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PRESS RELEASE from ASTI

Education partners: 'shock⁵ at savage cuts

The *Post-Primary Education Forum (PPEF)* is a forum involving the National Parents' Council, management associations and teacher unions in the post-primary education sector. Notwithstanding the current economic climate, the PPEF wishes to express its shock at the measures in Budget 2009 which will seriously undermine the effectiveness of the education system at second level.

- The increase in the pupil-teacher ratio will have the effect of increasing class size and of reducing subject choice in second-level schools in Ireland. In the recent OECD report *Education at a Glance 2008* Ireland's second-level pupil teacher ratio was only better than 7 countries out of 30 measured. To put us further down this particular league table is foolhardy and endangers our ability to produce rounded and well-educated young people.
- Several measures, far from protecting the disadvantaged, specifically target some of the most marginalised groups in Irish society for cutbacks. These include:
 - o The reduction by €2 million in the capitation fund for Traveller education.
 - o The reduction of 500 student places in the Back to Education initiative.
 - o The re-imposition on the ceiling on the number of language support teachers per school.
 - o The abolition of grants towards the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, LCVP and Transition Year programmes.
 - o The restriction of the aid for school books to scheme to DEIS schools. Disadvantage can and does occur in a dispersed manner and this measure is punishing those disadvantaged students in schools that are not within the current scheme for disadvantage (DEIS)
 - o The withdrawal of capitation top-ups and teachers from non-DEIS schools is another measure which will affect the most vulnerable students in our schools.
- The abolition of grants towards Choirs and Orchestras, Home Economics and Physics and Chemistry will further reduce the diversity of the Irish education system, a diversity which has contributed greatly to the creation of an adaptable workforce, which in turn is necessary for the renewal of economic prosperity.

- The changes to the supervision and substitution scheme are going to lead to chaos in many schools throughout the country.
- The abolition of the early retirement scheme for teachers is short-sighted. The scheme is of great benefit to schools and costs the exchequer very little. The importance of education to our past and our future economic well-being has been emphasised again and again;

not only by the partners in the education system but by economists, politicians and business leaders. OECD reports in recent years have emphasised the fact that "spending" on education is in fact "investment" in education and they have provided clear and compelling analysis of the public and private rates of return from education. They have also emphasised that the returns from education cannot only be measured in economic terms, pointing out that better educated citizens are not only wealthier but they are healthier, they spend more and they contribute more to society. It is very foolish of the government at this point, where education can be a major influence on the success and the rapidity of our economic recovery, to cut now and pay later.

Issued by the *Post-Primary Education Forum*

Main Estimate Features

Capital

- Capital allocation of €889m is an increase of €80m on the allocation for 2008. " This includes an allocation of €581 m for the schools capital programme compared to €586m in 2008.
 - This will allow the Department to complete 26 major projects and start construction on another 62 major projects. It will allow completion of 100 smaller projects on site and allow another 80 projects previously approved to progress to completion.
- " At third level, €265m, an increase of 44pc over the 2008 estimate, is being provided. This will allow for continuing investment in core undergraduate facilities, as well as expansion of research capacity and capabilities under the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation.
- Provision has also been made in the capital allocation for the continuation of the Department's public-private partnership programme.

Teachers salary and pension costs

- The net pay bill for teachers' salaries and pensions will increase by almost €300m as a result of a combination of pay increases and the full-year costs of the salaries of teachers appointed this September.
- The budget allocation takes account of increased enrolments in primary schools and the continued growth in provision for special needs in primary and post-primary schools.

- Overall, the number of primary and post-primary teachers in schools in September 2009 is projected to be about 200 fewer in each sector compared to September 2008. This is because of a number of measures that are being taken to meet the overall budgetary requirements:
 - o The mechanism used to allocate classroom teachers to primary schools is the staffing schedule and, with effect from September 2009, the enrolment bands will be based on an average of 28 pupils per class rather than the current 27 pupils per class.
 - o In the case of post-primary schools, the allocation basis will be altered by one point with effect from September 2009 from the current 18 to 1 basis to a revised basis of 19 to 1.
 - o In the case of fee-charging post-primary schools, there will be an additional one-point adjustment.
 - o The ceiling of two on the number of language support teachers per school is being re-imposed, with some alleviation for the position of those schools where there is a significant concentration of newcomer pupils as a proportion of the overall pupil enrolment.
 - o Arrangements will also be made for the withdrawal of teacher posts which have been historically provided under previous disadvantage schemes to non-DEIS schools.

Teacher substitution arrangements: substitution cover will be suspended from January 2009 for absences arising from uncertified sick leave in all schools, as well as for school business absences in post-primary schools.

- **Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers:** this pilot scheme is being suspended with immediate effect.

School funding

" Improvements are being made to the rates of capitation funding available to schools. The combined value is €20m.

In the case of **primary schools:**

- The increased financial provision will provide for an increase of €21.42 in the standard capitation, bringing the rate to €200 per pupil. This equates to an increase of almost 12pc on the existing €178.58 grant rate.
- The increase further builds on the progress made in recent years that has seen the primary school capitation grant increased from €81.26 per pupil in 2000 to this new rate of €200 per pupil. This will represent an increase of 146pc in the standard rate of capitation grant since 2000.
- The ancillary grant will be increased from €151.50 per pupil to €155 per pupil.

In the case of **post-primary schools:**

- An increase of €14 per pupil in the capitation grant is a 4.3pc increase on 2008.

- The capitation grant will now stand at €345 per pupil.
- There will be an increase of €8 per capita in the equalisation measure payable to voluntary secondary schools, giving a total increase, when capitation and school support services grants are combined, of €22 per pupil.

Abolition in 2009 of certain grants paid to schools

In the case of primary schools:

- The separate cookery grant, resource grant for language support teachers and equipment grant for resource teachers are being abolished. The total value of these grants was €2m.
- A further €4.3m is being saved by the reduction in capitation funding for Travellers and withdrawal of certain capitation funding from schools that are not in the DEIS programme but had continued to receive top-up funding originally provided under previous disadvantage initiatives.

In the case of post-primary schools:

- A number of separate grant payments to second-level schools are being abolished. These are grants for Choirs and Orchestras, Home Economics, Physics and Chemistry, Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, LCVP and Transition Year. The total saving will be €5.35m.
- A further €2m is being saved by a reduction in capitation funding for Travellers and withdrawal of certain capitation funding from schools that are not in the DEIS programme but had continued to receive top-up funding originally provided under previous disadvantage initiatives.

In the case of fee-charging second-level schools:

An anomalous situation has existed whereby fee-charging schools under Catholic patronage were not in receipt of certain grants, including the support services grant, that were paid to other fee-charging schools. This position is being regularised. All fee-charging schools will be treated on a similar basis resulting in a saving of €2.8m. The Protestant block grant remains in place.

Other funding reductions

- **Aid for school books:** A saving of €7.5m will result by restricting aid for school books to DEIS schools. A fund of €7m will be available for distribution to schools in the DEIS programme.
- **Library grants:** A saving of €2.19m will result from the cessation of funding that the Department made available to local authorities to support school library services.
- **Support for summer courses in Irish colleges:** The per capita subvention by the Department to summer courses conducted in Irish colleges (in Gaeltacht areas) is

being withdrawn. The saving will be €1 -25m. " **Centre for Talented Youth:** The Department has in the past provided an annual

grant of €97,000 to the Centre for Talented Youth. This is being withdrawn.

- **Grant for foreign qualified teachers attending Irish courses in the Gaeltacht:**

This grant is being withdrawn. The saving will be €200,000.

Special needs

- Resource teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) will continue to be deployed to meet the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN) at primary and post-primary levels. There are just over 19,000 staff working with special needs children.
- While in the light of the financial situation it is necessary to defer the implementation of the EPSEN Act, children with SEN will continue to have their SEN met on a non-statutory basis.
- Further, provision is being made to improve these services through the allocation of an additional €10m which will fund enhanced measures for children with SEN pending the full implementation of the EPSEN Act.
- **School psychologists:** Some of this €10 million will contribute to a 33% increase in expenditure on the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), resulting in all schools having a service by the end of 2009.
- **SNAs:** An increase of €40 million to cover the full-year costs of additional SNAs in the system this September, provision for additional posts next September, and full-year cost of pay increases awarded.

Higher education

- The current estimates provision for higher education is €1,844m, compared with a

2008 estimate of €1,887m. The estimate allows for an increase in the student registration charge from €900 to up to €1,500 in individual institutions for the academic year 2009/2010. Third-level students entitled to a student support grant will remain exempt from paying the student registration charge. " The estimates provision will require restrictions in the implementation of approved projects under the Strategic Innovation Fund and will involve the deferral of planned

2009 increases in medical education places. It will also involve restrictions in the volume of awards made by the two Research Councils (Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology and Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences).

- There is no provision for increases in student maintenance grants.

Adult and further education

The non-pay grant provision for adult and further education shows a reduction of €8.5m or just under 5pc on the 2008 estimate. This will require a reduction in the provision of 500 places on the Back to Education Initiative - reducing the total number of places to 9,000. The number of

places provided in Senior Traveller Training Centres will be reduced by approximately 100 - there are currently 1,084 places provided.

Allowances to participants in VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres will be increased in line with the appropriate social welfare rates or FAS trainee allowances.

Youth

Grants for youth services are being reduced by just over 8pc - from €52.6m to €48.2m.

Teacher education

The provision for teacher in-service education support is €28.8m, compared with a 2008 estimate of €33.8m. It is intended to reduce teacher secondments to in-service and, while it will be possible to continue to provide a wide range of services to teachers, the reduced allocation will mean that programmes that are not in an expansionary or prioritised phase will have to be curtailed to a degree.

School transport

- The provision for school transport is €196m, compared with a 2008 figure of €175m.
- The post-primary school transport charge is increasing from an annual fee of €168 for junior cycle children and €234 for senior cycle children (payable on a term-by-term basis) to a single annual fee of €300 for eligible post-primary children first payable in summer 2009.
- The maximum amount payable per single family, regardless of the number of children using the school transport system, will be €650 annually. Eligible children in families who hold a medical card or children with special needs are exempt from the charges.

Reduction in Department's regional office service

The 26pc reduction reflects the intention to rationalise and prioritise some services and to seek efficiencies in the operation of the Department's regional office network.

Other current

Fee increases will be required across the State Examinations Commission (SEC), Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). SEC will increase fees by 8pc.

Note: The Government decided in July 2008 that the payroll costs across Government organisations should be reduced by 3pc in 2009 and other restrictions should apply in order to effect cost savings in consultancy, advertising and other administrative areas. This is the background to some of the reductions applying in the Education Estimates for 2009. The estimates provisions under a range of headings will require careful management over the course of the year with expenditure control measures across all areas and possible further tightening measures may be necessary as the year progresses.

Rationalisation of bodies

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, HETAC and FETAC will be amalgamated. The new organisation will also take responsibility for the external quality assurance review of the universities - a function currently performed by the Irish Universities Quality Board and the Higher Education Authority. In seeking to ensure a coherent approach to qualifications and quality assurance, there will also be discussions with the National University of Ireland around the possibility of including some of the related functions of the NUI in the new organisation.

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education will be closed. The work of ensuring quality education provision within pre-school services will be led by the Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department within the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

ENDS

Education Cuts - What they mean

Pupil Teacher Ratio up from 18:1 to 19:1

This does NOT mean 19 pupils in a class instead of 18. *It means that schools will lose teachers*

School example 1 780 pupils - 18 = 43.3 teachers (i.e. 43 teachers)

780 pupils-19 = 41.05 teachers (i.e. 41 teachers)

School example 2 600 pupils - 18 = 33.3 teachers (i.e. 33 teachers) 600 pupils - 19 = 31.5 teachers (i.e. 31 teachers)

School example 3 400 pupils - 18 = 22.2 teachers (i.e. 22 teachers) 400 pupils - 19 = 21.05 teachers (i.e. 21 teachers)

No sub. cover for school business /uncertified sick leave - schools cannot

Example: A geography teacher takes Leaving Cert. students to the Burren for their field-study exam. question.

- 50 students go on the trip by hired coach from 5 a.m. - 9 E.J.H.)
- 2 teachers must accompany (safety)
- These teachers each leave behind 8 classes of up to 30 students (i.e. 60 at a time) 480 students with no adult during that day.
- In addition if one or two teachers are sick there could be.....

Schools cannot operate safely with these restrictions - sports etc. during school time will not be possible.

Other implications in the Budget re education:

- **Book Grant for needy students gone**

(This will now only apply to DEIS schools)

- **Grant for Traveller students gone**

(All requirements will have to be borne by the family)

- Transition Year grant gone

- Home Economics grant gone

“Physics and Chemistry grant gone

- Choir and instrumental Music grant gone

- School Transport fares increased for students

- An increase to the school of €14 euro per student

(will be offset by the loss of the above grants, + increases in ESB, Gas, water charges, etc.)