

Higher Education must be centre stage in a new Programme for Government, says IFUT

Unanimous commitments across party manifestos must be delivered

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has called for higher education to be put centre stage in any new Programme for Government.

IFUT General Secretary, Joan Donegan, said that all political parties uniquely committed to address the funding crisis in the recent general election campaign.

“The level of acknowledgement that higher education is in deep crisis equalled that on other key issues in society and the economy, such as housing and healthcare.”

“The thousands of people employed in higher education and hundreds of thousands of young people in the sector require a ‘red alert’ response from any new government.”

Joan Donegan strongly welcomed proposals from across the political spectrum to address the higher education crisis in the recent election, as follows:

- Fianna Fáil: ‘Provide an additional €100m exchequer funding per year for Higher Education and establish a new Department of Higher Education and Research.’
- Fine Gael: ‘A long-term funding model for higher education ... we will make more Exchequer funds available.’
- Green Party: ‘Invest in third-level institutions.’
- Labour: ‘Develop an implementation strategy to increase university funding, for both teaching and research, building on the recommendations of the Cassells report.’
- People Before Profit: ‘Restore funding for third-level education ... third-level institutions are in crisis.’
- Sinn Féin: ‘Ensuring adequate funding is provided to higher education institutions to the benefit of students, staff and the wider economy alike.’
- Social Democrats: ‘Significant investment in higher education is required to address chronic underfunding.’

“State funding per student to third level institutions is now 40% less than it was a decade ago. This situation is simply unsustainable, is impacting on the ability of universities to maintain standards and the impact is showing in a decline in international rankings.”

“The consensus on this issue among political parties must be brought into the various discussions taking place on future policy priorities, with the aim of ensuring that immediate funding initiatives are introduced by whatever new government emerges,” Joan Donegan said.

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For further information on this media release please contact:

John Gallagher - John Gallagher Consulting. Tel. 087 9369888

Joan Donegan - General Secretary, IFUT. Tel. 087 1315960