

# Achievements of Government 2 years in office - July 2022

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## Departments

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine .....	2
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth .....	5
Department of Education.....	7
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment .....	9
Department of Finance .....	10
Departments of Foreign Affairs & Defence .....	13
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science .....	14
Department of Health .....	16
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage .....	23
Department of Justice .....	25
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.....	26
Department of Rural and Community Development.....	28
Department of Social Protection .....	30
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.....	32
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media .....	34
Department of Transport.....	36

# Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

- Over the first two years of this Government, Irish farmers and fishers have received close to €4 billion, comprising €2 billion in Exchequer and EU payments annually.

## Marine

- Seek EU Commission contingency supports to mitigate impact of COVID-19 and Brexit – Established the Seafood Sector Taskforce to discuss the future of the fishing industry in Ireland. The Taskforce delivered its report, *Navigating Change*, and proposed a number of schemes and initiatives to help fishers and coastal communities.
- Prohibit pair trawling inside 6 nautical miles (currently *sub judice*).
- Facilitate establishment of Producer Organisation for inshore fleet – worked with IIMRO to establish a new Producer Organisation to support island fishers and inshore fishers.
- Invest in coastline communities through FLAG programme – Ongoing support through EMFAF programme from 2023 and support through Taskforce Report schemes.
- Invest strategically in harbour infrastructure – In 2022, announced the biggest ever funding allocation for local authority marine infrastructure. This will have a huge positive impact for coastal communities throughout our country.
- Actively promote setting annual quotas in line with MSY principles.
- Work to retain factory weighing of pelagic fish in the context of negotiations on the new EU Control Regulation.

## CAP Reform

- In 2021 - visited marts in every county in Ireland to hear first-hand the views of farmers on draft CAP Strategic Plan. Following that engagement tour, the full draft CAP Strategic Plan was submitted to the European Commission and shared with the CAP Stakeholder Consultative Committee.
- The new CAP will be a well-funded, farmer friendly aimed at supporting farm families across the country. There will be an extra €1bn for farm families in Pillar II for a variety of schemes. Schemes and measures under the next CAP include:
- A new and pioneering agri-environmental scheme that will pay farmers up to €10,500.
- A new suckler cow support scheme that will pay farmers €150/cow on the first 10 cows and €120/cow thereafter. This is up from €90/cow on the first 10 and €80 thereafter in the outgoing BDGP.
- A €12/ewe sheep scheme.
- Protein Aid has been more than doubled to €7m.
- The successful Straw Incorporation Measure will be rolled into the CAP programme.
- Nearly €400m for TAMS.
- A fivefold increase in organics funding.
- Specific supports for women farmers.

- A 50% increase in Pillar I funding for young farmers.

### **Ukraine response - €90m in support to farm families**

- Launched a received approval at cabinet for a €55m scheme to aid farmers to grow silage this year. A recent Teagasc survey found that 49% of drystock farmers had yet to spread chemical nitrogen.
- In March, launched the €12m Tillage Incentive Scheme to support farmers in growing more tillage crops for 2022, and to reduce Ireland's dependency on imported feed material.
- There have been two pig package supports worth €20m and a support package for horticulture growers worth nearly €3m (more detail inside). In total, we have delivered an additional €90m in supports for our farm families.

### **Office for Fairness and Transparency in the Agri Food Supply Chain**

- In March, announced that the Cabinet approved a General Scheme of the Agricultural and Food Supply Chain Bill 2022. This Bill, when enacted, will establish a new independent statutory Authority which will be known as the "Office for Fairness and Transparency in the Agri-Food Supply Chain.

### **Fur farming**

- Mink farming is now being phased out in Ireland with the remaining few farms due to close, following the introduction of the Animal Health and Welfare and Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022 which prohibits fur farming in Ireland.

### **Animal Welfare**

- In December 2021, announced record animal welfare funding of more than €3.7million to 98 organisations nationwide.
- The funding announcement was made on the inaugural Animal Welfare Awareness Day, an initiative to raise awareness of animal welfare. Funding for animal welfare organisations was evidence of the Government's ongoing commitment to animal welfare and acknowledged the important role played by animal welfare organisations. These organisations play such a crucial role in ensuring all our animals are cared for and protected.

### **Gender Equality in Farming**

- The contribution of women to agriculture is important and we have worked to design measures which will increase their participation in farming.
- Food Vision 2030, the agri-food sector's new 10-year stakeholder strategy, also supports an enhanced role for women in the sector and recommends some further actions, including a national dialogue on women in agriculture.
- Included a 60% rate in TAMS to support women farmers invest in the future of their farmers.

## **Forestry**

- Reform of forestry sector, culminating in new Forestry Strategy and Forestry Programme which will be open to applicants from 1 January 2023.
- Establishment of Project Woodland in 2021 to implement the findings of the MacKinnon Report.
- Passage of legislation to make the forestry appeals process more efficient, as well as legislation to enable the establishment of a small scale native woodland planting scheme without the requirement to obtain a forestry licence.

## **Organic Farming**

- A budget of €256 million has been allocated to the Organic Farming Scheme under the next Common Agricultural Policy from 2023 – 2027 to help to grow the number of organic farmers.
- Re-opening of the Organic Farming Scheme in 2021 and in 2022, the scheme having been closed to new entrants since 2015 apart from a brief period at the end of 2018.
- In 2021, an additional 12,000 ha were farmed organically and it is expected that this will increase by a further 17,000 ha this year due to the recent opportunity to apply to the scheme.
- Establishment of a new Organic Strategy Forum.

## **Horticulture**

- Commissioned KPMG to conduct a major review of the Horticulture industry in Ireland, which will provide evidence-based recommendations on a road map for the future of the Irish horticulture sector.
- Increased the scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture by 50% in 2021, with that increase in funding maintained for 2022 at a level of €9 million.
- Recently introduced a €3 million scheme of investment aid for the seed potato sector, using funding from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve.

# Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

## Integration

- Published and began implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Service.
- Led Ireland's humanitarian response to the many thousands of Ukrainians displaced by the Russian invasion, ensuring accommodation could be provided to over 28,000 Ukrainians seeking refuge in Ireland.

## Legacy Issues

- Passed the Birth Information and Tracing Bill, 2022 which for the first time provides a clear and full right of access to all information about the birth and origins of adopted people, people affected by illegal birth registration and people who had been boarded out as children.
- Published and progressed the Historical Burials Bill, which will allow for the exhumation, identification and dignified reburial of the infants at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home site. The bill is due to pass both Houses in early July 2022.
- Published proposals for an €800m redress scheme for survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby Homes and County Home Institutions.

## Equality

- Passed the Gender Pay Gap Bill.
- Began a comprehensive review of the suite of equality legislation, with a commitment to introduce new grounds of discrimination based on gender identity and socioeconomic background.
- Began work to introduce a ban on so-called 'conversion therapy'.
- Published the Work Life Balance Bill, which will introduce flexible working arrangements for caring purposes, 5 days unpaid Carer's Leave, and expanded breastfeeding breaks.
- Progressively expanded entitlement to Parental Leave from 2 weeks to 5, and then to 7.
- Ensured Adoptive Leave is now available to male same-sex couples.
- Developed proposals for a statutory entitlement paid Domestic Violence leave.

## Children

- Introduced Core Funding, a €221m investment in the Early Years Sector to ensure stability, better pay and a freeze on parental fees in childcare.
- Provision of significant direct supports to the Early Years sector to ensure sustainability of the sector through the challenges of the pandemic.
- Published the Childminding Action Plan, which will regularise and support childminders, and ultimately bring them inside the National Childcare Scheme.
- Established a Joint Labour Committee to examine pay and conditions of Early Years professionals which will shortly conclude with a new Employee Regulation Order that will see wages rise across the sector.
- Completed a review of the operating model for childcare, committing to establishing a new national agency for Childcare in the coming years.

- Launched a new 'Little Baby Bundle' pilot that will see a collective of essential, helpful and supportive items provided for free to every new parent in the two pilot hospitals of the Rotunda Dublin and Waterford General. The scheme will be expanded nationwide subsequently.
- Introduced the Little Library initiative to provide children with a free book bag for every child starting school in 2022. Each My Little Library Book Bag contains three books on starting school, making friends and being comfortable to be yourself, a story card on going to the library, a postcard the child can write or draw on and send to their new teacher, or bring to give to the teacher on their first day at school and Their very own library card and special 'My Little Library' cardholder. 30,000 book bags have been distributed to date.
- Increased investment in Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

# Department of Education

## Senior Cycle reform

- In March of this year, announced a historic package of reforms to the Leaving Certificate and Transition year
- The purpose is to empower students, enrich the student experience and embed wellbeing. The reforms include :
- The development of two new subjects: Drama, Film and Theatre Studies, and Climate Action and Sustainability
- The redevelopment of all current subjects and the introduction of teacher based assessment to a value of 40%
- Offering all students the opportunity to take Transition Year and updating the TY programme
- Creating better integration between the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Established

## Smaller Class Sizes

- We have reduced the primary pupil teacher ratio in every budget since entering budget to the lowest level in the history of the state. From September 2022, the primary pupil teacher ratio will be at 24:1, ensuring our children benefit from smaller class sizes. Also reduced the pupil teacher ratio for DEIS Band 1 schools for the first time in 16 years.
- In the past two budgets, over 2,000 additional teaching posts have been created.
- We have restored the full ex-quota allocation of guidance counsellors, ensuring that students have access to important guidance support and education when deciding their future paths.

## Supporting School Leaders

- We have increased administrative leave for principals and ensured that all teaching principals have a minimum of one release day per week from teaching duties to support with school leadership and administration. This has benefitted nearly 1,700 schools across the country.
- Investing in School Building Infrastructure
- Over €1.5 billion has been invested in the school building programme, which has benefitted schools in every county in Ireland
- In excess of 400 school building projects have been approved under the school building programme
- In excess of 300 school building projects have commenced on site
- In excess of 300 school building projects have been completed, benefitting 28,000 students and creating in excess of 1,500 special school or class places
- Under the multi annual summer work scheme in excess of 750 Summer Works projects have been given approval
- €140m capital funding was provided directly to schools to assist with Covid, in terms of reorganizing internal space, improving ventilation, and undertaking minor upgrade works

- Circa €50 million funding has been approved to provide continued support for the Schools Energy Retrofit Pathfinder programme

### **Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs**

- Overall, we invest over €2 billion per year on Special Education, over 25% of the total educational budget. Budgets 2021 and 2022 provided for 2,230 additional Special Needs Assistants, bringing the total number to almost 19,200 and 1,020 additional Special Education Teachers, bringing the total number to nearly 14,500.
- Significant investment has been made to increase the availability of special school and special class places. Between 2021 and 2022, over 550 new special classes opened, offering places to nearly 3,500 children. There are now over 2,100 special classes across Ireland.
- Last year, nearly 40,000 students benefitted from the summer programme, which offers two to four weeks of extra tuition time in school or at home to students with special educational needs and disadvantaged students. For the first time ever in 2021, all schools were eligible to run the programme for their students. In the last two years, €80 million has been made available to support this programme.
- Combatting education disadvantage and promoting equity of access
- Undertaken the largest ever expansion of the DEIS programme, the government's flagship programme to support disadvantaged students and provides supports such as enhanced funding, lower pupil teacher ratios, and leadership supports to schools. This investment benefitted over 300 schools right across the country and means that nearly a quarter of a million students now benefit from the DEIS programme. Under Budget 2022, the Hot School Meals programme was extended to nearly 100 additional schools, ensuring that 55,000 students now benefit from the programme.

### **Foreign Languages in Primary school**

- Developed a new programme where primary school students had the opportunity to study modern foreign languages, including German, French, Polish and Spanish, as well as Irish Sign Language through their schools. In its first year, this benefitted nearly 500 schools and 40,000 pupils. It will be continued and expanded over the next number of years.

### **Cost of Living**

- Students availing of the school transport scheme will not be charged fees for the academic year 2022/23. This will provide families with savings of up to €500 on the cost of tickets.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

- Record level of employment – over 2.5m in employment a year ahead of schedule. All regions have registered jobs growth and full-time employment up 10% (176,100) year-on-year.
- Record employment levels at companies and businesses supported by the State Agencies: EI, IDA and Údarás na Gaeltachta. Over 491,600 jobs in client companies of the agencies in 2021 – a 6.3% increase on 2020 and growth recorded in every region with 55% of the jobs outside of Dublin.
- Minimum Wage – Eighth increase under FG governments – increased to €10.50 in January 2022.
- New ‘Examinership Process’ for small/medium-sized businesses - Small Company Administrative Rescue Process (SCARP) – a simplified, effective restructuring process for viable small companies.
- Statutory Sick Pay Scheme announced – 3 days in 2022 rising to 10 by 2025. Sick pay will be paid by employers at a rate of 70% of an employee’s wage, subject to a daily threshold of €110.
- Living Wage to replace national minimum wage. Tánaiste received Cabinet approval to introduce Living Wage at 60% of median wage in any given year by 2026. Low Pay Commission will have discretion on pace of introduction.
- Right to Disconnect – Code of Practice introduced which gives employees the right to switch off from work including the right to not respond immediately to emails, calls or other messages.
- Remote Working Strategy published. Legislation being progressed on right to request remote working. Strategy includes right to disconnect, investment in remote working hubs, tax changes, acceleration of NBP, and specific plan for Public Sector (20% of workforce remote working at any one time).
- Project Ireland 2040: Disruptive Technologies Fund – €95m over three years. 29 ground-breaking projects in life sciences, ICT, AI, environmental sustainability.
- Joint Labour Committee set up for Early Years’ Sector. JLCs set wages and determine terms and conditions of employment.
- Online Retail Scheme - €18.2m has supported over 500 applicants during 2020/21. 2022: €9.2m
- Trading Online Voucher Scheme – 4,442 recipients in 2021 with €9.6m funding. 2020: Due to Pandemic and need to move online, there were 12,946 approvals across Ireland to a value of €30.7m.
- Copyright Directive transposed – new law strengthens rights and protections of copyright-holders, e.g. journalists and authors, when their work is shared online.
- Regional Enterprise Plans launched for the nine regions and backed by €180m in funding.
- Insurance Reform: Since the establishment of the Sub-Group on Insurance Reform in September 2020, car insurance has declined by circa 15%. Overall, car insurance is now 40% lower than the peak in July 2016 on foot of actions some of which are listed below. In addition, data from the Personal Injuries Assessment Board shows that the overall average awards have reduced by 42% since 2020.
- A new Cabinet sub-group on insurance reform produced an action plan with 66 actions. Key actions implemented to date include:

- The Personal Injuries Guidelines have been given effect
- Legislation to strengthen the laws on perjury has been enacted (the Criminal Justice (Perjury and Related Offences) Act 2021)
- The Office to Promote Competition in the Insurance Market has been established within the Department of Finance
- Regulations to ban price walking for home and motor car insurance have been introduced
- The Insurance Fraud Co-ordination Office has been established within the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau
- National Claims Information Database Report on employer and public liability insurance has been published by the Central Bank
- Review on Differential Pricing in the Motor and Home Insurance Sectors has been published by the Central Bank
- New regulations on solicitors advertising have been introduced

## Department of Finance

### Cost of Living Supports

- Government's specific measures are worth €2.4bn and increase household income by 2%. These decrease fuel tax and home energy tax, and increase heating supports:
- Cut fuel tax -- 20 cent cut in the excise rate for petrol (15c diesel, 4.7c green diesel). This is worth €12 on a full 60 litre tank of petrol (€9 on diesel).
- Cut home energy tax -- 4.5% VAT cut on gas & electricity, worth €50 (gas) & €70 (electricity)
- Targeted fuel allowance rise of €404 -- €225 in lump sum payments & €5 increase p/w
- Universal energy credit of €200 -- supporting over 2 million households
- PSO levy saving of €127 -- €52 'indicative' saving as levy reduced to zero this winter, and then €75 'indicative' saving through a rebate next winter.
- Extended the special 9% VAT rate for tourism and hospitality into 2023.
  - These measures came in 4 packages since last October:
- Budget 2022 included a €1bn package of tax measures and social welfare changes.
- A €505m 'cost of living' package in February 2022.
- A 20 cent decrease on excise for petrol (15c diesel / 2c green diesel) -- worth €320m
- A decrease in VAT on gas and electricity, & 2nd fuel allowance lump sum.
  - And general government policies have helped people's finances by keeping people in jobs, growing wages and providing tax relief
- Jobs - we have kept unemployment low at 4.7%, despite a global pandemic.
- Wages - average wages increased by 14% in the last 3 years, outpacing the eurozone.
- Tax - €415 income tax relief in Budget 2022, for those on the average wage
- Fairness - Lowest income households benefit most from our cost-of-living policies (ESRI)

## Credit Unions

- The Government is committed to building a strong Credit Union sector in Ireland. The Programme for Government contains four commitments to **review Government policy, support growth, expand Credit Union services** and enable the movement to become a key provider of **community banking**.
- New legislation will help Credit Unions **collaborate** further and increase their **lending** to a sustainable level. There is now a major opportunity for Credit Unions as the only financial institution left in many towns and villages across Ireland.
- All Credit Unions can now for the first time ever invest in **Approved Housing Bodies**. This helps with the Government's delivery of affordable and social homes.
- Credit Unions have begun collaborating on new community lending. **Cultivate** is an initiative where Credit Unions provide loans to farmers.
- The Government cut **levies** on Credit Unions by 54%. This resulted in a saving of €6.7 million for Credit Unions and their members.
- Legislation was passed that gives Credit Unions discretion for the first time ever to convene wholly or partly virtual **Annual General Meetings (AGMs)**.
- Legislation to enable the wind-down of the **Credit Union Restructuring Board** was passed.

## Insurance

- Insurance reform is a priority for Government. In the **Programme for Government** there are 21 measures dedicated to insurance reform.
- The **Action Plan for Insurance Reform**, published in December 2020, is the Government's plan improve the insurance market and to bring down costs for consumers and business through 66 actions.
- **Motor premiums** are going down with a 10% decrease since the formation of this Government.
- In 2022, the **loyalty penalty** that insurance companies apply to customers is ending on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Customers who stayed with their insurance provider for nine years or more, are paying, on average, 14% more for private car insurance and 32% more on home insurance. There are currently 2.2 million private motor and 1.3 million home insurance policy holders around the country.
- The Central Bank found that 94% of **businesses** in Ireland pay less than €5,000 for insurance while only 1% of all businesses are paying over €25,000 in insurance.
- The Government recognises the difficulty faced by a number of businesses to **obtain affordable** insurance. This affects certain sectors of the economy, some of which are considered high-risk activities by insurance companies.
- The Government has had success in working with businesses and community groups to establish **group schemes** to access more affordable insurance cover. This includes childcare, adventure tourism and equestrian sports. The Government is now examining the issue of sport insurance more closely.
- There are a number of upcoming Government actions, including reform of the **Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB)** and introducing new common sense amendments to the **duty of care** legislation, which should go some way towards alleviating these problems.
- The Government has also made **perjury** a criminal offence.

- **Brexit** has made the issue of competition more difficult for certain sectors in the economy which were covered by specialised insurance underwriters who sold services from the UK.
- Minister Fleming Chairs **office within Government tasked with encouraging greater competition** in the Irish insurance market. The IDA has been tasked for the first time ever to attract new insurance companies to sell to Irish customers.
- Introduced new legislation to enhance transparency around the practice of insurers deducting **State supports** from insurance claim settlements. It will also support the ban on the loyalty penalty.

### International Financial Services

- The international financial services sector is a fast growing industry around Ireland. It employs more than **52,800 people** around the country, two thirds of which work in Dublin and the rest in the regions.
- Since the establishment of the Government, more than 5,000 new financial services jobs have been created. This has exceeded **the Government's employment target** of 50,000 with the help of Enterprise Ireland and the IDA.
- Ireland is becoming a strong centre for **Fintech** (Financial Technology) and **Sustainable Finance** (Funding for sustainable development). The Government is committed to further develop Ireland's position with these sectors.
- Completed the update of the **Government's strategy** to make Ireland a top-tier location for international financial services. This will include publishing annual action plans to develop the sector.
- Established Ireland's first **Women in Finance Charter**. This sets yearly targets for financial services companies to increase the number of women in senior management and on the Board.
- Modernised Ireland's **investment laws** for funds regulated by the Central Bank.

### Other

- New law passed to protect consumers by **regulating monthly repayment plans** for the first time ever. Popular payment plans such as Buy Now Pay Later, Personal Contract Plans and Hire Purchase agreements are included in this legislation.
- Law to be introduced to **cap the interest** moneylenders can charge on short-term loans.

## Departments of Foreign Affairs & Defence

- Ireland a member of UN Security Council for 2021-23 – chaired Council in September 2021.
- Ireland currently holds the chair of the Council of Europe (six-month term).
- The allocation to Official Development Assistance for 2022 is €1 billion, the highest ever and a 20% increase on 2021's allocation. This will allow Ireland to support countries and regions including Ukraine, the Horn of Africa, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, as well as countries in the Sahel.
- UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a global humanitarian fund that assists people trapped in humanitarian crises - €10m in 2021, €11.5m in 2022. Ireland = 8th largest global contributor.
- €75m for the World Food Programme provided by Ireland over a three-year plan.
- €10m in core funding to the International Committee of the Red Cross in response to humanitarian crises. Extra funding of €2.5m for Syria, €2m for Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger and €600k to Mozambique – areas impacted by armed conflict and/or climate change.
- Irish Aid's Civil Society Fund - €9 million to 14 civil society organisations to carry out development projects overseas, including €6 million in grants to Irish organisations.
- €6 million to UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency - for its ongoing work with Palestine refugees in the occupied territory, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Extra €1.5m for Gaza.
- €300,000 to the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims.
- €3m allocated for the International Criminal Court to support work investigating possible war crimes by Russia in Ukraine.
- €21m Overseas Development Funding for Trócaire, €10.7m for GOAL, €27m for Concern
- €23m pledged for Syria in 2021 - €192m in support funding provided by Ireland since 2012.
- €5 million in humanitarian assistance from Ireland for the crisis in Yemen.
- Inaugural Ireland-Wales forum held in Cardiff – part of strengthening Ireland-Wales bilateral relationship.
- Nordic Strategy launched to deepen Ireland's bilateral and multilateral engagement with Scandinavia.
- First annual review meeting of Ireland Scotland Joint Bilateral 2021-2025 – includes 41 recommendations across six themes for co-operation between the two countries.
- First ever Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean launched to deepen bilateral and multilateral relations with countries in the region – home to some 650m people.
- Report of the Independent Commission on the Defence Forces published. Reports sets out several levels of ambition for the Defence Forces along with corresponding necessary funding.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Defence Forces 2020–2023 launched.
- Three-year Military Education Strategy 2021–2024 launched at McKee Barracks, Dublin. Strategy aims to develop and maintain military capability by building on existing Professional Military Education supports.
- Five-Year Equipment Development Plan for the Defence Forces launched. €358 million of NDP funding available for defence capital infrastructure, including barracks – 2020 to 2022.
- Three new Pilatus PC-12 NG Spectre Aircraft acquired for Defence Forces – €43m investment.
- Two new Maritime Patrol Aircraft - €228m investment.
- Two Inshore Patrol Vessels - €26m to replace the LÉ Orla and the LÉ Ciara.

- €45m+ for upgrade of Defence Forces' buildings – progress in 2021 included barracks in Limerick, Kilkenny, Meath, Cork and Dublin.

## Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

- €85m Adult Literacy for Life plan - Ireland's first ever national literacy and numeracy strategy launched.
- Technological Universities –
  - TU of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
  - Munster Technological University
  - Atlantic Technological University
  - South East Technological University.
- 'Funding the Future' policy on reducing the cost of higher education published. Student loans system ruled out in favour of multi-funded model of additional exchequer investment and employer contributions. Student charge to be gradually reduced. Core funding gap of €307m identified.
- Council of Europe Bank provides €75m for purpose-built student accommodation – boosts aim of providing 21,000 additional student beds by 2024.
- Springboard: 10,158 places on 294 courses under Springboard+ 2021 and 1,869 places on 78 graduate courses under the Human Capital Initiative (HCI). Springboard+ 2022: Over 10,500 places.
- €12m (2021) for the second call of the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme (EEDPP) for the higher education sector. First call provided €6m in March 2020.
- €225m in further and higher education and research under National Recovery and Resilience Plan.
- Five-year Action Plan for Apprenticeship launched. 10,000 new places by 2025. New National Apprenticeship Office to be created. New grants and supports.
- National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, for 2022-2026 period, under development.
- SUSI Grant Changes:
  - Maintenance grant increase by €200
  - Income threshold for standard rate of grant increase by €1,000
  - Distance for higher, non-adjacent grant reduced from 45km to 30km
- Threshold and Fee Grant Increase for Postgraduate Students.
- Payments disregarded in assessment include the Pandemic Placement Grant for student nurses/midwives, Covid-19 one-off grant, fuel allowance, living alone allowance.
- Irish Research Council's stipend increased to €18,500.
- Investment of €193m in five Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres for six years:
  - ADAPT - ADAPT, the SFI Research Centre for AI-Driven Digital Content Technology, led by Trinity College Dublin

- CONNECT - the SFI Research Centre for Future Networks and Communications, led by Trinity
  - College Dublin
  - CÚRAM - the SFI Research Centre for Medical Devices led by NUI Galway
  - iCRAG - the SFI Research Centre in Applied Geosciences led by University College Dublin
  - Lero - the SFI Research Centre for Software, led by University of Limerick
- €5.4m to help students with disabilities across 23 higher education institutions.
  - Mitigating Educational Disadvantage funding of €6.5m (2021) and €5.8m (2020) allocated to the ETBs to be dispersed to community education providers.
  - Student Assistance Fund – core annual funding of €9.1m to help students in financial difficulty. The total SAF allocation in 2020/2021 was €17.2m and in 2021/2022 was €18.5m.
  - €15m provided to institutions to acquire laptops to assist students with online and blended learning. Up to 17,000 laptops distributed.
  - €430m in new capital programmes for the further and higher education sectors.
  - Higher Education legislation underway to reform sector and modernise role of Higher Education Authority.

# Department of Health

## More Frontline Healthcare Staff

- We've hired thousands more staff since early 2020, with almost 15,000 more staff now working in our health service.
- This includes 4,200 nurses and midwives; 2,500 working in patient and client care in roles such as healthcare assistants and home helps; 2,300 health and social care professionals; and 1,300 doctors and dentists.
- 2020 and 2021 saw the biggest staff increases on record since the HSE was established.

## More ICU/Critical Care Capacity

- We're addressing our long-standing deficit in critical care capacity with significant funding allocated in 2021 and 2022.
- We have increased our permanent adult critical care beds from 255 to 306 – a 20% increase, or 51 more beds. To put that in perspective, we had a total net increase of 18 beds in the three years 2017, 2018, 2019 (i.e. an average of 6 per year).
- Strategic Plan for Critical Care brought to government that aims to deliver 446 beds – with 340 critical care beds open by 2023.

## Increased Hospital Bed Capacity

- We've opened more hospital beds in a two-year period than at any other time.
- An additional 847 permanent hospital beds have opened (and that figure does not include ICU beds).

## Our Covid Response

- We have had an extremely successful vaccine rollout. Our uptake rate of vaccine (for 18+) is the second highest in Europe. Similarly, our uptake rate of the booster is one of the highest in Europe.
- Every death from Covid is an individual tragedy, but we have had far fewer deaths from Covid compared to most EU countries.
- We have had one of the lowest cumulative deaths per million population of any country in Europe throughout the pandemic. The UK, for example, had almost twice our death rate.
- Excess mortality captures deaths from all causes, including those that may be directly or indirectly attributable to COVID-19. Excess mortality is the number of deaths from all causes observed over a specific time period that occurred above the number that would be expected during the same time period based on previous trends in all-cause mortality.
- Ireland was among several European countries (including Iceland and Norway) which had some of the lowest rates in the world, at less than 50 excess deaths per 100,000 population, according to a major study in The Lancet. Ireland had the third lowest estimated excess mortality rate amongst western European countries for the relevant study period, according to the Lancet study.

## **Making Healthcare More Affordable**

- Making healthcare more affordable is a key foundation for Universal Healthcare.
- Drug Payment Scheme threshold has fallen from €124 to €80 today. The Drug Payment Scheme (DPS) threshold is the maximum people/families pay on approved prescribed medicines in a given month. About 100,000 people/families are now claiming under this scheme, with some individuals/families saving up to €528 per year.
- This Summer, we will remove hospital charges for children under 16 who attend a public hospital (as an inpatient or daycase). At present parents/guardians can be charged €80 a night, or up to €800 a year. This measure will save some families up to €800 per year.
- We're in discussions with doctors about expanding free GP care to children aged 6 and 7, which we plan to introduce later this year (2022).
- We have extended access to medical cards to anyone with a prognosis of 24 months or less to live. It was 12 months up until last year, when we changed the policy to facilitate greater access and a more compassionate approach.

## **Clinical Quality**

- We're investing our major clinical strategies (trauma, maternity, ambulance) to improve the quality of patient care. They were all fully funded for the first time ever in 2021.
- We allocated an additional €20 million to expedite implementation of the National Cancer Strategy in 2021. An additional €20 million in new development funding has been allocated again in 2022. To put that in perspective, and up until 2021, the National Cancer Strategy had received just €6.3 million in total since it launched in 2017.
- Key areas of focus are access to diagnostics, recruitment of clinicians and the development of our cancer genetics programme. We also want to ensure patients have access to advanced new treatments. Dozens of new medicines and treatments have been made available. The first adult patient in Ireland to receive a ground-breaking cell therapy (called CAR-T) did so in December thanks to this funding. Until now patients had to travel abroad.
- In 2022 an unprecedented €200 million was allocated to the National Ambulance Service. This includes a further €8.3 million in new service development funding, which will provide for an additional 128 whole time equivalents and help to build further capacity into this vital service.

## **Improving Access to Care**

- Published a 2022 Waiting List Action Plan with ambitious targets to reduce waiters by 18% and to their lowest levels in five years by the end of 2022.
- The Government has provided €350 million in 2022 to deliver additional activity. The Plan anticipates an additional 469,000 individuals will be removed from waiting lists as a result of this funding.
- The Waiting List Action Plan identifies 15 high volume procedures and includes a commitment that anybody waiting 6 months, who is clinically suitable, will receive an offer of care by the NTPF. At present it is anticipated that the 6-month target will be met for nearly all 15 specialties by the end of July.
- Funding was provided to Children's Health Ireland (CHI) to improve waiting lists for Paediatric Orthopaedics, including Spina Bifida and Scoliosis. CHI has reported 180 scoliosis

procedures in the year-to-date (for the week ending 13th May). This represents a 30% increase on the 138 procedures carried out in the same period in 2019.

- At the end of March, the waiting times for GI Scopes was 20% lower than its peak in March 2021.

### **Women's Health**

- Women's Health was identified by the Minister as a top priority for government.
- The Women's Health Action Plan, the first ever in this country, launched on International Women's Day.
- The first publicly funded dedicated specialist Menopause clinic opened in the National Maternity Hospital last December. Another 5 are funded to open (Limerick, Cork, Galway, Coombe and Rotunda).
- We've opened 5 Regional Fertility Hubs in 2021 and 2022. A sixth is due to open later this year.
- We are developing a network of 20 seen-and-treat gynaecology clinics nationally. 9 are already open and having a significant impact on waiting times.
- Unprecedented funding has been allocated to implement the National Maternity Strategy. Government is allocating €8.66 million to the Maternity Strategy this year, on top of €7.3m allocated in 2021. This is the single biggest investment in the Strategy since its publication in 2016 (in 2020, for example, €1.5 million was allocated).
- This is allowing enabling us to develop community midwifery, expand breastfeeding supports and recruit additional frontline staff into maternity services across the country, including Consultants, Midwifery/Nursing posts, Allied Health workers, and Healthcare Assistants.
- We are funding new services for Endometriosis, including 2 supra-regional specialist centres for complex care for endometriosis in Cork and Dublin.
- A scheme to provide free contraception to women aged 17-25 is currently scheduled for launch and roll-out in August.
- We're developing interventions and supports in response to the recommendations of the Period Poverty in Ireland Discussion Paper, with an initial focus on reaching those most in need: the homeless, minorities including traveller and Roma women).
- Plans to have proposals for termination of pregnancy safe access zones on the legislative programme for 2022. Legislative proposals are at an advanced stage with a General Scheme of a Bill now undergoing final due diligence through an expert legal review.
- A Review of the operation of the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 commenced in December 2021 and a final report is expected to be submitted to the Minister in late 2022 for consideration.

### **Mental Health Achievements**

- Record budget of €1.149 billion for 2022, an additional €47 million on 2021.
- Historic Mental Health deficit of €53 million cleared
- €1.5 million in community grants allocated by Mental Health Ireland to approximately 80 local and national organisations.

- New investment in the mental health national clinical programmes and models of care which has led to significant service improvements including:
- Full implementation of specialist Perinatal Mental Health network with 19 perinatal midwives in place in each maternity hospital.
- The roll out and development of 9 specialist Eating Disorder Teams, including 3 fully operational teams, 3 nearing full recruitment and 3 further teams funded for 2022.
- The development of 3.5 additional teams in 2022 for the National Clinical Programme for ADHD in Adults to contribute to the existing network of 2.5 teams.
- General Scheme to amend Mental Health Act published in July 2021. Final Bill to be completed and introduced to Oireachtas in Autumn session.
- In 2021, 93.7% of urgent referrals to CAMHS responded to within three working days (target was 90%); against referrals being up 5,177 on 2020 (30%) and patients seen up 1,920 (18%).
- Secured agreement from HSE CEO to create a new post for National Lead on Youth Mental Health.
- New Primary Care Psychology Waiting List Initiative has reduced numbers waiting longer than 12 months from 5,298 in March 2021 to 3,963 in April 2022, a reduction of 1,335 or 25%.
- All adults referred to Adult Mental Health Services seen within 12 weeks with no outstanding waiting lists.
- In 2021, additional CAMHS Community Mental Health team was set up in Innisowen, Co. Donegal bringing the total to 73.
- Cork Kerry CAMHS services uncovered serious and drastic service provision failures in 2021. A non-adversarial compensation scheme has been developed in an unprecedented time frame, approved by Government and notified to the affected families before any public comment was made. Manged relationships directly with affected families to ensure involvement and agreement with govt proposals.
  
- A full audit of all CAMHS teams nationally underway to report before year end.
- Mental Health Commission review of all CAMHS teams underway with my full support.
- Mental Health online supports for displaced Ukrainian people being delivered by My Mind
- Following labour court hearing in May date of 28<sup>th</sup> August agreed with HSE to transition from the Central Mental Hospital to the National Forensic Hospital in Portrane.,
- Revamped Website and e-services to facilitate nearly 1.7 million visits to yourmentalhealth.ie,
  - 53,000 conversations on the HSE text 50808 service,
  - 100,000 counselling sessions offered through the HSE National Counselling Service
  - 1,000 free online counselling sessions every month through MyMind,
  - 2,600 referrals to therapist-supported online CBT programmes (Silvercloud),
  - 34,000 therapeutic contacts by Jigsaw
  - 47,000 views of the Minding Your Wellbeing training programme
  - Almost 6,500 students participated in recovery education in 2021
  - Over 6,300 people completed the full Stress Control online in 2021
- The final report of the High-level Taskforce between the Department of Health and the Department of Justice to improve links for those in contact with the criminal justice system accessing Mental Health, Addiction or Primary Care services will be finalised shortly.

## **Dementia**

- 28 Dementia Advisors in place up from 8 in 2020.
- 30 Memory Technology Resource Rooms throughout the country now in place.
- 11% of new home care hours ringfenced for Dementia specific.
- Funding for National Dementia Office 2022 -€7.3 m (previously dependent on dormant acc funding)
- Dementia assistant Director of Nursing in each hospital group.
- 4 additional clinical nurse specialist posts.
- 31 Dementia Day Care Centres open.

## **Home Care**

- 20.9 m Home Care hours delivered in 2021 up 2.9m on 2020 to 55,000 recipients
- Budget for homecare €672m, with €150m additional investment secured
- €376.3m additional funding to Older Persons services in 2022.
- Waiting list averaging 5000, due to staff shortages, not budget, down from 9000 in 2020.
- Established a Strategic Workforce Advisory Group, Cross Departmental to address, identify and resolve solutions. Report early September 2022.
- National Home Care office to open in Q3 in Tullamore -14 staff currently being recruited.
- (Statutory Scheme) Regulation of Home Care Providers – Currently developing a new framework, licensing and regulation, bill will be brought to Oireachtas in Q4.
- The Pilot for testing a reformed model of care fully operational on 4 sites.

## **Nursing Homes**

- Funding of €1 billion for Nursing Home Support Scheme – Fair Deal supporting 22,500 service users.
- Fair Deal for Farm Families operational since October 2021.
- Government approval received to reduce the contribution from the rental of the home of a NH resident from 80-to 40%.
- €8.2 m to establish 9 permanent Community Support Teams as per Expert Panel recommendations to support NH.
- €4.5 m to progress the Safe Staffing Framework in 9 pilot sites (Nursing to HCW ratio)

## **Resident Voice**

- Patient Advocacy Service PAS expanded to HSE operated NH, new contract will expand to private NH Q1 2023
- National NH Experience Survey launched in March 2022, collected data until May, report being compiled.
- Long awaited Safeguarding Legislation will be brought to the Oireachtas Q4 2022

## General Older Persons

- 20 ICPOP teams (Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons) multidisciplinary rehab teams established across all CHO's. The full complement of 30 teams will be in place for Q3 2022.
- Secure and manage the €137m fund that has been provided under the Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme to Nursing Homes up to June 2022. The Covid outbreak assistance element of the Scheme has been extended to the end of September 2022.
- Propose and develop an ICT system to manage home support services – will go to tender in September 2020.
- Monitor and progress the reopening of **85%** of Day Care Services post Covid for Older People (**288 out of 324**)
- Funding has been approved for 128 interRAI Care Needs Facilitators to progress the national rollout of interRAI as the standard assessment tool for care-needs. These posts are being advertised and recruited currently.

## Disabilities

- **Policy and Legislation:**
  - Commenced the Irish Sign Language Act, which gives ISL official language status.
  - Ensured disability services deemed as 'essential' at all COVID-19 restrictions levels which saw return of many services.
  - Published Ireland's Initial State Report under UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for public consultation. The report describes recent advances in the rights of people with disabilities in Ireland.
  - Finalised amendments to the Assisted Decision-Making Act, which will be brought through Oireachtas in coming weeks. This will remove the outdated wardship model from the Irish legal system, replacing it with assisted decision making overseen by the Decision Support Service.
  - Published Disability Capacity Review, which gives overview of investment needed in Disabilities out to 2032. Currently working on detailed Action Plan to 2025.
  - Commissioning research into gender-based violence against people with disabilities.
- **Investment**
  - Secured €7.8 million to tackle AoN backlog, which cleared 6,500 children waiting for an assessment in the space of 12 months, bearing in mind most work carried out at peak of COVID-19 restrictions.
  - Reversed 1% cut to disability services saving €20m for sector.
  - Record €100 million new funding for Disability in Budget 2021, and another €65 million in Budget 2022.
  - Secured €10 million to bolster respite and day services in response to Covid-19.
  - Launched €20 million Strengthening Disability Services Fund.
  - Funded the development of 19 new respite houses, with most CHOs now securing at least two services each, adding over 19,000 respite nights into the system.

- Increased delivery of PA hours and delivered 6.7% above target in 2020. Single biggest increase in Personal Assistance hours in 2022 in several years, with €3m providing an additional 120,000 hours in 2022, supporting people to live more independent lives.
- Creation of €2.5m Disability Integration Fund, increasing to €3m in 2022, which supports the application of the UNCRPD at a community level.
- Funded AsIAM Information Phoneline to provide assistance for families who have questions and need information about services in their area. This launched in February 2022.
- €1m for new Sensory Gardens around the country in 2021.
- Provision of €8m for Service Providers to purchase new buses for supporting transport of its service users.
- Allocation of €2m for 11 projects in 2022 under new Cooperative Real Engagement for Assistive Technology Enhancement (CREATE) initiative, which aims to improve access to digital and assistive technologies for people with disabilities.

- **New Developments**

- Establishment of Disability Participation & Consultation Network, ensuring increased engagement of people with disabilities in the drafting of policy and legislation.
- Launched a pilot project in 2021 that transferred 18 additional U65s out of nursing homes back into their community, with the supports they need. This is increasing to 63 people in 2022.
- Committed to over 180 people being supported to move out of congregated settings through procurement of over 60 additional houses.
- Extended Personalised Budget Pilot Scheme.
- Secured pay restoration for Section 39 workers.
- Announced creation of a cross-departmental Autism Innovation Strategy that will deliver real and tangible solutions to the challenges, needs and experiences of people with autism. Public consultation open until end of May 2022.
- Launched Minister and Families Disability Services Forum, allowing parents engage with the Minister and detail their experience of disability services. Three meetings held so far (Cork, Dublin & Meath). Intention is to hold at least one meeting in each CHO.
- Launch of Disability Day Service Referral Programme, which allows potential service users defer their day service placement for up to 3 years to allow for access to further education or employment instead.
- Engaging with World Health Organisation to develop Ireland's role at both a European and Global level regarding assistive technology to support people with disabilities.

- **Therapy Support**

- Completed rollout of 91 Children's Disability Network Teams (under the Progressing Disability Services programme), which is one of the greatest fundamental reforms in disability services.
- Secured 100 clinician posts in Budget 2021 and another 185 posts in Budget 2022 to populate these teams, increasing the delivery of therapeutic supports to children.
- Secured funding for an additional 85 clinician posts in 2021 to ensure therapists in Special Schools remain associated with these schools.
- Vaccination of Disability Service users and staff as priority.
- Resumption of Disability Day services.

# Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

## Delivering in government

- Launched Housing for All the most ambitious, fully funded housing plan in the history of the state with €4bn per annum to build 300,000 homes by 2030.

## Delivering new Homes

- Highest level of Commencements on record
- Highest levels of Planning permissions in over a decade
- Highest levels of completions in over a decade
- Established high level housing delivery group

## Delivering for Home Ownership

- Expanded Help to Buy Scheme of €30,000
- Set up the new First Home “Shared Equity” Scheme
- Introduced a new €30,000 grant for vacant properties
- Introduced a new subsidy to activate apartment building in city centres for owner occupiers
- Expanded Tenant Purchase scheme to include pensioners
- Building the First affordable homes in over a decade
- Passed the first ever Affordable Housing Act
- Revamped Land Development Agency to focus on affordable homes
- Put in place the first ever Cost Rental Units in the history of the state
- Banned Co-living
- Capped rent increases and strengthened tenant’s protections
- Enhanced Local Authority Home Loan (reduced interest rates and making it easier for single people to get State back mortgage)

## Delivering for vulnerable households

- Launched the largest state led social housing building programme ever
- Slashed red tape with a new single stage development approval process for LAs up to €6m to accelerate social housing delivery
- Expanded Repair & Lease from €40,000 to €60,000 to bring Vacant properties into use
- Brought over 6,000 void homes back into use
- Delivered over 700 Housing First tenants
- Launched New National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 and providing €81 million in funding for Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability in 2022
- Established the National Homeless Action Committee

## **Delivering for Local Communities and infrastructure**

- Secured a Local Government Rates Waiver of over €1bn to support local businesses and services
- Launched €1.3bn in Urban Regeneration Funding for town and city centres
- Established a €50m Water Investment scheme for rural towns and villages
- Introduced a new €61m Fire services capital plan
- Passed the National Marine Planning Framework and Maritime Area Act Ireland's first ever spatial plan for our seas to facilitate new investment in our coasts.
- Setting up the Electoral Commission, our first body committed to overseeing and strengthening our democratic electoral process.

## **Natural Heritage**

- Commenced the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss
- Increased NPWS funding by 50% in 2021 and again in 2022 to pre-financial crisis levels of €47.2m – a total increase 64%.
- Allocated €600,000 to progress the commitment for Biodiversity Officers in the Programme for Government in 2022
- Secured Government approval for funding, governance arrangements and constitution for the National Biodiversity Data Centre
- Funded a new project officer to support the implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan
- Almost trebled the investment in the NPWS Farm Plan scheme to support farmers to manage land for nature

## **Built Heritage**

- Published Heritage Ireland 2030 in March 2022 and commenced its implementation.
- In 2022, the Built Heritage Investment Scheme was increased to €4m, Historic Structures Fund increased to €4m, the Historic Towns Initiative was increased to €1.75m and the Community Monuments Scheme was increased to €6m

## **Electoral Reform**

- Passage of the Electoral Reform bill through the Oireachtas.

## Department of Justice

- Judicial Council: First annual report of Council published.
- Waiver of court fees and excise duties for pubs, bars, and restaurants in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19.
- First convictions for human trafficking secured in Ireland (June 2021).
- Local Community Safety Partnerships pilots underway – will replace Joint Policing Committee system.
- Review of the Civil Legal Aid Scheme has commenced.
- Interdepartmental group established to undertake a review of Garda vetting arrangements & legislation.
- Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland set out an ambitious five-year programme of reform.
- Proceeds of crime to be directed to new €2m Community Safety Innovation Fund for community projects to tackle disadvantage and crime.
- 3rd Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence – four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, and policy co-ordination.
- Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 launched. Existing network of 105 Garda Youth Diversion Projects to be strengthened to provide greater early intervention, family support, engagement with younger children and support to schools. 2022: €6.7m in funding for over 50 Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs).
- New Victims Charter Website launched and new website on Restorative Justice launched. 2022:€4.6m funding across more than 60 organisations supporting victims of crime.
- Ireland joins Schengen Information System: all missing person records and lost or stolen object/vehicle records created by An Garda Síochána immediately available to 30 EU and associated Schengen countries. Information from other countries available to An Garda.
- Strategy to help reduce recidivism by supporting employment options for people with past convictions launched. Working to Change – social enterprise and employment strategy to run from 2021 to 2023, backed by €1.5 million Probation Service KickStart fund.
- Regularisation Scheme for Undocumented Migrants launched – applies to persons in State for four years. Successful applicants receive immigration permission, access to labour market, and can begin path to citizenship.
- First in-person Citizen Ceremonies held since Covid-19 Pandemic. 1,300 new citizens in at ceremony in June. To date, over 148,000 people have received Irish citizenship since 2011.
- Special Oireachtas Committee on Surrogacy established to report on best practice in area.
- Cabinet approval for reform of Irish Defamation Law – end of jury trials, clearer protection for responsible public interest journalism, easier access to justice for individuals when reputation unfairly attacked.
- Legislative Progress on Garda powers, digital recording, security and community safety, hate crime, family courts, gambling regulation.
- Garda Síochána Powers Bill
- Garda Síochána Digital Recording Bill
- Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill
- Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill
- Family Court Bill

## Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

- **Summary of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform achievements to date**
- The Government undertook unprecedented levels of **Covid related Expenditure** to assist households and business and protect public health through the pandemic. In total close to €37 billion of expenditure will be undertaken on PUP, EWSS, enterprise schemes and Covid related Health, Education and Transport supports. We delivered on our undertaking that the withdrawal of supports would be gradual and carefully timed. A Central Bank study stated Government supports had “significantly mitigated the impact of Covid-19 on household incomes and debt sustainability.
- The Government’s intervention has been critical. At the end of last year, the number of people in **employment rose to nearly 2.5 million** surpassing the number employed immediately prior to the pandemic by almost 150,000. **Unemployment has continued to fall as Covid supports have been unwound reaching 4.8% in April 2022. Modified domestic demand grew by 6.5% in 2021** making Ireland one of the fastest growing economies in the EU. From a deficit of over €18 billion in 2020 the Government balance is set to move back into a balanced budget either this year or next.
- We have announced a suite of **measures to mitigate the increase in the cost of living** and the challenges facing households, in particular relating to energy bills and especially for those at lower incomes. In total the value of cost of living measures taken since October 2021 amounts to €2.1 billion.
- Budgets 2021 & 2022 resulted in significant additional resources being allocated to public services with an additional €7 billion in core current expenditure, this includes an additional €2.9 billion in core funding for a **permanent increase in capacity in the Health service** with a target of increasing staffing levels by 16,000. A **record capital budget of €12.0 billion** (inclusive of carryover) has been put in place in 2022 to address infrastructure deficits across Health, Housing, Education and Transport.
- **The review of the National Development Plan** was brought forward to 2021 to assess the resourcing requirements for the most important challenges facing us as a nation including climate action, infrastructural challenges, housing, balanced regional development, healthcare, social welfare policy, transport, and education. The new 10-year plan has set out a **€165 billion programme** to transform the national infrastructure.
- New structures are being put in place to ensure much tighter oversight of major infrastructure projects and **value for money across current and capital expenditure**. A framework of external specialists in major infrastructure delivery is now in place together with a Major Projects Advisory Group to support the work of the Department. Additional external members including people with private sector expertise have been appointed to the Board of Project Ireland 2040 to ensure we have the capacity to manage the increased capital budget. The focused Spending Review process has been expanded and key spending Departments must now report on a quarterly basis of any emerging issues in relation to budgetary targets.
- In order to deal with the rising costs of materials and energy, we introduced a series of measures to manage these rises within the confines of the **public works contract**. These measures will ensure that the National Development Plan will be implemented.

- A new **2-year public sector pay deal** Building Momentum was agreed in December 2020. It is a progressive agreement which benefits those on lower incomes more. A review of the pay arrangements is now underway with public sector unions to reflect the changed circumstances brought about by rising inflation levels.
- The **Independent Haddington Road Hours Body** established under 'Building Momentum' reported in January 2022 addressing the issue of additional hours of work in place since the Haddington Road Agreement. Its recommendations will be implemented from July 1<sup>st</sup> this year. The Department has also been centrally involved in the resolution of long running pay issues relating to **School Secretaries** and **Community Employment Scheme supervisors**.
- Ireland's **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** will draw down €915 million in grants from the EU funding a range of innovative projects are included in the Plan focusing on the areas of Digital Transition, the Green Economy and Social Recovery.
- The **Brexit Adjustment Reserve** represents an important response by the European Union to the challenges posed by the United Kingdom's departure from the EU. Ireland played a leading role in securing support for the Reserve at the marathon European Council meeting last July. Despite pressure from certain countries to re-open national allocations, discussions between the European Council, Parliament and Commission have now concluded and Ireland has maintained its agreed allocation of €1 billion.
- The Dáil has passed legislation to **reform the process for Protected Disclosures** to further enhance and strengthen the protections provided to whistle-blowers. The regulations will come in to effect later this year.
- Legislation to **improve the regulation of Lobbying** is being progressed, in particular to deal with concerns of the cooling off period for Designated Public Officials after they leave office.
- A comprehensive review of **Freedom of Information** is underway to ensure the framework is fit for purpose taking account of international best practice and the increasing digitalisation of information.
- Work is ongoing to update Ireland's statutory framework for Ethics in Public Life to create a fit-for-purpose, easy to understand and user-friendly process that contributes positively to the quality and effectiveness of our public governance.
- A new €1.145 billion **PEACE PLUS programme** will support peace and prosperity across an eligible area of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo).
- We are delivering significant improvement in the provision of online public services years. The recently launched **Connecting Government 2030** will deliver world-leading digital government services while at the same time improving the off-line experience for those who are unable to access services digitally.
- A new **Blended Working in Civil Service** policy has been launched which will as well as providing flexible ways of working for civil servants it serves as a template for good practice across the wider economy embedding new ways of working that evolved during the pandemic.
- To **improve the transparency and effectiveness of how National Lottery Good Causes funding** is distributed, the Minister for Public Expenditure has launched a review of the current distribution model for funds raised and looks forward to bringing forwards proposals to reform the process, proposals for reform will be advanced later in 2022.
- DPER has launched a range of **Equality Budgeting, Green Budgeting and Well-being Budgeting initiatives** to increase the focus on policy goals and the impact of public policy on

people's lives. Equality objectives and indicators are published every year in the Public Service Performance Report.

- Work has been undertaken by the Office of Government Procurement to ensure that the **opportunity to compete in public procurement** is accessible by all businesses, including SMEs. Specifically, the OGP has developed a suite of policy measures aimed at assisting SMEs to access public procurement opportunities.
- Together with the Department of Sport, we announced a record **€150 million in Sports Capital Grants**.
- Together with the Department of Housing, we implemented the Moorhead Report improving the **terms and conditions for Local Councillors** around the country.
- Finalised a plan for a **Covid recognition payment** for frontline healthcare workers and an extra bank holiday in recognition of the efforts

## Department of Rural and Community Development

- Covid Stability Fund to support community and voluntary groups, charities, and social enterprises – Over €48m provided in 2020 and 2021.
- Town and Village Scheme – Almost €113m since 2016 for 1,400 projects.
  - 2021 Scheme - €18.5m –
  - 2020 Scheme - €25m (€15m plus €10m extra due to Covid). Scheme now open to larger towns for first time.
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme – Over €87m since 2016 for 1,200 projects. 2022 Scheme -€15m.
- Broadband Connection Points – BCPs: There are now more than 270 BCPs live and operational –BCPs in 28 of 31 Local Authority Areas. On course for 300 by year end.
- €500,000 Digital Innovation Programme to support rural digital initiatives with national impact.
- Scheme to Support National Organisations - €20.8m over 3 years to provide core funding for 81 national, community and voluntary organisations.
- Dormant Accounts Action Plan: 2020 - €93.5m comprising €50m for COVID-19 supports and €43.5m for normal dormant account measures, up from €37.4m in 2019. 2021: €51.8m for 51 measures across 11 Government Departments. 2022: €55.5m for 42 measures across 10 Government Departments.
- Connected Hubs Network launched. Over €100m provided under Our Rural Future to date. Circa 240 hubs part of network – circa 350 hubs have been identified as part of the Department's mapping project.
- Local Improvement Scheme: Over €80m (2017-21) since LIS was re-introduced by FG in 2017 has funded works on over 3,000 roads benefitting over 13,000 residents and in addition to visitors. 2022 funding - €11m. New cap of €1,200 individual householder/land-owner contribution.
- Small scale capital works on Islands – works to roads, piers, slipways, coastal erosion projects –funding for Cork, Donegal, Galway, Mayo, and Sligo. 2020: €1.07m, 2021: €1.1m, 2022 (so far) €286k.

- ‘Our Islands’ – New CLÁR measure: €412,000 to support 11 different projects on Cork, Donegal, Galway and Mayo islands.
- Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) – 2021: €4.5m to improve community facilities. 2020: €7m supported over 3,000 projects (over two rounds).
- Community Services Programme Support Fund: Extra funding of €3.2m brings to €7.95m value of support fund for 2020 and 2021. Supports over 420 community-based organisations to provide local, social, economic, and environmental services – over 2,000 jobs. Annual co-funding contribution of €19,033 for each fulltime position and, where warranted, €32,000 towards employment of a manager.
- New Community Centres Fund - €15m capital fund to support upgrade of community centres.
- Our Public Libraries Strategy: 113 libraries benefitted from €4.1 million in 2020 - €3m from DRCD and
- €1.1m from local authorities. Funding supported small scale capital works. 2022: €7.7m. New strategy for 2023 – 2027 in development.
- €1.5m across 2020 and 2021 to assist public libraries in reaching marginalised and disadvantaged communities. 2022: €850,000.
- National Outdoor Recreation Strategy under development.
- National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025 launched. Whole-of-government framework to support the voluntary sector. Every county has a volunteer centre now.
- Outdoor Infrastructure Scheme: €15.7m for 226 projects across country under 3 measures.
- CLAR Programme: €5.5m for 2021. 10% increase on 2020 funding. 2020: €4.1m to support 115 projects.
- €75m for 24 landmark regeneration projects in rural communities across the country under the €1 Billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. 2022: €21.5m for 27 landmark regeneration projects in rural communities across the country (category 2).
- Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce re-established

## Department of Social Protection

### Budget 2021 improvements:

- 375,000 Households benefit from increase in Fuel Allowance – up €3.50 to €28 per week
- Increases for Child Dependant Payments in respect of 419,000 children - €5 for children aged 12 or over and €2 for children aged up to 12 extra per week
- 221,000 people receive increase in their Living Alone Allowance – up €5 to €19 per week
- Island Allowance – up by €7.30 to €20 per week – first ever increase
- Working Family Payment – weekly income threshold increased by €10 for families with up to three children, benefitting some 48,700 families who are on a low income
- One Parent Family earnings limit of €425 per week removed (effective April 2021)
- Disability Allowance earnings disregard raised from €120 to €140 p/w (effective June 2021)
- Widowed/Surviving Partner Grant (with children) increased from €6,000 to €8,000
- Carer's Support Grant – Increased by €150 to €1,850

### Budget 2022 improvements:

- All working age social welfare support payments have increased by €5 per week
- The State Pension has increased by €5 per week to €253.30 (Contributory) and €242 (Non-Con)
- The Living Alone Allowance has increased by €3 to €22 per week
- The weekly Fuel Allowance has increased by €5 to €33 while the means threshold has been increased by €20 to €120 so that more households can qualify
- Weekly threshold for Working Family Benefit to rise by €10
- Extra social welfare payment for children up by €2 to €40 per week (U12) and by €3 to €48 (O12)
- Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance increased by €10 to €160 (each child aged between 4 and 11) and by €10 to €285 (each child aged 12 and over) **\*\*Further €100 recently announced\*\***
- Parent's Benefit to increase by two weeks to seven weeks for all parents of children born or adopted from July 2022
- Maternity, Paternity, Adoptive and Parent's Benefit has increased by €5 to €250 p/week
- The cap on the cost of medicines lowered with Drug Payment Scheme threshold to €100 per month
- Improvements to the Treatments Benefit Scheme include –
  - A new €500 grant to help people with an illness such as alopecia or undergoing chemotherapy with the cost of hairpieces/wigs
  - A reduction in the number of PRSI contributions that younger workers need to qualify for the Scheme from five years' contributions down to nine months.
- In addition to the increase in weekly payment rates, more carers qualify for the Carer's Allowance Payment due to changes including increase in the amount a carer can earn for work outside the home to €350 (€750 for couples) without affecting eligibility for the Carer's Allowance and significant increase from €20,000 to €30,000 in the capital/savings disregard for qualifying for the Carer's Allowance
- Jobs for persons with a disability supported with a 19% increase in the subsidy – from €5.30 to €6.30 per hour – paid to employers

- The recruitment and employment service for persons with a disability, Employability, will now provide grants directly to those who qualify
- The earnings limit on Disability Allowance will increase from €350 to €375 meaning that a person with a disability will be able to keep more of their weekly support payment.
- The Pandemic Unemployment Payment supported around 880,000 people over the pandemic and represented an investment of €9bn approximately.
- Enhanced Illness Benefit has been extended until September 2022. This enhanced weekly payment of €350 has supported over 516,500 people to date with a total payment of €313.5m.
- Illness Benefit – Waiting days for claim reduced from six to three days.
- New Benefit for people aged between 65 and 66 years – no requirement to be available for full-time work or genuinely seeking work and no need to sign on.
- Adoptive Leave and Benefit extended to male same sex couples.
- We've expanded the **Hot School Meals Programme** for 230,000 pupils in over 1,500 schools. This is being expanded. 310 newly designated DEIS schools can avail of the school meals programme, benefitting almost 60,000 additional children.
- Community Employment and Rural Social Scheme reformed – participants over 60 can remain until retirement. Additional 1,475 CE Scheme places and 1,164 TÚS places.
- Rent Supplement – victims of domestic violence can access rent supplement without delay on referral by Tusla or Tusla-funded service providers.
- New Workplace Pension Scheme for Ireland: Automatic Enrolment Retirement Savings System
  - approximately 750,000 workers to be enrolled into a new workplace pension scheme
  - participation in the new scheme will be voluntary - workers will have the ability to opt-out
  - scheme includes matching employer contributions and a State Top-up
  - for every €3 saved by a worker, €4 will be credited to their pension savings account
  - when fully established a worker earning €35,000 p.a. will accumulate a fund (excluding investment returns) of €293,000 over their working life
  - the new system will account for about €21bn in funds (excl. investment returns) after 10 years
- New Pathways to Work 2021-2025 launched. The Plan aims to Help enable 75,000 long-term unemployed progress into work. Subsidies of up to €10,000 for employers who take people off the Live Register
- New Work Placement Experience Programme to provide 10,000 paid, quality placements
- Special supports for young people; Youth unemployment target reduction from 44% to 12.5% by 2023.
- 50,000 further and higher education training places to be provided
- €1,000 Training Support Grant for jobseekers
- focus on using Remote Working and e-Learning opportunities to help people into the workforce
- New Pay-Related Jobseekers Payment to be developed.

# Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

## Cleaner Power

- Incentivised the renewable sector to increase Ireland's renewable electricity production by 5.1 billion kWh of renewable electricity. It will likely increase the quantity of Ireland's renewable electricity by 40% from current levels through onshore wind and solar via Renewable Electricity Support Scheme auctions in 2020 and 2022.
- Delivered the microgeneration support scheme to enable households and SMEs to generate renewable electricity, almost doubling the number of homes installing solar PV per annum.
- Published planning exemptions to remove the vast majority of small scale solar from the planning system.
- Progressing the Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme to deliver 5GW of offshore renewable electricity by 2030. The Marine Area Planning bill was passed in December 2021. Marine Area Consents have been applied for and will be issued for auctions in Q1 2023.

## Home Energy Grants

- Raised the grant levels from 30% to 80% for roof and cavity wall insulation to encourage as many homes to implement quick turnaround measures.
- Established the long-term national home renovation scheme with 40-50% funding for householders to deep retrofit homes.
- Underpinned the renovation programme with €8 billion of funding in the National Development plan to 2030.
- Increased the warmer homes scheme from €39m in 2019 to €109m for 2022, increased the level of funding, widened eligibility and focussed on more in need homes.
- Increased the level of local authority home renovation from €25m to €85m per annum.

## Sustainable Energy for Business and Communities

- Increased Communities Programme funding from €20m to €40m to support homes, communities and businesses to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Established a target for 500MW of Community energy by 2030 and procured the first 17 projects in the first renewable energy auctions in the community categories.
- Established a community enabling framework for supporting communities to deliver their own renewable energy projects.

## Clean Air

- Extended smoky coal ban to 10 more towns
- Secured Cabinet approval for regulations that will ban smoky coal in Ireland while exempting traditional use of turf will significantly decrease the health impacts of the heating of homes.

## Secure and Affordable Energy

- Published the National Energy Security Framework as part of REPower EU

- Increased fuel allowance and additional support payments payable in 2022 from €630 in 2019 to €1,350 to protect the most vulnerable from fuel poverty.

### **Reducing Waste**

- Published the Waste Action Plan on the Circular Economy setting out over 200 actions across the economy to reduce waste.
- Published and progressed the Circular Economy bill to put the tools to incentivise the switch to a circular economy and establish the Circular Economy Plan on a statutory basis.
- Deposit return scheme for plastic bottles and aluminium cans legislation in place and scheme preparation underway for full roll out in 2023.

### **Climate Action**

- Ground breaking Climate Action Act passed in 2021 that puts a science-led 51% emissions reduction by 2030 into law.
- Detailed climate action plan with almost 500 actions across the economy to deliver real change in the economy.
- Step change in resourcing the civil service, regulatory system and planning system to deliver climate ambition.
- Establishing acceleration teams to deliver on key climate objectives such as offshore wind, renewable heat, just transition and others.
- Established a trajectory of carbon taxation to 2030 and underpinned the ringfencing of the carbon taxation to support increased social welfare payments to protect the most vulnerable.

### **Just Transition**

- Funding allocated for €24m of just transition projects in the Midlands which will create up to 924 jobs.
- Progressed the EU Just Transition Application to allocate €150m Just Transition funding for the Midlands
- Committed to a statutory Just Transition Commission with proposals to be published by mid-2022.

# Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

## Tourism

- Supported the recovery and rebuilding of Ireland's crucial international tourism market
- Record level of funding for tourism in Budget 2022 - €288.5m overall
- Delivered wide-ranging supports for tourism and hospitality businesses impacted by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Developed four new world-class tourist attractions in Cavan, Donegal, Dublin and Mayo (€73 million allocated, via Fáilte Ireland)
- Commenced the development of a new national tourism policy which mainstreams sustainability.

## Culture and Arts

- Basic Income for the Arts – a three-year pilot scheme to support artists and creative arts workers, providing 2,000 successful applicants with a weekly income of €325 each.
- Night-Time Economy Taskforce report delivered. New measures to promote a thriving, inclusive and diverse Night-Time Economy are now being implemented across Ireland
- Decade of Commemorations programme: Including the 'Treaty 1921' Exhibition; presentation of Michael Collins' diaries by the Collins family to the State; The Irish Civil War National Conference in UCC
- Creative Ireland Programme extended to 2027
- Record-breaking production figures for the Irish film industry in 2021 - €500 million, with growth across local feature film, TV drama and local animation.
- Substantial funding for the arts, artists and cultural enterprises impacted by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, including government supports for the first time for the live entertainment sector
- Record Arts Council funding has significantly contributed to the stability and increased development of the arts community in Ireland

## Sport

- Sports Capital and Equipment Grants of over €150 million made to some 1,900 different applicant organisations, large and small, right across Ireland. This was the highest level of funding ever made under this scheme
- Government support for the Football Association of Ireland's bid, with the UK, to host EURO 2028
- Major public consultation (Q2 2022) to inform new government policy on hosting major international sports events
- Equalisation of government per-head funding to female and male GAA players, trebling the amount received by each female player (from €400 to €1,200)
- Publication of first ever High-Performance Strategy
- Publication of Sports Action Plan 2021-2023 including new 40pc minimum female membership on boards of all national sports bodies
- €4m (33pc increase) in Sport Ireland's Women in Sport Programme over 2021 and 2022

- Doubling in Dormant Accounts Funding to €12m for more inclusive sport and physical activity measures as well as the development of 'SportForAll' initiative
- Budget 2022 package included €105.81m for Sport Ireland
- €78.9 million funding boost for sport sector - €73.6m to help sports organisations to recover and grow post pandemic, and €5.3m for sports equipment

## Gaeltacht

- Enactment of the Official Languages Act (2021), which will encourage more people to learn and embrace the language and ensure the delivery of public services through Irish. Measures contained in the Act include:
  - 20% of recruits to the public service will be proficient in Irish by 2030
  - That newly established statutory bodies will use an Irish name.
  - That public bodies will carry out 20% of their advertising in the Irish language and that 5% of advertising will be in the Irish language media.
  - Using the síneadh fada will be recognised and accepted in IT systems operated by the state.
  - And that people will have the right to not use a title in their correspondence with a Department, should they so wish.
- On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, the Irish language gained full status as an official language of the EU
- Implementation of the language planning process across Gaeltacht regions, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks continued to be advanced as a key measure in the overarching implementation of the Government's 5-Year Action for the Irish Language (Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022)
  - All 26 Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas have now been approved
- 400 scholarships for children from Deis schools to attend Gaeltacht Summer Colleges
- More than €8m has been provided in financial supports to Gaeltacht Summer colleges, mná tí and community hall operators who have not been able to proceed with courses as part of a stabilization package for our Gaeltacht communities.
- Launched review of election/selection procedure for the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta
- BÁC le Gaeilge initiative launched to get more people and businesses using Irish in daily life
- Údarás na Gaeltachta supported 7,809 full-time jobs in 2021, including the creation of 825 new jobs, the highest number of new jobs created in one year since 2008. A total overall increase of 446 jobs in 2021 over 2020 figures.

## Media

- The Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill, currently progressing through the Oireachtas will establish a new Regulator, and a multi-person Media Commission, to which an Online Safety Commissioner will be appointed.
- In partnership with the Department of the Taoiseach, the Future of Media Commission was established, to help inform the basis for media and broadcasting policy in the years ahead. The Commission's work has now concluded, and its report and recommendations have been published.

# Department of Transport

## Public Transport

- 20% reduction in fares on PSO services.
- 50% reduction in fares for under 24s and students on PSO services (and soon on commercial services too)
- Connecting Ireland continues to be funded and new routes and services continue to come on-stream across the country.

## Capital projects

- €35bn has been allocated in capital funding in the NDP for transport projects demonstrating commitment to providing a step-change in quality and availability of transport services and infrastructure
- €360m p/a continues to be spent on walking and cycling which represents an order of magnitude increase compared to previous funding levels
- The Metrolink project received Government approval to proceed to planning (decision gate 1 of the PSC) which represents a major step forward for what will be the biggest infrastructure project in the history of the state
- Construction of 41 InterCity Railcars (ICRs) is almost complete with delivery of the first expected in September this year.
- Construction of the National Train Control Centre, which will completely transform the management of the network as compared to today and allow for the future expansion of services in the years ahead, commenced in 2020 with main construction concluding in 2022 and completion and full commissioning expected by 2024. The City Centre Re-signalling Project was completed in 2021 and is a key enabler of increased train frequencies in Dublin city centre and the wider DART+ programme.
- Phase 1 of the Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme was included in Ireland's National Recovery & Resilience Plan, as submitted to the European Commission in 2021. All works associated with Phase 1 will be completed by end-2026 as required by the European Commission. This will see a €185m investment (€164m of EU funds) in Cork's rail infrastructure, which will facilitate the longer-term electrification of the network.
- All Ireland Strategic Rail Review Commenced

## Other

- Launch of the sustainable mobility policy – the Department's flagship policy in this space for the next decade
- The Road Traffic and Roads Bill has progressed through Committee stage and will be enacted by year end with positive measures on scramblers, e-scooters and car insurance costs among the highlights
- ZEVI (Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland) a new body to oversee and facilitate the rollout of EVs and EV infrastructure will be launched at the end of July