

An Ireland of Equals in a Europe of Equals

Sinn Féin EU Election Manifesto 2004



Sinn Féin

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BRINGING OUR AGENDA FOR CHANGE TO THE EU

A MESSAGE FROM SINN FÉIN PRESIDENT GERRY ADAMS

As we prepare to elect our representatives to a new European Union Parliament on the 10th and 11th of June 2004 the people of Ireland are at a crossroads.

We are at a critical point in the Irish peace process. If we are to move forward, supporters of the Good Friday Agreement throughout the 32 Counties must use their vote to re-affirm their commitment to the principle set out in the Agreement, that only real change and equality can bring a lasting peace.

This election is also a key moment that will help to determine the future of the EU - and therefore Ireland's future - for many years to come. Shortly after the election the EU heads of state will again attempt to agree a new treaty establishing for the first time an EU Constitution. This new treaty will subsequently be put to the member states for ratification, including a referendum in the 26 Counties and the first ever EU referendum in the Six Counties. The 10th and 11th of June elections will therefore also be the first opportunity for voters to send a message about whether they are satisfied with the Draft EU Constitution and, if not, what kind of EU they want to be a part of.

Sinn Féin stand for change in the EU. We have a vision for an EU that respects the democratic rights of the people of each member state. We want an EU that promotes equality among people and nations. An EU that works for the just and peaceful resolution of conflicts in Europe and beyond. We believe that the enlarged EU must adopt a new set of priorities including the elimination of poverty within its borders and the reform and strengthening of the United Nations to advance justice and peace in the wider world. The changes we want to see happen at EU level are no different from those we are pursuing here in Ireland.

We also want the EU to become a partnership of equal states. We oppose current attempts to turn the EU into a superstate or a military and economic superpower because we value Irish sovereignty and Irish neutrality. We know that the EU with all its present shortcomings was not inevitable, but reflects the political agenda of the most powerful in the EU at present - the big States, the unelected Eurocracy, and big business. It also reflects a lack of political will to change it. But it can be changed, and it should be changed.

We know that we are not alone, and we will work cooperatively with all progressive forces in Europe and beyond that share our vision.

Sinn Féin is the only all-Ireland party standing candidates in all five constituencies on the island with the ability to win seats on both sides of the border. By electing Sinn Féin representatives, the people of Ireland can have truly national representation in the EU Parliament for the first time.

An all-Ireland team of Sinn Féin MEPs can provide the effective, accountable representation that the Irish people deserve, and we give our commitment to work tirelessly for an Ireland of Equals in a Europe of Equals.

With your support, we look forward to bringing our Agenda for Change to the European stage.

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GERRY ADAMS MP MLA



AN IRELAND OF EQUALS IN A EUROPE OF EQUALS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - SINN FÉIN EU ELECTION MANIFESTO 2004

The 2004 European Parliament elections are happening at a crucial juncture in both the Irish peace process and in the development of the EU.

The European Union is a more dominant force than ever in the political, economic and social life of Ireland. Sinn Féin has a policy of critical but constructive engagement with the EU. This means we decide to support or oppose the many and complex developments in the EU each on its own merits. We have supported EU and other Europe-wide measures that promote and enhance human rights, equality and the all-Ireland agenda - measures which are an example of the EU at its best, promoting a guarantee of a basic level of rights protection in all member states. But Sinn Féin has also never been afraid to stand up against EU measures damaging to Irish interests.

We want to build a Europe of Equals - a true partnership of equal sovereign states, co-operating in social and economic development in Europe and beyond. We want an EU that promotes peace, demilitarisation and nuclear disarmament and the just resolution of conflicts under the leadership of a reformed, renewed and democratised United Nations. Ultimately, we want a future United Ireland to take an active, leading role in such a reformed EU.

SINN FÉIN'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE

Sinn Féin is a campaigning party. We will work cooperatively with others who share our political vision to effect needed social change. Consistent with our republican agenda at home, Sinn Féin's Agenda for Change at EU level involves actively campaigning for:

- an independent Ireland of Equals in an EU of Equals
- an EU that respects and promotes national, collective and individual rights (including human, political, social, cultural and economic rights)
- an economically and socially just EU, not an EU that is merely another economic superpower
- a demilitarised and nuclear-free EU
- a globally responsible, fair-trading EU that leads the way on reaching the Millennium Development Goals for reducing global poverty by 2015

FOR AN EU THAT ENDS ALL OCCUPATIONS

The new EU of 25 must come to terms with the reality that several of its members and applicants militarily occupy other member states, enforce partitions, and deny other European nations the right to self-determination enshrined in international law. The EU must respect the right to self-determination everywhere, but especially at home. It must take a role in ensuring the speedy end to all occupations and enforced partitions.

Sinn Féin MEPs will argue our case for a United Ireland and for an end to all military occupation in the EU.

FOR AN EU TREATY WORTHY OF IRISH SUPPORT

Sinn Féin supports EU enlargement and a more inclusive EU. We welcome all new member states that comply with the Copenhagen Criteria on democracy and human rights. We also agree the EU needs major reform. We support streamlining existing treaties to make them more accessible to people, and we support measures that make the work of the EU more transparent, accountable, efficient and effective. However, while the present draft EU Constitutional Treaty proposes big changes, it does not do all we need it to do and it is not a charter for an EU of Equals.

Sinn Féin is opposed to the current draft EU Constitution. If the final Treaty does not address our concerns we will campaign for a NO vote in the future referenda. Sinn Féin calls for any new EU Treaty to ensure:

- an explicit recognition of EU member states' right to national sovereignty and self-government, including economic self-government
- full equality in decision-making between EU partners
- an end to the practice of the EU Council meeting in camera
- the introduction of an accountable Commission
- the primacy of fair trade and the social economy over free trade
- an explicit recognition of Irish neutrality and parity of esteem for EU neutral states

PROMOTING PEACE AND IRISH INDEPENDENCE

Sinn Féin MEPs will promote the peace process on the EU stage, where it needs to be heard. We believe that the EU could play a constructive role in ensuring that the British and Irish Governments as stated parties to the Good Friday Agreement honour their commitments and do not seek nor agree to its renegotiation.

Sinn Féin MEPs will:

- act as ambassadors of the Irish peace process
- place the democratic demand for Irish unity and an end to military occupation of a part of our country the European political agenda
- work with their Sinn Féin elected colleagues throughout Ireland for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

AN ALL-IRELAND ECONOMY IN A EUROPE OF EQUALS

Sinn Féin is committed to a process of all-Ireland economic development because we are working towards social, economic and political unification. To properly harness the all-Ireland potential, Sinn Féin proposes:

- the Six Counties adopt the euro, in order to establish an all-island currency
- the progressive harmonisation of tax regimes on the island
- the EU recognise the island as one economic unit for the purposes of EU programmes and funds
- a merger of the economic development agencies on the island to end the competition between Invest Northern Ireland (INI) with Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Development Association (IDA)

EU PEACE FUNDING

Sinn Féin MEPs will work to ensure that EU funding support for the peace process continues beyond 2004. We will also campaign at local, national, and EU levels to ensure that Peace funding reaches its maximum potential for promoting full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and for promoting national reconciliation on our island. This means:

- prioritising social inclusion
- supporting all Ireland development
- giving communities a greater say in the design and implementation of future programmes

EU STRUCTURAL FUNDING FOR ALL-ISLAND DEVELOPMENT

Sinn Féin recognises the huge potential of EU structural funding for all-island economic development, but we also recognise that the two Governments have frequently diverted these funds into the partitioned economy. We believe that EU structural funding can and must be used even more proactively to drive all-Ireland development.

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign at local, national and EU levels to ensure:

- all EU funding has an all-Ireland dimension
- a truly national development plan with all-island infrastructure at its core
- targeted investment in the disadvantaged counties (the Six Counties, the Border Counties, and particularly the North West)
- increased accessibility and accountability in the administration of EU funding
- citizens and communities can participate in deciding how the funds are applied
- all projects are equality-proofed

PLANNING FOR THE END OF OBJECTIVE ONE STATUS

From 2006 EU Objective One funding will end, and EU funding structures will change considerably. Sinn Féin believes that post-Objective One planning must be undertaken now, and on an all-Ireland basis. Sinn Féin will campaign to ensure:

- maximum EU funding is secured post-2006
- the extension of EU Peace funding and an emphasis on all-island economic development in any future EU structural funding
- community stakeholders have a say

REFOCUSING THE LISBON AGENDA

The EU economic policy known as the Lisbon Agenda aims to establish the EU as the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy by the year 2010. While the Lisbon Agenda does include progressive elements, over time a market-driven emphasis has evolved that is focused more narrowly on competitiveness, privatisation and deregulation.

Sinn Féin MEPs will call for:

- the Lisbon Agenda mid-term review in 2005 to refocus the policy on sustainable economic development, full employment and social protections
- greater emphasis on the social economy

A CAMPAIGN TO RESTORE ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for the restoration of economic sovereignty:

- member state governments should retain complete control over taxation policy and strategy
- member state governments must be allowed to own important public sector utilities and to take necessary steps to bolster local, regional and national development strategies, including borrowing

CAMPAIGNING FOR FARMERS AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL ECONOMIES

Sinn Féin is committed to revitalising Irish agriculture and rural communities on an all-island basis. While the EU Common Agricultural policy (CAP) has brought some benefits to Irish farmers, it has also contributed to a decline in the sustainability of small to medium family farms. We believe that the reforms due to take effect as of January 2005 can provide the basis for maintaining family farms if they become part of a revised all-island strategy for the future of Irish agriculture.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- stronger all-Ireland participation in EU agricultural policy formulation
- entry of member states into the CAP on an equal basis
- establishment of a full range of complementary rural development programmes to aid farmers and rural communities
- the designation of the entire island of Ireland as a GM-free zone and a new EU embargo on GM crops and products

ACTION FOR THE IRISH FISHERIES

Sinn Féin deplores the shameful treatment of the Irish fishing industry under the EU Common Fisheries Policy.

Sinn Féin calls for:

- the radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to include a complete renegotiation of the terms governing the Irish fisheries
- an end to all threats to the Irish Box conservation area
- the statutory representation of fishing organisations in the management of stocks
- a programme to sustain coastal communities similar to the rural development aspect of the CAP

ELIMINATING POVERTY

More than 68 million people in the enlarged European Union live in poverty. As a matter of urgent priority, Sinn Féin MEPs will fight for:

- agreement of EU wide targets and timeframes for the reduction and elimination of poverty reduction and homelessness
- agreement of EU-wide standards for social protection and for combating poverty and social exclusion
- poverty-proofing of all EU law and policy
- incorporation of the social and economic rights outlined in the European Social Charter into the body of EU law

PROTECTING PUBLIC SERVICES

People have the right of equal access to quality public services, which states have the responsibility to provide and which we pay for through our taxes. Sinn Féin MEPs will fight for:

- recognition that equal access to public services is a socio-economic right deserving of protection by the EU
- removal of privatisation imperatives from the Lisbon Agenda at its mid-term review in 2005
- easing of EU restrictions on state involvement in the provision of public services

THE RIGHT TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Sinn Féin believes that a clean environment is not only a public good but a fundamental social right in need of protection. Sinn Féin MEPs will press for:

- prioritisation and mainstreaming of sustainability in EU economic policy
- timely implementation of all outstanding EU Environmental Directives

- meeting all EU obligations under the Kyoto Protocol
- a Zero Waste Strategy for Ireland and the EU that prioritises the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste
- an EU-wide standard on nuclear safety, with a monitoring role for the EU
- the closure of Sellafield, the scrapping of EURATOM, and a new agreement to progress towards a nuclear-free EU

CHAMPIONING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Sinn Féin welcomes the EU's commitment to "more and better jobs" and full employment in a knowledge-based economy because there are over 50 million unemployed and more than 10 million working poor in the EU. However, we share the concerns of the trade union movement that these objectives have been made subservient to corporate sector demands for labour market "flexibility".

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- full employment based on high quality and stable jobs
- a living wage for workers across Ireland and Europe
- positive incentives and other measures to enable people to overcome barriers to employment including poor education, carer responsibilities for children or elderly family members, exclusion of elderly workers, people with disabilities and asylum seekers, and long-term or generational unemployment
- ending gender discrimination and the gender pay gap
- mandatory trade union recognition
- an immediate right to employment for all EU workers in any member state
- equal access to social protections for all EU and legal non-EU migrant workers across the EU

CAMPAIGNING FOR FULL EQUALITY

Sinn Féin believes that the achievement of full equality of all people within the EU must become a higher priority objective of EU policy. The EU must lead by example on protection from discrimination and the promotion of equality.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- the introduction of a mechanism for equality-proofing all EU law and policy

- the introduction of more comprehensive EU anti-discrimination legislation including a new Gender Equality Directive, a Disability Directive and a Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender Equality Directive
- redress of the persistent democratic deficit caused by the under-representation of women on EU decision-making bodies

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

The European Union must lead by example on the protection and promotion of human, civil and political rights. However the present reality is that 13 of the 15 established member states tolerate domestic human rights violations according to Amnesty International. Sinn Féin believes that the elimination of human rights abuses within the EU must become a higher priority objective of EU policy.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- the introduction of human rights-proofing of all EU law and policy
- the establishment of an EU Human Rights Agency
- incorporation of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights into the next EU Treaty, including full enforceability
- domestic amending legislation to allow for proper full incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law in the 26 Counties
- Common Migration and Asylum Policies that are fully compliant with human rights instruments, that bring rights protections up to the highest standard, and that make the EU more open, inclusive and anti-racist

PROMOTING IRISH LANGUAGE RIGHTS

Sinn Féin will ensure that all Irish-speaking people can use the language in their dealings with domestic and European institutions as of right. In keeping with our demand for equal status for the Irish language in the EU, Sinn Féin MEPs will:

- continue to work with the STÁDAS Campaign and others for the recognition of Irish as an official working language of the EU
- address the European Parliament in Irish on a regular basis

INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND GLOBAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

Sinn Féin believes that EU member states should work cooperatively through the EU to exercise global responsibility in economic relations. Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for the development of a Global Social Justice Agenda for the EU, including:

- fulfilment of EU and member state commitments to the UN Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction by 2015
- bringing the EU partners on board to match the Irish Government's commitment to Developing Country Debt Cancellation
- a reversal of the present imbalance in EU military v. development aid spending, and a redirection of a significant portion of the €160 billion presently spent annually by EU states on defence towards the estimated €100 billion cost of cutting global poverty in half by 2015
- human rights-proofing of all EU aid and trade policies
- the adoption of a Trade Justice approach at EU level, to allow fair trade to prevail over completely unrestricted free trade
- a more effective EU Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers and the adoption of an international Arms Trade Treaty to prevent EU export of arms where they contribute to violations of human rights

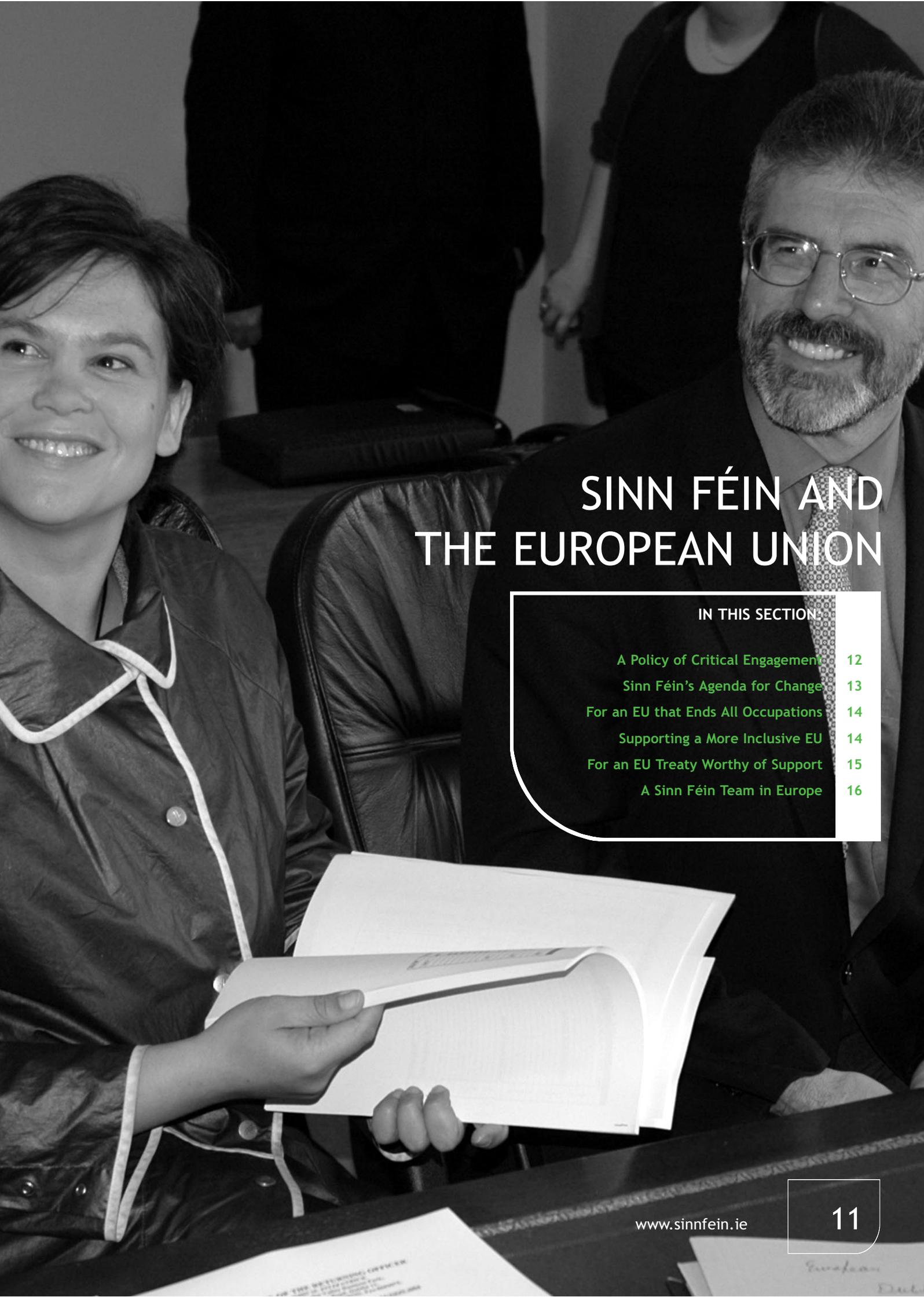
PROMOTING IRISH NEUTRALITY, EU DEMILITARISATION, AND UN REFORM

Successive EU treaties since the Single European Act in 1987 have corroded independent foreign policy to the point where Irish military neutrality is virtually all we have left. But Irish neutrality is under increasing pressure from the accelerating militarisation of the EU and the decisions of an Irish Government that is no longer truly committed to the policy.

Sinn Féin MEPs will strongly promote our policy of "Positive Neutrality in Action", which requires:

- neutrality to be enshrined in the Irish Constitution and codified in legislation
- withdrawal from the EU Rapid Reaction Force and NATO's Partnership for Peace
- Irish troops to train and serve abroad only under the auspices and leadership of the United Nations, and only with prior Dáil approval

- no use of Irish airports, airspace, seaports, or territorial waters for preparation for war or other armed conflict by foreign powers
- active promotion of the demilitarisation of the EU
- active promotion of UN primacy, as well as badly needed UN reform and capacity-building to create a revitalised UN which is capable of fulfilling the promise of the Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of upholding international law



SINN FÉIN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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SINN FÉIN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

A POLICY OF CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The European Union is a more dominant force than ever in the political, economic and social life of Ireland. As such it demands closer attention than it gets at present.

In the Six Counties many people feel disconnected and complacent about the EU. This is partly as a result of their being denied the right to vote on any of the EU Treaties since accession in 1973. While Sinn Féin welcomes the announcement that the British Government will hold a referendum on the next EU Treaty, we are concerned about the timescale. We believe that the two Governments must respect the right of people in the Six Counties to determine relations with the EU on the basis of their common interest with the rest of the people of Ireland.

In the 26 Counties, the establishment parties have adopted a wholly uncritical attitude to any and all developments in the EU, regardless of their impact on Ireland. For too long successive governments and opposition parties have behaved like second-class citizens, accepting everything handed down to them from Brussels and Strasbourg. They have also been content for engagement with the EU to be an elitist preserve and to keep ordinary Irish people - and their concerns about the direction of the EU - out of the debate.

In contrast, Sinn Féin has a policy of critical but constructive engagement with the EU. This means we decide to support or oppose the many and complex developments in the EU each on its own merits, using the criteria of democracy, transparency and accountability, equality and human rights-compliance, the effect on Irish sovereignty and potential for promoting Irish unity.

For example, Sinn Féin has supported EU and other Europe-wide measures that promote and enhance human rights, equality and the all-Ireland agenda. We argued for the inclusion of the European Convention on Human Rights in the Good Friday Agreement. We support the incorporation of the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights and the European Social Charter in EU law. We have argued for full adoption of the existing EU Equality Directives into

domestic law, and for the development of new more comprehensive equality directives. These measures are an example of the EU at its best, promoting a guarantee of a basic level of rights protection in all member states.

But Sinn Féin has also never been afraid to stand up against EU measures damaging to Irish interests. We opposed previous EU treaties on this basis, including the Treaty of Nice.

The Irish Government and the EU are prepared to ignore the expressed democratic will of the Irish people in order to comply with EU demands. This was dramatically illustrated by the referendum re-run on the Nice Treaty. The people voted NO to Nice and that decision should have been respected and acted upon by the Irish Government and the other EU member states. As a result of this episode Irish people are now, quite rightly, more skeptical about democratic accountability in Ireland and the EU than ever before.

The question of democratic accountability is more important than ever because the EU has developed from what was essentially a free trade bloc into what is now a politically, socially and economically integrated entity which makes laws touching virtually every aspect of Irish life. But the EU Council still meets and takes decisions in secret, without transparency or accountability. Often the Irish people do not know how their government representatives vote in Council, and Irish Ministers have proven evasive under direct questioning. Too many controversial EU measures are being fast-tracked by the Irish Government, and rubber-stamped without debate. All this must change.

The bottom line for Sinn Féin is that democracy is built upon the sovereignty of the people expressed in the form of the democratic nation-state. We believe strongly that democracy is best exercised at local and national level where the citizen and the community have maximum input. We support cooperation at EU level where appropriate and necessary, but only if the proposed measures do not compromise democratic rights and have followed a transparent and accountable decision-making process.

Critical engagement is not an anti-European approach. Indeed, Irish republicanism has its origins in a broader European democratic movement. Today

Sinn Féin continues to build cooperative links with like-minded democratic movements throughout Europe and beyond.

Sinn Féin MEPs will not only engage critically and constructively with EU policy, they will also challenge the persisting democratic deficits in EU decision-making, as well as the democratic deficits here on this island.

In keeping with this commitment, Sinn Féin MEPs will:

- demand an all-island referendum on the next EU Treaty
- demand the strengthening of EU scrutiny mechanisms in the 26 Counties, which have so far failed to deliver on the promise of increased accountability and public debate
- demand further reform of the EU institutions, particularly the appointment of unaccountable Commissioners as the primary lawmakers of the EU, and the workings of the Council as the primary decision-makers of the EU

In keeping with the policy of critical engagement, Sinn Féin will assess all EU proposals against the following criteria, and support or oppose it accordingly:

- does it compromise national sovereignty or local democracy?
- does it compromise the interests of smaller nations or minority groups within those nations?
- was the proposal arrived at through democratic dialogue and consultation with civil society?
- will its outworking be transparent and subject to democratic accountability?
- will it enhance social and economic equality or have the opposite effect?
- does it promote or compromise human, political, social, economic and cultural rights?
- does it have the potential to promote Irish unity?

SINN FÉIN'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE

It is no secret that the European Union is presently dominated by the largest, wealthiest countries and is driven by a federalist agenda that seeks total integration and eventual subsuming of the member states in a federal superstate structure.

Across the political spectrum, EU federalists seek to construct an EU that would act as a world power either in concert with or in competition with the

USA. This plan for EU development is reinforced by the Draft EU Constitutional Treaty, which continues the evolution of the EU as an economic and military superpower, internally unequal and dominated by a few powerful states.

Sinn Féin is firmly opposed to the federalist agenda. We have our own positive vision for what the EU could be.

We want to build an EU that is a true partnership of equal states, co-operating in social and economic development in Europe and beyond. We want an EU that promotes peace, demilitarisation and nuclear disarmament and the just resolution of conflicts under the leadership of a reformed, renewed and democratised United Nations. Ultimately, we want a future United Ireland to take an active, leading role in such a reformed EU.

Consistent with our republican priorities at home, the Sinn Féin Agenda for Change at EU level involves actively campaigning for:

- an independent Ireland of Equals in an EU of Equals
- a demilitarised EU
- an EU that respects and promotes national, collective and individual rights (including human, political, social, cultural and economic rights)
- an economically and socially just EU, not an EU that is merely another economic superpower
- a globally responsible EU that leads the way on reaching the Millennium Development Goals for reducing global poverty by 2015
- a nuclear-free EU
- a fair-trading EU

In keeping with our Agenda for Change, Sinn Féin's commitment in the European Parliament is to:

- work for a reformed EU that gives power back to the people
- promote Irish sovereignty, democracy and neutrality
- advance all-Ireland approaches to economic and social issues with the active assistance of the EU
- seek new priorities for EU policy including the elimination of poverty
- ensure that all EU law and policy respects and promotes equality and human rights
- build political alliances with like-minded parties and civil society groups in Ireland and across the EU to advance these goals

FOR AN EU THAT ENDS ALL OCCUPATIONS

With few exceptions, every state in the enlarged EU has known invasion and military occupation by another EU state in the recent past. Peoples in EU states have suffered the persecution and discrimination associated with occupation, and have also engaged in armed resistance. The people of all these European states know where Republicans are coming from.

Military occupations of one state by another in Europe have largely ceased. But there are exceptions. The new EU of 25 must come to terms with the reality that several of its members and applicants militarily occupy other member states, enforce partitions, and deny other European nations the right to self-determination enshrined in international law.

The EU must respect the right to self-determination everywhere, but especially at home - in Brittany, in Galicia, in Catalonia, in Corsica, in Cyprus, in the Basque Country, in Kurdistan, in Scotland, in Wales - and in Ireland.

The EU must take a role in ensuring the speedy end to these occupations and forced partitions. While this issue has been acknowledged with respect to Cyprus, it must be confronted in all states where it occurs.

But the EU presently tacitly condones and acquiesces in this wrongful occupation. The EU allows the British Government to negotiate on behalf of a part of Ireland, even where the interests of the people of the Six Counties are by no means coincidental with the interests London brings to the table.

Just as we look to the EU community of nations to endorse the peace process in our country, we equally expect EU support for our just call for an end to the British military occupation of a part of our island and for Irish reunification.

Sinn Féin MEPs will argue our case for a United Ireland and an end to all military occupation in the EU:

- all occupations in the EU must end
- the reunified and newly-liberated nations must be included as full EU members

- other EU member states should remember their own past, recognise the Irish right to self-determination, and cease their recognition of and collaboration with Britain's ongoing occupation of Ireland

SUPPORTING A MORE INCLUSIVE EU

Sinn Féin welcomes the enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 members as of 01 May 2004.

We welcome a more inclusive EU, and will welcome the future accession of all applicant states fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria on democracy and respect for human rights and whose populations have endorsed EU membership by referendum.

There can be no exclusion of applicant states on the basis of a false racially or religiously exclusive notion of what is "European", and we reject the development of a Euro "supranationalism" based on any notion of cultural or other superiority.

We oppose the accession of Turkey at this time on the basis that it has not yet met the Copenhagen requirements with respect to human rights, because it continues to militarily occupy Cyprus and also denies the Kurdish people their right to self-determination. However, once Turkey has fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria and ended their occupations, we would welcome the further diversification of the EU by its inclusion as a predominantly Muslim but secular state.

We also welcome enlargement because it has the potential to change the balance of power in what has been an elitist club dominated by a few wealthy powerful states and serving their interests.

As a small nation with a history of colonisation, Ireland has much in common with both the smaller accession states and the economically marginal former Eastern Bloc states. We are convinced that the greater number of peripheral EU states have the potential to counterbalance the power of the core EU states. Together, we have a far greater chance of creating an EU of Equals. To this end, Sinn Féin will work on the basis of common interest to forge alliances with other progressive states, other neutral states, other small states, and any other progressive forces in the EU.

While we are wary of the implications of the accession of so many more NATO states to the already NATO-dominated EU, we specifically welcome the accession of another militarily neutral state, Malta.

On the issue of future EU enlargement Sinn Féin believes that:

- all new member states must comply with the Copenhagen Criteria on democracy and human rights
- new member states must join the EU on the basis of full equality with established member states
- all EU workers should have the immediate right to employment and the equal right to social protections in any EU state
- we need more public discussion and debate on the proposed establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area involving the EU, Middle Eastern and North African states (through what is known as the Barcelona Process) and its implications for the future direction of the EU and global geopolitics

FOR AN EU TREATY WORTHY OF SUPPORT

Sinn Féin agrees that the simplification and consolidation of existing EU Treaties is necessary. But such a process must not be used to diminish national sovereignty and increase the centralised power of the EU as does the proposed Draft EU Constitution.

We are adamantly opposed to the creation of an EU superstate - even by increments. The proposed Draft EU Constitution moves the EU further down this federalist road. It makes fundamental changes in the structures of the EU. It gives those structures more powers. It shifts the balance of power yet further from sovereign national parliaments and towards the EU, taking the single biggest step so far in the creation of an EU superstate. It entrenches the inequality of the EU by enhancing the power of the larger states. It also advances the project to turn the EU into a superpower.

As it stands, the draft EU Constitutional Treaty is not worthy of Irish support because:

- it does not respect national sovereignty, and increases the superiority of EU law to national law

- it does not respect economic sovereignty, but continues to impede the right of states to control their own economies
- it establishes a number of new features that are normally the accoutrements of states, including a single legal personality and a Foreign Minister
- it ends the already qualified right of each state to appoint a voting Commissioner
- it further extends Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), which is an unequal decision-making process
- it does not clearly favour a social market economy over the market-driven economy demanded by big business
- it gives the EU primacy in all areas of foreign policy and allows for the progressive establishment of an EU Common Defence; it directs states to contribute forces and increase military spending; it requires mutual defence of EU member states; it allows for EU military intervention as part of counterinsurgency campaigns; and it privileges NATO states over neutral states - all of which undermine Irish military neutrality
- it increases EU control over criminal law and policing matters, and does so without guaranteeing access to best procedures and protections
- it increases the EU democratic deficit instead of reducing it

The opportunity to undertake fundamental positive reform in the EU has been squandered by both the drafters (the Convention on the Future of Europe) and the negotiators (the EU Council, including the Irish EU Presidency) of the Draft EU Constitution.

The Draft EU Constitution is not a charter for an EU of Equals. Unless significant changes are made along the lines that Sinn Féin recommended to the Irish Government nearly a year ago, Sinn Féin will be unable to support the new Treaty, and will once again have to campaign on the NO side in the referenda north and south.

Sinn Féin calls for any new EU Treaty to ensure:

- an explicit recognition of EU member states' right to national sovereignty and self-government, including economic self-government
- the primacy of fair trade and the social economy over free trade
- an explicit recognition of Irish neutrality and parity of esteem for EU neutral states
- an end to the practice of the EU Council meeting in camera

- an end to weighted voting and a reintroduction of equality in decision-making between EU partners
- the introduction of an accountable Commission
- a more detailed definition of all EU competences (areas of jurisdiction), contraction of EU competence to the minimum necessary areas, and an end to exclusive EU competence
- recognition of the right to scrutiny by national parliaments and regional and local governments, and the introduction of a standard scrutiny mechanism
- meaningful sanctions allowing national parliaments and regional and local governments to enforce the principle of subsidiarity (that decisions should always be made as closely as possible to the citizen)

Sinn Féin will also push for the domestic changes necessary to redress the democratic deficit here at home, including:

- citizens of all 32 counties to be consulted by referendum on any future EU treaty changes - and such referendum results to be binding on the Governments
- a review of the operation of the 26 County EU Scrutiny Act 2002 by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on EU Affairs, as provided for under Section 5 of the Act, to include a meaningful public consultation process
- a full Dáil debate on Government positions in advance of each EU Summit meeting or Inter-Governmental Conference, allowing for the recording of votes on each measure where there is no consensus - the result of which should be binding on the Taoiseach and reflected in Government positions represented at Council
- involvement of the relevant Oireachtas Committee/s in EU policy development prior to Ministers taking decisions, and a requirement on all Ministers to brief their Committees in advance of Council of Ministers meetings on how they plan to vote on EU proposals
- Committees to debate and vote on proposed Government positions in order to register opposition if necessary; a vote defeating the position should result in referral of the matter for full debate and vote by the Dáil with the result of the Dáil vote to be binding on the Minister and reflected in the Government position represented at Council
- a standard procedure for Oireachtas Committees to deal with EU proposals referred to them by the Oireachtas Subcommittee on Scrutiny, requiring them to debate and vote on the proposals; and requiring a public report summarising the

- arguments for and against the proposal, or indicating the reasons for consensus where it is recommended that a motion accepting the proposal be put to the Dáil without debate
- a direct relationship between the northern Assembly and the EU with respect to both legislation and funding programmes
- the recalled Assembly to appoint a Minister for Europe, establish an EU Scrutiny Committee, and introduce Question Time to make northern MEPs more accountable to the regional administration
- reconfiguration of the Seanad to give it primary responsibility for EU scrutiny, as per Sinn Féin's Seanad Reform proposals
- full membership in the Forum on Europe for representatives of northern political parties, to make the Forum truly "national"
- the Forum on Europe to carry out a rolling consultative process with communities and civil society groups across the 32 Counties
- the All-Ireland Consultative Forum proposed in the Good Friday Agreement to act as a grassroots monitoring body for direct scrutiny by Irish citizens and voters of the performance of Irish MEPs, the Irish Commissioner, and Irish Government at EU level, with the power to refer all EU proposals to an all-Ireland Human Rights Commission

A SINN FÉIN TEAM IN EUROPE

Sinn Féin will work all levels of democracy, from local councils in Ireland to the EU Parliament in Strasbourg, to ensure that our demands for national self-determination, democracy, and economic and social justice are addressed and advanced.

Sinn Féin MEPs will promote Sinn Féin's Agenda for Change by engaging critically - but constructively - with the institution, just as we do with the Dáil and the Assembly.

Our MEPs will also engage cooperatively with other progressive forces in and outside of the EU institutions, and with likeminded groups and movements in Europe (and outside Europe) on the issues that matter, including human rights, equality, democracy and opposition to militarism.

We understand that the nature of the European Parliament is to act as a watchdog on EU Commission and EU Council - and that is what Sinn Féin elected activists do best.

Equally, the nature of co-decision procedure and Committee procedures involves negotiation. The Sinn Féin team have unparalleled expertise in tough international level negotiations, and we will bring this to Strasbourg.

Sinn Féin MEPs:

- will ensure that the rights and interests of Irish people are stoutly defended at EU level
- will do our best to ensure that Six County and 26 County interests are represented in negotiations on an all-Ireland basis, and that the interests of people in the Six Counties are not neglected in favour of London's dominating separate interests
- will not shrink when confronted with the might of the Commission or the more powerful EU states, and will not be made to feel second-class citizens in the EU
- will challenge the assertion that the present EU is inevitable, and will bring our firm conviction that another EU is possible, given the political will to change it
- recognise that the EU is only one part of a bigger picture
- will not allow our participation in the EU to divert our attention from our other priorities such as our peace process at home or, on the international stage, UN reform (as the most inclusive, democratic and therefore legitimate multilateral forum)



THE EU AND THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA

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THE EU AND THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA

PROMOTING PEACE AND IRISH INDEPENDENCE

The last EU election took place in 1999, the year after the people of Ireland overwhelmingly ratified the Good Friday Agreement. The story of the Irish peace process since then has been the story of the efforts to implement what people voted for.

Time and again the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement has been thwarted by the British Government at the behest of the unionist parties. On four occasions the democratic institutions established under the Agreement have been suspended by the British Government. The institutions have now been in suspension since October 2002. The crisis continues because of the unwillingness of unionism to come to terms with the changes promised under the Good Friday Agreement and because of the failure of the British Government to fulfil its commitments.

The British Government has failed to reform policing in line with the Patten Report. It has failed to remove the British army and all its barracks and posts which intrude in the lives of the people. It has failed to repeal repressive laws and implement basic standards of human and civil rights. It has failed to ensure equality of status for Irish speakers. It has failed to come clean on its role in arming unionist paramilitary death squads and killing hundreds of citizens on both sides of the border. And on top of all this the Irish Government has failed to challenge the British Government on its breaches of the Good Friday Agreement, while also failing to fulfil many of its own commitments.

Despite these huge difficulties, Sinn Féin has spared no effort to revive the peace process and to ensure the restoration of the institutions through dialogue and negotiation. Sinn Féin has shown our willingness to take difficult decisions and to persuade others to do so. This commitment has helped to ensure the maintenance of the IRA cessations for most of the past decade and has secured three significant acts putting arms beyond use. Republicans have fulfilled their commitments and will continue to do so.

Real equality threatens no-one but will enhance the lives of nationalists and unionists alike. On this basis, we will work with all who share this island to build lasting peace.

Sinn Féin MEPs will bring this message to the EU stage, where it needs to be heard. We believe that, in keeping with its stated commitment to international peace and conflict resolution, the EU could play a constructive role in ensuring that the British and Irish Governments as state parties to the Good Friday Agreement honour their commitments and do not seek nor agree to its renegotiation.

Sinn Féin MEPs will:

- act as ambassadors of the Irish peace process
- place the democratic demand for Irish unity and an end to military occupation of a part of our country the European political agenda
- work with their Sinn Féin elected colleagues throughout Ireland for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement
- co-operate with Irish MEPs of all political traditions in the common interests of the people of Ireland
- give fair representation to all sections of the community

EU FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE PROCESS

The European Union has recognised the importance of the peace process to the stability of both Ireland and the EU as a whole.

We commend the EU for its significant practical support for the peace process, particularly through its Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, the Peace I and Peace II Programmes, which have enhanced the outworking of the Good Friday Agreement.

Much of the potential for peace building, reconciliation and conflict resolution in Ireland remains unrealised however, and Sinn Féin therefore will work for the continuation of EU Peace funding after 2004.

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign at local, national, and EU levels to ensure that future Peace funding reaches its maximum potential for promoting national reconciliation and its precursors: an end to discrimination, the promotion of diversity, and the recognition of the interdependence of all individuals and communities on the island.

SINN FÉIN PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE EU PEACE FUNDING

Future EU Peace funding must support a managed process of national reconciliation through the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in all its aspects. It is therefore crucial that future Peace funding be developed and managed in the context of the Good Friday Agreement.

Sinn Féin proposes that future Peace funding needs to be managed with specific reference to conflict resolution and peace-building. Therefore:

- it should not become part of the general Community Support Framework because it is about more than just community development
- it should continue to be a Special Programme linked to the family of rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes run by the EU Commission's External Affairs Directorate
- the priority of purely economic initiatives (as in the Peace I and Peace II Programmes) should end, and economic sustainability should not be the over-riding criteria
- its programmes should encourage management for the transition from conflict, and its projects should aim to complete particular post-conflict tasks, such as the reintegration of prisoners back into community and family life and victims initiatives
- its programmes should be guided by the principle of social inclusion and targeted to benefit those areas subjected to unequal distribution of public resources or that suffered disproportionately due to the conflict
- it should promote and encourage the development of all-island projects and networks as central to the process of national reconstruction

Reconciliation cannot be built on the basis of inequality. Future Peace funding must therefore be used to tackle inequality in the social, economic, linguistic, political and cultural spheres, and to promote social inclusion. A key element of this is community empowerment. This must involve:

- using the social economy model for sustainable socio-economic development to combat poverty and social exclusion in the areas of greatest disadvantage and where the conflict was most intense over the last 30-40 years

- inclusion without discrimination of those who have suffered directly as a result of the conflict, including those who regard themselves as "victims", those who regard themselves as "survivors" and those who have been imprisoned as a result of the conflict
- participatory involvement of workers in the design of initiatives to increase the safety, security and peace of mind of those underrepresented in the workplace
- strengthening community capacity for equality-proofing, and for monitoring outcomes and improvements in status and changes in attitude and practice on the part of public officials and institutions
- using community development models to underpin the evolution of public administration in the North
- recognising and supporting the role of the community and voluntary sector in the maintenance and development of the Irish speaking community

Future Peace funding must also not repeat the administrative shortcomings of past programmes. This requires:

- distribution of funding in line with objective need
- prioritising of community-based projects over business initiatives
- the promotion of all-Ireland networks
- a more hands-on role for the European Commission whose mediation is needed to ensure maximum benefit from available funds
- restoring the previous monitoring role of the Community Consultative Forum under Peace I for greater transparency
- less bureaucracy and complexity in application and processing procedures to prevent prejudice against smaller groups in disadvantaged areas

PROMOTING THE ALL-IRELAND DIMENSION - AN ISLAND ECONOMY IN A EUROPE OF EQUALS

Sinn Féin is committed to a process of all-Ireland economic development because we are working towards social, economic and political unification. This is the core of the republican agenda.

Others have increasingly recognised that the single greatest structural impediment to coherent economic development in Ireland is the existence of two constitutional, administrative and economic systems. This has also been acknowledged by the European Union.

While there is no disputing that various EU initiatives set up to integrate economies and eradicate borders across the EU have already had some positive impact here, the EU's role to date in promoting the all-Ireland dimension of the republican agenda - an island economy - has been a mixed one of opportunities and constraints.

The opportunities have mostly taken the form of EU structural funding with the potential to enhance all-Ireland infrastructure. Sinn Féin believes that the EU structural funds can and must be used even more proactively to drive all-Ireland economic development.

The constraints have taken two forms. One is the persistent diversion of EU support to the partitioned economy by the Irish and British Governments. The other is the direction of the EU economic policy, which remains fundamentally at odds with the project of Irish economic sovereignty and the development of a vibrant dynamic all-Ireland economy.

Sinn Féin's critical engagement approach to the EU in relation to economic matters is guided by this analysis and our focused pursuit of the all-Ireland dimension of the Good Friday Agreement.

BEYOND THE PARTITIONED ECONOMY

While we readily acknowledge that the EU has played a valuable role in all-Ireland development to date, it also should not be overstated. In the referendum debates for the Rome and Maastricht treaties in 1972 and 1992 we were promised that EU membership would make partition meaningless.

But more than 30 years later the island economy remains embryonic. We still have a partitioned economy with two currencies, two tax regimes and often conflicting development agendas.

This needs to change. We need a new impetus at national and EU levels.

To properly harness the all-Ireland potential, Sinn Féin proposes that:

- the Six Counties adopt the euro, in order to establish an all-island currency
- the EU recognise the island as one economic unit for the purposes of EU programmes and funds
- the EU allow Ireland the same latitude for overcoming the negative economic effects of partition presently given exclusively to Germany in the proposed EU Constitution

Sinn Féin proposes that the two governments:

- begin the process of harmonising tax regimes in consultation with trade unions and business organisations and all the political parties on the island
- merge the economic development agencies and end the competition between Invest Northern Ireland (INI) on one side with Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Development Association (IDA) on the other.

Sinn Féin MEPs will pursue the potential for the EU to make an even greater positive contribution to all-Ireland economic development.

EU STRUCTURAL FUNDING FOR ALL-ISLAND DEVELOPMENT

EU Regional Policy has designed and funded many worthwhile social and regional economic development initiatives that have had a limited but measurable positive impact on an all-island basis.

In particular the EU's Structural Programmes have offered new opportunities for harmonising policies and organisational networks throughout the island.

The Structural and Cohesion Funds have begun to reshape the economic infrastructure of Ireland as a European region and have facilitated an economic network stretching from Cork to Derry.

Since its inception EU Objective One funding has provided essential support for economic growth across the island. Future structural funding needs to

further develop the all-island economic infrastructure and break any remaining obstacles to balanced economic development as a means of transition into a stable, sustainable and peaceful economy and society.

One important aspect of EU structural funding has been its potential to tackle disadvantage and inequality. Sinn Féin has actively monitored this, particularly at local level.

We found that at a local and community level the effects of the funding were less beneficial than expected. This was most apparent where government did not use EU money as a supplement to existing funding for community and economic development, but instead used it as a substitute.

In addition, the European Court of Auditors is aware of the mismanagement of funds by certain projects in the Six Counties. This issue still needs to be addressed, and the EU needs to reassert its role in co-ordinating the funds to prevent any future abuse.

For the structural funds to 2006 and beyond, there needs to be an ongoing coherent and vibrant all-island dimension. There must also be an analysis of the impact of previous initiatives to inform the current and future funding rounds, as well as clear and quantifiable plans and objectives.

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign at local, national and EU levels to ensure that:

- government departments that administer the EU structural funding are more accountable to elected representatives and the general public
- citizens and communities can participate in deciding how the funds are applied in their areas
- all grants are accessible and transparently processed with accounts placed in the public domain
- there is equality of treatment in the application of funding
- all projects are equality-proofed
- the social, voluntary and public sectors get greater access to funding
- economically disadvantaged and marginalised areas and communities get priority investment
- there is targeted investment in the disadvantaged counties (the Six Counties, the Border Counties, and particularly the North West) in terms of infrastructure, arterial routes and networks, indigenous business development, rural diversification, and initiatives to tackle outward migration

- economic development is monitored on a regional basis to determine the real effects of the programmes on sectors and areas, particularly with respect to the core problem of long-term unemployment
- training for the new economic sectors becomes commonplace and accessible to all
- more consideration is shown to the environmental consequences of EU funded projects

“BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY” IN THE SIX COUNTIES

The total package of EU structural funding to the North to 2006 is worth STG£1 billion, of which STG£575 million is the spending programme Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP). This programme has contributed to the development of the economy in the Six Counties over the past four years and has had a generally positive impact on the quality of life. Its projects and schemes have brought infrastructural and capital investment in business, urban regeneration, support for rural communities, ending long-term unemployment and environmental protection.

The BSP programme has the potential to be especially relevant to the communities most affected by the legacy of economic decline and ongoing effects of conflict. The programme plan has targeted those areas and sectors with immense potential for the economy at community level - small to medium enterprises and indigenous firms with the potential to expand.

Sinn Féin has actively supported the BSP programme since its inception, both in terms of co-ordinating community responses to the application procedures and in monitoring the ongoing development of the projects. At council and community level we have encouraged participation and dialogue to support the EU and BSP contribution to the transition to a more peaceful, stable, prosperous and fair society.

Sinn Féin has also encouraged all-island links through business and infrastructural development, and the practice of operational integration to generate an all-island economic sphere within the context of the European Union.

However, Sinn Féin has a number of concerns regarding the administration of the BSP funds, their targeting and priorities, and the extent of their commitment to all-island economic integration.

The BSP programme is set to close in 2006. For the remaining period of the BSP funding, Sinn Féin MEPs will monitor and campaign at the local, national and EU level to ensure:

- the socio-economic partners who deliver the funding better reflect the mix of society within the Six Counties
- elimination of conflict of interest from programming, monitoring and evaluation
- greater transparency in programme administration to address suspicion about mismanagement and to build public confidence in the administration of EU funding
- an end to preferential treatment and subsidies for some sectors by the NIO and Department of Finance and Personnel
- more focus on local and small enterprise and those businesses which can stimulate growth at a local level
- recognition of the importance of the social economy for effective regeneration
- the BSP programme's potential to enhance the all-island economy is utilised more effectively

THE 26 COUNTIES AND THE "NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN"

Successive British, Unionist and Irish administrations deliberately neglected the development of substantial sections of rural Ireland. The results of this neglect are most acute in the North West region of the Six and 26 Counties.

Today, despite a significant injection of EU structural funds and a so-called "National" Development Plan for the 26 Counties, underdevelopment of power, transport and communications infrastructure persists in this region.

Sinn Féin wants to see an end to this. We need a truly national development programme with all-island infrastructure at its core.

There is a fresh urgency to this issue, because the present EU structural funding programme ends in 2006, and the Commission has announced a sharp reduction in regional funding to Ireland from 2007-2013.

We welcome the recent relaxation of the EU Structural and Cohesion Fund criteria. EU funding should now be used to support the development of all-island energy and ICT infrastructure, as well as all-island transport infrastructure.

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for a focused all-Ireland initiative involving local government, the development agencies, the service providers, and local and regional interest groups coming together to plan a strategy with firm targets for the delivery of projects including:

- the Western Rail Corridor and the possible re-building of the Dublin-Derry rail link
- an agreed timetable for the N2/A5 upgrade
- a guaranteed full broadband service to all towns regardless of size
- energy initiatives to solve the current power shortages that are constraining economic development in the North West
- locally-run training and education programmes to tackle the digital divide
- accelerated implementation of the Innovation North West Programme

THE SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY AND INTERREG

INTERREG is a programme financed under the EU Regional Development Fund to stimulate inter-regional cooperation, balanced development, and economic and social cohesion.

The Special EU Programmes Body (SPEUB) was set up under the All-Ireland Ministerial Council as the designated managing authority for both PEACE and INTERREG. The SPEUB has an additional role in coordinating the all-Ireland dimensions of the other EU support programmes on the island, such as EQUAL, LEADER and URBAN.

All of these funds are intended to tackle social and economic marginalisation by building capacity in deprived areas throughout the island, and are interwoven into the respective development policies on the island. For example, the 26/6 Counties Regional Development Plans each share a Common Chapter that outlines areas of cooperation on a cross-border basis. The Common Chapters recognise that the border corridor is the most deprived area on the island. The primary fund used to redress this is INTERREG IIIA.

The operational programme for INTERREG IIIA recognises the detrimental impact of the border in its acknowledgment that communities and businesses in areas adjacent to the border suffer from similar social, economic and infrastructural disadvantages. Consequently, the objective of INTERREG IIIA is to overcome the social, economic and environmental problems caused by the border.

Fundable projects must demonstrate full integration.

As such, INTERREG and the SPEUB have enormous potential to develop the all-Ireland dimension that is critical to the republican agenda. Sinn Féin seeks to develop this opportunity to the fullest possible extent.

There is scope to go further. For example, we must access the two other INTERREG III strands, B and C, which so far have not been used to a fraction of their potential. Both of these funds offer the opportunity to promote large, area-based regional development projects on an all-Ireland basis.

Working in Europe and collectively on the island of Ireland, Sinn Féin MEPs will work to ensure:

- the SPEUB has the resources and autonomy to act as the overall authority for the implementation of the all-Ireland aspects of the EU structural fund programmes including INTERREG III A, B, and C, and INTERREG IV
- the SPEUB has the resources and autonomy to act as the overall authority for the implementation of the all-Ireland aspects of the EU Community Initiative Programmes including EQUAL, LEADER and URBAN
- more SPEUB development and advisory staff with the skills to promote cross-border and all-Ireland integration
- that all relevant EU structural funds are utilised strategically in each of the three border corridor zones (North West, Central and Eastern) to tackle the social, economic and infrastructural marginalisation endured by border communities and businesses, and to promote greater social, economic and spatial cohesion through the development of Integrated Area Plans for the Border Corridor

THE IMPENDING CLOSURE OF OBJECTIVE ONE STATUS

The EU's designation of the island of Ireland as a high priority "Objective One" regional funding recipient will end in 2006.

In the short term Objective One funding propped-up the economy in all parts of the island and facilitated growth across a number of sectors, primarily the high-technology and tourist industries.

We don't yet know the long-term effects of the loss of billions of euros in capital and revenue funding on our island economy.

From 2006 the EU funding structure will change considerably. We will no longer talk about "Objective" status. The majority of funding will go towards a "Cohesion Priority" which Ireland will not be eligible for. However Ireland will be entitled to apply for two other Priorities. Funding will be available for competitiveness and employment through programmes like URBAN, European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund, and for territorial co-operation, for example through the INTERREG Fund.

The impact of the closure of Objective One status must be publicly examined and debated, and post-Objective One planning undertaken now and on an all-island basis.

Sinn Féin calls for a coherent all-island development strategy post-Objective One.

Sinn Féin MEPs will argue for:

- the maximum allocation of EU funding post 2006
- all-island action plans and remedial targets to stabilise the social and economic infrastructure prior to the closure of Objective One
- an emphasis on all-Ireland economic interdependence
- the creation of a strategic all-island development plan which redresses the island-wide east-west imbalance and offers a joint approach for development of the Six Counties, the Border regions, and the North West
- equality-proofing and an end to political vetting
- greater community involvement in the design and implementation of future programmes
- an emphasis on the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion, and the social economy

THE CONSTRAINTS OF EU ECONOMIC CONTROL

One of the big problems with economic policy formulation in the EU is the question of who makes the decisions. With every new EU treaty member states cede more power and control over decision making to unelected unaccountable bodies like the European Central Bank and the EU Commission. Where economic measures are still decided by the EU Council, the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting has ensured an unequal distribution of power and influence between member states because the bigger states have more voting power than the smaller states.

Sinn Féin believes that increased centralisation of economic power and decision-making in the hands of unelected, unaccountable and unequal EU bodies is wrong.

EU economic control has not only eliminated our economic sovereignty, it is actively interfering in our ability to shape a socially just and sustainable all-island economy.

We need the EU to actively support the creation of a full-employment economy that houses, educates, transports and provides healthcare and social security to all. Unfortunately the EU is not doing this because it is driven by flawed and contradictory economic policies that privilege profits over people.

Paradoxically, EU economic control is pushing member states further away from the “Social Market” than ever.

THE EURO ZONE RULES

EU control over macroeconomic policy derives from the introduction of the euro as a common currency adopted by a majority of member states including the 26 Counties.

The protocols and directives that underpin the common currency have serious implications for the economic policies of Euro Zone states. For example, the euro rules known as the Stability and Growth Pact dictate that member states cannot allow budget deficits to exceed 3% of GNP. This strangles efforts to borrow for investment in infrastructural development, or to kickstart a sluggish economy. Under the rules, member states are often prevented from taking economic decisions that are in the best interests of their people. This is why an increasing number of member states are being found in breach of the rules, and risk incurring large fines.

But the double standard of the two-tier EU and the unequal power wielded by the larger member states has become more apparent in the case of these Stability and Growth Pact violations. When France and Germany failed to meet the stability criteria the EU Council let them off without reprimand. This is because the large states can control decisions as a result of their favourable voting weights under Qualified Majority Voting (QMV). It is a prime example of why we need to create an EU of Equals.

Needless to say, participation in the euro has required the Irish Government to contain borrowing. Despite the fact that the state’s GDP-debt ratio is

one of the lowest in the EU, participation in the euro means that the state could attract penalties if it increases borrowing.

We badly need infrastructural investment. With our critically under-funded health service, severe educational disadvantage compared to other EU states, a housing crisis that could take 40 years to solve at current rates and persistent deficits in transport, power and communications we need to take significant investment decisions even if that means incurring debt now in order to build for the future. For this reason 26 County participation in the common currency is hindering our economic development.

However, the common currency issue is not straightforward for republicans. Our preference is for an independent all-Ireland currency. However we recognise that in the context of the 26 County adoption of the euro, Britain’s insistence on remaining outside the Euro Zone (until at least 2011) has reinforced the negative effects of partition in Ireland, since two currencies continue to operate and the Six Counties continues to be held hostage by sterling.

Consistent with our commitments to economic sovereignty and the development of an all-island economy Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for:

- a return to the principle of consensus decision-making among member states on EU economic policies and strategies
- a complete renegotiation of the Stability and Growth Pact with a focus on flexibility, and a recognition that the present one-size-fits-all policy is neither fair nor workable
- the adoption of the euro in the Six Counties, as the next best option to an independent all-island currency

CONDITIONAL EU INVESTMENT

Whereas other EU states have established extensive infrastructure built through state-led projects, Ireland’s infrastructure remains relatively backward, especially in the border regions.

The Irish people appreciate that the EU has invested substantially in our infrastructural development over our 30 years of EU membership. However, the EU is now making any new investment in infrastructure conditional on opening public sector utilities like our airports, power stations and communication networks to private sector ownership or only allowing any new

infrastructural projects if they are funded through so-called Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) or Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs).

Since Ireland has not had the benefit of extensive past state infrastructural investment and is still trying to catch up, this new conditionality unfairly penalises us. It is discriminatory.

Sinn Féin cannot accept these constraints on Irish economic sovereignty and we will not accept the imposition of a privatisation imperative by the EU - not least because there is evidence from other jurisdictions that it causes more economic and social damage than benefit.

We need all-Ireland state-led and managed infrastructural development. We also want a well-run dynamic public sector delivering quality services on the principle of equal access on an island-wide basis. We believe that this is the standard the EU should insist on.

Sinn Féin MEPs will demand:

- that the EU remove the investment conditionality and assist member states to develop their own infrastructural development strategies
- that the EU respect member states' right to establish new state industries and companies if it is in the interests of their people
- an EU-wide examination of the real effects on privatisation focusing on the real costs to consumers and workers, the quality and safety of goods and services produced, and a measure of how real competition is in the newly privatised sectors

THE LISBON AGENDA - A FLAWED ECONOMIC POLICY

The dictates of an EU economic policy that is fundamentally flawed place another major constraint on the development of a socially just and sustainable all-island economy.

Faced with a virtually stagnant EU economy, political leaders and EU officials developed an economic plan known as the Lisbon Agenda. The Lisbon Agenda aims to establish the EU as the world's most competitive knowledge based economy by the year 2010.

The first fundamental premise behind the Lisbon Agenda is that increasing competitiveness is the key to resolving the economic problems of the EU.

The second fundamental underlying premise is that increased competitiveness requires privatisation of public companies and public service provision. This has resulted in an EU imperative to open every area of service provision to privatisation including gas, electricity, public procurement, roads, and public transport.

But privatisation does not result in the promised "trickle down" benefits for either consumers or workers.

For example, privatisation of the Irish telecommunications market has led to increased line rental costs for fixed-line customers. The Eircom privatisation resulted in massive losses to small shareholders and the worst of both worlds for consumers, who have neither the benefits of a single supplier nor of diversity and competition. The EU-created duopoly in the Irish mobile market has led to Irish customers paying the highest mobile charges in the EU, and privatisation of the Irish electricity market has resulted in higher costs for households. In the north, the private monopoly gas supplier has raised its charges by one third in the last year.

Privatisation also dictates increased labour market "flexibility" which really means changing labour market legislation to reduce the bargaining power of unions and reduce labour costs - meaning lower wages and benefits.

Another flaw in the current EU economic policy is its concentration on transnational exporters as the primary economic drivers. This exclusive focus does not create sustainable economies. Important sectors are being overlooked, and the needs of smaller business and the social economy barely figure on the EU agenda.

When first proposed in 2000 the Lisbon Agenda was supposed to balance increasing competitiveness with sustainable economic development, increased employment and social protections. In practice, however, a higher priority has been assigned to competitiveness, privatisation and deregulation. The progressive elements of the Lisbon Agenda have lapsed into second class status. Taken together with the EU's other big-business driven emphasis on spending controls and inflation targets the Lisbon Agenda now threatens to have a negative impact on the lives of ordinary people.

Sinn Féin wants an holistic approach to EU economic policy that recognises fairly the contribution and roles of all sectors: public and private, international and domestic, exporters and service providers, social and community.

We also want an Irish and European economy genuinely underpinned by the principles of sustainable development, that will use the considerable economic wealth and resources available to exert a positive influence on the global economy.

In practice this means ensuring fair trading relationships with less developed regions and states. It means EU transnational companies must respect and promote the dignity and human rights of their workforces wherever they are. It also means that the EU must put sustainable economic growth strategies at the heart of its economic policy-making.

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for:

- the Lisbon Agenda mid-term review in 2005 to end the almost exclusive focus on competitiveness and privatisation and refocus on the original balance with sustainable economic development, full employment and social protections
- a recognition that the increased tax-take from “more and better jobs” must result in better provision of public services such as healthcare, education, and transport - the Lisbon Agenda must work towards setting minimum standards for state provision and must not result in any erosion of public services
- greater emphasis on the social economy

A CAMPAIGN TO RESTORE ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY

While economic cooperation and coordination among EU partners should of course continue, Sinn Féin does not believe that it is in the best interests of the member states including Ireland for the EU to exercise exclusive competence in (control over) economic matters. There needs to be increased control by and accountability to the elected governments of individual member states.

Sinn Féin also wants EU economic policy to be determined by a more equal decision-making process in the Council of Ministers (in co-decision with the European Parliament).

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for the restoration of economic sovereignty:

- member state governments should retain complete control over taxation policy and strategy
- member state governments must be allowed to own important public sector utilities and to take necessary steps to bolster local, regional and national development strategies
- fiscal and other economic decisions should be co-ordinated at an EU level but the need for unanimity and the primacy of member state governments must be re-instated

CAMPAIGNING FOR FARMERS AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL ECONOMIES

Sinn Féin is committed to revitalising Irish agriculture and rural communities on an all-island basis. While we are convinced that this will require greater local democratic control over the policies and programmes that will ensure this, we also recognise the central role that the EU currently plays.

While the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has brought some benefits to Irish farmers, it has also contributed to a decline in the sustainability of small to medium family farms. Even the Agriculture Commissioner has admitted that CAP has compromised the long-term prospects of rural areas.

That is why we have actively engaged in the debate around CAP reform and advocated an expanded programme of rural regeneration. We were the first party to call for full decoupling as part of a radical reform of CAP. We believe that the reforms due to take effect as of January 2005 can provide the basis for maintaining family farms if they become part of a revised all-island strategy for the future of Irish agriculture.

We see that future being built on the basis of high quality food production and an expanded domestic processing sector, with a return to genuine producer co-operatives playing an enhanced role. We are also adamant that to preserve the reputation of Irish food, the entire island must remain free from Genetically Modified (GM) crops.

Sinn Féin supports the expansion of the horticultural and organic sector, and will argue for a change in the regulations governing the Single Farm Payment to allow farmers to expand into these areas.

While still a relatively small part of Irish food production, there is a growing demand that can be filled by farmers in this country building on existing resources and our image as the source of clean, non-GM produce to expand higher value-added production for the domestic and export consumer markets.

Rural communities are not just economic units and rural economic life does not all centre on agriculture. Sinn Féin supports a radical decentralisation of the public service and investment in employment opportunities in rural areas.

We support the right of all regardless of region of residence to equal access to public service provision and are opposed to any attempt to cut back on education, health, transport and postal services.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- proper debate and increased national discretion over the regulation of Irish agriculture
- stronger all-Ireland participation in EU agricultural policy formulation, after full input from stakeholders
- entry of new member states into the CAP on an equal basis
- establishment of a full range of complementary rural development programmes to aid farmers and rural communities in adapting to changes brought about by CAP
- adequate provision for farmers who took part in the Early Retirement Scheme
- reassessment of the application of the Nitrates Directive in the light of evidence that nitrate levels in Ireland are currently within the 50 mg limit for water supply and groundwater
- the channelling of all modulated funds from CAP payments towards an expanded programme of rural development
- greater local democratic control of rural development programmes
- the designation of the entire island of Ireland as a GM-free zone
- a new EU embargo on GM products and crops
- increased EU support for expansion of research, development and training in the organic sector

ACTION FOR THE IRISH FISHERIES

Sinn Féin deplores the shameful treatment of the Irish fishing industry under the EU Common Fisheries Policy.

Ever since the scandalous deal that was made on accession in 1973, the Irish fisheries have been subject to greater levels of restrictions. It has reached the stage where the very future of the sector is in doubt.

EU fleets have taken €120 billion in fish out of Irish waters since 1973. That amounts to more than all the direct payments and structural funds to the island. We do not deny the right of fishermen from other countries to fish off our coast but there has to be a fairer proportionality. Irish fishermen have the right to demand a larger share of the quota.

Sinn Féin calls for:

- the radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to include a complete renegotiation of the terms governing the Irish fisheries
- an end to all threats to the Irish Box conservation area
- the statutory representation of fishing organisations in the management of stocks
- the lifting of all EU restrictions on night landings, which are having a detrimental impact on livelihoods and the Irish processing industry
- a programme to sustain coastal communities similar to the rural development aspect of the CAP

TOWARDS A RIGHTS-BASED EU

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David Cullinane

South

Pearse Doherty

North West

TOWARDS A RIGHTS-BASED EU

ELIMINATING POVERTY

People have the right to live free of poverty. As an organised bloc of some of the wealthiest states in the world, the EU has the resources to guarantee this fundamental socio-economic right at least to its own population.

Nevertheless more than 68 million people in the enlarged European Union live in poverty today.

Since its formation, the EU has primarily concerned itself with stimulating economic growth and free market competition in the belief that this was sufficient to eradicate poverty. But the widening poverty gap under the Celtic Tiger economy disproves this theory. Between 1994 and 2000 the number of people living in poverty in the 26 Counties rose to nearly a quarter of the population. In 2004, while the 26 County state is the fourth wealthiest in the world, it has the lowest level of social spending and the highest poverty rate in the EU. In the north, the situation is, if anything, worse. Thirty eight percent of children live in households in poverty.

Job creation and economic growth on their own are not sufficient to tackle poverty. Measuring prosperity in terms of economic growth without taking into account how the wealth created by workers is distributed is a useless exercise. In the EU, the richest 20% of the population receive five times the total income of the bottom 20%.

The increasing numbers of working poor in Ireland and other EU member states are testament to the fact that low-paid, poor quality employment does not necessarily reduce poverty. One fifth of Irish households living in poverty are headed by people who are working but earning low wages and overburdened by the Government's increasing use of double taxation and stealth charges.

The present situation is unacceptable. Eradicating poverty should be a top EU priority. The needs of the poor and disadvantaged must come before the needs of the wealthy and big business. While we remain committed to the preservation of national sovereignty and independence, we believe that the EU has a coordinating role to play in a genuinely redistributive economic system that has equality and social justice at its core.

As a matter of urgent priority, Sinn Féin MEPs will fight for:

- agreement of EU wide targets and timeframes for poverty reduction and elimination
- agreement of an EU wide target and timeframe for the elimination of homelessness
- poverty-proofing of all EU law and policy
- a renewed Social Exclusion Action Programme that takes into account the needs of the new member states
- an end to EU restrictions on borrowing for investment in capital projects aimed at providing improved public services such as hospitals and schools
- increased protection for public services from privatisation to ensure access to healthcare, education, housing, childcare and eldercare as essential basic rights
- agreed EU minimum standards for social protection and combating poverty and social exclusion
- incorporation of the social and economic rights outlined in the European Social Charter into the body of EU law
- Irish social spending increases to at least the EU average

PROTECTING PUBLIC SERVICES

People have the right of equal access to quality public services, which states have the responsibility to provide and which we pay for through our taxes.

It is wrong to make access to public services such as water, waste collection, health or education dependent on ability to pay or other factors, as so often happens when these services are privatised.

We must not allow the commercial interests of a few set to profit from privatisation of these services to subordinate the meeting of social need in the public interest.

EU restrictions on state formation of or investment in companies has created an environment where right-wing governments can push for privatisation of public services by pointing to the "failure" of public sector companies - whose development has in fact been hampered by EU regulations.

The alleged commitment to a “European Social Model” has failed to prevent a deepening divide between public and private services and this has directly contributed to growing levels of poverty and inequality in Ireland and the EU.

Sinn Féin is committed to maintaining and improving public services. We have repeatedly opposed attempts by various governments to privatise state companies and services. Problems with public services in Ireland are the legacy of decades of under-funding. Spending on health and public transport is still far less than the EU average.

In successive EU Treaty debates Sinn Féin has continually expressed our concern about the threat to public services in the privatisation agenda at the heart of the EU integration process. This privatisation agenda has accelerated under the EU economic policy known as the Lisbon Agenda.

We do not accept that the EU has any right to impose a privatisation agenda on Ireland or on any member state.

Nor do we accept that the EU should have the right to impose methods of raising revenue on sovereign governments. We are opposed to the substitution of regressive “double taxes” in the form of service charges, levies or poll taxes. Progressive taxation is the proper means by which all people contribute to public services proportionately based on their ability to pay.

Sinn Féin MEPs will fight for:

- recognition that equal access to public services is a socio-economic right deserving of protection by the EU
- removal of privatisation imperatives from the Lisbon Agenda at its mid-term review in 2005
- easing of EU restrictions on state involvement in the provision of public services
- transparency and accountability to national parliaments of the Article 133 Committee, which advises and makes proposals to the EU Commission on the negotiation of international trade agreements: member states’ proposals and voting records must be made public
- retention of unanimity in EU decision-making on trade policy in education, health and cultural and audio-visual services (libraries, museums, broadcasting etc.), which the Draft EU Constitution proposes to lift

THE RIGHT TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Sinn Féin believes that a clean environment is not only a public good but a fundamental social right in need of protection.

Environmental threats transcend borders. Therefore international cooperation is essential in addressing issues of environmental protection.

The European Union has played an important role to date in the promotion of environmental protection objectives. The EU must now show international leadership on climate change prevention, waste management based on a zero waste policy, and development of energy alternatives from non-nuclear renewable sources.

Investment in pollution prevention, environmental health measures and sustainability are essential for the people of Europe today as well as for future generations. Complementary commitments to sustainable development in the EU economic policy known as the Lisbon Agenda have been lost in the stampede to increase competitiveness at all costs. The environmental aspect of the Lisbon Agenda deserves a renewed emphasis.

INVESTMENT IN SUSTAINABILITY

The right to a clean environment can never be protected without EU and national investment in sustainable development.

Sinn Féin MEPs will press for:

- prioritisation of sustainability in EU economic policy
- mainstreaming of sustainable development across all areas of EU law and policy
- full implementation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy
- increased EU investment in sustainable development, particularly public transport

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROTECTION

Access to clean air and water are essential for human health. We need concerted action to combat the increasing rate of respiratory illness due to air pollution, and the contamination of our public water supplies and group water schemes which if left unchecked could lead to a public health disaster as seen in other industrial countries in recent times.

Clean air and water supply is a right. Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- timely implementation of all outstanding EU Environmental Directives
- the continual reduction of airborne pollutants and waterborne contaminants including any necessary further EU regulations
- ratification of ILO Convention 174 Concerning the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents by all the Member States
- pre-eminence for environmental health concerns in the new EU Chemicals Policy (REACH)
- a ban on fluoridation in piped water supplies on the island of Ireland as is best practice in a number of EU states including Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden

FULFILLING OUR KYOTO OBLIGATIONS

Though it was expected that the European Union would show strong leadership in the battle to stop climate change there is growing concern at the lack of progress by member states in the submission of their national emissions targets as required under the EU Emissions Trading Directive. At the time of writing only 5 of 25 states have submitted their plans.

Sinn Féin will continue working for:

- full member state cooperation to establish meaningful emissions targets for industry so that the EU can meet its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol
- revision of the Irish targets already submitted to strengthen the economic incentives for industry innovation
- no change in the agreed EU time-frame for Kyoto implementation
- increased EU support for technological innovation to improve energy efficiency, with an emphasis on non-nuclear alternatives - Sinn Féin does not accept the EU Commission position that Kyoto implementation dictates increased reliance on carbon-free nuclear energy
- the EU-wide introduction of carbon taxes on industrial energy users to generate behavioural change in favour of lower emitting fuels

TOWARDS A ZERO WASTE STRATEGY

Waste management on this island has been characterised by both inadequacy and environmentally incompatible solutions - bigger landfill sites and more highly dangerous and

unpopular incinerators.

This lack of leadership has resulted in an accelerating waste crisis on both sides of the border. Landfill sites are now overflowing. Illegal dumping has become widespread.

Sinn Féin is campaigning for an all-Ireland waste management strategy based on waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- a Zero Waste Strategy for Ireland and the EU that prioritises the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste
- the setting of targets and timetables for implementing the EU Waste Prevention and Recycling Strategy and EU Sustainable Use of Natural Resources Strategy
- a plan for a progressive phasing-out of landfill sites
- a ban on the use of incinerators at European and national levels
- a review of implementation of the Polluter Pays Principle to refocus more correctly on penalties for industrial and agricultural producers of waste, as opposed to the currently incorrect interpretation which treats the consumer as the primary polluter

TOWARDS A NUCLEAR-FREE EU

Sinn Féin is working towards a nuclear-free Ireland in a nuclear-free EU.

We believe the European Union must lead the move away from nuclear energy and towards the generation of electricity from renewable sources.

We are deeply concerned that after enlargement 13 of 25 member states will have nuclear reactors, but there will be no common set of rules regulating nuclear safety in the EU. This is not acceptable.

Sinn Féin in the European Parliament will campaign for:

- the closure of Sellafield
- an end to the reprocessing of nuclear fuel within the EU
- an end to the promotion of nuclear energy by the EU
- the declaration of Ireland and the EU as Nuclear-Free Zones

- in the interim, an enhanced role for the EU in supporting, supervising and enforcing an EU-wide standard on nuclear safety
- the scrapping of the EURATOM Treaty of 1957 and its replacement with a new agreement on the progressive realisation of a nuclear-free Europe
- no inclusion of EURATOM as a protocol to the new EU Constitutional Treaty
- in the interim, all EURATOM loan applications and decisions to be made public, and subject to a public consultation process
- nuclear disarmament by EU states

CHAMPIONING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Despite gains made for workers over the lifetime of the EEC/EU, the objective of full employment has not been achieved. Over 50 million people are unemployed in the EU. There are also more than 10 million working poor. This situation must change.

In the rush to increase competitiveness under the EU economic policy, EU workers' rights are once again under threat. Sinn Féin believes that the European Union must play a greater role in the enhancement of workers' rights and trade union rights.

We are also deeply concerned about the working conditions of many migrant workers in EU member states including Ireland. The EU must ensure non-discriminatory work practices and respect for these workers' human rights.

FULL EMPLOYMENT AND BETTER JOBS

We welcome the EU's commitment to "more and better jobs" and full employment in a knowledge-based economy. However, we share the concerns of the trade union movement that these objectives have been made subservient to corporate sector demands for labour market "flexibility".

EU employment policy must address the needs of the working poor to make sure more, better quality, better paid jobs are available to enable all workers to earn a living wage.

Sinn Féin supports an employment policy which can bring about an improvement in the living and working conditions of workers in Ireland and across the EU based on key values such as respect for the dignity of individuals, respect for equality, workplace safety and access to life long learning.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- full employment based on high quality and stable jobs
- a living wage for workers across Ireland and Europe
- the raising of working and living conditions to the highest equal standard across the EU
- the introduction of minimum standards to increase both quality of work and the protection of workers
- positive incentives including training, support and career guidance, rather than forcing people to accept poor quality low paid employment

ENABLING ALL WORKERS TO TAKE UP EMPLOYMENT

People living in poverty as a result of unemployment want to work. However, many of them cannot as a result of poor education, carer responsibilities for children or elderly family members, barriers to access for elderly workers, people with disabilities and asylum seekers, or long-term and generational unemployment.

Enabling all workers to take up employment is the central goal of Sinn Féin employment policy.

In keeping with this, Sinn Féin MEPs will work for EU-wide standards on:

- ensuring workers' access to life-long learning and re-training
- equal access for all to good quality childcare for all
- adaptation of social protection systems to the needs of part-time workers and other atypical workers, including single parents and others caring for dependents, and guaranteed social security rights for atypical workers
- a specific strategy to tackle disproportionately high rates of unemployment among disabled workers, including effective supports for the public and private sector to recruit people with disabilities, effective enforcement mechanisms and remedies regarding the employment quota for the recruitment of people with disabilities in the public sector, and comprehensive needs assessments for people with disabilities to direct them to the appropriate service around their education, training and employment needs
- the right of asylum seekers to work (and pay taxes) while their applications are in process

ENHANCED RIGHTS PROTECTIONS FOR ALL WORKERS

Enhancing workers rights and entitlements will ensure a better quality of life for workers and their families.

Achieving such improvements requires universal recognition of trade unions as the workers' representatives, and their coordination on an EU-wide level.

While the Taoiseach in a reply to Sinn Féin stated that trade union recognition is "not a major item" on the EU agenda, Sinn Féin will not sit back and accept this. Sinn Féin MEPs will fight for:

- mandatory trade union recognition
- upward equalisation of statutory redundancy entitlements across the EU
- increased protection of workers from instability in their jobs as a result of sub-contracting or privatisation
- improved working conditions and health and safety at the workplace including the full implementation of the Community Strategy on Health and Safety 2002-2006
- revision of the EU Working Time Directive to remove the individual opt-out which has had detrimental effects on the health and safety of millions of workers, as well as on their right to a work-life balance
- new working time reduction measures including a 35-hour work week and increased flexibility in working hours
- increased parental protections including the right to paid parental leave and the maintenance of pensions and social security rights during career breaks
- ending gender discrimination and the gender pay gap
- full compliance with the EU Employment Equality Directive to ensure an end to age discrimination in the workplace
- protection for the rights of migrant workers through the adoption of the UN and ILO Conventions on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families by the European Union and member states
- equal access to social protections for all EU and legal non-EU migrant workers across the EU
- equal rights for temporary workers including passage of the EU Directive on Temporary Agency Workers which would regulate and guarantee equal treatment in employment conditions (this measure is presently being blocked by the Irish and British Governments)

CAMPAIGNING FOR FULL EQUALITY

The European Union is still a very unequal place, where women are grossly underrepresented in decision-making, where people with disabilities are regularly denied full access to education, services and jobs, and where some member state governments still believe it is acceptable to discriminate against people based on their national origin, religion, sexual orientation, family status or age.

Sinn Féin believes that the achievement of full equality of all people within the EU regardless of gender, ethnic origin (including nomadic status), national origin, sexual orientation, disability, religious or political belief, family status, socio-economic status or age, must become a higher priority objective of EU policy. The EU must lead by example on protection from discrimination and the promotion of equality.

Sinn Féin MEPs will make campaigning for equality a priority here at home and in Strasbourg and Brussels. We will work for:

- the introduction of a mechanism for equality-proofing all EU law and policy
- the levelling-up of equality rights protections throughout the EU
- full transposition of the three existing EU Equality Directives into domestic law (the Employment Equality Directive, the Gender Equal Treatment Directive and the Racial Equality Directive), including their application to non-nationals
- the introduction of more comprehensive EU anti-discrimination legislation with similar scope to the Racial Equality Directive, including:
 - a new comprehensive Gender Equality Directive
 - a new comprehensive Disability Directive
 - a new Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgendered Equality Directive
- redress of the persistent democratic deficit caused by the underrepresentation of women on EU decision-making bodies through:
 - the introduction of binding gender parity measures in the next EU Treaty
 - the appointment of at least 40% women to the next EU Commission
 - the appointment of a qualified woman as President of the Commission
 - the adoption of similar equal representation measures by the new European Parliament

- implementation of all the demands raised in Sinn Féin’s Women’s Manifesto Women in an Ireland of Equals/Cearta na mBan
- the extension of existing EU legislation to include a specific prohibition on discrimination on the basis of gender identity (transgender), in-line with the ruling of the European Court of Justice
- full recognition in EU law of same-sex partnerships and a revision of the EU Directive on the Free Movement of Citizens and their Families to reflect this recognition
- a revision of the Television Without Frontiers Directive to include provision for people with sensory disabilities to guarantee their equal access via provisions such as subtitling, signing, and audiodescription, including an action plan with targets

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

The European Union must lead by example on the protection and promotion of human, civil and political rights. However the present reality is that 13 of the 15 established member states tolerate domestic human rights violations according to Amnesty International - particularly impunity for excessive force by police, and allowing degrading conditions of detention. Sinn Féin believes that the elimination of human rights abuses within the EU must become a higher priority objective of EU policy.

Present EU policy is fixated on security to the detriment of freedom, justice and rights. This fixation is embodied by the set of draconian measures that make up the so-called EU Anti-Terrorism Roadmap (including the common definition of terrorist offences, the EU Arrest Warrant, and the establishment of Joint Investigation Teams).

Sinn Féin opposes present attempts to create an EU security and surveillance state in the name of the so-called “War on Terrorism” because we do not believe that this approach which involves draconian measures will make people or communities in Ireland or the EU any safer.

We believe that security and rights are indivisible and we will challenge the EU securocrat agenda. We will actively oppose the evolving EU surveillance state including such measures as universal mandatory data retention and the introduction of biometric identifiers on passports, visas, and residency permits.

We reject the federalist trend towards incremental integration and centralisation of policing and judicial powers ending in the eventual establishment of EU police, an EU prosecutor, and an EU border guard. We believe that these are matters for sovereign states.

We also reject the accelerating impetus to harmonise criminal law between EU member states, not only on the basis of safeguarding a cornerstone of nation-state sovereignty, but because it is being done without first ensuring the harmonisation of rights protections - which currently vary widely from state to state. Sinn Féin cannot support criminal law harmonisation measures in the absence of equivalent protections.

In addition, the present EU Justice decision-making mechanisms lack democratic accountability.

For these reasons, it continues to be Sinn Féin’s position that EU competence in (jurisdiction over) Justice and Home Affairs should be limited and the unanimity requirement should remain for decision-making in this area.

Sinn Féin would however welcome measures that harmonise human rights protections and safeguards between EU member states - just as we support the harmonising upwards between jurisdictions on this island and at a global level. For example, we would favourably consider a Common Migration and Asylum Policy that is fully human rights-compliant, consistent with international law, and based on best practice. Nothing less is acceptable. We oppose any attempts to use this policy to create a “race to the bottom” with regard to migration and asylum law and policy.

In view of our national experience of the positive capacity and potential of immigrants for a society, we oppose the evolution of Fortress Europe-style Common Migration and Asylum Policies for adoption under the Tampere Agenda. Sinn Féin has campaigned against the creation of a Fortress Europe, and will continue to do so.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work for:

- the introduction of human rights-proofing of all EU law and policy
- the establishment of an EU Human Rights Agency
- incorporation of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights into the next EU Treaty, including full enforceability

- domestic amending legislation to allow for proper full incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law in the 26 Counties
- an end to the blockage at Council of the proposed Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia
- Common Migration and Asylum Policies that are fully compliant with human rights instruments, that bring rights protections up to the highest standard, and that make the EU more open, inclusive and anti-racist
- Scrapping of the so-called EU Anti-Terrorism Roadmap and related measures and their replacement with a human rights-compliant strategy based on a “human security” approach - that is, one that seeks to prevent and resolve conflict by recognising and resolving the root causes of conflict
- development of an EU framework on corporate accountability with a strong human rights dimension

Sinn Féin MEPs will also keep a close “subsidiarity watch” on all measures proposing EU criminal law, policing, border control or judicial harmonisation.

PROMOTING IRISH LANGUAGE RIGHTS

Sinn Féin will ensure that all Irish speaking people can use the language in their dealings with domestic and European institutions as of right.

Domestically, Sinn Féin recognises the importance of the Official Languages Act, 2003 and the appointment of the first Languages Commissioner. For too long Irish speaking citizens denied public services through Irish had no alternative to expensive and time-consuming litigation in the High Court. The Official Languages Act now provides a much-needed mechanism for Irish speakers in the 26 Counties to ensure their rights are respected by the state.

Irish speakers in the Six Counties are in need of equal legal protection. We have therefore called on the British Government to enact an Irish Language Act along the lines of the Welsh Language Act, 1993 and the Official Languages Act, 2003 as a matter of urgency.

We are also committed to the achievement of official working status for the Irish language in the European Union. We have long recognised that the State made

a fundamental error when joining the EEC in 1973 by not accepting official status for the language which was offered to the Irish Government at that time.

The Irish Government’s attitude contrasts with the national confidence of the new member states, who insisted on immediate recognition of Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovene and Maltese as official EU working languages when they joined on 01 May 2004.

Malta is a bilingual nation like Ireland. EU laws and official documents will now be translated into Maltese but not into Irish - despite the fact that EU law has been directly enforceable in Ireland since 1973. While knowledge of Maltese will now allow EU job applicants to meet the bilingualism requirement, knowledge of Irish will not.

Sinn Féin congratulates the STÁDAS Campaign for raising this issue across the 32 Counties during the Irish Presidency of the EU.

In keeping with the demands for equal status for the Irish language in the EU Sinn Féin MEPs will:

- continue to work with the STÁDAS Campaign and others for the recognition of Irish as an official working language of the EU
- address the European Parliament in Irish on a regular basis
- make it clear that we are strong supporters of the EU principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism



Féin

FOR AN INDEPENDENT IRELAND IN A GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE EU

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FOR AN INDEPENDENT IRELAND IN A GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE EU

INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY AND GLOBAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

Sinn Féin believes that EU member states should work cooperatively through the EU to exercise global responsibility in economic relations. As the biggest aid donor and trade partner of developing nations, the EU has the potential to play a very significant role in advancing human security (freedom from poverty, disease, and human rights violations) and global social justice through the way in which it conducts its aid and trade relationships.

However, Sinn Féin does not accept that there is any need for a EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) nor do we accept the legitimacy of establishing an EU Common Defence. We do not accept EU exclusive competence in this area as it undermines a cornerstone of state sovereignty. We believe that international relations - and international justice and peace in particular - are best served by the efforts of sovereign states acting in concert through the only fully inclusive multilateral forum, the United Nations.

We also oppose the present federalist drive to fully integrate foreign and defence policy among EU member states because it threatens to create a new military alliance that enjoys a special relationship with the military alliance representing the most powerful states on the planet: NATO.

Sinn Féin will continue to campaign for the restoration of an independent Irish foreign policy. In the interim we will adamantly oppose any erosion of the unanimity requirement in Council decision-making on CFSP.

We will also continue to campaign for the EU to adopt a Global Social Justice Agenda as an equivalent priority to the Lisbon Agenda, with an emphasis on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, Trade Justice, and UN reform.

ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals on global poverty reduction by 2015 must become the single overriding objective for EU external relations

policy, as this is the most effective way of ensuring human and global security. At minimum, the EU partners must meet the modest Barcelona Commitments on implementation of the Goals.

Sinn Féin MEPs will work towards:

- bringing the EU partners on board to match the Irish Government's commitment to Developing Country Debt Cancellation - with an urgent priority on debt cancellation for countries with a high HIV/AIDS prevalence
- establishment of permanent EU monitoring group to review members' implementation of the Monterey and Barcelona Commitments on aid increases, aid harmonisation, the untying of aid, and an increased proportion of EU aid to poor countries
- a reversal of the present imbalance in EU military v. development aid spending, and a redirection of a significant portion of the €160 billion presently spent annually by EU states on defence towards the estimated €100 billion cost of cutting global poverty in half by 2015
- the 26 Counties to return to multi-annual Official Development Aid (ODA) budgeting, and publish a plan for incremental growth in ODA between 2004-2007 as recommended by Development Cooperation Ireland and Dóchas
- reform of the International Financial System to strengthen representation of developing countries in international economic decision making
- the establishment of Ireland and the EU as Currency Speculation (Tobin) Tax Zones

TRADE JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

It is not acceptable for the EU to act as an economic superpower, imposing a free trade agenda that hurts the developing world. Instead it must use its considerable economic power responsibly by pursuing policies that eradicate the exploitative trade relationships that prevent the developing world from establishing independent sustainable economies.

The EU must also ensure that it does not contribute directly or indirectly to human rights violations in other parts of the world and indeed, to use its economic leverage to ensure human rights compliance.

Sinn Féin MEPs will campaign for:

- human rights-proofing of all EU aid and trade policies
- the adoption of a Trade Justice approach at EU level, to allow fair trade to prevail over completely unrestricted free trade
- coherence between Ireland's and the EU's aid and trade policies
- the resumption of the Doha Development Round at the WTO, and the speedy resolution of the outstanding development-related issues before the introduction of any other issues
- the activation of Articles 2 and 79 of the EU Association Agreement with Israel allowing for the suspension of preferential trade on the basis of human rights violations, until such time as Israel ceases assassinations of Palestinian leaders, collective punishments, and construction of the illegal Apartheid Wall, and returns to the table for peace negotiations without preconditions
- a more effective EU Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers and the adoption of an international Arms Trade Treaty to prevent EU export of arms where they contribute to violations of human rights
- adoption of the proposed EU Regulation on Trade in Torture Equipment
- the development of a European Framework on Corporate Social Responsibility

PROMOTING IRISH NEUTRALITY, EU DEMILITARISATION, AND UN REFORM

Successive EU treaties since the Single European Act in 1987 have corroded independent foreign policy to the point where Irish military neutrality is virtually all we have left.

But Irish neutrality is now under pressure from the accelerating militarisation of the EU, underway in earnest since the first reference to EU military cooperation and Common Defence appeared in the Maastricht Treaty. Subsequent treaties have built incrementally on this. The Amsterdam Treaty established the European Security and Defence Policy and the Rapid Reaction Force. The Nice Treaty created command and control structures in which Ireland participates, including an EU Military Command. Now we are confronted with the EU federalist drive to use the next Treaty to reconstruct the EU as a military and economic superpower.

Despite all the denials, an EU Army is evolving, and the Constitutional Treaty under negotiation will bring us measurably closer to this.

The draft Article 40 enabling provisions direct that:

- the EU shall frame a Common Defence Policy leading to a Common Defence
- Common Defence can be the subject of "enhanced cooperation", or the subcontracting of defence to a smaller group of states
- members shall contribute forces and improve military capabilities, and that the EU shall establish an EU Armaments Agency (the basis for an EU military industrial complex)
- members shall be required to defend other members in case of attack and to cooperate with NATO in this

Many of these next generation developments are already underway, Treaty or no Treaty, as they are being pursued by agreement in the EU Council. For example, while we don't yet have a new Treaty, we do have:

- an EU military harmonisation deadline of 2010 and an agreement to establish the EU Armaments Agency
- an agreed EU Security Doctrine that includes imperatives to increase military spending and an extension of the EU Rapid Reaction Force's Petersburg Tasks well beyond humanitarian and peacekeeping tasks to include military intervention to assist other states both within and outside the EU in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations
- an EU-approved enhanced cooperation agreement on defence between the biggest, most powerful states France, Germany, and Britain

The need for intervention to halt the momentum of EU militarisation has never been more urgent. Yet the Irish Government on behalf of a supposedly neutral state has done nothing to oppose these developments, and has done even less to improve its negotiating position for the future in an EU that continues to be even more heavily dominated by NATO states after enlargement in May 2004.

Worse, the Irish Government has continued to violate its own stated policy of neutrality by allowing Shannon airport to be used as a refuelling base by thousands of US troops on their way to the illegal occupation of Iraq.

Sinn Féin proposes an independent and progressive Irish international relations policy that opposes military alliances and works for international cooperation and conflict negotiation leading to democratic social change and respect for human rights, universal demilitarisation and nuclear disarmament.

Sinn Féin MEPs will strongly promote our policy of “Positive Neutrality in Action”, which requires:

- neutrality to be enshrined in the Irish Constitution and codified in legislation
- withdrawal from the EU Rapid Reaction Force and NATO's Partnership for Peace
- Irish troops to train and serve abroad only under the auspices and leadership of the United Nations, and only with prior Dáil approval
- no use of Irish airports, airspace, seaports, or territorial waters for preparation for war or other armed conflict by foreign powers
- an end to Irish involvement in the arms trade and profit from war
- clear recognition and legal protection through a binding Protocol on Irish neutrality in any new EU Treaty, and explicit parity of esteem for the EU neutral states
- active promotion of demilitarisation of the EU, including nuclear disarmament
- formation of alliances with other progressive, neutral states to promote a Human Security approach to international relations
- active promotion of UN primacy, as well as badly needed UN reform and capacity-building to create a revitalised UN which is capable of fulfilling the promise of the Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of upholding international law

A vote for Sinn Féin is a vote to endorse this approach to international relations and a vote in favour of the demilitarisation of the EU.

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