

## **Progress by Government - Changing the Way Politics and Government Works**

On taking office, the Government set out in the agreed Programme for Government a very ambitious programme of reform to change the way politics and Government works in this country. Much has been achieved in two and half years since then demonstrating the Government's firm commitment to delivering significant reforms during its lifetime. This has seen the introduction of a range of measures to overhaul the Dáil and Local Government, continued Constitutional reform and ongoing delivery of an extensive programme of public service reform to deliver improved services to the public with more transparency and greater efficiency.

### **Political Reform**

#### **Reducing the number of TDs**

Legislation has been enacted to reduce the number of TDs to 158 and the number of constituencies has been reduced to 40

#### **Reducing Ministers' salaries and pensions**

The Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Ministers took a pay cut immediately on entering office, with further a pay cut in 2013 arising from the Haddington Road Agreement which applies to TDs also

Pensions are no longer paid to newly elected members until 65 and Ministerial pensions are no longer paid to sitting TDs

#### **Limiting Corporate and Political Donations**

Legislation has been enacted providing for the establishment of a register of corporate donors, public disclosure of political donations and an obligation on political parties to publish accounts

#### **Regulating Lobbying**

An extensive public consultation process on proposals has been undertaken to provide for a public register of lobbying to bring greater transparency in this area and to provide restrictions and conditions on former officials taking up employment for a specified period where a possible conflict of interest arises. Relevant legislation will be published later this year.

### **Ethics Reform**

Arising from the recommendations of the Mahon tribunal an extensive overhaul of the legislative framework for ethics is underway to address the recommendations of the Mahon Report relating to conflicts of interests, as appropriate

### **Encourage greater number of female candidates**

Legislation is enacted to ensure that at least 30 per cent of any party's candidates are women or face a 50% reduction in public funding

### **New Spending Limits for elections**

The spending limit for Presidential elections was reduced from €1.3m to €750,000 in 2011 with similar changes to limits for all other elections provided for in new legislation being drafted

### **Reduce TDs expenses**

In Budget 2013, M/PER announced changes to the Oireachtas expenses system, which will reduce costs and enhance accountability including the abolition of severance payments to current and future officeholders

### **Reducing the cost of Ministerial Transport**

The provision of Garda transport and cars to Ministers has been restricted with most now supplying their own cars and hiring civilian drivers delivering savings of €4m per annum

### **Reduced use of the Government Jet**

More restricted use of the use of Ministerial Air Transport has led to a reduction in use of almost 50 per cent in 2011-2012, compared to 2009-2010

## **Oireachtas and Dáil Reform**

### **Increase in Dáil Sitting time**

Dáil holidays have been reduced and the number of sitting days substantially increased including Monday and Friday sittings

### **1st phase of Dáil Reform measures** introduced to provide for

- Enhanced role for Ceann Comhairle to improve the quality of answers provided to parliamentary questions raised by deputies
- Friday sittings for TDs to introduce their own Bills
- Topical Issues Debates has been introduced to facilitate greater debate about issues of current concern
- New Oireachtas Public Petitions system in operation to allow members of the public directly raise matters of public interest

### **Enhancing our parliamentary relationship with Europe**

- Briefing by the Taoiseach in the Oireachtas regarding EU Council meetings - time is now allocated for this before and after any Council Summit
- Ministers now appear before Committees prior to meetings of the Council as required
- New Committee system enables regular attendance by MEPs at relevant Dáil Committees and provides an enhanced role for the Oireachtas in EU scrutiny

### **Oireachtas Committee Reforms**

- Overhaul of the Committee system to prioritise resources towards those dealing with Government departments.
- A dedicated Committee on Jobs has been established.
- The introduction of a system by which Departments can involve Oireachtas Committees at an early stage in the development of legislation

### **Provision for Effective Oireachtas Inquiries**

Legislation recently enacted provides for the Oireachtas to undertake inquiries within the existing constitutional framework including inquiries into the work of Government and in relation to the conduct of Oireachtas members

### **Protecting Confidentiality of Information Provided to Public Representatives**

Legislation recently enacted also provides for the protection for confidential communication from members of the public who wish to draw wrongdoing to the attention of Oireachtas members without having their identities disclosed

## **Constitutional Reform**

### **Reducing Judges' pay**

The referendum in 2011 which was passed allowed the Houses of the Oireachtas to reduce judges pay in line with reductions across the public service

### **Referendum on Abbeylara Judgement**

The promise to hold a referendum to confer powers on the Houses of the Oireachtas to hold inquiries into matters of general public importance was delivered but the amendment was rejected by the people

### **A Referendum on Children's Rights**

The Thirty-First Amendment of the Constitution was approved to insert an explicit statement on children's rights into the Constitution for the first time. It addresses a number of areas of children's rights including intervention to protect their safety and welfare, adoption and giving children a say in court proceedings related to their custody or welfare

### **Constitutional Convention**

The Constitutional Convention has held five full sessions to discuss reform in a range of areas and has published reports making recommendations on

- Reducing the voting age to 16
- Amending the clause on the role of women in the home and encouraging greater participation of women in public life
- Amending the Constitution to provide for same-sex marriage
- Dáil Electoral System

## **Public Service Reform**

### **Reform Plan**

M/PER published the Public Service Reform Plan in Nov 2011 setting out the ambitious programme of change which has been vigorously implemented

- Public Service numbers already reduced to almost 291,000 by early 2013 from 320,000 in 2008 and on track to reach the 282,500 target set for 2014
- Rationalisation of 48 State bodies is on track
- Recruitment and appointment of key roles underlining the commitment to deliver in the areas of procurement, eGovernment and Shared Services :
  - Reform Programme Director
  - Chief Procurement Officer
  - Chief Information Officer
  - Specialists to lead on Shared Services and Outsourcing
- Radical reform of public procurement is underway, to create savings of over €250 million per year
- The new Civil Service HR Shared Service Centre – Peoplepoint – was opened in June 2013 and is expected to yield savings of €12.5m per year when fully operational
- In April, Government approved the establishment of a single Civil Service Payroll Shared Service Centre, to be located in 3 sites – Killarney, Galway and Tullamore which will achieve savings of up to €5.6 million per annum
- The new eGovernment strategy being implemented to transform the way citizens and businesses engage with the State
- Over 200,000 Public Services Card issued so far to facilitate easier access to Government services and reduce the capacity for fraud
- New initiatives are underway to release Gardaí to frontline policing duties – an extra 61,000 patrol hours are available in 2013

## **Local Government Reform Plan**

Sets out fundamental reform of local government system which will help transform the work of local government and deliver savings of €420m:

- radical reduction of local authority structures from 114 to 31
- nearly halving the number of elected representatives
- new enhanced role of local authorities in economic development and job creation
- more devolution of functions to local government
- replace the existing system of city managers with a Chief Executive Officer
- Local government will have a central role in the oversight and planning of local and community development programmes

## **Pay Related Savings**

- Total pay and non-pay savings of €1.8 billion achieved since 2010 under the Croke Park Agreement
- The Haddington Road Agreement will help deliver further necessary savings of €1bn by 2016 with some of the main benefits
  - Public Servants will work a total of 15 million additional hours annually
  - Overtime and premia payments costs are being reduced
  - Supervision and Substitution payments for teachers will be eliminated
  - A freeze on increments and pay cuts for higher earners
  - Measures to enhance re-deployment of staff across sectors
  - Proposals for grade rationalisation across each sector by 2014
  - Strengthening performance management systems

## **Greater Accountability and Transparency across Government**

### **Open Government**

The Government has agreed to participate in the Open Government Partnership and is developing a draft action plan. This initiative aims to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

### **Public Finances**

- A statutory Irish Fiscal Advisory Council was established to independently assess, and comment publicly on, whether the Government is meeting its own stated budgetary targets and objectives
- Requirement for all Government Departments to publish details of all Purchase orders over €20,000
- Launch of Ireland Stat website with detailed information on spending and use of Government resources
- Increased level of performance information in the published Estimates

### **Accountability**

- Legislation to protect Whistleblowers who speak out against wrongdoing or cover-ups, has been published and is proceeding through the Oireachtas.
- A new Freedom of Information Bill to remove the substantive restrictions introduced in 2003 has been published and is before the Oireachtas. The legislation will extend the remit of FOI to all public bodies including NTMA, NAMA, An Garda Síochána and the Central Bank of Ireland.
- 140 extra public bodies have been added to Ombudsman's remit

### **State Board Appointments**

- Greater transparency in relation to appointments to State boards and bodies with new arrangements involving advertisement of vacancies from suitably qualified candidates
- Chairpersons of State boards are required to make themselves available to the appropriate Oireachtas committee in advance of their appointment

## **Renewing the Civil Service**

Work is underway on a 'whole of Government' process to renew and refresh the vision and strategy for the Civil Service to ensure that it has the capacity, capability and commitment required to successfully meet current and future challenges

### **A Strategic Centre**

- The Department of the Taoiseach has undergone significant restructuring to refocus its work in line with the Programme for Government and enhance its capacity in policy making
- The Department of Finance has been restructured under new leadership and 44 newly recruited graduate-level staff and a new expanded Economics Division resourced by expert economists
- Overhaul of Top Level Appointments Commission - chairperson and a majority of members taken from the private sector is helping to deliver increased private sector appointments to the top jobs in the Public Service and greater mobility at senior level
- A dedicated Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service has been established to enhance economic and evaluation skills across Government Departments with the first phase of specialist recruits actively deployed across a number of Government Departments

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