



Teachers' Union of Ireland

Submission Regarding Budget 2024

The Teachers' Union of Ireland respectfully submits the following observations and recommendations in relation to the preparation by Government of a Budget for 2024.

General

Social Contract.

The Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) believes that the social contract is and must remain the underpinning construct for a compassionate, inclusive society. By extension, public policy, as expressed in budgetary policy, must uphold the key principles of the social contract, central to which is the equitable provision of high-quality health, education, housing and other social services and protections. As we start to recover from the extraordinary impact a global pandemic, these principles have never been more important. In April 2023, DFHERIS described Ireland as a small advanced economy (SAE) and noted that SAEs are “characterised by heavy investment in R&D and human capital”.

As a society, we must ensure that all can live in safety and with dignity; that all are enabled meaningfully to participate in and contribute to Irish society, according to their respective talents. In this context, it is a cause of grave concern that the imbalances and inequalities that became very pronounced under the regime of austerity have not been addressed and continue to threaten social cohesion. Indeed, some of these inequalities have undoubtedly been exacerbated in recent years. The ongoing crisis in relation to housing remains the most obvious of these imbalances.

The TUI advocates that Budget 2024 should seek to restore appropriate balance and to foster social cohesion and solidarity. Therefore, there should be a clear commitment to targeted investment that repairs and improves social infrastructure and invests in public service such as the education system. An Irish Times/IPSOS poll reported in the Irish Times on June 16th, 2023, found that “there is little

enthusiasm for using projected budget surpluses for tax cuts, with a strong preference instead for spending on public services and investing in infrastructure”.

Investment in public services and infrastructure.

In this context, cutting taxes in the forthcoming budget would be entirely inappropriate. Ireland’s level of public expenditure and investment is poor when compared with other high-income European countries. Indeed, Government should instead focus on raising additional revenue with a view to addressing deficits in housing and education infrastructure.

Housing Crisis.

In previous submissions, the TUI, drawing on the experience of our members both as employees and as advocates for their students and communities, expressed grave concern about the oppressive effects of the combination of low pay and the rising costs of accommodation, especially rental costs. In a survey carried out among 1,209 TUI members in March 2022, 73% of those appointed after 2011 said they did not believe it would be possible for them to get mortgage approval for a property in or near the location of where they work based on their teaching salary. Once again, we must record our deep disappointment at the continuing failure of government meaningfully to address the housing crisis. The reliance on a self-interested private sector has manifestly failed. In this regard, we will reserve judgement on the recently announced ‘Housing for All’ plan until such time as we see its effects.

Tax and Other Measures.

Public funds for such investment must be sourced by way of increased receipts from taxation and social insurance. Serious consideration should be given to the imposition of a 1% levy on corporate profits in order to generate a dedicated fund for investment in higher education and further education. Such a levy would have yielded up to €1.8bn in 2022 based on estimates derived from general Corporation Tax receipts. It is important to note that this measure could readily be framed to provide necessary protections to small indigenous businesses/SMEs. Furthermore, the funds held in the National Training Levy should be released for the benefit of expanding apprenticeships.

Education Sector - Eliminating Casualisation.

As the TUI has previously observed, low pay is still evident in the education sector. This is the product

of a number of factors, including the prevalence of part-time work. Although progress has been made in ameliorating the problem of part-time work in the education sector, the problem in certain sectors is now increasing again where teachers in Post Primary schools get hours, not jobs. Budget 2024 needs to include measures that also encourage teachers to return from work in schools in the Middle East and Australia etc.

Education Sector: New Entrants – discriminatory pay rates.

Crucially, Budget 2024 also needs to provide funding to eliminate any remaining elements of pay inequality by ensuring that those who entered the public service on or after 1st January 2011, in particular in further education. Restoration would cost just over €9m in further education. Furthermore, posts should be restored in post primary. This would cost just over €8 million.

Investment in Education.

In terms of education, there is broad agreement about the need to restore and enhance service to students, particularly given the many additional new challenges foisted on the sector by the various effects of COVID-19. Yet the OECD's latest Education at a Glance indicators (September 2022) show that of the countries for which figures are provided, none spend a lower proportion of national wealth on education than Ireland's (2.9%). At second level, the situation is even worse again with Ireland's spend (1.0%) the lowest of the 36 countries for which figures are provided, trailing unacceptably far behind the OECD and European averages (both 1.9%). The data for tertiary education are lamentably poor also (0.8% in Ireland – the second lowest in the OECD).

There is no dispute that a significant increase in public investment, on a multi-annual basis, is required at third level. The capacity of higher education institutions - particularly for those seeking to move towards Technological University designation - to meet the rapidly evolving needs of students, broader society and the economy remains severely compromised by inadequate investment in staffing and infrastructure. The student experience has been sharply diminished by this chronic inadequacy. At post-primary level and in further and adult education, increased investment is also required. This investment must of course be targeted at the most vulnerable. The TUI welcomes the fact that real expenditure per student in primary rose 5% between 2008 and 2018 (CSO (2023), *Measuring Ireland's Progress 2021*, Cork: Central Statistics Office). However, it is deeply regrettable that the same report shows that in post-primary real expenditure per student fell 6% in

the same timeframe, and by a huge 35% in tertiary education.

The TUI welcomes Government's decision to provide sanctuary to those fleeing Ukraine as a result of the deplorable and illegal actions of Russia. Appropriate and timely resourcing, particularly in terms of language support, translation, psychological services etc., should be made available to facilitate the provision of the high-quality education service that these students deserve.

Specific observations and recommendations.

The TUI notes:

- the impairment of the public education service to diverse cohorts of learners caused by cuts and under-investment.

(Disadvantage and inequity).

- the significant and on-going increase in student numbers at both post-primary and **third level**.
- the depletion of student support systems at all levels of the education system.
- the exacerbation of disadvantage caused by the reduced capacity of schools/colleges/centres and institutes to provide the appropriate and necessary supports to marginalised students and communities.
- the continuing failure of government to restore the management structures (including middle management) that were caused to collapse by the moratorium on promotional posts.

(Unsustainable under-resourcing of the Institute of Technology/Technological University Sector).

- the steep cuts in the funding and staffing of the IoT/TU sector at a time when student numbers rose significantly (September 2022's OECD Education at A Glance shows that the ratio of students

to teaching staff is 22:1, which is vastly higher than the OECD average of 15:1 and European average of 14:1).

- difficulties with sustainability have been magnified in small institutes and smaller campuses of institutes.

(The crisis of casualisation in teaching and lecturing).

- the heavily casualised and precarious nature of employment for recent entrants to teaching and lecturing and the resulting crisis within the profession.
- the unacceptably high levels of part-time working and the resultant income poverty of many teachers and lecturers.
- the positive impact of implementation of the Ward Report and Cush Report recommendations and of DoE Circular Letters 59/2016 and 49/2017 in addressing aspects of the crisis.
- the ongoing discrimination against new entrants to teaching and lecturing who - in spite of measures secured by the TUI that reduce the extent of the disparity - are on lower rates of pay (than their peers who entered the profession in 2010).
- that this pay disparity diminishes the attraction of a career in education and is the main, if not the sole, cause of the recruitment and retention crisis.
- the increased actual and opportunity cost of pursuing a career in post-primary teaching because of the increase to two years (from one) in the duration of the required training-in-teaching programme leading to the Professional Master of Education (PME) qualification.

(Bureaucratised, inappropriate, and oppressive workload).

- The bureaucratisation of the public education system and the additional administrative burden imposed on teachers and lecturers – including those in promoted and leadership positions. (In a survey carried out among over 1,200 TUI members this year, 90% agree strongly (66%) or agree

slightly (24%) that bureaucratic duties/paperwork regularly deflect from their core role of teaching.) Workload is increased by trying to do more with less. This has an impact on both recruitment and retention. Schools and colleges feel as though they are still operating in an austerity environment.

- the considerable additional workload - at institutional and individual levels - arising from new legislative, accountability, compliance, procurement, system maintenance and quality assurance requirements.
- that these workload impositions have alienated lecturers and teachers and have diminished their capacity to respond effectively to the changing needs of students and of society.
- the introduction of extensive structural change in the further and adult education and training sector and in the Institute of Technology/Technological University sector and that concern around this matter is exacerbated by the government's deliberate espousal of a model of governance that diminishes trade union and staff representation (on relevant bodies such as SOLAS, IoT Governing Bodies, the National Apprenticeship Council) and weakens democratic governance.
- the erosion of collegiality and of opportunities for meaningful professional involvement in institutional decision-making

And noting also:

- the evidence of (despite the challenges of COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, and the war in Ukraine) relative health in the general economic situation and in government finances
- and the important role trade unions play in Irish society and economic life.

The Teachers' Union of Ireland recommends that Budget 2023 should respect and cater to the educational, social, and economic needs of all in our nation by:

- eliminating the remaining elements of pay inequality that has discriminated against those who entered service on or after 1st January 2011 as well as moving education staff to the pre-2004 pension scheme.
- significantly increasing investment in public education as a necessary condition for the development of a resilient knowledge economy and knowledge society. Those students who lost out the most because of COVID-19 must have whatever additional resources they require made available. 87% of 1,200 TUI members polled earlier this year said that they believe additional resources are required for those students who lost out the most as a result of the disruption to teaching and learning. Meanwhile, appropriate resourcing must be made available for those students who have been forced to flee war-zones so that they have access to the high-quality education surface that they deserve.
- fully reversing cuts that were introduced while the ECF/moratorium applied. The TUI welcomes the comments by Minister Harris at our 2023 Congress on this matter and looks forward to further developments in the area.
- explicitly recognising and commensurately investing in further and higher education as essential components of the public education system and the social contract.
- using a significant portion of the additional €307m earmarked by Government for third level to increase academic staffing levels in Institutes of Technology (and Technological Universities) in recognition of the urgent need to restore appropriate standards of provision to students, to arrest and reverse the casualisation, demoralisation and flight of academic staff and to enable the sector to meet the challenges presented by legislative and structural changes.
- providing for adequate, targeted additional investment in Institutes of Technology involved in consortia that are moving towards Technological University status and in newly Technological Universities following designation – given the clear risk that re-structuring will founder if attempted without the requisite level of funding. For example, according to the OECD Education at a Glance reports, class size in TUs and IoTs are one and a half times the international norm.

- progressively reducing the lecturing delivery hours of academic staff in Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities to bring them into alignment with the norm (domestically and internationally) at third level and re-calibrating workload to enable academic staff to enhance the quality of service provided by IoTs/TUs, and, in particular, to enable them to increase engagement in research
- significantly increasing student capitation grants while reducing registration fees for the third level sector
- reducing the student/teacher ratio at second level and in further education in a targeted manner, with an initial focus on tackling and overcoming the disabling effects of educational disadvantage. In this context the restoration of the previously available level of ex-quota guidance counselling allocation is needed. In this context also, programmes that focus on ameliorating inter-generational disadvantage, such as DEIS and School Completion Programmes must continue to have their level of funding gradually increased in line with rising student numbers, whilst DEIS should have significantly increased funding so that new schools can join the programme. Given the constraints on admission of schools to the DEIS programme, supplementary measures are also required to tackle educational disadvantage where it exists in non-DEIS schools. HSCLOs should, on a phased basis, be appointed to all schools and not just DEIS schools. Furthermore, the free school books scheme should be extended to post-primary schools.
- compelling strict adherence to the terms of DoE Circular Letters 59/16 and 49/17 in order to ensure reinstatement in the education sector of the previous, stabilising practice of making initial appointments on a permanent basis.
- recognising the utter inadequacy of school support systems since they were hollowed out by the moratorium on appointment to posts of responsibility. It is vital that middle management posts be restored to the percentages pertaining prior to the cuts of over a decade ago. If the original approximate proportion of one-third AP1 and two-third AP2 ratio were to be restored, then a significant increase in posts would be required. Given existing numbers of posts, and existing teacher numbers, there is an urgent requirement for 600 additional AP1 posts and 5,700 additional AP2 Posts.

- in one with the recommendation of a recent Joint Oireachtas Committee report on school bullying and mental health, fully restoring posts of responsibility to the pre- moratorium proportions of total teaching staff in order to build school capacity to meet student support, administrative, curricular and compliance needs.
- progressive increases in capitation per student for post-primary students until the rate returns to 2010 levels as adjusted for inflation up to 2023 (calculated by the SVP in 2023 as €422 compared to €316 currently and €345 in 2010).
- Capital investment in buildings in the Youthreach sector.
- Incentivising initial teacher education through payment for students in the final year of programmes.
- the application of a 1% levy on corporate profits to generate an additional dedicated fund for investment in higher education. In making this demand, the TUI notes that corporations – especially transnational corporations – are primary beneficiaries of publicly funded higher education and of the highly educated graduate workforce available in this country. The union notes that corporation tax is payable only in respect of profits made by companies and organisations and that, while the nominal rate of this tax is 12.5% - significantly below the international norm - the effective rate is considerably lower still. Considerations of corporate responsibility, social equity, the maintenance of public funding of higher education and the undesirability of further increasing the cost to students and their families of participation in higher education argue strongly for a tangible and substantial contribution by corporations. Such a levy would have generated up to €1.8 billion in 2022.
- effective regulation of the rented accommodation market and, specifically, the introduction of measures to stabilise rental costs over a period of years; recognising that sharp increases in the cost of rented accommodation wholly erode the value to employees of increases in nominal income and are a driver both of emigration by teachers and lecturers and of migration out of the larger urban areas where the costs of accommodation are exorbitant; recognising also the

significant probability that those living in rental accommodation when they retire will be forced into moving or into poverty or both.

- phased increases, over three years, of the percentage of GDP invested in education until it reaches the OECD average.
- a specific timescale and mechanism for the full restoration of pensions
- Clarity in the role of the 'FET college of the future' is required as is investment in same. SEN and AEN supports are required. Furthermore, it needs to be more than just a building. It must have the facilities to enable it to be a genuine education community.
- retention of the existing flat-rate allowances. Abolition of these allowances is regarded as an unwarranted attack on PAYE workers on modest incomes, as a pay cut

Summary

In summary, the TUI demands that progressive measures be taken in Budget 2024 to undo the corrosive and damaging effects of the cutbacks imposed during the years of austerity and to maintain public trust in public services and the political process. It must also address the current cost of living crisis.

The Union wants government to ensure access to a public education service of the highest quality for all, irrespective of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, or sexual identity. The education provisions of Budget 2024 must demonstrate a commitment to equity and fairness and must give expression in practical terms to the democratic, societal imperative to eliminate disadvantage.

Ends.

Liz Farrell, President, president@tui.ie

Michael Gillespie, General Secretary, mgillespie@tui.ie

David Duffy, Education/Research Officer, dduffy@tui.ie

Conor Griffin, Press and Information Officer, cgriffin@tui.ie