

2009

Political Party Manifesto
European Elections

AONTAS

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Organisation

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INTRODUCTION

The European Elections will be held on Friday, 5th June 2009. This document contains the policies in relation to lifelong learning and education included in the European manifestos of the five main political parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Green Party and Sinn Fein.

FIANNA FAIL

According to the Fianna Fail European Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Fianna Fail candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Fianna Fail believe that not everyone starts life from the same point. Therefore it is crucially important that we create and promote a policy of equal opportunities for all - especially in policy areas such as access to healthcare, education, pensions, social security and the labour market
- Fianna Fail support the principles as set out in the European Commission's 2006 document The Demographic Future of Europe. An ageing Europe also brings clear benefits of experience, knowledge and expertise. Fianna Fail believe that they must continue to encourage trans-European dialogue on ageing by putting forward European-wide lifelong learning and third-age information technology programme.
- Fianna Fail support the Operation of the European Social Fund in Ireland. Under the EU Human Resources Operational Programme for Ireland 2007-2013, the European Union is providing €375 million to Ireland under the European Social Fund. The overall budget of this programme is €1.36 billion. These monies are being used to provide training courses for those who are unemployed, for people with disabilities, for early school leavers and for the marginalised in our society.

Click [here](#) to download a copy of the Fianna Fail European Election Manifesto

FINE GAEL

According to the Fine Gael European Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Fine Gael candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- The creation is of new jobs and the need to continue reforms, invest in education, life-long learning and employment in order to create opportunities for everyone.

- Fine Gael believes that education is crucial to our future growth and prosperity. Higher levels of education increase employment prospects for everyone. Life-long learning is essential in order to meet the new challenges posed by technological advancement and globalization and as public sector costs increase, advantageous cooperation with the private sector should be explored.

Under the heading Education, Fine Gael makes a number of points:

- Access to education was crucial to the creation of the Celtic Tiger. But education is about more than improving economic performance. It can improve lives, giving greater options to people in careers, lifestyles, income, and personal fulfilment.
- Fine Gael is highly critical of recent government decisions on education, believing that they will hinder, not help, the prospect of economic recovery.
- Fine Gael also believe that the European Union can play a crucial role in developing the standard of education across all 27 member states.
- An education system of the highest quality must be available to all citizens providing for greater choice and encouraging wider participation.
- Multilingualism must be a goal across Europe. It is important in the twenty-first century that as many people as possible in our Union should be fluent in Europe's languages. Our educational system must reflect this commitment to multiculturalism.
- Fine Gael believe strongly that the promotion of new technologies in training and education programmes should be supported;
- Obstacles to student and teaching mobility must be removed.
- Participation in the Bologna Process at a European level is essential to encouraging modernisation of the third level sector, greater levels of quality across the EU, while at the same time favouring academic freedom. To further Ireland's participation in this process Fine Gael has outlined a programme of third level reform aimed at improving quality assurance procedures and enhancing the quality of third level education domestically.

- Ireland's domestic education policy and systems must be developed to reflect the highest standards at an EU level to enhance competitiveness encourage mobility and ensure educational outcomes here favour comparably with our EU counterparts.
- Fine Gael has outlined its own detailed policy proposals for Third Level education in its recently launched 'The Third Way: A Fine Gael Green Paper on reform of Higher Education', published in March 2009. Fine Gael believes that education at all levels is vital for the future development of Ireland, and will give it priority attention in government. Ireland's Celtic Tiger years were built on the investment in education in the 1960s. Fine Gael maintain that they will insure, at both European and national level, that education remains a key focus.

Click [here](#) download a copy of the Fine Gael European Manifesto

LABOUR PARTY

According to the Labour Party European Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Labour Party candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Labour in Europe is proposing a European Pact for the Future of Employment. Advantage should be taken of the possibilities offered by the European Social Fund for integrating the unemployed into the labour market and for training workers. In a global economy, investments in education are fundamental for growth and creating better-paid and better-quality jobs. They propose to fund a Skills Programme through the current EU budget, to train workers across Europe for, amongst other things, the eco-jobs of the future, such as in the renewable energy sector. Labour also promise to work towards full and equal access to lifelong learning, with special attention paid to 'second-chance' education and training for those who have not completed their formal education. This can be supported by European, national and regional policies. They propose to expand funding, within the current European budget, for education and training exchanges to include, for example, apprentices and older people, building on the success of the ERASMUS programme, and giving as many young people as possible the chance to study abroad. Mobility should be the rule not the exception. Every young European should have the chance to enjoy it.
- Labour in Europe will seek agreement on a European Social Progress Pact, with goals and standards for national social, health and education policy to contribute to the fight against poverty and as well as Europe's continued social and economic development. They will do this in partnership with social NGOs and people

experiencing poverty directly. We favour needs-based social welfare benefits for all those who are retired, homeless, unemployed or unable to work, to guarantee a life of dignity. The Labour Party support targeted policies to support those most affected by the economic crisis.

- Labour propose to include a social progress clause in every piece of EU law, and to take into account social and environmental impact assessments when developing new laws. The process of liberalisation must be assessed, particularly in the context of the Lisbon Agenda, which was put in place to open up the single market, and also to forward the agenda of decent work and pay, and workplace equality. They propose that the EU carries out a social audit of its environmental and energy policies to develop measures to prevent these policies hitting the poorest hardest.
- Labour promise to continue to support the role played by state aid in fostering economic development and employment, particularly in peripheral and underdeveloped areas and in areas suffering high levels of unemployment. They believe the social and environmental criteria for awarding public contracts under European law should be extended and strengthened.
- Labour support the development of policies based on the concept of flexicurity, i.e. the promotion of employment security through investment in the education and skills of employees, better protection of income after redundancy, and active policy to ensure rapid re-employment after a person loses their job. They promise to work to promote decent working time, meeting health and safety standards, and a fair work-life balance, in line with the European Parliament's position on the revision of the Working Time Directive.
- Labour propose to establish a European Charter for Internships, to give young people seeking work experience better rights and ensure they benefit from a good start to their working lives.
- Labour propose setting EU targets for providing care for the elderly, modelled on those already in place for child care, in light of our ageing population and the need to reach the goals of full employment and gender equality. They promise to continue to work for an EU active ageing strategy, including measures to increase healthy life years and demand the full involvement of older people and organisations working on their behalf in EU policy-making affecting them.

- Labour in Europe will work to create a European Women’s Rights Charter to improve women’s rights and opportunities and to promote mechanisms to achieve gender equality in all aspects of social, economic and political life.
- Labour promise to work to introduce improved parental leave rights for men and women across Europe up to the highest standards in Europe.
- Labour promise to campaign for equal political representation of women and men in all decision-making bodies at European level. They promise to campaign for a gender-equal European Commission and a gender-equal European Parliament, and will call for the creation of a European Commissioner for Gender Equality.
- Labour will work to support parents so that they can balance their caring responsibilities with their professional responsibilities. To support this goal, they propose that Member States achieve the existing EU target of 33% child care coverage for 0-3 year olds and 90% coverage for children from 3-school age, and adopt complementary EU qualitative targets for child care.
- Lead the fight to close the gender pay gap, which is vital to improve living standards, fight poverty and increase economic growth. Labour proposes to step up European efforts to eradicate human trafficking and sexual exploitation through closer police cooperation, and particularly welcome the new provisions in the Lisbon Treaty on these problems.
- Labour promise to support the EU and its Member States in their efforts to stop domestic and gender specific violence, including that perpetrated against women of ethnic minorities, through all appropriate EU programmes and funds.

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GREEN PARTY

According to the Green Party European Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Green Party candidate promises the following in relation to lifelong learning and education.

Irish Green MEPs promise to work towards a Europe-wide directive on independent living, ensuring that people with disabilities in all EU member states

1. are supported with services and opportunities

2. have choice and control in their lives to enable them to access **education**, employment, services and community life equal to non disabled people.
3. are able to move throughout member states as is the right of all EU citizens, with support services to enable this.

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SINN FEIN

According to the Sinn Fein European Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Sinn Fein candidate promises the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Sinn Fein MEPs promise to work to ensure equal access to good quality social, educational, child care and health services, and housing, transport energy and water services.
- Sinn Fein MEPs promise to work to change the existing EU economic policy guidelines to promote sustainable economic growth, full employment, social justice and environmental protection.

Click [here](#) download a copy of the Sinn Fein European Manifesto