

EDUCATION IS...

THE STUDENT
GENERAL
ELECTION
MANIFESTO
2016



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI)
Student General Election Manifesto 2016

#MakeASmartVote

FOREWORD

While our student manifesto is focused on education issues we have outlined a broad range of areas we feel should be addressed by the next Government. The 32nd Dáil has the opportunity to introduce real and lasting change for all our citizens.

100 years on from 1916 we can build an Ireland our children and our parents will be proud of. An Ireland where workers are paid the living wage, where there is a right to full bodily autonomy and where every person is treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

Ireland has gone through significant change in the last five years. Austerity has taken its toll on almost every group in society. The impact of harsh and often brutal cuts must be accepted and those responsible must now ensure that it is our most vulnerable who are the first to see the fruits of our recovery.

No party who has served in government in the last generation can abdicate responsibility for the situation we are now in. However young people and students are not interested in political point scoring and the tit-for-tat remarks that dominate our political conversations. Young people want candidates and political parties to demonstrate kind of leadership that befits the positions they seek and to map out a clear path to strong, sustainable future.

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) believe that education, from early years to post-doctorate, is not just a right but key to economic growth. As a nation we are particularly reliant on a highly educated workforce for growth. It is a major attraction for foreign direct investment coming into Ireland. A highly skilled and well-educated workforce is of a benefit to everyone in Irish society.

Since the economic crash of 2008 our education system continues to be seriously under-funded. Against a backdrop of reduced household incomes, dramatic increases in rental accommodation and a saturated part-time employment market, there is an increasing and ever-widening gap between the rising costs of attending college - now estimated at €11,000 per annum - we see no corresponding increases in student supports. Students and their families are now put under enormous financial pressure to attain

a third level qualification – a qualification which is now considered a basic necessity.

As such there is no credibility to a manifesto that does not clearly outline the plan for education funding at all levels. Education funding is a proven investment in our future, leading to broader and increased participation in our democratic processes, reduced crime and poverty rates, environmental sustainability, job creation and social equality.

The next Government should seek to follow the example of most of our EU partners and introduce free, publicly funded education.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Donoghue'.

Kevin Donoghue
President, Union of Students in Ireland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CORE ASKS

FEES

Rejection of Proposal for Student Loans

- USI urges the next Government to reject any proposal to increase third-level fees and/or the introduction of an income-contingent loan scheme

GRANTS

Adjacency Rates

- USI urges the next Government to introduce a full reinstatement of the old non-adjacency rate of 24km.
- USI urges the next Government to provide a Free Travel Card for maintenance grant and BTEA recipients.
- USI urges the next Government to deliver an entitlement of non-adjacent rate to those living on islands.
- USI urges the next Government to reinstate the entitlement of mature students to the non-adjacent rate.
- USI urges the next Government to provide a rural exemption or increase in rate for rural colleges with poor transport links.

Independent/Estrangement

- USI urges the next Minister for Education and Skills review guidelines to the grant awarding body in relation to the document requirements for proof of estrangement.
- USI urges the next Minister for Education and Skills ensures that guidelines are clearly and promptly communicated to the relevant state bodies providing these documents.

Postgraduate Support

- USI urges the next Government to commit to a full reinstatement of the postgraduate maintenance grant in the lifetime of the next Government in line with pre-Budget 2011 levels.
- USI urges the next Government to reverse successive changes to student family income thresholds and restore them to pre-crisis levels in Budget 2017.

ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

- USI urges the next Government amend the Terms of Employment Information Acts 1994 to 2012 be amended to require employers to provide a statement of working hours which are a true reflection of the hours required of an employee. This requirement should also apply to people working non-guaranteed hours.

JOBBRIDGE

- USI urges the next Government to abolish JobBridge in favour of a system that enhances the experience of participants, improves quality and increases progression into secure and sustainable employment.

ACCOMMODATION

- USI urges the next Government to prepare a further short-term solution, such as the use of Nama-owned properties to temporarily address the student accommodation shortfall.
- USI urges the next Government to create a Student Housing 2020 strategy to complement the Construction 2020 Strategy.
- USI urges the next Government to amend part 3 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to include a provision that allows for students' unions or other representative bodies to have legal standing to challenge on behalf of their membership the introduction of new rents in purpose built student accommodation centres, where those rents are raised outside of term time.

REPEAL THE 8TH

- USI urges the next Government to commit to holding a referendum on repealing Article 40.3.3 (the Eighth Amendment) of Bunreacht na hÉireann.
- USI urges the next Government to repeal the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 and replace it with laws that ensure safe and legal access to abortion, at a minimum, in cases of rape, incest, risk to health or severe and fatal foetal impairment.
- USI urges the next Government to repeal the Regulation of Information (Services Outside the State for the Termination of Pregnancies) Act 1995 and any related censorship laws.

AGENCY TO SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- USI urges the next Government to support a Sparqs-style agency in Ireland to provide training to student representatives to enhance the learning experience.

CORE MANIFESTO ASKS

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FUNDING OF THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

USI has campaigned for the introduction of fully publicly funded education since it was founded in 1959. The paper *We need to talk about higher education* written by Tom Healy from the Nevin Economic Research Institute outlines how we might move to a publicly funded model. The report identifies higher education as one of the key drivers behind the innovation, research, and highly skilled workforce that has developed Ireland's economy; that higher education in Ireland has taken a disproportionate funding hit since 2006; and that fully state-funded third-level education is the most sustainable and equitable solution to the current un-sustainable model.

Education is a public good and should be treated as such in terms of state investment at all levels. From early years to third level, education is crucial to our development as a society both socially and economically. Alternative funding models rarely consider the impact they have in terms of access to third level. USI wants an education system that is free of both financial and societal barriers. Failure to adequately invest in education is a failure to invest in society. People young and old deserve the opportunity to make positive contributions to the Ireland of tomorrow.

REJECTION OF PROPOSAL FOR STUDENT LOANS

USI wants an education system that is free of both financial and societal barriers. Failure to adequately invest in education is a failure to invest in society, and the proposed income-contingent loan scheme fails to bring state and enterprise contributions to a sustainable level. People young and old deserve the opportunity to make positive contributions to the Ireland of tomorrow, but not by being burdened with tens of thousands of euro of debt.

Income-contingent student loan arrangements have failed to deliver the promised efficiencies in the frequently cited Australian and UK contexts. While this system has been successful in ensuring reliable funding streams to higher education institutions, the cost of administering loans in the UK is on course to be more costly to the state to the lower-fees model that it replaced. In Australia, the federal government is out of pocket to the tune of \$70bn owing to default, emigration and slower-than-expected repayment.

Moreover, high fees linked to loans inevitably rise beyond the level at which they were agreed and proposed. Since the advent of income-contingent loans in the United Kingdom,

annual tuition fees have risen from a maximum of £1,000 per annum to a current upper limit of £9,000 per annum, with talk among elite universities of a £16,000 per annum limit. The introduction of a student loan system in Ireland will inevitably see fee levels rise over time, not necessarily in line with inflation and cost, increasing the debt burden on graduates and increasing the likelihood of emigration and default.

Student loan proposals are often credited with the capacity to greatly increase the participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, given that no up-front fee would be required. USI regards this as highly unlikely, as the current participation rate of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in a context where the state pays fees through SUSI without the need for a loan, points to broader access difficulties beyond fee contribution.

- **USI urges the next Government to reject any proposal to increase third-level fees and/or the introduction of an income-contingent loan scheme.**

GRANTS

The maintenance grant is the support that aims to bridge the affordability gap between family incomes and the cost of attending third-level education. However, in the context of ever-rising costs of accommodation, materials, and transport, the level of support available to students has proven insufficient. Whereas the average grant payment amounts to €83 a week, the DIT Campus Life Cost of Living Survey estimates that average living costs are as high as €190 per week (excluding fees). While some students have the option to supplement the support that their family can provide by working part-time, the appropriate jobs are simply too scarce. Furthermore, part-time work in addition to academic responsibilities would not be possible for students with integrated placement responsibilities or a high number of contact hours.

For the grant to fulfil its purpose, the grant must be sufficient to meet the financial costs of third-level education and take into account the reality of the present-day student experience. By accounting for the true cost of participating in third-level education and increasing grant rates, we can reverse a trend according to which the decision to attend third-level is becoming increasingly dependent on personal or family finances. Financial support through a robust, timely, and sufficient grant is a key element in ensuring that merit is the true determinant of the limit of a student's aspiration in education. We cannot afford supports that are insufficient.

ADJACENCY RATES

The adjacency rate exists to provide higher levels of maintenance for students who live at a greater distance from their institution. However, the cost of commuting to college in an area that does not have well-developed or direct transport links may be comparable to the cost of actually moving closer the institution, thus defeating the purpose of this rate. Incomes outside the Greater Dublin and east coast areas are lower and grant dependency is higher.

- **USI urges the next Government to reinstate the 24km non-adjacency rate.**
- **USI urges the next Government to provide a Free Travel Card for maintenance grant and BTEA recipients.**
- **USI urges the next Government to deliver an entitlement of non-adjacent rate to those living on islands.**
- **USI urges the next Government to reinstate the entitlement of mature students to the non-adjacent rate.**
- **USI urges the next Government to provide a rural exemption or decrease in rate for rural colleges with poor transport links.**

INDEPENDENCE/ESTRANGEMENT

There is no formal recognition process for estrangement in Irish law; no designated officer is charged with deeming a person estranged. Often, the state agencies are unclear as to the types of documents that will suffice and more often the HSE or the Gardaí won't issue such evidence if requested unless they have dealt with the applicant themselves.

- **USI urges the next Minister for Education and Skills to review guidelines to the grant awarding body in relation to the document requirements for proof of estrangement.**
- **USI urges the next Minister for Education and Skills to ensure that guidelines are also clearly and promptly communicated to the relevant state agencies providing these documents.**

POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT

That high-performing undergraduate students have the opportunity to engage in postgraduate study is a key tenet of the kind of smart economy to which Ireland aspires. However, the abolition of postgraduate maintenance grants in 2011 meant that most prospective postgraduate students who were within reckonable income limits for the undergraduate grant found themselves outside of the new limits (under €31,500) for postgraduate support.

- **USI urges the next Government to commit to a full reinstatement of the postgraduate maintenance grant in the lifetime of the next Government in line with pre-Budget 2011 levels.**
- **USI urges the next Government to reverse successive cuts to student family income thresholds and restore them to pre-crisis levels in Budget 2017.**

ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

Students who are contracted with low hours feel insecure and powerless at work. Today, the numbers of students who continue working fewer hours than they need is increasing and the only employment, too often, are zero-hours contracts.

Exploitative zero-hours contracts are leaving students concerned about whether they will have enough work, finance and to be able to afford attending third-level. This sort of job insecurity is placing an unnecessary strain on students. Students, and young people, deserve to have the opportunity to work enough hours to be able to afford a decent standard of living.

- **USI urges the next Government to review the Terms of Employment Information Acts 1994 to 2012 be amended to require employers to provide a statement of working hours which are a true reflection of the hours required of an employee. This requirement should also apply to people working non-guaranteed hours.**

JOBBRIDGE

USI are calling for the abolishment of the National Internship Scheme, known as JobBridge, due to its flaws and the unsatisfactory conditions in which it creates for students and the unemployed in Ireland, in favour of a programme that benefits and values graduates and Irish citizens.

Despite the Government advocacy of JobBridge, there are too many faults with the programme for it to be a viable solution to youth unemployment or an answer to graduates seeking employment once completing their course. It is well known that the economic crisis of 2007 made a significant impact on the levels of youth unemployment. Young people on the live register trebled in just a three-year period from 29,950 in May 2006 (CSO, 2006) to 95,746 by August 2009 (CSO, 2009).

The Government in 2009 imposed cuts in the Jobseekers Allowance for young people under the age of 26. However, Budget 2013 saw similar cuts reach young people up to the age of 25 as a tactic to encourage young people to seek work. The naissance of JobBridge came in 2011 as a temporary initiative which is becoming a permanent, defective and flawed programme. A poll commissioned by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) found that 52% of young people felt exploited by the scheme (2014). As of January 8th 2015, there were a total of 36,434 jobseekers where 10,125 of whom were under the age of 25 who took part in JobBridge (Humphries, 2015). Participants in the National Internship Scheme receive an extra €50 per week with their social welfare. However, participants in the scheme struggle to meet the extra costs and found the sum of €50 to be inadequate to live (NYCI, 2015).

47% of interns do not receive any employment, while 14% receive employment on a part-time basis which is not sufficient to live in Cork, Galway or Dublin due to the price of living. Just 27% receive full-time employment (NYCI, 2015). 44% of interns agree that JobBridge is used solely for free labour with 13% neither agreeing or disagreeing. Young people feel JobBridge internships are pervasive, and lead to job displacement while stunting any job growth for entry-level graduates, especially with value for money (IMPACT, 2015).

- **USI urges the next Government to abolish JobBridge in favour of a system that enhances the experience of participants, improve quality and increase progression into secure and sustainable employment.**

ACCOMMODATION

A combination of private sector rent price increases alongside the continuing shortfall in purpose built student accommodation will fuel a non-progression culture in third level education unless immediate action is taken.

It is apparent, from the high levels of demand, that

students generally would prefer to reside in on campus accommodation. The conditions relevant to these residences recognise the duration of the student's study period i.e. summer breaks, as well as a high standard of maintenance and facilities. In addition, the student experience is no doubt enhanced through close proximity to student facilities such as libraries, sports, restaurants, etc (HEA, 2015).

There are approximately 80,000 students in the Dublin region with less than 3,000 purpose built accommodation places. With growing student numbers, the need for purpose-built accommodation needs to be addressed. Evidence suggests that students are having difficulty in sourcing accommodation in close proximity to their HEI campus, particularly in large urban areas. Recent reports from the rental sector are demonstrating a shift to rental property in the commuter belts adding to traffic volumes and congestion. (HEA, 2015). 15.2% of those living below the poverty line are students (NERI, 2015).

The current imbalance between supply and demand will not be resolved by known or estimated future developments. Indeed, increased demand due to projected additional numbers will only result in a continuation of this shortfall. It is recommended that actions should be taken to encourage additional investment and, where feasible, bring forward forecasted projects.

- **USI urges the next Government to prepare a further short term solution such as the use of Nama-owned properties to temporarily ease the accommodation burden.**
- **USI urges the next Government to create a Student Housing 2020 strategy to complement the Construction 2020 Strategy.**
- **USI urges the next Government to amend part 3 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to include a provision that allows for students' unions or other representative bodies to have legal standing to challenge on behalf of their membership the introduction of new rents in purpose built student accommodation centres, where those rents are raised outside of term time.**

REPEAL THE 8TH

USI has a long history of campaigning for access to abortion services here in Ireland. USI's involvement in this debate in the past (SPUC vs. Grogan) led to the change of legislation so that information about abortion could be distributed freely in the state. USI continues to have a clear stance to campaign for access to free, safe and legal abortion services when a woman's life is at risk, including from suicide or if a foetus has a fatal abnormality and cannot survive. USI also has a clear mandate to campaign for the repeal of the 8th amendment of the Irish Constitution, allowing for legislation to be made to allow for accessible abortion rights for women in Ireland.

For many students' unions the issue of abortion is viewed as an issue of equality and women's rights. Access to safe and legal abortions in Ireland is critical to advancing gender equality and the position of women in Irish society.

The current legislation, which forces women to travel abroad so as to access abortion services, makes abortion a class issue, and inherently inaccessible to students. UK Department of Health statistics show that approximately one quarter of women who give Irish addresses when availing of abortion services in the UK are aged between the ages of 18-24.

Young women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are discriminated against because of their inability to afford the significant costs of travelling abroad for an abortion. It costs at least €1,000 to travel to the UK for an abortion, including clinic costs, travel and accommodation. Young women and students do not normally have ready access to such funds. The current legislation also makes it possible for women to be sentenced to jail for a period of up to 14 years or be fined an enormous amounts of money if they induce an abortion in Ireland.

The failure to provide services in Ireland creates considerable psychological, physical and financial hardship for those who are either forced to travel outside the country for abortion or forced to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term because of restrictions imposed upon them.

- **USI urges the next Government to commit to holding a referendum on repealing Article 40.3.3 (the Eighth Amendment) of Bunreacht na hÉireann, in the lifetime of the next government.**

- **USI urges the next Government to repeal the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 and replace it with**

laws that ensure safe and legal access to abortion, at a minimum, in cases of rape, incest, risk to health or severe and fatal foetal impairment.

- **USI urges the next Government to repeal the Regulation of Information (Services Outside the State for the Termination of Pregnancies) Act 1995 and any related censorship laws.**

AGENCY TO SUPPORT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

USI's enthusiasm for a strategy for student engagement according to the Scottish model is shared by state bodies across the world, including our own Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), who rightly look enviously at the quality of Scotland-based student participation in quality assurance. The Sparqs agency has provided students with the skills and competencies to act as key stakeholders in the design, delivery, and improvement of teaching and learning. Further, it has offered effective consultancy support to institutions to develop their capacity to manage effective student engagement.

A similar agency, imported into the existing Irish context, would work with QQI and the USI to provide training to student representatives on an ongoing basis throughout the year. This training would be designed, as it is under Sparqs, to fully enable students to engage with the quality enhancement process, both in their own institutions and on a national basis. Tailoring would allow students to become familiar with quality assurance mechanisms within their own institution, how that institution relates to a broader context, and to build key contacts.

Putting students at the centre of their learning experience works. In Scotland, students feel empowered to engage with their course on a fundamental, curricular level. They are afforded the opportunity to contribute and the training by which to contribute effectively. Irish students are ready and willing to accept the responsibility to do so.

- **USI urges the next Government to support a Sparqs-style agency in Ireland to provide training to student representatives to enhance the learning experience.**

ACCESS AND
OPPORTUNITY

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SUPPORT FUNDS FOR PART-TIME AND FURTHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

A number of support funds including the Fund for Student with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and the Maintenance Grant are only available for students studying on a full-time basis in recognised Higher Education Institution. Part-time students are currently not able to avail of equivalent supports, or the 'free fees' scheme. The same restrictions apply to students in further education. There are many students who due to personal circumstances, such as having a disability that simply will not allow their full-time participation in higher education, have no choice but to undertake their study on a part-time basis. USI believes it is unfair to punish students who are trying to further themselves through studying but due to circumstance cannot commit to attend a higher education institution, or in a full-time capacity.

- **USI urges the next Government to commit to ensuring that part-time and further education students are not locked out of receiving the same supports that would be available to full-time students in similar circumstances.**
- **USI urges the next Government to make available funding to address student hardship in further education colleges.**

LONE PARENTS

In recent years the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) provided additional support to working lone parents or those in full-time education. Until 2011, the OFP provided long-term income support until children were aged 18, or 22 if still in full-time education. Data from the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC 2013) show that 23% of lone parent families with dependent children live in consistent poverty, almost three times as many as the general population (8.2%).

As USI has argued on a number of occasions, the short-term investment in education is a long-term investment into the future, the economy and lifting people out of poverty cycles. Supporting lone-parents through education is an investment in both their and their family's future.

- **USI urges the next Government to commit to providing additional support to lone parents from rural areas, where the cost of attending college is higher, due to further travel requirements with often poor public transport, and childcare costs as an extra due to longer**

time away from the home due to poor public transport links.

- **USI urges the next Government to allow for flexibility with regards to childcare allowance, which does not preclude any form of childcare that is not formal childcare.**

FEES FOR STUDENT APPRENTICES

The publication of the Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland (2013) discussed that "many countries are newly adopting apprenticeship systems based on dual modes of learning, combining workplace learning in an enterprise with classroom teaching in an education or training setting" which is a consistent focus on the importance of work-based learning and apprenticeships as part of the dialogue around the Youth Guarantee (2013). The decision taken in Budget 2014 to impose a new pro-rata Student Contribution fee is a burden on student apprentices.

- **USI urges the next Government to overturn this decision in Budget 2017 and reinstate the State contribution to this fee.**

ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS

USI believes the almost exclusive focus of the current third-level admissions route on prior academic attainment is failing to take into consideration contextual data that can ensure an individual's true potential for performance in higher education.

USI approves of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) alternative admissions route which was piloted in Trinity College Dublin. The alternative route offered up to 30 students a place in a competitive Level 8 degree programme in September 2014 on the basis of Leaving Certificate results, performance relative to classmates, and a personal statement.

- **USI urges the next Government to develop further initiatives to create an alternative common admissions route for all publicly-funded third-level institutions where contextual data, including but not limited to socio-economic background, is considered in addition to prior academic attainment.**
- **USI urges the next Government to develop further initiatives to create an alternative common admissions route for all publicly-funded third-level institutions**

where contextual data, including but not limited to socio-economic background, is considered in addition to prior academic attainment.

- **USI urges the next Government to assist USI in developing improved information, advice and guidance and careers information at all levels of education for public consumption.**

GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

Since the removal of the ex-quota guidance allocation on second level schools by the Department of Education and Skills there has been a reduction of 51.4% in the time given to the guidance counselling services across Ireland. National Centre for Guidance in Education (2013) found that 47% of schools reported 1/3 - 1/2 of guidance counsellors time on Senior Cycle was spent providing individual guidance. As a result, there are disparities between guidance being given based on rounded guidance to students who wish to attend college and simply providing a list of subject matters and suggestions of third-level institution to attend.

USI research supports the belief that the reduction of opportunities for secondary school students to receive professional counselling is a factor in dropout rates in third-level. The focused research report compiled by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2015) found that the highest rates of attrition occurs in first year as a result of emotional demands, social integration and interaction with faculty and staff and difficulty coping. The research found that wrong course choice, transferring to another course, and issues relating to course interest and expectation was one of five core themes for attrition.

- **USI urges the next Government to remove the ex-quota guidance allocation on second level schools by the Department of Education and Skills and increase funding for these supports.**

TRAVELLER ETHNICITY

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010) found that there are 36,224 Travellers living in Ireland. The number of people enumerated as Irish Travellers in Census (2011) was 29,573, an increase of 32% since census 2006 (Pavee Point, 2015). Ireland's statutory human rights and equality bodies, including the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority, have concluded that Travellers fulfill the relevant sociological and anthropological criteria

for recognition as a distinct ethnic group. Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic minority in Britain, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and as separate from non-traveller Irish people. Recommendations and findings emanating from the Council of Europe and the United Nations call on the Irish State to recognise travellers' ethnic status. To add, census 2011 showed that 55% of Travellers leave school before the age of 15 and less than 1% of Travellers go on to third level education while in Budget 2011, the Government cut Traveller specific education supports were by 86.6%. USI believes that the State cannot continue to deny Travellers their right to self-identify as members of an ethnic group.

- **USI urges the next Government to make it a priority to recognise the ethnic status of Irish Travellers.**

- **USI urges the next Government to restore the Traveller specific education supports to pre Budget 2011 levels.**

CROSS-BORDER STUDENT MOBILITY

Currently there is very low cross-border student mobility between Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). This lack of mobility adds to the lack of access to support for travel, course costs, maintenance support and studying cross-border should not be a barrier to support.

A Joint Report by the Department of Education and Skills and Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (2015) highlighted that the number of ROI domiciled student enrolments on a regulated higher education course in an NI FEC has increased by 38.3%, from 486 in 2008/09 to 672 in 2012/13. The number of ROI domiciled students enrolling on undergraduate higher education courses in NI institutions declined by 4.4%, from 1,650 in 2008/09 to 1,575 in 2012/13. Correspondingly, the number of NI domiciled students enrolling on undergraduate higher education courses in the ROI declined by 13.5%, from 870 in 2008/09 to 755 in 2012/13. In 2012/13 only 980 students from NI travelled over the border to study in Irish institutions. ROI students in NI often have trouble accessing the right information about the SUSI grant which is available to them, which can then lead to financial hardship.

- **USI urges the next Government and Minister for Education and Skills to work in tandem with the Northern Ireland Government and Department of Education to provide adequate financial support for students studying over the border.**

THIRD-LEVEL STRUCTURES

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THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN THE GOVERNANCE OF IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

USI firmly believes that students are the key stakeholder in any college's community and that this should be reflected in governance structures. Widespread evidence shows that Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are becoming increasingly undemocratic in their approaches to decision making, and the negative and potentially destructive impact that this could have on the student democracy and the voice of the student overall. Some bureaucratic management practices in higher education institutions can lead to a lack of openness and which can impede the efforts of student representatives.

The concept of academic freedom refers not simply to the liberalisation of teaching and research imperatives. It connotes a collegial context in which students are as empowered to ask challenging questions of their environment as members of staff are to pursue cutting-edge work. For student representatives to effectively serve their function within institutions, their freedom to represent requires legislative protection.

- **USI urges that when the next Government is composing legislation in relation to the governance of higher education institutions they should prioritise the introduction of legislation that includes provisions for student representation at governing body, academic council, and other committee levels, and the autonomy and independence of students' unions within their new institutions.**

- **USI urges the next Government to introduce legislation which will recognise that students are at the heart of successful institutions. This can be achieved through a number of measures, including but not limited to provisions for student representation at governing body, academic council, and other committee levels, and the autonomy and independence of students unions within the new institutions.**

PRECARIOUS ACADEMIC WORK

Increasingly, institutions are availing of unpaid or low-paid lecturing, seminar delivery, supervision or instruction from postgraduate students as part of revised requirements of their programme of study. Further, institutions have also increasingly turned to hiring academic staff on precarious short-term and low-paid work, or on a temporary adjunct basis. Both are clearly measures to manage the instructions of employment control agreements, which are a direct consequence of declining state investment in third-level education. It is a fundamental premise of work that lower pay inevitably delivers lower quality. Given the managed decline of Irish higher education institutions in the last decade, these are concerning developments indeed.

- **USI urges the next government to take decisive action to ensure that academic staff are afforded the necessary working conditions - incorporating pay and duration of contract - to effectively deliver high-quality education to Irish students.**

TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

USI and its member organisations enthusiastically support the introduction of legislation to allow for the creation of Technological Universities. Despite the concept's clear compliance with the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, the current government has dragged its feet over advancing the legislation or giving serious consideration to the position of students within the new institutions.

- **USI urges the next Government to prioritise the introduction of legislation to create a framework for the creation and operation of Technological Universities, should the fitting government fail to pass meaningful and sufficient legislation on the subject before the election.**

STUDENT LIFE AND HEALTH

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Ireland has one of the highest levels of participation in third-level education within the EU (Careersportal, 2013 - Eurostat Figures). The importance of promoting positive mental health among the large third-level student population cannot be underestimated, with recent research showing a high percentage of students experiencing mental health difficulties including depression, anxiety, loneliness, substance misuse and suicidal behaviour (Vision for Change, 2006). An action plan for mental health promotion in third level should be included within the development and implementation of a Health Promoting College Network.

The number of mature students, international students, students with disabilities and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds has also grown steadily. Yet the provision of counselling services to meet the growing numbers and diverse needs of students has not kept pace. Currently waiting lists can be up to six weeks which raises serious concern if a student is in distress. In light of the considerable demand they are experiencing and their fundamental importance to students in need, higher education institutions' budget allocations for counselling services and mental health supports should be ring-fenced. Given the increasing numbers of students reporting mental health issues this causes serious concerns if a student is in distress.

Currently, as a result of hiring restrictions most institutions may not be able to afford to hire extra counselling staff to meet the demand.

Access to 24/7 crisis intervention services remain extremely poor. Some patients who present to A&E with a mental health crisis face lengthy waits of 8 hours or more before receiving support. Extra support should be provided for community mental health services to provide 24/7 crisis intervention.

- **USI calls on the next Government in line with A Vision for Change (2006) and Healthy Ireland Framework (2013), to produce a detailed, time-lined Action Plan to continue the reform of mental health supports and improve the mental health of the whole population, ensuring that adequate funding and the structures for good governance and oversight of the plan are in place.**

- **USI urges the next Government to Update Ireland's Mental Health Act, in line with international human rights standards and the UN convention on the Rights**

of Persons with Disabilities, within the first year of government.

- **USI urges the next Minister of State for Mental Health, Primary Care and Social Care (Disabilities and Older People) to increase funding given specifically for the provision of adequate counselling services to all third level students either through the direct employment of more counsellors or in purchasing external counselling session hours.**

- **USI urges the next Government to deliver funding to be ring-fenced in Higher Education Institutions' budget allocations for counselling staff and mental health supports.**

- **USI urges the next Government to develop and provide funding for a mental health strategy specifically for mental health promotion in third level in conjunction with USI and to include an Action Plan for the strategy.**

- **USI urges the next Government to ensure community mental health services have the funding they need to provide 24/7 crisis support in each local area.**

MSM BLOOD BAN

3,000 donations are needed every week with over 1,000 people who receive transfusions every week in Ireland. Only 3% of the Irish population give blood, providing blood for a population of over 4 million. Only 5% of the Irish population eligible to give blood do so (Irish Blood Transfusion Service, 2015). Currently there is a lifetime ban on men who have sex with men (MSM) on donating blood. Sexual orientation screening negates the possibility of many potential blood donors based on outdated evidence and research. Many other countries and states, such as the United States of America and Britain, have changed their policy regarding the donation of blood by MSM donors.

- **USI urges the next Government to consider reducing the lifetime blood ban on MSM down to a 12-month blood donation deferral period for men who have sex with men, based on individual risk assessment where the donor is identified to be not at risk of passing infections into the blood supply.**

DRUGS REFORM

The current Irish system processes ‘personal use’ cases in the justice system. As a result individuals are given a conviction which lasts a lifetime. This is particularly concerning for USI, as college is often a time for exposure to drugs for many students. According to the National Drugs Survey (2015), “around 75 per cent of over 300 Trinity respondents... said they had used illegal drugs, while 5 per cent said they had purchased illegal drugs on the dark web.” (Heaphy, 2015). If a student gets a conviction for personal use, this can have lifelong implications. It can prevent a student from accessing a visa to certain countries, a job which requires Garda vetting, certain types of insurance, and can impede them from availing of further education or training. A criminal conviction also limits an individual’s chances of social mobility, which results in students becoming dependent on the state. Education at second and third-level is crucial in terms of informing students about drugs and the consequences taking drugs may have on their future.

- **USI urges the next Government to legislate for the decriminalisation of drugs and the introduction of a system similar to one introduced in Portugal on July 1st 2001.**
- **USI urges the next Government to invest in treatment and health facilities along with educational programmes to inform young people about drug use and associated risks.**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

USI’s 2013 survey *Say Something* found 16% of respondents reported having an unwanted sexual experience. The issue of consent has been one of topic lately, with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, USI and the White Ribbon Project joining together to run the #AskConsent campaign in 2015. USI, students’ unions, a number of academic staff, along with student support staff, have worked together in various institutions on developing and implementing various consent campaigns and consent workshops. However, there is still no definition of consent in legislation. It is to be commended that Ireland recently signed up to the Istanbul Convention, which sets out international standards in relation to strengthening legislation and frontline services in relation to sexual violence. Ireland now need to see firm commitment to honouring this convention, and to implementing the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

- **USI urges the next Government to commit to strengthening legislation in relation to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, and to ensure the rights of the victim are central to any policy or strategy.**
- **USI urges the next Government to implement the recently signed Istanbul Convention.**
- **USI urges the next Government to restore and bolster supports to frontline services dealing with sexual, domestic and gender-based violence.**
- **USI urges the next Government to include a legal definition of consent in legislation.**

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE

The cost of the Emergency Contraceptive is currently unregulated here in Ireland, and prices vary hugely throughout counties, cities, towns and pharmacy chains in Ireland. Receiving emergency contraceptive can cost anywhere from €10 to €45, or even higher.

- **USI urges the next Government to introduce legislation which sets a standard maximum price for all forms of Emergency Contraceptive.**

DEMOCRACY AND STATE REFORM

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VOTER REGISTRATION REFORM

Being registered to vote is essential for citizens to fully participate in our democracy. Registering to vote should be a simple and efficient process. However, the current system in Ireland is outdated, arduous and unnecessarily complicated. USI directly registered nearly 28,000 students to vote ahead of the marriage equality referendum and handed out tens of thousands more forms. In September 2015 USI registered an additional 10,000 students. As a result, USI has developed an in-depth analysis of problems inside the current system for the registration of voters – and ways to fix them.

There are many practical changes that could be implemented in the short term. Checktheregister.ie contains much outdated information and County and City Councils were providing conflicting messages in relation to whether they would accept forms in bulk or in individual envelopes. Standardised information on the process should be produced and promoted post haste.

England and many States in the U.S. have the option of online voter registration – this would be an excellent step to making the system here more accessible. Automatic voter registration is being discussed in the U.S. at the moment and this is something we believe should be explored in Ireland.

The need for Gardaí to sign forms for the supplemental register could be replaced using PPS numbers and making producing identification obligatory at polling stations. Currently there is no option for Irish citizens to vote while they are abroad; currently they must return to the island so as to cast their vote. In this current day and age we feel this is outdated and not reflective of the reality that many Irish citizens have to live abroad for a period of time, yet plan to return to Ireland. We should follow the example of over 100 countries worldwide and allow all citizens abroad to vote at Irish Embassies.

USI supports the participation of young people in the electoral process. For the past number of years we have organised campaigns to support students to register to vote, and information campaigns in the lead up to elections and referenda. Through running these campaigns, it has become apparent to us that the current electoral system is not fit for purpose. The system cannot easily capture data on a population which is highly mobile, and one which no longer lives in the same place from birth, as previous generations have done. USI believes that the establishment of an Electoral Commission is one way to tackle the issue

of a system that is outdated and in need of updating. The work of the Electoral Commission should be to reform the current electoral register, and to also increase the number of people participating in the democratic process. The Electoral Commission should also have the mandate to support voter engagement and participation campaigns, such as providing funding and resources to students' union to run voter registration campaigns on campuses.

- **USI urges the next Government to make online voter registration an option.**
- **USI urges the next Government to extend voting rights for citizens abroad via Irish Embassies.**
- **USI urges the next Government to allow the use of PPS numbers and thus remove the need for Gardaí to stamp forms.**
- **USI urges the next Government to extensively review and update the information on checktheregister.ie.**
- **USI urges the next Government to make an investment into campaigns to promote voter registration to those about to reach the age of eligibility.**
- **USI urges the next Government to seriously consider moving to automatic voter registration for those who have turned 18.**
- **USI urges the next Government to establish and provide adequate resources to an Electoral Commission.**

EXTEND VOTING RIGHTS TO 16 YEAR OLDS

An opportunity to provide for a more inclusive democratic system was overlooked when the Government ignored the recommendations of the Constitutional Convention to hold a referendum on lowering the age of voting in Ireland to 16.

16 year olds have the right to vote in a significant number of other countries, such as Austria, parts of Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Cuba, the Isle of Man and most recently in Scotland, with the decision to allow 16 year olds to vote in the Independence Referendum, and subsequent national and local elections.

An inclusive, democratic society, which allows the involvement of more young people in politics would serve to introduce innovative and fresh ideas to the policy-making table. Lowering the voting age to 16 would help to engage

young people with democracy and ensure their voice is heard.

- **USI urges the next Government hold a referendum on a proposal to lower the voting age to 16 within in the lifetime of the next Government.**

EQUALITY BUDGETING IN IRELAND

That a large body of recent research, both Irish and international, suggests that more equal societies fare better across a range of social outcomes, including education, health, crime and almost every conceivable area of human life (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009)

That Equality Budgeting is an approach to economic policy-making that places equality at the centre of decisions concerning public expenditure and income. Through equality audits and impact assessments, Equality Budgeting provides information on how different sections of society are impacted by specific economic policy measures. The objective of Equality Budgeting is to ensure this information is used to reduce inequalities and to achieve the best equality outcomes for specific disadvantaged groups, but also for society at large. Over 60 countries have implemented or worked towards Equality Budgeting.

With concern that while some progress was made in Ireland toward Equality Budgeting, particularly with a focus on gender, much of this was subsequently reversed with the weakening of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit in the Department of Justice since 2008, inaction on the implementation of the National Women's Strategy, and the more general dismantling of the equality infrastructure in Ireland that has been on-going since the beginning of the economic crisis.

The 2011 TASC Report Eliminating Health Inequalities – A Matter of Life and Death suggests that inequality in Ireland is endemic, with 2009 figures suggesting that the top decile of Irish Society had incomes which were 11 times those of the bottom decile. The report also found a strong correlation between income levels and education levels, with those in the bottom decile most educationally disadvantaged. USI believes that it is vitally important that the Government is always acutely aware of the long-term impact of the policies they enact.

- **USI urges the next Government to introduce Equality Budgeting for Budget 2017 onwards.**

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

USI believes that a constitution should be a living document, and should evolve to reflect the time and the people it represents. The Irish Constitution has a number of areas which need to be seriously considered and debated by the Irish people. These areas include, but are not limited to, repeal of the eighth amendment, blasphemy, and the role of women in the home.

- **USI urges the next Government makes a firm commitment to reconvening the Constitutional Convention early in the lifetime of the next government so as to ascertain what areas of the constitution Irish people would like to see amended or updated.**

INTRODUCTION OF A LIVING WAGE

A living wage is the minimum income necessary for a person to meet their basic needs. In November 2015 the joint committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation launched a report entitled Low Pay, Decent Work and a Living Wage (2015). The committee noted that "paying low-paid employees a living wage offers the prospect of significantly benefiting the living standards of these employees" and that "the state should become a living wage employer and that payment of the living wage should be stipulated as mandatory in government procurement contracts."

Fair treatment of workers at all levels should be a key priority for any government. The prevalence of in work poverty and deprivation is unacceptably high. 350,000 workers or just under 20% of the workforce are currently classified as living in deprivation. This rises to 33.8% in one income households. Additionally 95,000 workers were at risk of poverty.

It is not acceptable that any of our citizens should be expected to live in conditions where their basic needs cannot be met. Similarly it is not acceptable that even those in work cannot generate enough income to meet their basic needs.

- **USI urges the next Government to introduce a living wage for all workers as well as removing conditions that allow for precarious work.**

PAY INCREASE FOR STUDENT NURSES AND MIDWIVES ON PLACEMENT

The results from the USI Irish Student Nurses and Midwives Survey (2015) found that out of 608 responses 95.2% had considered emigrating once qualified with 72.61% stating they will emigrate as a direct result of pay. Currently, student nurses and midwives in the first third of training receive €6.49 an hour, the second third students receive €6.92 an hour and the final third students receive €7.79 hourly, a rate which is still significantly below the legal minimum wage. This equates to approximately 53% of the 1st point of the staff nurse scale. Mental health student nurses are paid 2.3% more, reflecting existing relativities between general and psychiatric staff nurse pay scales. When undertaking the placement, the students are not qualified nurses and require supervision. This is reflected in the 2:1 replacement ratio for student nurses replacing staff nurses.

Although current rates of pay were increased from the 1st January 2016, in line with the increase in the minimum wage to €9.15 per hour announced in Budget 2016 and provided for in the National Minimum Wage Order 2015, this level of pay will still, evidently, force student nurses and midwives to emigrate. Issues surrounding working hours of 39 hours a week and the low pay should be a concern for the Government and only when pay for student nurses and midwives is increased in line with a minimum wage (now €9.15 per hour) will the issues of retention of nurses be resolved.

- **Unless the current Government commits to increase pay, USI urges the next Government to engage in the process set out in the Chairman's note of the Lansdowne Road Agreement and subsequent Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) talks regarding student nurse/midwife pay for 36 weeks to restore incremental credit.**

RETURN SOCIAL WELFARE FOR UNDER 26S

The current social welfare rates for under 26 year olds (introduced in Budget 2014) is a financial penalty for unemployed graduates and youths in Ireland. Prior to these budget changes, a young person aged 23-24 years of age was in receipt of €144 per week (p/w) and those aged 25 and older received €188. The majority of young jobseekers do not claim secondary benefits which means that this is the maximum payment received.

The argument that jobseekers allowance, and a lower rate of social welfare for under 26s, is a mechanism to encourage

young people and students to seek employment is not justified as Ireland currently has the fourth highest number of young people who are 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEETs) in the European Union with 18.4% compared with the EU average of 12.9%.

- **USI urges the next Government to provide equal access to social welfare and that age should not be a criteria to receive full financial social welfare.**

ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS

The constant hikes in the cost of using public transport with no apparent improvement of or access to service is having an effect on students in Ireland.

Transport costs have increased over the past 5 years, and rents continue to rise year on-year (Daft.ie, 2015). The decreased availability, and increased cost of accommodation for students, is forcing more and more students to commute long distances to college. But public transport links between rural areas can be so poor that they force students to miss or arrive late for early morning lectures and miss evening lectures.

The end result will be students without accommodation dropping out as a result of the increase in transport costs as well as poor access to public transport.

- **USI urges the next Government to improve access to public transport services to more rural areas outside of cities in Ireland before 2018.**
- **USI urges the next Government to address the cost of public transport services for students by providing further concessions in line with other EU countries and economic recovery in Budget 2017.**

ENVIRONMENT

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

USI believe that the next Government must give a clear commitment to climate change, and must prioritise reducing carbon emissions as a matter of urgency before 2017.

For 2020, the EU has committed to cutting its emissions to 20 % below 1990 levels. This commitment is one of the headline targets of the Europe 2020 growth strategy, known as the Climate and Energy package. According to a recent study, Ireland's Climate: The Road Ahead (2013), an increase in mean temperature of around 1.5 °C above the 1981-2010 mean is anticipated by mid-century. It is imperative that Ireland, which has one of the highest proportion of emissions of any EU member state from this sector (Environmental Protection Agency, 2013), continue to follow protocol and reduce carbon emissions. Emissions are expected to increase by 2pc by 2020, if the Government plan to ramp up food production despite the outcomes from the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015. Comments from the current Taoiseach that not until after 2020, and when the economy recovers, will the State be in a position to meet "aggressive targets" are not acceptable. Average global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree(s) this century. The planet cannot wait five years to make these changes and commit to meeting the targets set out by the EU. However, Irish citizens are expected to see The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill to become law in 2016.

USI urges the next Government to follow through with these bills before 2017. Despite agriculture being Ireland's key sustainable sector, other avenues must be looked at such as deforestation, transport, insulation, electricity and ultimately reducing carbon emissions as promised by the current Government.

- **USI urges the next Government to give a clear commitment to climate change with measurable, actionable goals and outcomes.**
- **USI urges the next Government to complete and pass The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill before 2017.**
- **USI urges the next Government to seek alternatives to reducing carbon emission outside of agriculture in order to meet targets by 2020 before 2017.**
- **USI urges the next Government to seek alternatives to reducing carbon emission outside of agriculture in order to meet targets by 2020.**

TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

USI does not support the lowering of any EU standards in regards to the environment, food safety, animal welfare and workers' rights. USI are also concerned that under TTIP, the US would be allowed to export shale gas to Europe thus increasing fracking in the US and allowing US companies to challenge fracking bans in Europe under the Investor-State Dispute Settlement clause.

While USI firmly supports the EU's efforts in job creation, we believe that TTIP could jeopardise the health and wellbeing of those living in the EU and therefore call on the EU to use these negotiations to encourage the US to raise its standards rather than lowering its own. USI affirms that while it does not oppose free trade in principle, TTIP does not amount to a traditional free trade agreement but rather threatens to constitute an historic infringement upon democratic governance.

In terms of privacy, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement was rejected by the European Parliament in 2012 because it was seen to infringe on people's right to privacy by requiring internet service providers to monitor their customer's online activity. It is speculated that TTIP aims to bring back the skeleton of ACTA (Williams, 2015).

- **USI urges the next Government not to accept TTIP and to reject the Partnership.**

AN GHAEILGE

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DEIREADH A CHUR LE TÁILLÍ GAELTACHTA DO MHC LÉINN MHÚINTEOIREACHTA

I ndiaidh don rialtas a mhaoiniú Gaeltachta a aistarraingt, titeann ualach an chostais ar mhic léinn mhúinteoireachta atá i mbun sochrúcháin Gaeltachta, rud a chothaíonn constaic eile socheacnamaíoch dóibh siúd atá ag súil le céim mhúinteoireachta a bhaint amach. Le páirt a ghlacadh sa socrúchán Gaeltachta, is gá do mhic léinn breis agus €1,500 a íoc. Dar le Tuarascail ón nGrúpa Oibre ar an Tréimhse Foghlama sa Ghaeltacht, curtha faoi bhráid na Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta i 2012, go gcuireann na táillí seo bac ar mhic léinn ó chúlaí faoi leith clárú i gcúrsaí oideachas mhúinteoireachta.

- **Is gá deireadh a chur leis an riachtanas do mhic léinn mhúinteoireachta táillí Gaeltachta a íoc.**
- ***USI urges the next Government to remove the requirement for student teachers to pay Gaeltacht fees.***

DÍRÍÚ AR SCOILEANNA LÁN-GHAELIGE A THÓGÁIL, LEIS AN ÉILEAMH A SHÁSAMH

D'ardaigh líon na ndáltaí in oideachas bunléibhéal lán-Ghaeilge taobh amuigh de na ceantair Ghaeltachta ó 33,205 i 2013/14 go 34,476 i 2014/15. Tá gá an t-éileamh seo a shásamh, trí dhíríú ar Ghaelscoileanna a thógáil, idir bhunscoileanna agus iar-bhunscoileanna. Léirigh staidéar 2011 ag Ollscoil Luimnigh (Mathematics and Gaeilge: A Report on the Influence of Bilingualism) go bhfuil tuiscint acadúil níos fearr ag páistí i mbunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge.

- **Le líon na gcainteoirí laethúla a ardú, agus le mian an phobail a shásamh, is gá don rialtas díriú ar a thuilleadh bunscoileanna agus iar-bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge a thógáil.**
- ***USI urges the next Government to focus on providing increased Irish language education at both primary and second level.***

CÚRAM NÍOS AIRDE DON GHAELIGE AG LEIBHÉAL AIREACHT

Tá gá le guth níos láidre don Ghaeilge ag Bord an Rialtais, ionas go ndéanfar reachtaíocht teanga a threisiú, ath-mhaoiniú a chinntiú do heagraíochtaí Gaeilge, agus cás na Gaeilge a bhrú ag leibhéal sinsearach.

INCREASE THE PRIORITY OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL

A stronger voice for the Irish language at government level is needed, to enforce legislative language protection, to restore funding to Irish language and Gaeltacht organisations, and to ensure that the language agenda is properly supported for at senior level.

MAOINIÚ DON GHAELIGE AGUS DON GHAELTACHT A ATHÓGÁIL.

I dtuarascail foilsithe ag an ESRI níos luaithe i mbliana, dar teideal “Dearcadh an Phobail i leith na Gaeilge”, dúirt 37% den phobal ó dheas agus 29% den phobal ó thuaidh nach ndéanann an Rialtas “go leor” ar son na Gaeilge, dar leo. Tá laghdú tar éis teacht ar bhuiséad Foras na Gaeilge agus ar bhuiséad caipitil Údarás na Gaeltachta ó €45 milliún sa bhliain 2008 go dtí €22 milliún sa bhliain 2015. Leis na haidhmeanna agus spriocanna leagtha síos sa Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge a bhaint amach, tá gá le ath-mhaoiniú láithreach don teanga, agus don Ghaeltacht.

RESTORE FUNDING FOR THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

In a report published by the ERSI earlier this year, titled “Attitudes towards the Irish Language on the Island of Ireland”, 37% of the public in the South and 29% of the public in the North said that the government do not do “enough” for the Irish language. The budget of Foras na Gaeilge and the capital budget of Údarás na Gaeilge fell from €45 million in 2008 to €22 million in 2015. In order to achieve the aims set out in the Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, the immediate restoration of funding for the language and the Gaeltacht is vital.

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Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

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