



Questions on the Doorstep

A Voter's Guide to Creating a More Just Society



*Catholic Social Teaching provides a picture of a Just Society shaped by six principles: Human Dignity, the Common Good, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Participation, and Care for Creation. The **Local and European elections** take place on **Friday, 24th May**. This guide points to the most pressing matters of social and environmental justice. It provides questions to consider before voting, and to ask candidates on your doorstep.*

Poverty – Human Dignity and Solidarity

Poverty remains an entrenched problem: 1 in 5 children in Ireland are living in poverty and over 85 million people are living in poverty across Europe (Sources: *Social Justice Ireland* and *SVP Ireland*)

Key Question for Local and European Election Candidates:

1. What actions will you take to reduce poverty in Ireland and Europe?

Homelessness and Housing – Human Dignity and the Common Good

In March 2019, 10,305 adults and children were living in hotels, B&Bs, and family hubs across Ireland. (Sources: *RTE News* 30/04/19 and *Good Shepherd Cork*)

Key Questions for Local Election Candidates:

1. How will you manage the speedy exit of families from emergency accommodation?
2. How will you prevent more families from entering homeless services?
3. What will you do to reduce the impact of homelessness on families and especially on children?

Budgetary decisions by Local Authorities not only impact those without a home, but also the wider population who feel the impact on rent and supply. In the third quarter of 2018, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) – subsidizing private rent – accounted for an average of 67% of the total social housing output per Local Authority across Ireland. (Source: *Social Housing Output Overview by LA, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government*)

Key Questions for Local Election Candidates:

1. How sustainable is a subsidy to private landlords (HAP) for the stable provision of long-term homes?
2. What is your policy on the use of council-owned land to build more social and affordable housing?
3. What is your policy on cost-rental developments to increase affordable rental properties?

(Cost-rental is a policy of setting rent to cover the cost of the build instead of at the rental market rate. For info: www.socialjustice.ie)

Migrants Rights – Human Dignity, Solidarity and Participation

Pope Francis has called on us to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees, yet in Ireland we are failing. The Direct Provision system, which segregates and diminishes people, remains in place despite having been established as a temporary measure. Human trafficking is a widespread crime, and Ireland is a destination, source, and transit country for victims of trafficking. (Source: *Trafficking in Persons Report 2014*)

Key Questions for Local and European Election Candidates:

1. How will you promote welcoming communities, enable good relations and challenge racism?
2. How will you provide ways for migrants, especially those in Direct Provision, to participate and contribute to society?
3. What actions will you take to improve the lives of those seeking protection in the asylum process?

4. As an MEP, will you promote reception facilities for people seeking protection that respects their human dignity, and seek alternatives to detention of vulnerable people by EU Member States?
5. What steps will you take to ensure that human trafficking cannot happen in Ireland?

Fair Tax, Fair Trade and Fair Debt – Solidarity and the Common Good

In the midst of the housing crisis, the European Commission is proposing a 'Non Performing Loans' Directive which will further open markets to vulture funds. Meanwhile, even if it doesn't feel like it, Ireland is a low-tax environment, especially for corporations: our corporate tax rate is 12.5%, but can fall to as low as 0%. (Sources: *Financial Justice Ireland* and *Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice*)

Key Questions for European Election Candidates:

1. What will you do to oppose vulture funds and the 'Non-Performing Loans' Directive?
2. What actions will you take to lobby for a fair and sustainable taxation policy?

EU trade and investment policies have often led to exploitation and unjust trade and investor relations, especially but not only for developing countries. Mechanisms that exacerbate injustice include investor-state dispute settlement provisions which can be used to tie the hands of governments in order to protect investor profits.

Key Questions for European Election Candidates:

1. How will you promote the removal of investor-state dispute settlement provisions from existing trade and investment agreements, and oppose concluding such agreements in future?
2. Will you promote the implementation of *Human rights Impact Assessments* prior to concluding trade and investment agreements?

Climate Change and Our Environment – Care for Creation

Ireland is ranked last in the European Union and one of the worst in the world in the Climate Change Performance Index. While our climate is becoming ever more erratic, we are also seeing a collapse in our biosphere: a recent UN report warns that one million animal and plant species face extinction within decades. (Sources: Climate Change Performance Index, Ireland 2019 Results and *RTE News* 06/05/19)

Key Questions for Local and European Election Candidates:

1. How will you ensure the National Biodiversity and All Ireland Pollinator Plans are implemented locally?
2. What proposals do you have to improve more walking and cycling, use of bus, rail and car pooling?
3. What steps will you take to bring Ireland in line with our carbon reduction targets?
4. As an MEP, will you promote carbon reduction measures as part of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2020?

