and develop as well rounded citizens today and for the future. By entrusting young people with leadership roles today we know our countries future is in safe hands tomorrow.

Ireland needs strong and vibrant local youth services in all our communities. Youth Work Ireland makes a real difference to young people's lives today and for the future. Young people and youth work need to be supported today if we are to have a tomorrow.

Introduction

Our current economic turmoil has arguably impacted on young people much more than other group in society. There are currently xx young people on the Live Register and it is estimated that approximately one in three young males are currently unemployed. The collapse of construction has hit young people hard in terms of entry level jobs and the apprenticeship route in to trades.

Similarly and crucially the education and training system has not succeeded in dealing with what can only be described as a predictable major increase in demand. Young people cannot find any sort of place in education and training at the moment with both the CAO and the PLC sector turning away thousands. This leads inevitably to unemployment and emigration. 28,000 young people left Ireland in the last year according to the CSO.

This upward spiral of youth unemployment and emigration and a failure to plan for the inevitable demand for education and training is truly a shameful condemnation of our country and our economic performance. It is openly admitted that much of the debt incurred today will be with us for generations, in other word young people who had no involvement in causing this crisis will be expected to pay for it.

Jobs and the economy are key concerns for young people. Youth Work Ireland and Voices of Youth (a youth media group we support) carried out a poll of over 1,000 young people in 2009 and the economy and their future was the key concern. Examples of some of the findings were;

- Nearly 60% expect unemployment after education
- 86% did not trust politicians with their future
- 73% did not believe the Government cared about young people and their future
- 80% felt there were less opportunities for young people in terms of education and training (87% less apprenticeships)
- The overwhelming majority cited the leadership skills of Barack Obama as what they were looking for (69%) as opposed to 4.5 and 5.8% for Brian Cowen and Enda Kenny respectively
- Over 79% feel more young politicians would mean more understanding of their issues
- Health was the most important issue to young people

There are no two ways about it, jobs and the economy are the key to young people's future in this country and urgent action is needed to restore faith in young people's very commitment to this state. Action on the macro economy, while important, is not enough without reference to outcomes in terms of jobs and the real economy.

Economic Backdrop

There is broad consensus on the overall national finances in terms of reaching a budget annual budget deficit of 3% of GDP by 2014 as agreed with the European Commission under the excessive budget deficit arrangement. However there is less agreement on precisely how to do this.

Clearly major cuts in public expenditure coupled with tax increases can have a deflationary effect on the economy and there is much evidence to suggest that such a spiral may actually be occurring. There is a danger that the medicine might kill the patient.

We believe the real challenge to policy makers and key to young people's future is to provide a jobs and growth stimulus package while still achieving the long term targets on the public finances. It is not our role to provide precise figures on this but we believe drawing on work done already by others there are numerous ways of doing this without damaging the economy further or hurting the least well off. While we do not necessarily endorse all suggestions there are certainly enough to draw from, for example;

- Use of the Pension Reserve Fund for infrastructure
- Restriction of tax reliefs including pensions
- Possible disposal of non essential state assets
- Increased levies on Banks when profitable in the future
- Self Assessed Property taxes and water charges reflecting ability to pay
- A third rate of income tax

While estimates vary measures such as the above could provide anywhere between 5 and 10 billion euro for the public finances. Given the need for a stimulus package for the economy we do not support cuts in the capital budget rather the use of pension reserve funds for the more productive projects which provide a return.

Youth Work

Youth Work is defined in the 2001 Youth Work Act as

Youth Work Ireland is the largest youth organisation in the country. Through a network of 22 local services we work with over 100,000 young people through hundreds of clubs, projects, drop in centres and local services.

These services are provided through a variety of public and private funds. We provide an integrated service to young people which is joined up from their viewpoint. We see young people as assets and we seek to develop their strengths for their development and the development of local

communities. We provide a universal service and also work in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland.

The state plays a key role in supporting youth work in Ireland and it is important to recognise this. We believe however that the state also receives excellent value for money in this investment. For example youth work Ireland has approximately xx thousand volunteers who if remunerated the most basic level would cost about xx.

The state also wishes to deal with some key social problems in partnership with the youth work sector for example offending behaviour, drug prevention, counselling etc. GFor this work to be effective there needs to be a basic infrastructure in place in communities to support and integrate this work into young people’s lives.

Core funding from the OMCYA for youth work and specific disadvantaged projects for youth has been severely cut in the last few years. This has led to the discontinuation of many services in local communities for young people. Youth work along with other areas is co-financed by the National Lottery, while cuts to frontline services have been averaged xx% year on year since 2008 overall National Lottery income was xx higher in 2009 than 2007.

It is important that the contract between lottery players and good causes remains. If the exchequer is cutting matching funds by greater amounts then such a contract is also threatened.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Youth Affairs Funding</i>	42.6	43.7	39.34	38.6
<i>National Lottery Income</i>	245.5	267.8	263.5	Not available

Revised Estimates of Public Services

1. We recommend a link between lottery income and youth affairs funding
2. Maintain 2010 levels of funding for 2011 . Cutbacks of previous years have led to our own internal austerity measures and any further cuts will lead to job losses and service cuts. Youth Services have instituted pay freezes, withdrawn training funds.....etc
3. Make unused buildings (owned by the state or state agencies) available to Youth Sector under license for provision of direct services to young people
4. Ensure that Youth Services that are registered as Charities are exempt from Rates as a rule and not just as determined annually by local councils
5. Lower rate of VAT for Charities or VAT exempt? Taking money in through VAT to then returning some of that money as grant-in-aid is serving to increase administration.
6. Sector is looking forward to utilising the employment scheme announced by Minister O Cuiv and ensuring that it is a meaningful experience for those who opt to participate

The Three Key Issues – Jobs, Jobs and Jobs

There were 88,663 people under the age of 25 on the Live Register in September 2010. While the figures do vary the general trend in youth unemployment has been upward in the last number of years. For example the figure in September 2008 was 53,700 and in August 2009 and 2009 reached 95,000. The CSO also reports major flows of young people on to the live register. It is reasonable to

suggest based on CSO figures and anecdotal evidence that emigration is also keeping youth unemployment figures down.

Youth unemployment poses particular problems for our economy and society as having unemployment as your first labour market experience is a hugely negative factor in young people's development. As many young people may not have developed strong roots in their communities through family or housing they are more likely to emigrate this providing free educated workers to other competitor countries.

Nobody suggests that jobs can be created out of thin air however the very least the hard-pressed public might expect would be some form of coherent strategy with a dedicated focus on jobs beyond the simple macroeconomic route of spending cuts and bank bail outs. It is also important to recognise that while there is a need for job creation for young people any coherent strategy will be as much about the training and education as job creation to ensure young people can stay in Ireland and avail of any economic recovery when it comes. We suggest that there should be several pillars to a dynamic youth employment strategy such as;

1. **Labour Market Programmes:** During periods of high long term unemployment and even during periods of economic growth employment programmes keep people in touch with the labour market. Given the extreme labour market situation we suggest allowing young people access all labour market programmes regardless of age subject only to interaction with appropriate employment services.
2. We believe the **Student Summer Jobs Scheme** which gives valuable labour market experience to
3. young people and helps the voluntary and community sector should be revived
4. **Reverse the PLC places freeze**, this is a crucial move in the vocational space for those who cannot access third level.
5. **Maintain apprenticeship numbers** as was done with the ESB scheme, local authorities have also become involved here. There is a considerable infrastructure built up around apprenticeships which should not be lost.
6. **Foster and support young entrepreneurs**, we seldom hear about enterprise support for young people despite the fact that several major successful businesses have been created by young people such as Facebook and several technology related products
7. Establish a process to **commercialise young people's ideas** e.g. transition year & young
8. scientist entries
9. Work with young people on new areas of **economic potential in music, arts and technology**
10. Capitalise elements of the **pension reserve fund** on a commercial basis to support job creation
11. for young people – after all it's their future pension!
12. Ensure every young person has an offer of work, education, training or quality work
13. experience to prevent the drift into a culture of long term unemployment
14. Develop **work placements and public works** for the most hard to reach
15. Increase places in Youthreach Centres to eliminate perceived waiting lists

16. Roll out **Job Fit nationwide** for over 18's, Junior Cert or lower level attained in school and 3 months on Live Register
17. Extend entitlement to young people over 18 and under 25 from the **asylum seeking community to vocational training**. If these young people acquire refugee status then they should have skills and training to compete in the jobs market.
18. Commit to a time-frame for **lowering class sizes** in primary and post primary schools

Safety and Well-being of Young People

Ireland's National Children's Strategy commits the state to support children's mental health and emotional well being. Under the "vision for Change" mental health strategy a key cornerstone of this is the development of Community Mental Health Teams. Although some additional support has been forthcoming from this work it is falling behind target with long waiting lists and waiting times. Clearly with an endemic of youth suicide in Ireland a proper mental health infrastructure for young people is a must. The admission of children and young people to adult psychiatric facilities is also a blot on our mental health system for young people.

Year in year out we hear terrible news concerning road deaths of young people. While this is a complex problem there is a definite need for much greater work on safety for young drivers. Many youth services and schools already provide these in an ad hoc and informal way. There would be a dividend in mainstreaming these efforts.

Ireland continues to have a major alcohol problem

1. Driver preparation and safety programmes
2. Implement the findings of successive reports on how to address Ireland's alcohol problem particularly through the evidence based successful measures in the areas of price, promotion and availability
3. Youth Counselling Services: Suicide prevention
4. Training for teachers in dealing with bullying and disclosures of abuse: young people reporting a poor response in school and teachers saying they are not adequately trained to respond to these situations
5. Resourcing Garda Vetting for Sector: delighted with increase in numbers of volunteers but the timeframe for completion of vetting is causing difficulty with risk of potential volunteers losing interest waiting several months for report

Support for Families in Crisis

1. Ensure the HSE provide more appropriate placements for young teenagers in need of out of home care (particularly 14 to 17 year olds)
2. Child benefit payments to remain for families with income below.....€
3. Local Authority Housing lists growing. Support for homeless Families and Families at risk of becoming homeless: empty housing estates under NAMA to be utilised to reduce housing lists
4. Loss of CDP's: lack of anti-poverty strategy for poorer communities and resource centres with no services

Regeneration