

First Programme for Economic Expansion

‘To what extent did the First Programme for Economic Expansion, 1958-1963, achieve its aims?’ (2019)

Many of the elements of economic success in the 1960s had already been gradually set in motion from the 1950s such as the Coras Trachtála and the Industrial Development Authority or IDA.

However the First Programme introduced a more planned approach to economic growth. Despite this however, there were a plethora of effects.

Firstly, the economic growth was huge. The annual growth of the economy was 4% rather than the expected 2% target. This was mainly due to industrial output which had grown by 50% since 1963.

Secondly, Unemployment fell by a third and emigration also fell. Thus the population rose after its 1950s decline, from 2.8 million in 1961 to almost 3 million in 1971. Apart from the fall in emigration this was also helped by the increase in marriage rates.

Agriculture did not improve as much as was planned. Bovine TB was reduced substantially but agricultural output only rose by 1% as farmers were too conservative and did not improve their farming methods. Food produces were also too reluctant to adopt modern marketing methods.

The First Programme prepared Ireland for an increase in free trade with the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement of 1965 which reduced tariffs on manufactured goods between Ireland and Britain. It also gave greater access to British market to Irish farming products.

There was also a growth in tourism as European and American tourists were visiting Ireland. As well as that, more Irish people were holidaying abroad as the economy and standards of living improved.

Finally, free secondary education was introduced by the government in 1967 to provide a more educated workforce to feed the economic growth. This led to a

large increase in student numbers in second-level schools of about 60% between 1967 and 1974. This opened up equality of opportunity for everyone, especially for women.