
In this issue

Working time
Civil Service gender balance
Climate challenge
EPSU Congress
Conference news & pics
Podium pride
The gig economy
Sligo branch podcast
Limerick Palestine exhibition
New Galway office opens
Pension auto-enrolment

Plus all the latest union news with
food, music, travel and competitions



FORSA





Start Saving.

Maximise your spending power with thousands of offers from top brands. Save with vouchers, cashback, e-codes & more in your favourite categories.

- Travel.**
- Food + Drink.**
- Insurance.**
- Fashion.**
- Entertainment.**
- Technology.**



Start saving today at:
forsa.group-login.com

President's foreword



Summer-Autumn 2019

Working together Taking care of business

Fórsa is produced by Fórsa trade union's communications unit and is edited by Niall Shanahan. Deputy editor Róisín McKane.

Front cover: Cathaoirleach Niall McGuirk speaks to Fórsa's Head of Civil Service Derek Mullen at the Civil Service Division Conference 2019 in Kilkenny. See more photos from the divisional conference season on pages 16-21. Dylan Vaughan, Dylan Vaughan Photography.

Contact Fórsa at:
Nerney's Court, Dublin 01 R2C5.
Phone: 01-817-1500.
www.forsa.ie

Designed by:
N. O'Brien Design & Print Management Ltd.
Phone: 01-864-1920
Email: nikiobrien@eircom.net

Printed by Boylan Print Group.

Advertising sales:
Niki O'Brien.
Phone: 01-864-1920.

Unless otherwise stated, the views contained in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the policy of Fórsa trade union.

This magazine is printed on environmentally friendly paper, certified by the European Eco Label. This magazine is 100% recyclable.



This publication supports the work of the Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman, and our staff operate within the Code of Practice. You can obtain a copy of the Code, or contact the Council, at www.presscouncil.ie, PH: (01) 6489130, Lo-call 1890 208 080 or email: info@presscouncil.ie



All suppliers to this magazine recognise ICTU-affiliated trade unions.

You can't beat quality

THIS UNION is blessed with quality activists. I meet them everywhere I've gone on union business this year. I had the pleasure of attending all six divisional conferences in April and May and thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many great activists and to witness such good debates.

Carrickmacross, Sligo and Kilkenny all provided a great welcome to delegates. Well done to the host branches for their brilliant preparations.

Elsewhere, the union's *More Power To You* and School Secretary campaigns saw lots of members out attending meetings and engaging with local representatives and their communities, inspiring stuff.

In June I was delighted to take part as a delegate as we welcomed the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) to Dublin for its 10th Congress. Our delegation, led by Senior General Secretary Kevin Callinan, really reflected the diverse membership of our union and well done to all the Fórsa team for their crucial role in making it all run very smoothly.

Elsewhere, we've had two meetings of the Women's Network and the first Disability Network meeting, since our April launch, took place in June. The Equality Network has been working hard and plans for an event for Travellers rights, race equality and an LGBT+ event are now in the pipeline.

I was delighted to see the Galway office officially opened in June, and we marked the event by holding our national executive meeting in the new premises. The new offices will be a fantastic resource for union members in the west, and it's great to see another big piece of Fórsa work completed.

Meanwhile, back on the east coast, I was writing this message as we began Fórsa's second branch campaigning summer school. After a busy conference and campaigning season, it was a wonderful opportunity to learn something new and to share ideas with the branch campaign officers.

As we reach the halfway point in the year, I like to reflect on all the hard work being done throughout the country by our member activists. I'm fortunate to get to see a lot of that work up close, and the quality of our activists is always a source of inspiration to me. Our union is in good hands.

Now that we've finally arrived into the summertime most of you will be taking time out to savour some downtime. Enjoy the well-deserved break!



Ann McGee, Fórsa President

June 2019

Going for gold



12

Climate challenge



14

New Galway office



18

Limerick exhibit



20

Sligo podcast



28

WORKING TOGETHER: Taking care of business

UNION NEWS.....4
Snapshots from the conference season news desk

HOURS AND HOURS10
BERNARD HARBOR reports on the push for reduced working time

PODIUM PRIDE.....12
Philippa Ryder on Sporting Pride and winning for Ireland

CLIMATE CHALLENGE.....14
Can we turn words into meaningful action? asks BERNARD HARBOR

IN PICTURES: UNDER WESTERN SKIES18
NIALL SHANAHAN reports on the opening of the new Galway office

BEARING WITNESS20
Hugh Malala's extraordinary Palestine photos are on display in Limerick

STIKING A BALANCE22
HAZEL GAVIGAN examines the gender divide in the Civil Service

WE OWN IT.....24
Cat Hobbs loves public services. So she mounted a campaign to save them

HIGH TECH SWEATSHOPS.....26
The gig economy could just be old fashioned exploitation in new garb

THE SLIGO NETWORK.....28
The Sligo branch continue innovating with branch communications

ART ON COMMON GROUND30
NIALL SHANAHAN meets the team bringing artists and communities together

PENSION AUTO-ENROLMENT34
Most workers don't have a pension. LAURA BAMBRICK explores a solution

JUST PAY ME ALREADY: THE UNTOLD STORY36
AINGEALA FLANNERY on why the media was slow to tackle precarious work

A PLACE AT THE TABLE.....38
DANIEL DEVERY on the joys of dinner table equality

MUSICAL GENIUS.....40
The thorny question of the real genius in your favourite band

PACK YOUR BAGS.....42
Ace travel tips with UNA-MINH KAVANAGH

WIN WIN WIN47
Crossword, competitions and prize survey



Niall Shanahan.

Pause: take on the future

WE MIGHT all be living in a noisy, fractious and hurried world, but it's always worth taking a moment to stop, breathe, look around and try to stay in the moment. In a way, we hope this publication gives Fórsa members the opportunity to do exactly that, even if only for a moment.

After a full and busy divisional conference season, Fórsa activists and staff got stuck in to the 10th EPSU Congress, which took place in Dublin's RDS in June. Our European guests seemed to have had a great time. I think the gauntlet thrown down by Michael D Higgins in his opening speech to conference definitely stirred their senses.

Aside from his well-publicised swipe at US President Donald Trump, Michael D

set out the challenges facing the trade union movement in the face of a rapidly developing climate crisis. Senior General Secretary Designate Kevin Callinan further emphasised that climate change is the biggest challenge facing Ireland's public services. Bernard Harbor digs deeper on what is probably humanity's greatest challenge in this edition.

Michael D was similarly up-front and honest about how much work remains to be done to achieve true workplace gender equality, a challenge he said won't be met until a balance is struck within the trade union movement itself. Hazel Gavigan takes a look at recently-revealed civil service figures that illustrate the scale of the challenge on that sector.

It was great fun to visit the Sligo branch recently and take part in their new podcast series, *Stronger Together*. Rodrigo and Irene have embraced the technology to find new ways to engage with members.

Technology, meanwhile, is being utilised to facilitate new forms of work and service delivery. But is this shiny new thing merely old fashioned exploitation in new clothes? Ashley Connolly had a stark warning at our Services and Enterprises conference in May, while Aingeala Flannery reveals the realities of the gig economy from within.

We hope that you find plenty to chew on in this edition, but we hope too that there's time for reflection as the summer passes, pleasant and slow ■



Pension top-up scheme details published

THE SCHEME is a career-average defined benefit pension scheme, meaning that each year you bank amounts towards your retirement lump sum and your retirement pension.

The scheme is a career-average defined benefit pension scheme, meaning that each year you bank amounts towards your retirement lump sum and your retirement pension.

A long-awaited circular on a facility for the purchase and transfer of retirement benefits for members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme has been released by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

The circular (15/2019) provides single scheme members with a facility to purchase additional amounts to top up their pensions, and transfer amounts from other Revenue-approved retirement schemes into the single scheme. The circular takes effect from 1st October 2019.

The facility is aimed at single service members whose career in the public service may be shortened due to joining mid-career, taking career breaks, other unpaid leave or who wish to transfer in pension benefits from outside employments.

The scheme is a career-average defined benefit pension scheme, meaning that each year you bank amounts towards



your retirement lump sum and your retirement pension. Anyone who joined the public service on or after 1st January 2013 are members of the single scheme.

Supporting documentation relevant to the purchase and transfer scheme will be made available on the single scheme website closer to the scheme/circular's date of effect.

A copy of the *Purchase and transfer of retirement benefits* circular is available at forsa.ie.

Public service deal "should cover voluntary sector"

FÓRSA HAS said the next round of public service pay talks should include talks on establishing "a structured, fair and sustainable funding model" for 'section 39' agencies, which provide housing, disability and other services on behalf of the State.

Speaking at the union's recent health conference in Sligo, Fórsa official Ian McDonnell said it was time to address "fundamental flaws" in the funding model for 'section 39' agencies, which are independent of the State but rely heavily or entirely on public funds to provide services and pay their staff.

Pay in most community and voluntary sector bodies was cut during the crisis, but it has not been restored in the same way as in the mainstream public service. Ian said Fórsa had fought for a "long-overdue start to a pay restoration process" and that money was due to change hands shortly in many of the 50 organisations where the HSE is the primary funder. Talks are due to begin on rolling this process out to a further 254 bodies.

Read the full story at forsa.ie.

Higgins: Decent work our defining issue



President Higgins and Sabina Higgins with volunteers at the EPSU conference in Dublin.

THE BATTLE for decent work "is a defining battle of our times," according to Michael D Higgins. Speaking at the five-yearly congress of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), which took place in Dublin in June, the Irish President applauded the role of trade unions in upholding the "hard-won rights of workers across Europe as we continue to face the challenges and obstacles to a fairer society."

Delegates from unions representing eight million public servants across the continent were wowed by a wide-ranging speech that covered gender equality, workers' rights, climate change and the civilising role of public services.

President Higgins said the abuse of digitalisation was helping to undermine hard-won workers' rights as staff were required to register as self-employed, which he likened to nineteenth century working practices.

"Online workers often are not covered by employment law or collective agreements and seldom have access to

social security, paid leave or paid training. The co-ordination and direction of employees by an algorithm owned by a company should never be allowed to divest the employer of their responsibility any less than a bogus self-employment does," he said.

President Higgins criticised the displacement of secure jobs with precarious work in large parts of the European economy. "Workers are too often expected to demonstrate what is called flexibility, by which is meant a willingness and ability to readily respond to changing circumstances and expectations without adequate information or recompense.

"This flexibility is often not matched, however, with any security of tenure or appropriate income by employers, with the vista of zero-hour contracts now appearing ever-more prevalent," he said.

He outlined a vision of Europe with excellent public services at its core. "Good jobs in the public sector mean quality services for citizens. Your members appreciate only too well that

the services they deliver are not a cost to society, but an investment in our communities. This message must be taken to the heart of Europe," he said.

The President lauded the trade union movement for its "powerful, proud tradition" on which the civil rights, anti-apartheid and equal rights movements could look to for support.

Fórsa demands mental health investment

FÓRSA HAS called on the Government to invest seriously in State supports for those with mental illnesses, and says it wants health sector employers to "create an environment of meaningful support" for workers who suffer from mental health problems. The union says it will seek discussions with health service management with a view to developing policies to remove stigma from workers who experience them.

Fórsa published the results of a survey that found almost half of Ireland's health workers have experienced mental health difficulties. Over 60% of the 1,600-plus health workers who responded to the survey said they would be uncomfortable discussing a mental health issue with their line manager, while over 80% said their employer was doing too little to promote mental health awareness.

Read the full story at forsa.ie.

Fórsa criticises lack of Brexit plans



Eugene Gargan.

FÓRSA TRADE union's Services and Enterprises division has called for a "comprehensive dialogue" with Irish government departments in order to ensure a seamless continuity of services in the aftermath of Brexit.

The union said talks are essential to secure the jobs and livelihoods for Irish workers likely to be most affected by the UK's departure from the EU.

A motion to the union's divisional conference in Sligo in May said dialogue with various government departments was also necessary to ensure that all appropriate supports are made available in the event of the UK's departure from the EU.

Proposing the motion Eugene Gargan (pictured) described the Government's development of a Brexit response plan as "poor."

"While some contingency plans drawn up, they've been developed under the pretence of 'nothing to worry about, it'll all be ok'. That's not good enough. If there's no engagement with stakeholders, there's a risk that any plan will be unworkable. Any plans need to be published, tested and refined to make sure they stand every chance of success," he said. Read the full story at forsa.ie.

Dementia: Understand Together

THIS HSE-led campaign, in partnership with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Genio, is supported by more than 40 national partners. Organisations from various sectors shared their experiences of taking action to change the culture around dementia. It's estimated that 11 people develop dementia every day in Ireland with over half a million families affected by the condition. For information on how individuals, businesses and organisations can help create communities that are supportive and inclusive of people with dementia and their families, visit www.understandtogether.ie/get-involved.



Paul Slowey, Iarnród Éireann, Kathy Ryan, Irish Dementia Working Group, Audrey Podd, Dublin Airport Authority, Maureen Cournane, National Transport Authority, Jean Pigott, Dublin Airport Authority, and Fiona Foley, *Dementia: Understand Together* campaign, pictured at the campaign's National Partner Forum 2019, which recently took place in Dublin.

BENEFITS OF JOINING DUBCO CREDIT UNION

Proud to be the Credit Union for staff of Fórsa Trade Union, Fórsa members who are Special Needs Assistants and Local Authority staff in Louth, Clare, Dublin & Kildare



- Membership is open to the **whole extended family**
- Competitive interest rates** on all loans (<7% in 2018)
- Borrowing is based on a member's **ability to repay**, not how much they have saved
- No wait period** before a new member can borrow
- Membership is **open to all Local Authorities** who do not have access to an Industrial Credit Union
- No hidden charges or fees** on any accounts
- Death Benefit Insurance scheme** available
- Help members **manage their bills** with our **Budget Account**
- Free Savings/Loan protection insurance**
- Online banking facilities**, means **24/7 online access** to your account
- Give away €34,000 in cash prizes** every month for €1.00 per week
- Out of hours phone service**
Mon - Fri: 8am - 8pm
Sat: 9am - 5pm

Dubco Credit Union Limited
Main Office: Little Green Street, Dublin 7
Sub Office: Malahide Road, Coolock, Dublin 5
(for Mondelez employees only)

Tel: 01 887 0400 Fax: 01 887 0499
Email: info@dubco.ie Website: www.dubco.ie

[f DubcoCreditUnion](#) [t DubcoCU](#) [in Dubco Credit Union](#) [@ dubco.cu](#)

Fórsa news



Up and running in the West: Fórsa's National Executive Committee held its monthly meeting in June at the newly opened Fórsa offices in Galway City. For a full report on the new building's official opening see page 18.

Photo credit: Gerry Stronge

forsa.ie news shorts

IALPA warns on bogus self-employment

THE IRISH Airline Pilots Association (IALPA), a branch of Fórsa trade union, has told an Oireachtas committee that the Irish Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection need to approach their investigations into the status of Irish airlines' contractor pilots "with the same focus and intensity as the authorities in Germany and the UK."

The president of IALPA, Captain Evan Cullen (pictured), was addressing the joint Oireachtas Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection in a June hearing about bogus self-employment.

He said Ireland's rate of 'contractor' pilots is far higher than the European average. Across Europe, 18% of pilots have non-permanent indirect employment status. Read the full story at forsa.ie.

Unions welcome councillors' 'Dublin Agreement'

FÓRSA, SIPTU and Connect trade unions have welcomed the launch of the 2019 'Dublin Agreement' by elected representatives on Dublin City Council.

The agreement was launched as a joint initiative by Dublin City councillors from Fianna Fáil, Labour, the Green Party and Social Democrats at the first meeting of the newly elected council in June.

The agreement includes a range of commitments to implement the demands of the unions' More Power To You campaign, which was launched in March this year.

The campaign sought substantially increased revenue and funding powers for local authorities, as well as greater autonomy for local government. Read the full story at forsa.ie.

4,000+ child protection cases await social worker

THERE ARE 4,282 child protection cases awaiting allocation of a social worker, including over 650 that have been judged as 'high priority,' according to Fórsa. In evidence to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs in May, the union said a minimum of 285 additional social workers were needed to bridge the gap, and that 8% of existing social work posts were currently vacant.

Speaking to the Committee, Fórsa official Éamonn Donnelly outlined a range of recruitment and retention difficulties regarding social workers in the child protection area. They include the complexity and challenging nature of the work, the ready availability of posts in the UK, a cumbersome recruitment process that favours the use of relatively expensive agency staff, and a rising "blame culture" that discourages young social workers from going into the child protection field. Read the full story at forsa.ie.

Interview with Paul Ryan, new CEO of Public Service Credit Union (PSCU)

Ursula Nolan, founder Director and long standing CEO of Public Service Credit Union, retired recently and has been succeeded as CEO by Paul Ryan. A native of Dublin and a graduate of UCC, Paul has worked in credit unions for the past twenty years, first as CEO of Portlaoise Credit Union and subsequently as CEO of An Post Employees' Credit Union. We caught up with Paul recently.



Q: Paul, congrats on the new appointment. How are you settling in?

A: Many thanks. I'm settling in well. PSCU is one of the strongest credit unions in the country with a very committed membership and an excellent staff and is involved in some very interesting projects, so it's a great time to be joining. Ursula has left a wonderful legacy and it's an honour to be taking on the baton.

Q: You mention some interesting projects. Anything you can share?

A: Very much so. PSCU hopes to go live over the next few months with a members' current account service. This will feature a debit card, overdraft facilities, direct debits and all the functionality you would associate with a current account. Fees will be very competitive. PSCU is also introducing full online lending from early July.

Q: Any truth in the rumour about a possible link up with Citybus Employees Credit Union?

A: You are well informed! PSCU are hoping to accept a transfer from

Citybus Credit Union over the months ahead. Citybus has over 2,800 members, all employed at Dublin Bus, and the fit with PSCU looks good. As you know, there have been previous transfers in the past and the former members of Agri, Fás and Forfás credit unions are very much part of the credit union and its DNA.

Q: Is PSCU a bit Dublin based?

A: Well, the office is based in Earlsfort Terrace in Dublin but there are members throughout the country. While members are welcome to call to the office, most interact with the credit union online or by the traditional routes of post and phone. There are payroll deduction arrangements in all government departments and state bodies and this makes membership very straight forward. PSCU has a Development

Officer, Noel Cocoman, who loves to call to the various departments and bodies – he is always happy to talk with groups of employees or to set up a stand in the canteen.

Q: Finally, Paul, what is the future for Irish credit unions?

A: The future appears to be very bright. We have come through a challenging period in relation to new regulations and a reasonably large number of local credit unions have transferred to their stronger neighbours. Irish people love their credit unions because of the member control, friendly service and ethical foundations. And with the world needing to pivot to more sustainable and local arrangements for all goods and services, the credit union movement catches that mood ■



SEAMUS P. McEOIN THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION BURSARY AWARD

FREE FOR ALL MEMBERS

6 CHANCES TO WIN €6,000

OPEN TO FAMILY MEMBERS ENTERING 1ST YEAR AT COLLEGE

SEE **www.pscu.ie** FOR DETAILS AND ENTRY FORM
CLOSING DATE: FRIDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2019

EDUCATION LOANS AVAILABLE AT **www.pscu.ie**

St. Stephen's Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 PH42 Tel: 01 6622 177 Fax: 01 6622 861 Email: info@pscui.ie Web: www.pscui.ie
Public Service Credit Union Ltd is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Reg No. 455CU.



Bernard Harbor.

Fórsa's recent divisional conferences heard the so-called 'Haddington Road hours' placed in the context of a trade union demand for fewer working hours for all. BERNARD HARBOR reports.

Fórsa puts extra hours back in play

THE GOVERNMENT responded quickly when Fórsa's incoming Senior General Secretary, Kevin Callinan, told delegates to the union's recent divisional conferences that he wanted the restoration of pre-crisis public service working hours back on the negotiating table.

Official spokespeople told journalists that the return of additional hours introduced as a crisis measure under the Haddington Road agreement would cost the Exchequer over €600 million a year. But Kevin questioned their maths, saying that figure was at least 50% higher than Government estimates when the additional time was introduced in 2013.

The Government was responding to his blog on the union's website. *In Search of Lost Time*, published ahead of the Fórsa conference season, concluded that the issue should be revisited as part of a review of the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA), which governs pay and working conditions for most civil and public servants.

"Advances in new technologies and work organisation could defray any costs associated with reduced working time in the public service and elsewhere."

Placing the issue in a wider international trade union debate about how much time we spend at work, Kevin later told conference delegates that – in any case



Kevin Callinan.

– advances in new technologies and work organisation could defray any costs associated with reduced working time in the public service and elsewhere.

The issue featured at nearly all the union's conferences, where branch representatives questioned why changes to working time had been set in stone when other crisis measures – particularly pay and pension contributions – had been fully or partially restored after the economic crash.

The 'Haddington Road hours' – additional time added to the working week of civil and public servants –

clearly still rankle six years after they were introduced.

Two-tier problem

Kevin identified the issue as a "two-tier problem" because the temporary pay cuts experienced at the same time by higher grades – whose working time did not increase – have been restored, while additional working time for lower and middle earners has not.

"A few years ago, when we were in the eye of the economic storm, I opposed conference motions calling for an end to the Haddington Road hours. But I'd struggle to construct a convincing



Photo: dreamstime.com

argument against them now, in light of our current economic performance and rapidly-developing technological possibilities," he said.

Under the Haddington Road agreement, higher earners – those on €65,000 a year or more – suffered a third, but temporary pay cut. By January 2018 this had been fully restored, as envisaged in the deal.

Crisis

Those who earned less accepted increased working hours to avoid a third pay cut. But, unlike their higher-paid colleagues, these workers have so far seen no restoration to pre-crisis working time levels.

Kevin said: "These were torrid times for Ireland and, when the Government sought savings to fill an extra and unexpected €1 billion hole in the public finances, we agreed to talk and workers reluctantly voted to accept a third hit.

"By doing so we produced the savings that enabled the country to meet the harsh Troika bailout terms, and we avoided the imposition of another public service-wide pay cut under the hated FEMPI emergency legislation.

"It was the right thing to do at the time. But six years later we're left with yet another two-tier public service problem, which leaves those on low and middle incomes – mainly women – losing out.

"In fairness, most of the measures imposed on, or accepted by, public servants during the crisis fell harder on

the higher paid. But this anomaly continues to disadvantage lower paid workers long after better-paid staff have experienced restoration. That's not fair."

Last November, Fórsa became the first Irish organisation to add its voice to international trade union calls for a reduction in working time across the economy – often expressed as a four-day working week with no loss of earnings – as part of a response to productivity improvements arising from new technologies and improved work organisation.

"If we raise our productivity, isn't it worth asking whether we could be working four days rather than five while producing the same amount?"

This debate about working time in all sectors has softened the response of many commentators to the idea of restored working time in the public service. And Fórsa is not alone in connecting the issue to climate change action, as fewer working days would likely translate into fewer carbon-boosting commuter journeys.

But it's not just unions that are talking about working fewer hours. The idea is gaining traction, here and abroad, among employers as working time

becomes a central theme in international debates about the future of work.

One standard-bearer has been New Zealand finance company Perpetual Guardian, which switched to a four-day week in 2018. Nearer to home, the Galway-based recruitment and HR firm ICE recently announced that its 50 staff would soon be moving to a four-day week with no loss of pay.

Luxurious weekends?

Speaking at a Fórsa event on working time last November, Kate Bell of the UK Trades Union Congress (TUC) said the British government had estimated that robots and autonomous technology could boost GDP by around £200 billion a year.

"If we raise our productivity, isn't it worth asking whether we could be working four days rather than five while producing the same amount? That's how workers have historically benefited from improvements in technology," she said.

Kate said average weekly working hours in Britain had halved from over 60 in the 1860s to just over 30 today. "The weekend, which was seen as an unaffordable luxury until around the middle of the twentieth century, is another example. Several generations on, we have the chance to fight for a fairer share for everyone, including through a four-day week," she said.

Bernard Harbor is Fórsa's head of communications ■



Niall Shanahan.

Last year, at the tender age of 57, Philippa Ryder represented Ireland, as a time trial and road racing cyclist, ascending the winner's podium in Paris no less than three times at the 10th Gay Games. This year Philippa will compete in the LGBTI European Multisport Championship in Rome, which take place in mid-July. NIALL SHANAHAN met her to discuss the long and winding road to medal success.

Proud to compete

PHILIPPA IS a transgender woman, a long standing member of Fórsa (previously IMPACT and, before that, UPTCS) and works for the Property Registration Office. She's also a former director of TENI Transgender Equality Network Ireland and a member of the committee of Sporting Pride, an organisation committed to making sport a more inclusive and diverse environment for members of the LGBT community, promoting the positive benefits of fitness and exercise.

Philippa regularly gives talks about her work within the LGBT+ community and about her transition, encouraging and supporting those who may be facing similar experiences.

"The training and diet schedule was demanding, with a mixture of high intensity interval training as well as regular visits to the gym."

The Gay 'Olympics' as they were originally called, were set up in 1982 to give Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) athletes a safe and accepting space to compete and have been held pretty much every four years since then.

Starting with around 1,500 competitors in the first games, the 2018 games saw over 13,000 participants, including Philippa, compete in the French capital.

Impetus

"I've been cycling pretty much all my life, but I really started taking it seriously around 2007/2008, when I joined Orwell Wheelers. Part of it was knowing I had to get into good shape as I was preparing for gender reassignment



Philippa with her three medals at the 2018 Paris Games.

surgery at the time, and I wanted to be able to recover from that as quickly as possible.

"That provided the impetus to take the training more seriously, and I found a great group there in Orwell Wheelers," Philippa explains.

During our conversation we realised we had cycled together in an Orwell Wheelers event back in 2009 (I recall cycling sportives largely for the quality of their catering, and Orwell's was outstanding). "I regularly did sportives, the Great Dublin Bike Ride, the Wicklow 100 and 200, Orwell and other club events, as well as getting out pretty much every weekend," she says.

Philippa took things to a whole other level for the 2018 Gay Games in Paris, taking on a professional trainer, Matteo Sigala (of cigalacycling.com), to set performance targets ahead of the games. "By the beginning of August I

was setting personal bests every time I went out on the bike, felt much fitter and stronger than I had in a long time and I was ready for Paris."

The training and diet schedule was demanding, with a mixture of high intensity interval training as well as regular visits to the gym. "It was pretty serious stuff," says Philippa.

Her main event was time trialling, where the individual cyclist competes against the clock. Finding a stretch of open road where you can ride uninterrupted by traffic is a challenge. One of her main training locations was Corkagh Park, at Ireland's only purpose built cycle track, which is near Newland's Cross in West Dublin, and run by South Dublin County Council.

"Over time I recorded serious improvements and toward the end of my training I was recording a lot of personal bests," explains Philippa.

"With confidence and fitness levels at an all-time high, Philippa went to Paris and claimed bronze in the individual time-trial, silver in the team time-trial event, and silver again in the road race event."

Aside from a cadence and heart monitor to capture training data, Philippa also uses the very popular Strava app, where cyclists can record their times at thousands of different locations, and compare their performance against other cyclists who train on the same routes. The KOM/QOM (King/Queen of the Mountain) is hotly contested on just about every ascending road in the country.



Team Ireland with Philippa (pictured center) in her Orwell Wheelers jersey.

"Just before I left for Paris I timed myself ascending Dublin's Knocklyon Road, and I managed to win the QOM, the fastest time recorded by a woman on that stretch of road. I was thrilled because you're up against much younger cyclists on very expensive bikes, and here I was at 57, claiming a Strava win at Knocklyon Road," she explains.

With confidence and fitness levels at an all-time high, Philippa went to Paris and claimed bronze in a personal best performance (12k in 22 minutes) in the individual time-trial, silver in the team time-trial event, and silver again in the road race event.

In the end Team Ireland claimed 42 medals, 12 of them gold.

Sporting Pride

The work didn't end there. Philippa says a key objective of Team Ireland is to promote the importance of sport and fitness to members of the LGBT+ community, which has a much lower participation rate in sport than the general public.

Sporting Pride continues to forge links with sporting bodies all over the world, and had a presence at Union Cup Dublin 2019, Europe's biggest LGBT+ inclusive rugby tournament.

The two-day tournament was hosted in early June at the DCU campus, with 1,300 players and 45 teams from 15 countries. The event also hosted a dedicated women's tournament for the



Team Ireland meeting President Michael D. Higgins on return from the 2018 Paris Games. Philippa pictured to the left of President Higgins.

first time. Philippa says the success of the Union Cup has helped pave the way for a Sporting Pride multi-sport LGBTQ+ event in Dublin in the future ("Watch this space" says Philippa).

"The planning for Team Ireland's next big outing - the 2022 Gay Games in Hong Kong - has already started, and we've put the call out for participants. Ireland will field 60 athletes in the European games in Rome, including men's and women's football, badminton, swimming, cycling and running.

"We're using it as a way to highlight the importance of physical activity to your

mental and physical health. We're trying to get people involved so that they can say they represented Ireland at an international competition.

"For me, standing on the podium last year with a medal around my neck, draped in the Irish flag, it was just an incredible feeling. I want lots more people to be able to experience that," says Philippa.

All the focus now is on Hong Kong in 2022. "I'm saving already," says Philippa, with a focus and determination that suggests another trip to the winner's podium is imminent ■



Bernard Harbor.

BERNARD HARBOR says the recent surge of environmental concern is sustainable if unions take the lead.

Has everything gone green?

SINCE YOU read the last issue of the Fórsa magazine President Michael D Higgins has faced off with Donald Trump on climate change, and former President Mary Robinson (who now heads her own foundation for climate justice) majored on the issue at ICTU's biennial conference.

Also, the Green Party shone in local and European elections here and in many other EU countries, while Friends of the Earth declared the Government's new Climate Action Plan "the biggest innovation in Irish climate policy in 20 years."

Meanwhile, I nearly choked on my veggie wrap when I heard that even McDonalds is to jettison much of its plastic wrapping and replace its stores' plastic straws with the paper variety.

Then, closer to home, Fórsa's incoming Senior General Secretary Kevin Callinan identified climate change as the biggest challenge facing Ireland's public services. And most unions rowed in to support the 'School Strike for Climate' demonstrations staged by young people in Irish cities and across Europe in May.

Phew! In just a couple of short months, the issue of climate change seems finally to have elbowed its way to the top of the political, social and trade union agenda. In the words of New Order, everything's gone green. Or has it?

Sustainable?

That depends how sustainable the urge for sustainability really is. Particularly when we start to get to grips with the radical changes experts say are



Photo: @nicolishan (via Twitter)

"Only the public sector has the resources, the scale of organisation, the infrastructure and the legislative and regulatory heft to meet this challenge head on in the fast declining time available" - Senior General Secretary Designate Kevin Callinan addressing the EPSU Congress in Dublin in May.

required - now and over this decade - to divert the planet from environmental disaster.

The strong performance of green parties in a lot of countries in the European elections suggests a significant appetite for change, particularly among young people, though the sceptics in my house (okay, Labour-supporting me) did find space to grumble about a generation that learned how to vote green before mastering the trick of turning off an electronic devise.

But there's a serious point here. Climate action will demand more than general support for the environment. It requires radical changes to the way we live, and it's also likely to have a profound impact on the public finances, employment,

taxation, transport, housing and a wide range of public policy debates and decisions in the coming years.

For instance, I'm writing this amid frenzied speculation about the effect of Brexit on the Budget 2020, on the day finance minister Paschal Donohoe publishes his Summer Economic Statement. But the impact of Britain's EU exit - hard, soft or in-between - will be paltry compared to the cost of measures to minimise climate change and mitigate its impacts.

Alternatives

Michael D's hard-hitting speech to the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), which took place in Dublin in June, coincided with Trump's trip to Britain and Ireland. This set the scene for flamboyant front-page coverage of his criticism of the US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement.

But will the press be as playful when necessary climate action is influencing the scope for public spending or tax cuts?

Trade unions will have to up their game too. The issue of climate change featured strongly at the EPSU Congress, and on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' (ICTU) July conference agenda.

But the union 'just transition' emphasis has mainly focussed on the necessary - but frankly inadequate - task of creating alternative employment for workers most affected by a move towards a low-carbon economy.



Photo: Joe O'Connor

Fórsa activists joined the second climate action protest in Dublin on 24th May as thousands of young Irish students called on the Government to back its demands on address the climate crisis.

Highlighting the recent announcement of job losses at Bord Na Móna, ICTU general secretary Patricia King recently called for a 'Just Transition Forum' to help develop alternative forms of employment and ensure that supports and resources are put in place to assist workers and their wider communities.

And she added that ICTU was working "to identify the opportunities that exist for new forms of energy generation and employment creation across the sector."

More tangible work is needed in this and similar areas to demonstrate a sustained trade union commitment to tackling climate change. This would lend weight to our insistence that everyone should benefit from the job-producing and revenue-reaping new technologies and products that will facilitate the transition to a carbon-free future.

This theme was taken up by Fórsa's incoming Senior General Secretary when he welcomed EPSU delegates to Ireland. And he placed it in the context of the challenge of making unions attractive to young workers.

Vulnerable

Warning that we would quickly lose any relevance for young people if we fail to lead the fight for climate justice, he urged unions to build on the foundations of the 'just transition' approach.

"Of course, we must insist on a just transition that protects and invests in the sectors, regions, and communities most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the many measures necessary to combat it. These include

sectors like food and energy, which are also among those most exposed by Brexit.



Higgins attacks Trump on climate change denial

The President's hard-hitting speech at the EPSU Congress coincided with Trump's brief visit to Ireland, setting the scene for flamboyant front-page coverage of his criticism of the US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement.

But unions must go beyond the protection of the people we directly represent, to embrace and lead the imaginative policies and difficult actions needed to confront the single most catastrophic threat facing humanity," he said.

And he placed public services at the centre of the necessary national and international response to climate change.

"Of course there is an important role for private enterprise and innovation. And, as communities and individuals, we must adapt the way we eat, the way we shop, the ways we travel, how we use energy and water, the homes we live in, and the way we throw away our rubbish.

"But only the public sector has the resources, the scale of organisation, the infrastructure and the legislative and regulatory heft to meet this challenge head on, in the fast-declining time available," he said.

Action

He added that there was an opportunity to put collective action at the centre of society through climate action.

"We have had a planet-wide lesson in effective, organised collective action in the form of the Global Climate Strikes, led and run by school children and college students. These same inspirational young people are experiencing - or facing into - low-paid, casual and insecure employment, which is incapable of meeting the rising costs of coming of age.

"They live and work under the shadow of automation, with its capacity to make their precarious position even less certain.

We need to adapt our organisations, and our priorities, in ways that convince them that our movement - also rooted in organised, participative, collective democracy and action - is available and open to them in a changing world of work," he said.

Bernard Harbor is Fórsa's head of communications ■

2019 divisional conferences



Hazel Gavigan. Diarmaid Mac A Bhaird.

April and May was a busy time for Fórsa member activists as the union hosted a series of divisional conferences in Monaghan, Kilkenny and Sligo. HAZEL GAVIGAN and DIARMAID MAC A BHAIRD have compiled this photo report. For more about the conferences visit forsa.ie

The Education conference took place in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan in April. The focus was on equality and respect for non-teaching staff, including SNAs, school secretaries and caretakers.

The Civil Service and Local Government and Local Services divisional conferences took place simultaneously in Kilkenny from the 8th-10th of May. Both conferences looked at reduced working time, while the Civil Service

conference was told that automation must not threaten public service jobs or reduce the quality of services.

Meanwhile, Fórsa's 'More Power to You' campaign, which is seeking to restore greater autonomy to local government, was a central feature of the Local Government conference agenda.

The last conferences of this busy season took place in Sligo. The Health and Welfare divisional conference

focused on mental health, featuring a number of talks and workshops on the issue, and building on the publication of results of a mental health survey for healthcare professionals.

Just up the road, the Services and Enterprises conference looked at the challenges of the gig economy, a potential high-tech sweatshop (see page 26), and passed a motion calling for any new pay improvements to apply in State agencies ■



Derek Mullen presents Christine Maguire of Dublin PRA Clerical branch with a distinguished service award.



Jim Ryan of Revenue Executive Grades branch accepting a distinguished service award on behalf of colleague and friend Brian Wray.



Daria Cibrario - Public Services International, speaking at the Local Government conference in Kilkenny.



It's all about details: Education delegates go through the finer points with the Standing Orders Committee.



Liz Fay and Paul Walsh - Cork Health and Local Government branch.



Michael Cahill - Kilkenny Health and Local Government branch, collecting his distinguished service award at the Local Government conference in Kilkenny.



Wladek Gaj from the Boards and Voluntary Agencies branch participating in a Q&A during the joint session on mental health in Sligo's Clayton hotel.



L-R; Linda McLinchey - Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Sarah Clarke - Institute of Technology Carlow, Yvonne Magill - Dundalk Institute of Technology and Mary Coughlan - Waterford Institute of Technology.



Delegates at the Health and Welfare division conference at the Sligo Clayton hotel.



PJ Keating receiving a distinguished service award from Dublin Care Services branch Chairperson Patricia Spratt and Senior General Secretary Designate Kevin Callinan at Fórsa's Health and Welfare division conference.



Attendees at the Education conference stand for a minute's silence in memory of Lyra McKee.



Niall Shanahan.

Under a balmy western sky at the end of June, trade union activists, friends and colleagues gathered at Fórsa's new offices in Galway city for the official opening. NIALL SHANAHAN reports.

Under Western Skies

THE NEWLY expanded state-of-the-art office facilities in Galway's Sean Mulvoo business park follows six months of complete reconstruction. The new facility will host branch, divisional and executive meetings, as well as act as a trade union hub for the region.

President Ann McGee officiated over the opening along with Assistant General Secretary Padraig Mulligan. Ann's speech extended an invitation to members, activists and other trade unions to visit and use the new premises. Ann also paid tribute to the work and effort in recent months to complete the new building.

Senior General Secretary Designate Kevin Callinan welcomed the opportunity to be able to bring unions together, sharing their approach to organising "to achieve the collective aims of our movement." Acknowledging the presence of "great friends" on the night, Kevin said the new premises represented a fantastic achievement, made possible by a great union team.

General Manager Matt Staunton paid tribute to SIPTU General Secretary Joe Cunningham, a guest on the night, for providing temporary office space to Fórsa staff during the construction.

Senior General Secretary Shay Cody recalled last year's strike and protest rally by Fórsa's Roscommon branch, and the support it drew from "the wider Fórsa family" and other unions. The June 2018 rally is now immortalised in the lobby of the new office, providing a backdrop to our guest photos on the night.

It was impossible not to notice the beaming faces of Padraig Mulligan, organiser Helen Cousins, the Galway office staff and local branch committee. The night represented the culmination of months of enormous hard work by all of them. Their warm welcome and obvious pride was complimented by the backdrop of a beautiful summer evening



Beaming with pride, the Galway branch celebrate the grand opening: l-r; Maura Cahalan, Padraig Mulligan, Helen Cousins, Bridin Feeney, Sean Purtill, Tom Browne, Elsa Edwardson, Evan Stapleton, Maura Sweeney, Marian O'Donoghue and Neil Murphy.



Sue Kelly, Audrey Lyon and Kathleen McGee.



Great friendship: Brendan Fox and Kevin Callinan.



Ronan Bolger and Gerry Wilson.



Sean Purtill makes a presentation to Senior General Secretary Shay Cody on behalf of the Galway branch.



Aisling Fallon and Rose Sheridan.



Maura Sweeney and Pat Hardiman.



Bernie Lally and Bernie Grace.



Marie Kelly and Catherine Leonard.



Elizabeth Madden, Catherine Kelly and Mary Carty.



Stephanie Brennan, Rosaleen Flanagan and Myra Mullarey.



Roscommon heroes Florie Hickey and Fiona Fallon.



President Ann McGee officiated over the opening along with AGS Padraig Mulligan and Senior General Secretary Designate Kevin Callinan.



The Galway team: l-r; Jennifer Flaherty, Helen Cousins, Padraig Mulligan, Maura Cahalan and Joan Keppel.



L-r; Shay Kavanagh, Tom Murtagh, Peter Nolan, Helen Cousins, Tom Briskine and Shelia Duddy.



Niall Shanahan.

Fórsa's Limerick office on Roxborough Road plays host to a range of trade union activities and has become the trade union hub for the region. The building also hosts a number of pieces of modern art, as well as displaying commemorative material to mark the centenary of the Limerick Soviet. Those works have now been joined by a stunning and thought-provoking series of photographs from the West Bank region of Palestine by HUGH MALALA, who spoke to NIALL SHANAHAN about the collection and his work in the region.

From the West Bank to Limerick

I MET up with Hugh Malala at Fórsa's Limerick office in April, as he was working out his notice period from a civil service post in the city. Hugh had made the decision to move on, to return to the human rights monitoring work he did in Palestine last year with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). In May he left Ireland again to take up a role in South Sudan.

My opening question is about photography. I'd seen the photographs, which were exhibited in Dublin last December in an exhibition partly sponsored by Fórsa. The photos are striking, and capture the realities of daily life in the West Bank with an eye for detail I hadn't seen before.

"Everybody moderates their behaviour when they know they're being looked at by an outsider."

I'd assumed I was looking at the work of a seasoned professional, and had prepared a number of photography related questions. But I was to have my expectations confounded.

Guilt

"I wasn't into photography before this trip at all." Hugh laughs as he explains he bought the camera just two days before he left for Palestine. "I got the camera out of a sense of guilt, a sense that I

should take photographs because I'd been there before and hadn't taken a camera. It's simple, inexpensive. I can only shoot with the 'auto' settings. I'm a complete spoofer really."

Hugh's genuine modesty is at odds with the selection of powerful photos. The series of thirty pictures are now arranged throughout the public spaces in the Limerick offices.

"The whole six months was an amazing crash-learning exercise, because the camera was an essential part of the job, which was to observe soldiers as they were coming into contact with civilians. You're putting yourself, as much as you can, into potential friction points between civilians and the military.

"Any time a Palestinian is trying to access land, places of worship, education or essential services, and they have to go by the military, you're there with them. You wear a jacket that identifies who you are, you're visible, and you're photographing the exchanges that take place, and this moderates the behaviour of the soldiers. Everybody moderates their behaviour when they know they're being looked at by an outsider," he says.

Confidence

Hugh explains that the presence of monitors from the EAPPI also gives confidence to the Palestinian civilians they accompany, as they know the soldiers behaviour will be different in the presence of an international monitor.

The EAPPI (eappi.org) describes its own work as "A vision of justice and peace in Palestine and Israel" that brings international human rights monitors to witness life under occupation.

"I'm always photographing at the point where the vulnerability of the civilian is at its highest, at the point where things are not going well."

The group provides a continuous presence of 25-30 ecumenical accompaniers, each serving for at least three months (Hugh served for six months), and offering protective presence and witness as Palestinian civilians go about their daily lives.

The community-oriented organisation was created in 2002 by the World Council of Churches, following the Second Intifada, a period of intense Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2000.

One of the difficulties during the conflict was that there were no international peacekeepers or human rights monitors. "No blue helmets" as Hugh explains. Church leaders in Jerusalem subsequently came together and asked the World Council of Churches to send unarmed peacekeepers.



Ahmad's land is not where it was yesterday

The featured photo, one of the thirty now on display in Fórsa's Limerick offices, was taken on 13th June 2018 in Susiya, which is in the South Hebron Hills.

On the day in question, shepherd Ahmad took his flock to the furthest end of his land, only to discover the 'invisible line' of his land boundary had been moved again. This time by 100 metres, a discovery he made after he'd been threatened by three members of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The soldiers arrived at the behest of Israeli settlers.

"It's not his land," said one of the soldiers confidently. "You can see the way he left without arguing too much. He knows it isn't his land."

Hugh explains that this systematic appropriation of land from Palestinian farmers is part of their daily experience. "The intention is to get them to give up, abandon the land and move to the cities.

"Palestinians are effectively being corralled into what's called 'Area A', clusters of territory with the highest population density of Palestinians. Virtually all farming and herding land is in 'Area C'. The goal is to take as much land with as little people."

See more at hughmalala.com

Witnesses

Since 2002, the EAPPI has brought 1,800 ecumenical accompaniers to live in the West Bank and monitor human rights, providing unarmed civilian protection. "Basically it's putting unarmed, non-partisan civilians in places where civilians and military encounter each other, where there's friction," he explains.

"It's not his land," said one of the soldiers confidently. "You can see the way he left without arguing too much. He knows it isn't his land."

The accompaniers are also encouraged to promote change on their return home.

That's where the camera came in. "Whenever a Palestinian walked by me they'd say 'soura! soura!' which means 'picture! picture!' because they know that the moment pictures are taken they're going to be fine.

"I'm always photographing at the point where the vulnerability of the civilian is at its highest, at the point where things are not going well. I'm taking pictures to deter an escalation of tension, so a lot of the photos capture those kinds of moments," he says.

Hugh returned with a collection of around 3,000 pictures and selected thirty images to exhibit in Dublin at the

end of 2018. He is delighted that the photos have now found a more permanent home, where they'll be on view to trade union members, activists and staff.

"It's an ideal opportunity to share the experiences I had, and to provide some insight into the experiences of ordinary people in the West Bank." ■



Hazel Gavigan.

It's no secret that Ireland has a sizeable gender pay gap, currently standing at 13.9%. However, new figures released by the Civil Service under Freedom of Information show that gap is far wider in government departments. HAZEL GAVIGAN reports.

Get the balance right

AS IT stands, only two out of 17 secretary generals – the most senior post in the Civil Service – are women. Dr Orlaigh Quinn in the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Katherine Licken in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The corresponding government ministers for these departments are also women, of which there are only four out of 15 cabinet members. Female representation at the top level remains at less than 12%, despite an initiative whereby women are favoured over men in promotion stakes if both candidates are equally qualified and capable.

“There’s a culture in senior roles of long working hours. The stereotype suggests that this is the only route to promotion. But that simply isn’t a viable work/life balance for someone who also cares for children, elderly relatives or dependents.”

The pay gap is also evident in lower grades. The latest figures*, which emerged in response to a parliamentary question by Fianna Fáil TD Barry Cowen, reveal that 72% of clerical officers are women.



Derek Mullen.

As you move up the ranks, the percentage of women in more senior positions drastically drops, particularly once you pass the grade of higher executive officer (HEO). In nearly two-thirds of cases (nine out of 14 departments,) there are more men than women occupying posts from assistant principal officer (AP) to secretary general. Roughly equal amounts of men and women are hired into entry level posts, so why is there so little senior female representation?

Responsibilities

Head of Fórsa’s Civil Service division, Derek Mullen, outlined a number of contributing factors, the most significant being the lack of flexible working arrangements beyond HEO

level. He explained that flexi-time, which is enjoyed by all civil servants up to the HEO grade, does not continue beyond the grade.

“It shouldn’t be the case that once you move into more senior management, you can’t avail of schemes that facilitate family and caring responsibilities in the same way as before.

“Clearly as you climb the ladder there are more restrictions given the added pressures you’re under. People must have the opportunity to go for promotion and still maintain the same work/life balance available to people in lower grades,” Derek said.

Geraldine O’Brien and Andy Pike of Fórsa’s equality committee echoed Derek’s view.

“There’s a culture in senior roles of long working hours. The stereotype suggests that this is the only route to promotion. But that simply isn’t a viable work/life balance for someone who also cares for children, elderly relatives or dependents,” Andy said.

Caring unpaid

Whether we like to admit it or not, caring responsibilities still fall predominantly on women. According to the CSO, two thirds of all unpaid caring hours are provided by women.

Granting flexi-leave at management level would allow women better balance their responsibilities at work and at home, and therefore encourage more women to pursue promotion.

To further facilitate a better balance, Derek also believes there should be greater encouragement for men to utilise paternal and parental leave. He says management has a responsibility to encourage men to exercise these leave options and create a culture where it’s the new norm.



Geraldine O’Brien.

Not only does he want to see paternal and parental leave more widely used, Derek strongly believes there needs to be more access to these schemes.

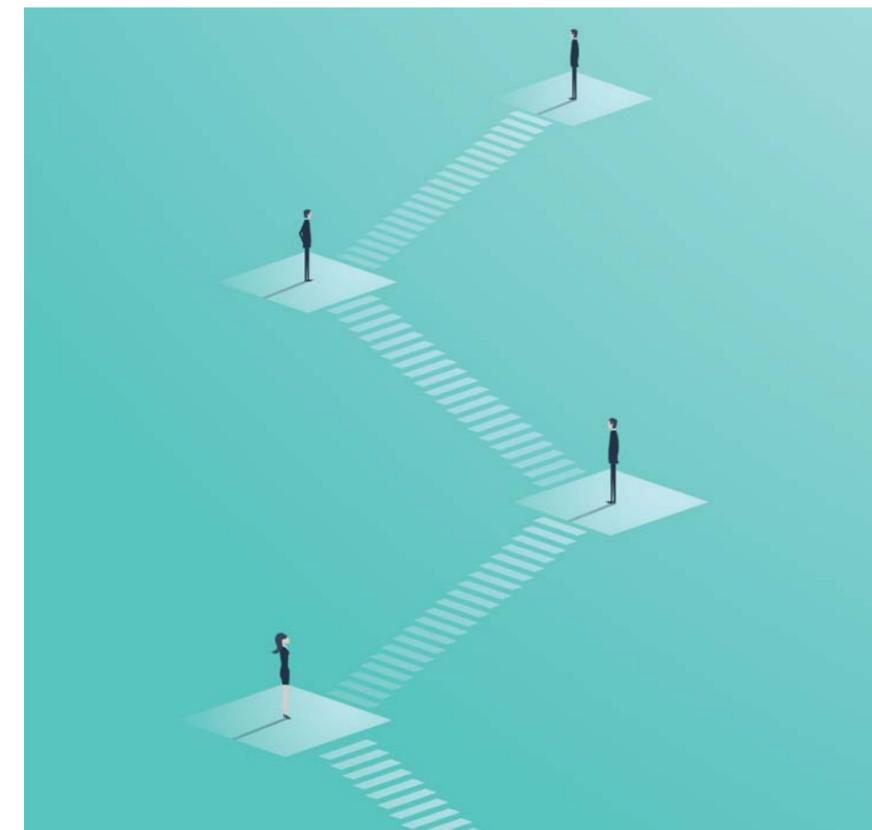
“I think what’s available to a father on the birth of a child now is a little bit of tokenism. It’s better than it was but if we’re real about achieving a shift in society, there should be more leave and it should be the expectation that it’s taken,” he says.

Hours

Increased working time under the terms of the Haddington Road agreement also had a heavily gendered effect. It hit low to middle income earners hardest, grades predominantly held by women.

“Management has a responsibility to encourage men to exercise paternal and parental leave options and create a culture where it’s the new norm.”

Fórsa has already committed itself to a mid-term review of the current Public Service Stability Agreement whereby the union will seek a restoration of pre-crisis working hours (see our report on working time on page 10). This, in turn,



should also facilitate a greater work/life balance for lower grades.

Other factors that would help achieve greater parity include greater access to remote working and equal subject access in single sex schools. Working from home enables families to better balance caring responsibilities, while exposing boys and girls to the same subjects in their education would reduce occupational segregation further down the line.

Geraldine was keen to make the point that some women don’t want to move up the career ladder as they’re very happy and comfortable with the position they’re in and these are choices we need to respect. She adds: “There are, however, other women who would progress but there are barriers in their way. It’s our job as a trade union to remove those barriers or give them the tools to remove them themselves,” she says.

Fórsa holds annual INSPIRE training seminars in conjunction with Women for Election. The aim is to equip and support women to advance in decision-making structures. The union’s new director of training, Linda Kelly, is keen to retain this initiative and develop it further to encourage promotional aspirations.

We have come a long way since the days of the marriage bar but there’s still



Andy Pike.

significant progress to be made. Fórsa was instrumental in progressing the new gender pay gap reporting legislation. When it finally takes effect next year, companies will be obliged to interrogate their data, identify where problems arise and develop specific measures to address them. It’s our job as a union to be ready to work with employers and strive for a more equal future, together.

**The figures reported do not include the Departments of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Communications, Climate Action and Environment; and Education and Skills ■*



Niall Shanahan.

One of the featured debates at the EPSU conference in Dublin in May was a panel discussion on privatisation and winning the battle for quality public services. NIALL SHANAHAN spoke to one of the panellists, CAT HOBBS, who founded the UK's We Own It campaign, which aims to reverse the privatisation of UK public services.

Taking back control

"AFTER 30 years, it's clear that privatisation of our public services has failed. It's time for public ownership. We use it, we pay for it, we own it" – that's the message of the *We Own It* campaign. Its continuing mission: to campaign against privatisation and make the case for public ownership.

Since it launched in 2013 *We Own It* has won a campaign to stop the privatisation of NHS professionals, helped to stop the privatisation of the Land Registry and has joined with others to push back the privatisation of Network Rail, the public sector body that owns and operates the railway infrastructure in England, Wales and Scotland.

"I believe public services are the best, most civilised, wonderful thing that human beings have ever invented."

We Own It was founded by Cat Hobbs ("in my bedroom, on my laptop") in 2013. Hobbs is a proud champion of public services: "I believe public services are the best, most civilised, wonderful thing that human beings have ever invented.

"I've always loved public services. I campaigned for better trains for over 10



"After 30 years, it's clear that privatisation of our public services has failed" – Cat Hobbs is the founder of the *We Own It* campaign, which is campaigning to reverse a 40 year trend of privatising the UK's public services.

years, and won a more frequent local rail service in Bristol before campaigning nationally. My parents work for the NHS and I hugely admire what they do.

"So when the government started privatising the NHS and selling off the Royal Mail, I began joining the dots.

Privatisation has failed for over 30 years. The evidence and the public are against it.

"I wanted to make the case for public ownership. Not "going back to the 1970s" but going forwards to a better future," she explains.



'Privatisation, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and private finance: Winning the battle for quality public services': (from left) the Dublin debate was chaired by Philippe Pochet of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) and featured Cat Hobbs, Bjørn Pettersen, Fagforbundet (Norway) and Myriam Planas, Enginyeria Sense Fronteres (ISF, Spain).

Aggressive

An aggressive programme of outsourcing and privatisation was created in the UK, almost 40 years ago, during the Thatcher administration. For decades the mantra had been that nothing (not even, it seems, the public interest) should stand in the way of private profit.

The National Health Service (NHS), the jewel in the crown of UK public services, has become something of a final battleground. Aside from the challenges of meeting the needs of a growing and ageing UK population (and being sued by privately owned firms like Richard Branson's Virgin Care, one of many looking to poach NHS services into private control), its very existence could be under threat in a post-Brexit environment, potentially placed on the table in a trade deal negotiation with the US.

With so much at stake, it's clear to see why *We Own It* has won so much popular support. Furthermore, the prevailing wisdom of Thatcher's privatisation agenda is at odds with the emerging body of evidence.

EPSU's 2019 publication *Public and Private Sector Efficiency* points to the growing body of research that shows, consistently, that there is no empirical evidence that the private sector is intrinsically more efficient.

It states: "The same results emerge consistently from sectors and services which are subject to outsourcing, such as waste management, and in sectors privatised by sale, such as telecoms. If private companies are no more efficient on a technical level, then the usual case for privatisation collapses."

Insourcing

More recently, a report by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) in the UK provides

evidence of a trend towards insourcing public services.

Based on a major research project carried out by the University of Liverpool, *Rebuilding capacity: the case for insourcing contracts* examined recent trends in insourcing (or re-municipalisation) and some of the key arguments for the process.

The report includes six detailed case studies from different municipalities across the UK, involving a range of local government services. A survey of APSE members found 73% of respondents had insourced, or were in the process of insourcing, one or more services.

"The shift toward insourcing is driven by some very practical considerations. When the cracks begin to show, councils often say 'let's do this ourselves because we can do it better.'"

Cat Hobbs is hugely encouraged, though unsurprised, by the findings.

"My understanding is that the shift toward insourcing is driven by some very practical considerations. It's often Conservative councils who are insourcing. It's often more expensive to outsource even though the private firms are undermining workers terms and conditions.

"Another driver is quality. In the delivery of public services this simply isn't a priority for private suppliers. When the cracks begin to show, councils often say 'let's do this ourselves because we can do it better.'"

"Flexibility is another consideration. Local authorities need to be able to improve services, to make changes, to respond to circumstances. They can't do that if they're locked into contracts over

many years with private companies. So they're actually thinking twice about that now and looking to get out of those types of contracts as soon as they can," she says.

Climate change

During the EPSU panel discussion in Dublin, the subject of climate change came up quite often, revealing a consensus view among the European trade unions that public services have a central role to play in the response to the threat of environmental collapse.

Cat agrees: "Public ownership of public services can deliver things that the private sector can't. Not alone has the private sector failed to deliver public services, it's failing to tackle climate change, because private companies are not motivated to do that."

With a growing debate in the UK about the need for a 'Green New Deal' - an economic stimulus package to address climate change and economic inequality - Cat says she's excited to hear the debate has become more widespread across Europe.

She says a 'Green New Deal' won't be delivered if we're "prodding and poking" at private companies trying to get them to do what's necessary for the sake of humanity and the planet.

Cat concludes: "We need to take control, and if we want to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2030, conserve water, look after the environment, help people transition, provide better public transport and produce clean, green energy, all of those things are going to be better delivered with public ownership.

"I think the two things go very much hand in hand. It's exciting that public ownership can play a key role in helping us tackle this challenge. It's the biggest challenge we've ever faced."

Find out more at weownit.org.uk ■



Niall Shanahan.

Technology is changing the way we work, driving greater flexibility in a digital and on-demand system in which worker protection legislation is struggling to keep up. We may have the freedom to pick up work that suits us, facilitated by smartphone technology, but the new tech carries with it the ghoulish models of 19th Century exploitation that the Labour movement was instrumental in dismantling. NIALL SHANAHAN looks at recent developments, and the need for unions to meet the challenge.

Brand new and old fashioned: the rise of the high tech sweatshop

THE GIG economy is defined as "a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements."

It's a highly polished way of describing a system of employment where all of the risk, costs and responsibilities are undertaken by 'independent workers' while the organisation that has temporarily hired them takes the most substantial slice of available profit.

Examples of gig employees in the workforce include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and temporary or part-time hires. It is characterised by short-term, payment-by-task arrangements, zero-hours and 'if and when' contracts.

Advocates of this new model of work (it remains a bright new shiny plaything for a lot of employers and corporations) will argue that people tend to change jobs several times throughout their working lives and say the gig economy can be seen as an evolution of that trend.



Ashley Connolly.

They will also argue that, from the perspective of the freelancer, the gig economy can improve work-life balance over most jobs, because it's powered by independent workers selecting jobs that they're interested in.

Embedded

With these kind of arguments, and aided by app-based technology, the gig economy has developed quickly and ruthlessly to the point where it has embedded itself quite comfortably inside the economy, and legislation is struggling to keep pace.

The digital, on-demand, nature of the services available has also proved a hit with consumers. The 'Uberisation' of services like food delivery and car services have bypassed any consumer concerns about the working conditions of the people who deliver those services.

A bit like the popularity of low-cost air travel, consumers don't like to think too hard about how the low cost and convenience is actually subsidised by the worker driving them to the airport, delivering their late-night curry or selling them a scratch card on board their flight.

But if you're a gig employee who's struggling to pick up enough hours or jobs to pay the bills, and further forced to spend most of your time chasing payment by employers (check out Aingeala Flannery's excellent column on page 34 for a first-hand account of how common, and frustrating, this practice has become in the media industry), you'll quickly learn that this bright new shiny model of employment is just old-fashioned exploitation dressed up to disguise ugly new realities.

Conference

That was the message delivered by Fórsa official Ashley Connolly to delegates at the union's Services and Enterprises divisional conference in Sligo in May. Ashley warned delegates that the 'gig economy' has created a new field of employment governed by developing technology, but that there's a real and substantial risk that workers are being set up for good old-fashioned exploitation.

"While the developers are hailed as futurist visionaries, the type of work on offer - and the manner in which the employment relationship is managed - is closer in form to the piecework and sweatshops of the 19th Century garment trade."

Speaking to a motion by the Cabin Crew branch, calling for the union to commission research into the potential impact of the gig economy on its members, Ashley said the recent introduction of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, to protect workers on insecure contracts, was welcome but that challenges remain for employment law to keep pace with changes in the economy and the workforce.

She said: "The emerging trend in freelance work has been facilitated by a rapid development in technology. The development of these apps has had a disruptive effect on traditional models of work and the service they provide are hailed as revolutionary.

"But, while the developers are hailed as futurist visionaries, the type of work on



Image: Pierre Kleinhouse

offer - and the manner in which the employment relationship is managed - is closer in form to the piecework and sweatshops of the 19th Century garment trade.

"Technology is pointing forward, but there is a substantial risk that workers are being re-directed to models of past exploitation. There's no future in reducing employment to a high tech sweatshop.

"Let's not forget - when you strip it all back - somebody somewhere is required to ensure that all this fantastic technology can operate," she said.

Erosion

Ashley has warned that, left unchecked, the development of app-controlled piecework will spell trouble for the economy, incur a loss of revenue to the exchequer and create instability for workers who can no longer rely on a fixed income, with no protections or benefits.

Meanwhile, the growth figures in the gig economy reveal its considerable momentum, and its capacity to disrupt more than just the job market.

In Ireland, Airbnb has over 23,000 active listings. A considerable number of its listings, especially in urban areas, would otherwise be available on the private housing market, and the company's business model has been cited in many cities as a contributory factor to a shortage of long-term housing.

The food-delivery service Deliveroo has over 900 riders in Irish cities and it's reported it receives over 400 new 'rider' applications weekly. While plans to expand Uber's ride-hailing service across Irish cities have not secured the approval of National Transport Authority, the company plans to grow its Centre of Excellence in Limerick as it continues to focus on markets in Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Outside of these developments, Ashley says the union has seen the erosion of full-time permanent roles in favour of seasonal employment in the aviation industry as part of a growing trend for the casualisation of work.

"Some contracts are now 'fly only' contracts. As the name suggests, the employee is only paid if they actually fly, they're not compensated for ground duties or standby," she explains. It is this trend that prompted cabin crew to seek research into the gig economy.

Ashley told delegates in Sligo that the union needs to be able to strike a balance between facilitating flexible working conditions and protecting employees from exploitation, ensuring protection for all workers regardless of the employment relationship.

The alternative is to allow the workers' rights clock slip back 200 years while we're all staring at our smartphones.

See also: *Holding the paymasters to account* by Aingeala Flannery on page 34 ■



Niall Shanahan.

Podcasting is having a bit of a moment. The medium has given rise to a whole new generation of DIY broadcasters, attracting millions of followers. Every interest is catered to in the podcasting world, though there's been little enough podcasting by trade unions so far. Fórsa's Sligo Health and Local Government branch has changed all that, and has officially launched the union's first regular podcast. NIALL SHANAHAN met up with the branch to find out more.

On the air: the Sligo Network

I'M ALWAYS keen to know what's going on in Rodrigo Frade's mind. Having first met him a few years ago on the union's member activist training programme, I was struck by his enthusiasm for new initiatives for reaching out to union members and recruiting new people.

Along with his friend and branch colleague Ed Harte, Rodrigo set up a series of very informal, and very effective, meet-and-greet workplace meetings. The 'Huddle Initiative' proved a big hit in the North West, as the team went around workplaces offering to answer members' questions, welcoming non-members to find out more about the union, and generally creating a feel-good factor while dealing with the practical nuts and bolts of union business.

"The podcast is presented by Rodrigo ('Rod' to his friends on the branch) and branch PRO Irene Tiernan."

I bumped into Rodrigo at our Health & Welfare divisional conference in May, which took place in Sligo. He took me to one side and confided to me in hushed tones that he was cooking up a new idea. "We're making a podcast," he said. This was good news, I knew he'd do a great job. I was also a little jealous that they'd beaten me to it.

Stronger Together is now the official podcast of Fórsa's Sligo Health and Local Government branch, and went live on the Anchor podcasting platform at the end of May. You can also listen to it on Spotify and on Apple Podcasts.

The podcast is presented by Rodrigo ('Rod' to his friends on the branch) and branch PRO Irene Tiernan. Irene works in the Garda Vetting Liaison Office in Manorhamilton, while Rodrigo works as an occupational therapist with the HSE in Sligo.

"One evening I received a text message from Rod, we met up and he mentioned the word 'podcast' and that's something I've a huge interest in. I listen to a lot of them," explains Irene.

"If you want to know about mindfulness or what's happening in the world of MMA (I'm assuming this is a sort of 'A to Z' example Irene is giving), you listen to a podcast.

"I listen to the Bonko Wellness podcast (from the yoga studio of the same name in Claremorris and Castlebar) and Joe Rogan, that's where my interest stemmed from.

"Myself and Rod discussed the idea and I loved it because I was looking for a new way of getting the message out there. I don't think we've been doing enough to contact members in a way that connects with them," she says.

Irene believes a podcast is more accessible than an email or printed communications. "I like to be able to go online and get access to stuff more

easily. I believe members will like the idea of being able to click on and hear new information as it becomes available," she says.

She says the branch plans to use the podcast to provide quick and practical answers to members' questions and to broadcast local branch news.

"Myself and Rod discussed the idea and I loved it because I was looking for a new way of getting the message out there."

"We're also hoping to feature members and officials as guests on the podcast. We think it'll provide a new and very innovative way to enhance our branch communications, to get people involved in the conversation and boost the visibility of the work of our branch," she says.

Rodrigo explains that he follows a lot of 'geek' podcasts as well as a lot of podcasts by some local people. "The Kendy and Raybo podcast is a personal favourite, I listen to it religiously every week. They're local musicians and their podcast is great fun.

"We're always open to finding new ways to communicate with our members. Myself and Ed (Harte) talked a lot about starting a podcast and there was a long period of wondering if we should do it,



Photo: Rodrigo Frade.

Rodrigo Frade, Irene Tiernan, Ed Harte and Nuala Fowley of Sligo's Health and Welfare Branch.

how we would do it, in the end, it seemed to make sense to just go for it.

"The podcast has a similar objective to the Huddle Initiative, this time embracing the technology that allows us to reach beyond the workplace," he explains.

"We're making a podcast," he said. This was good news, I knew he'd do a great job. I was also a little jealous that they'd beaten me to it."

Irene and Rod got to work pretty much immediately. "Within a week or so we were on the air. We both have a huge interest, Rod had all the technology, so we were ready to go," says Irene.

The production requirements to prepare, record, edit and publish 15 minutes of fresh audio content each week makes a lot of demands on the time and energy of these volunteer

trade union activists. This only serves to make what they've achieved so far so much more impressive.

Rodrigo and Irene talk me through the recording and publishing schedule of the next few weeks, proving themselves well organised and both are bursting with ideas for fresh content.

Rodrigo is very focussed on the planning side of things. "When I spoke to Irene first I had a very definite scheme in mind. Fifteen minutes of content, an hour to edit, another hour to get a new episode up online."

Rodrigo and Irene have scheduled production so that they can do the recording together during their lunchbreak from work. They'll meet for an hour but aim to record a couple of podcasts each time.

When I told Rodrigo I wanted to interview them for the magazine he agreed on one small condition, that I would join them as a guest for the podcast. I didn't need any convincing,

and we recorded an episode there and then during their lunchbreak.

Irene's philosophy is that it works as long as they're enjoying the process of creating the podcast. "We need to be enjoying it. We get along well and we enjoy having a bit of fun while we're putting the podcasts together, and I think that should come across to the listener." ■

You can listen to the Sligo branch podcast 'Stronger Together' on anchor.fm, Apple Podcasts and Spotify. You can also listen back on the Fórsa website, just enter the search term 'Sligo podcast' into the search function at forsa.ie.



Niall Shanahan.

Common Ground is a local arts organisation based in Inchicore, and is in the business of making art happen in the urban villages of Dublin's South West inner city. Bringing local people and artists together, powered by a belief in the transformative power of the arts, this small powerhouse has survived and thrived against all odds for 20 years. NIALL SHANAHAN reports.

Planting ideas in uncommon ground



Photo: Jason Sheridan

I'M AN Inchicore native, born and bred. Growing up in the 1970s and 80s, the presence of the arts in Inchicore was remote, but it was a thriving community steeped in history, if not resources.

In the urban village of Inchicore today, the ebb and flow of economic boom and bust is etched into the streetscape through which the M7 commuter traffic files each weekday evening. Gentrification is sporadically visible.

The ancient Goldenbridge cemetery sits by the Grand Canal. Designated by Glasnevin Trust as a conservation cemetery, two former Taoisigh are buried here, WT Cosgrave and his son Liam.

The renovated Richmond Barracks are adjacent, where 3,000 Irish rebels were

detained after the 1916 Easter Rising. It stands facing a large green space where St Michael's Estate (and previously the tenement buildings of Keogh Square) once stood.

Opposite are the old grounds of the former Goldenbridge convent. The late Christine Buckley was instrumental in highlighting the abuse of children once detained there.

Times have changed. The old convent building is now home to a number of community based organisations, including the local employment service.

Collaboration

In a tiny office on the first floor, Siobhán Geoghegan and Ger Nolan - Common

Common ground's HARD/GRAFT project: Artist Seoidín O'Sullivan worked with local community groups to graft native Irish trees from the Lambe Clarke Collection in UCD.

Ground's only staff - are scheduling and programming a range of art projects that will be delivered in Inchicore, Rialto and Bluebell over the next year.

The organisation supports artists to develop their work in collaboration with the local community. "We have a strong connection with the communities in which we work. We introduce theatre makers, musicians, visual artists and artists of other disciplines, to communities we believe will work well together," Siobhán explains.

Common Ground run a wide range of programmes for children and older

people with a strong focus on the local area. Part of its mission is to influence regeneration and redevelopment through the integration of the arts and culture into development plans.

In this capacity Common Ground has worked closely with the communities of Fatima, Dolphin House and St Michael's Estate.

Complimenting this type of work have been projects like *Music for Me*, which saw ten musicians working with after-school projects in each of the three communities.

"The children worked with different established composers, like Elaine Agnew, and performed in the National Gallery. There were really beautiful projects that emerged from that. 120 children took part overall," says Siobhán. With justifiable pride, she adds that the children participated in the multi-year musical project for free.



Painter Pat Curran with one of his paintings of St Michael's Estate (Citizen Artist 2016-2018).

Despite its size, the range and depth of the work is considerable.

In Rialto, Common Ground manages Studio 468 at St Andrew's Community Centre, a dedicated full-time art studio which has hosted around 24 artists over 19 years, working closely with the local community.

More recent projects include Citizen Artist (2016-2018) which hosted a range of collaborations with artists Seoidín O'Sullivan, Laragh Pittman, Fiona Reilly, Mark Holburn and painter Pat Curran.

The project included a publication, performances and an exhibition hosted at Kilmainham Jail. It included the innovative HARD/GRAFT project, with artist Seoidín O'Sullivan working with local community groups to graft native Irish trees from the Lambe Clarke Collection in UCD.

Origins

Common Ground was established in July 1999, emerging from a study by researcher Alan Tweedie about cultural



Photo: Jason Sheridan

Mark Holburn installation and performance at Kilmainham Jail (Citizen Artist 2016-2018).

activity in the area. The objective was to find ways of embedding the arts in an area marked by poverty and disadvantage.

Common Ground is directed by a voluntary board with experience in the areas of arts, community development, business, education and youth work.

The organisation's 20-year history has been one of thriving against the odds, as each year they work very hard to secure the necessary funding to keep going.

At the height of the economic crisis Common Ground lost its funding from the City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB). "It was devastating. The CDYSB had paid for the post of an arts facilitator who had worked with us for eight years. It was a huge loss to us," Siobhán says.



The powerhouse team: Siobhán Geoghegan (left) and Ger Nolan of Common Ground.

But it was only the beginning. Artists' fees and arts programmes for children and young people had to be cut, as well as staff hours. Like many organisations in the sector, there were "very difficult conversations" with stakeholders.

Reduced to a shorter working week for more than six years, Siobhán and Ger only had their full working week restored in November 2018.

Siobhán says working conditions are a problem throughout the community and arts sectors, and much depends on where the funding is coming from. "We're working in a precariously funded sector, with precarious contracts. Most of us have no pensions. Most of us are women. Most of us are on a low wage, and most of us have not had a wage rise since 2007," she says.

Independence

The current office is one in a series of temporary locations they've occupied locally. This summer they will take up residence in the gate lodge of Goldenbridge cemetery. The Glasnevin Trust is currently putting the finishing touches to the modest space, which will house both offices and two artist's workspaces.

The move to the gate lodge brings some much needed certainty to the organisation. "Our main strengths are that we're independent and autonomous, we have a good board and great staff and artists, and we just get on with it," says Siobhán.

Ger adds: "I meet people sometimes, with whom we've had a connection over the years, and they marvel at the fact we still exist. From year to year, people in our sector know how hard it is to keep going, the fact that the good work has continued is remarkable." ■

Photo: Ronan McCaul



Exclusive Insurance Schemes for FÓRSA Members & their Spouses or Partners.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

- ✓ Single or Annual Multi-Trips
- ✓ 24 Hour Medical Assistance

Use Promo Code FOR001

CAR INSURANCE

- ✓ Comprehensive Driving of Other Cars*
- ✓ 24 Hour Breakdown Assistance*

*Comprehensive policies only

HOME INSURANCE

- ✓ €3m Personal Liability
- ✓ Alternative Accommodation

**TO OBTAIN A QUOTATION OR TO FIND OUT MORE
CALL US 01 7075800 OR VISIT US ONLINE forsa.glennons.ie**

Frank Glennon Limited, trading as "Glennon" and "Glennon Insurances", is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

EPSU Congress



Craig Whelan.

EPSU is Europe's largest trade union federation, representing eight million public service workers from 265 trade unions. Irish affiliates include Fórsa, Siptu, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), the Energy Services Union (ESU), and the Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants (AHCPs).

Fighting For A Future For All

10th Congress of the European Federation of Public Service Unions

EPSU BRINGS together public service trade unions from across Europe, and represents eight million public service workers across the continent. The four-day event saw over 550 delegates gather in the RDS to debate and devise a programme of action for a fair future.

The theme of the conference was *Fighting For A Future For All* with delegates discussing the need for trade unions to embrace digitalisation, the continuing fight against privatisation, and how trade unions can work in more collaborative ways to build solidarity and union power.

See also our featured stories from the EPSU Congress on pages 12 and 14



The Congress was opened by An tUachtarán Michael D. Higgins, who urged trade unions to "seize the opportunity of providing a lead role in developing a strategy for a 'just transition' for workers and communities to ensure that we are all part of a sustainable, low-carbon economy and benefit from decent and green jobs."



Esther Lynch, Deputy General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Fórsa member, spoke about the need to dedicate more resources so that public servants "can do their job properly."



Fórsa's EPSU delegation. L-R: Billy Hannigan, Peter Nolan, Angela Kirk, Andy Pike, Hazel Gavigan, Joe O'Connor, Margaret Coughlan, Kevin Callinan, Ann McGee, Eoin Ronayne, Catherine Keogh, Grace Williams.



Dr Laura Bambrick

One in four people will be over 65 years by 2040. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has long highlighted the need for a radical change in policy to fix our low pension coverage. In 2022, the Government will begin one of the most significant developments in supplementary pension provision by introducing 'auto-enrolment'. Congress Social Policy Officer DR LAURA BAMBRICK explains what's proposed and how Congress believes it can be improved.

Population ageing, low pension coverage and auto-enrolment



Photo: dreamstime.com

WE'RE GETTING older. Not only as individuals, but as a country too. Ireland's birth rate is at the lowest level since records began in 1864 and, at the same time, we are living longer than previous generations. Women can now expect to live to an average 83.6 years, and men to 79.9 years of age.

As a result of these two trends – fewer babies and increasing life expectancy – almost one in four of our population will be over 65 years of age in the next 20 years.

Ill-prepared

Recent figures on pension coverage released by the state's statisticians at the CSO show that we are ill-prepared for population ageing.

Less than half of all workers are saving for their retirement in an occupational or private pension – 90 per cent of public

sector workers are, compared to only one in three workers (35 per cent) in the private sector.

At €248.30 per week, the contributory State Pension is only slightly more than the minimum income required to prevent a pensioner from living in poverty.

Consequently, workers without a second pension to supplement their State Pension are at risk of a big drop in their living standards in old age.

In other words, while the State Pension will keep the wolf from your door it will not stretch to cover the holidays, dining-out or other luxuries you had enjoyed on your pre-retirement income.

With the growth in the proportion of the population aged over 65, the importance of discretionary income in retirement is no longer solely a private matter. It is fast becoming a matter of grave importance to the economy as a

whole. If consumer demand is to be maintained into the future, we need pensioners to have sufficient money to continue spending on non-essential goods and services.

Auto-enrolment

Congress has long highlighted the need for a radical change in policy to fix our low pension coverage.

There is currently no legal obligation on employers to provide or contribute to an occupational pension for their workforce. Added to this, pensions are overly complex and not sufficiently understood to get low- and middle-income workers saving towards a financially secure retirement.

In 2022, the Government will begin one of the most significant developments in supplementary pension provision by introducing 'auto-enrolment'.

GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL

Target membership

Auto-enrolment will apply to all employees who are:

- aged between 23 and 60 years; and
- earning €20,000 or above; and
- not a member of a pension scheme.

Contribution rates

Workers will contribute a minimum 6% gross earnings. Employers will match workers' contribution. State will contribute €1 for every €3 a worker saves. Contributions to be gradually phased in 2022 – 2027.

Opting out, re-enrolment and saving suspension

Participation will be compulsory for 6 months. Workers who opt out re-enrolled every 3 years. Workers can suspend contributions in limited circumstances. Employer and State contributions will stop if a worker suspends savings.

Operational model

Workers will have access to a range of retirement saving products from approved pension providers via a newly established Central Processing Authority (CPA). Workers' contributions will be deducted by employers directly from wages and transferred to the CPA. The CPA remit contributions to the pension provider.

Service providers

CPA will tender every 5-10 years for 4 commercial providers for provision of pension saving products. Workers will be responsible for selecting one of the 4 providers and a saving option. A maximum management fee of 0.5% p.a.

Draw-down arrangements

Workers can draw-down their fund at State pension age as a lump sum, annuity or other retirement products permitted under pension and tax law.

CONGRESS'S RESPONSE

- Include self-employed with no employees.
- Set lower age threshold same as PRSI, 16 years.
- Raise upper age threshold above 60 for new entrants.
- No lower income threshold.

- Workers contribution graduated from 1% to 5% on first €20,000. A flat 5% contribution on remaining earnings.
- Employers contribute a flat 7% on all earnings.
- State contributes €1 for every €2.50 a worker saves.

- Merge the opt-out, re-enrolment and saving suspension features into a time-limited 'contribution holiday', which can be claimed as a single continuous period or any number of separate periods.
- Employer and State to continue contributing during a worker's contribution holiday.

- Collect contributions in the same way as social insurance: the employer deducts the worker's contributions at source, the employer and worker contributions are then collected by Revenue and all contributions noted on pay slip.
- Revenue to remit the contributions to a State fund.

- One provider, a public fund e.g. the NTMA.
- The NTMA to contract out management and investment of proportions of the fund.
- The 0.5% maximum management fee is excessive.

- State provision of annuities that take the form of top-up payment on State pension, similar to an earnings related pension. The more contributions made by and on behalf of the worker, the higher their State pension.

Auto-enrolment will legally require employers to include all employees, who meet certain age and income criteria and who are not already members of an approved occupational pension, into a new retirement saving scheme and to make a minimum mandatory contribution. Workers will also have to make a minimum contribution into their pension pot, and this will be topped up by the State.

There will be a limited opportunity for workers to opt-out of the scheme after a short period of compulsory membership. Upon opting out their personal contributions will be returned to them and their employer and the State will cease making contributions to their pension savings. After three years, the

worker will once again be automatically enrolled into the scheme by their employer, with the option to opt-out after the compulsory period has passed.

Auto-enrolment has proven to be hugely successful at increasing pension coverage in many countries, including Australia, New Zealand and the UK, who have very similar pension systems to the Irish system.

Saving

Auto-enrolment will be an additional pension instrument alongside all existing measures.

It is not being introduced to replace or undermine either the State Pension or

tax relief on pension contributions.

The purpose of auto-enrolment is to get workers and employers who are currently not contributing to an occupational pension scheme to start saving for a financially secure retirement.

While we do have concerns around some features of the draft system the Government has proposed, which are outlined in the table above, Congress agrees in principle with the introduction of auto-enrolment as the most appropriate way of increasing pension coverage, income adequacy for pensioners, and employer responsibility to contribute to their workers' living standards in old age ■



Aingeala Flannery.

Across the economy employers have been deliberately misclassifying workers as self-employed subcontractors so as to dodge their social insurance and pension contributions, established pay rates, sick pay, and maternity benefits. The practice is costing the State hundreds of millions of Euro, AINGEALA FLANNERY considers the reasons we are only grasping the extent of the problem now.

Holding paymasters to account



Photo: dreamstime.com

RECENT MEDIA reports and commentary about bogus self-employment have really stuck in my craw. What is the government going to do about exploitative employers who take on freelancers to do the work of employees? It's a good question, but a better one is why has it taken the media so long to ask? If you believe (and I do) that journalists should hold power to account, this practice, should have come to light years ago.

The so-called 'gig economy' emerged during the recession. Businesses

needed to cut costs to stay afloat and workers accepted diminished terms and conditions in order to stay in employment. What was perceived as a short-term solution evolved to become the norm, and is now endemic. I have met plumbers, electricians, English language teachers, cleaners, copywriters, nail technicians, couriers, and above all, journalists who are effectively employees.

Revenue is quite specific about the difference between employees and

contractors. If where and when you work is under somebody else's control, if your pay and hours are set, if you work for one business and are not permitted to subcontract your work, then you are to all intents and purposes an employee and should be treated as such. These guidelines are being flouted across all sectors of the economy, but since they have no statutory footing, employers are not behaving illegally when they don't adhere to them.

The upshot is where we previously had a black economy, we now have a grey one

in which only employers benefit. Contractors are not entitled to paid holiday and sick leave, or to paid paternity and maternity leave. They can be laid off without notice, have no redundancy entitlements, and very limited access to social welfare because nobody has been paying employers' PRSI on their behalf. This loss to the exchequer is the rock on which rogue employers will perish.

"The upshot is where we previously had a black economy, we now have a grey one in which only employers benefit."

It's estimated that the State is missing out on hundreds of millions of Euro annually in unpaid PRSI. Employment and Social Affairs Minister Regina Doherty has raised the issue at Cabinet and we are told there will be measures to crack down on bogus self-employment. As you might expect, Ibec are unhappy. The media, which had been conspicuously silent on the matter, has entered the fray, and the commentary has primarily pointed the finger at the construction industry, where one-in-four workers is now classified as self-employed.

Having read and listened with interest to tradesmen, cleaners, and software engineers discussing the bogus self-employment trap with journalists, it seems to me the media is simultaneously wringing and washing its hands over the matter. I have yet to hear or read a journalist who feels they are being exploited in this way. Yet I have worked alongside countless who do, and who complain bitterly in private.

The reason it has taken us so long to realise the enormity of our problem with bogus self-employment is two-fold. Firstly, workers in this position do not have union representation. Secondly, reporters who should have been writing about it are working in organisations where the practice is well-established. The fact is, the media industry as an employer was an early adopter of the strategy, and journalists, like other workers who are unsure of where they stand, have been minded not to poke their heads above the parapet.

I know this because I worked for almost twenty years in the industry. Before the economic downturn being freelance and self-employed was either a lifestyle choice or (more typically) a step toward being made permanent. When the crash

came in 2008 I held a staff position, I was on paid maternity leave, I had pension, holiday and sick pay entitlements. I was given parental leave because my child was sick, and my duties were filled by a freelancer until I was able to return. I was an employee, and an expensive one at that. The company was paying maternity benefit, PRSI and pension contributions on my behalf. I can only suppose they thought I was worth it.

The bust was brutal on media, advertising revenue plummeted and the need to cut costs was immediate. Payroll was the softest target, which meant last in-first out (cheaper redundancy) and salary cuts for those who were retained. This was expected and therefore accepted, it was happening across the economy. To cover shifts, staff were hired on a no strings basis, and unpalatable as that was, it was perceived as a temporary measure that would dig us out of a hole. After a couple of years, like a slow creeping rot, self-employed freelance work for journalists became the norm.

Those of us who were staff spent our days alongside colleagues who earned less for doing the same work, with no entitlements. The best they could hope for was making it onto the payroll, which meant their employer's PRSI was being paid. Those of us fortunate enough to be 'staff' sat at our keyboards, like the monkeys that guard the Tōshō-gū shrine; seeing, hearing and speaking no evil.

"If journalists are too afraid to speak out because of misplaced self-interest, how can they be trusted to report on matters that are in the public interest?"

What good are journalists who are afraid to speak out? These were strange, unchartered and unchecked times in Irish media. Concentration of ownership and conflict of interest were huge issues, but not ones that were openly and honestly discussed in newspapers or on the radio. There was a forbidding sense of not biting the hand that feeds you, especially amongst freelancers. Many good journalists left the field, some went into public relations and political communications, and were viewed in certain quarters as poachers

turned gamekeepers. No doubt, they were concerned about their career prospects, but certainly there were a number who believed their interest in public affairs would be better placed working in politics. I don't agree, but given the state of play, it was understandable.

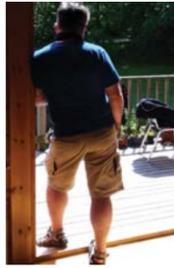
Newspaper reports about RTÉ's top earners have created a perception that journalists are well-paid, when most of them are, in fact, members of what the media itself has termed 'the precariat'. Students of journalism have only begun to understand that there is no lucrative and glamorous career waiting for them upon graduation. In order to get a foot in the door they will work for nothing as interns, in much the same way apprentices serve their time.

"Significantly, the only self-critical media reports on bogus self-employment have come from RTÉ."

They will pitch for work, under-pricing themselves in order to get the gig, and then like other sole traders they will spend a frustrating amount of time chasing unpaid invoices. But they will be reluctant to complain because they need the work and if they are seen as troublemakers they won't have a hope of getting a permanent contract should one arise.

So much for holding power to account, for calling out unfairness, for speaking up without fear or favour. Significantly, the only self-critical media reports on bogus self-employment have come from RTÉ. It began with a *Drivetime* investigation into how freelancers at the state broadcaster were carrying out the same work as permanent staff without any of the benefits. RTÉ has since agreed to review the status of over one hundred contractors after an independent report found their positions 'had attributes akin to employment'.

Journalists are not more entitled to fair treatment than plasterers, or coders, or cleaners. But the issue of media companies that have a policy of staffing their newsrooms with fake freelancers has serious ramifications for all workers. If journalists are too afraid to speak out because of misplaced self-interest, how can they be trusted to report on matters that are in the public interest? Awkward questions are the most important ones for journalists to ask, starting with 'where are you going to pay me my due?' ■



Daniel Devery.

It was recently revealed that a third of people in Britain now regularly eat every meal on their own. Perhaps they're just trying to avoid arguing with each other about Brexit, though there's concern it's also fuelling a loneliness epidemic. Sometimes it's unavoidable, which is why DANIEL DEVERY reckons all the more reason to savour those moments when we can all dine together.

A place for everyone at the table



Photo: dreamstime.com

IN HIS 1825 publication *La Physiologie du goût* (*The Physiology of Taste: Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*) Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin declared "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are."

The lawyer and politician gained fame as an authority on all matters gastronomic in the early part of the 19th century. Being French, this is clearly a significant accomplishment as they tend to take these things very seriously.

His particular food philosophy was that the simplest meal would satisfy him, as long as it was executed with artistry.

He was also quite up front on his views about excess, declaring "Those persons

who suffer from indigestion, or who become drunk, are utterly ignorant of the true principles of eating and drinking."

By today's standards his declaration may seem rather po-faced, but Brillat-Savarin was by no means a killjoy.



Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.

His rules for dining (and he had quite a few) suggests his enjoyment of dinner was as much about the food as it was about his dining companions: "Let the meal proceed without undue haste, since dinner is the last business of the day; and let the guests consider themselves as travellers about to reach a shared destination together."

As dining rules go it's not a bad one, and calls to mind the principal of equality that makes for a truly great dining table.

Eating together

Alice Julier makes the case for this in her book *Eating Together*, arguing that dining together can radically shift people's perspectives, reducing perceptions of inequality. The Pittsburgh academic says diners tend to view those of different races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds as more equal than they would in other social scenarios.

If you've seen the latest advertisement from Coca-Cola, this philosophy is given expression (with a tangible anti-Trump defiance) in its depiction of multicultural inclusion, all centred around food and eating together.

To see this levelling effect at work, look no further than the restaurant trade. It is a world of work with a very particular, sometimes even brutal, pecking order. But have a look into the dining space of a good restaurant an hour or so before evening service.

The table will be occupied by every member of the kitchen and front-of-house brigades, breaking bread together on equal terms, and often enjoying a meal cooked by the head chef or senior kitchen staff.

This moment of breaking bread, in the calm before the storm of evening service, is one of the elements that makes for a successful restaurant. When you're hungry you can't concentrate so a full-bellied brigade will always perform better. The practice is by no means universal but it's not by accident that it's widely known as the "family meal."

Eat simply, eat well

Cookery writer Elizabeth David is famed for bringing Mediterranean food sensibilities to post-War Britain. Her influence extends beyond the peak of her career in the 1960s, when she intoxicated the imagination of her readers with exotic ingredients like olive oil, aubergines, figs and lemons.

The title of one of her most famous books *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine* reveals her declared formula for physical and psychological well-being: eat simply and eat together. Not a million miles from Brillat-Savarin.

"Barbecue: a meal that's eaten standing up, in shorts, with your hands, and with the constant threat of rain. But Irish people can't get enough of it."

In 2013 Dr Brian Wansink of Cornell University and D. Ellen van Kleef of Wageningen University in the Netherlands questioned 190 parents and 148 children about how they eat their meals, and measured their body mass index (BMI), the system used to measure obesity.

They found that families who ate dinner in the kitchen or dining room tended to have a lower BMI, while those with a higher BMI were more likely to eat with the television on.

Families where nobody left the table until everyone had finished eating also emerged as generally slimmer and healthier and, while the results did not necessarily mean that families' dinner time habits are the cause of their BMI, the study highlighted the importance of sharing meals as a family.

The scientists concluded that eating and talking together may prevent overeating by making people feel better about themselves. This approach might well be a formula for better mental health, as well as gastronomic.

The Dinner Party

I was once invited to a friend's house (some time in the early noughties, during the burping and belching of the oversized Celtic feline) on the promise of a "fine dining" experience.



Elizabeth David.

What followed was a dreary three course succession of tasteless food arranged into vertiginous towers. Despite taking place in January, I have a vaguely horrible memory of chicken married with a strawberry... shudder.

It was one of many reminders that the fuss and pretension of an elaborate dinner party has never really taken hold in Ireland. Consider this, what single word is more effective to persuade a bunch of friends or family to pop round to your house than "barbecue."

This is a meal that's eaten standing up, in shorts, with your hands, and with the constant threat of rain. But Irish people can't get enough of it.

Why?

Let's return to Brillat-Savarin: "Let the guests be detained by the charms of society, and animated by the hope that the evening will yet develop."

I think that goes a hell of a long way to explaining the allure of an Irish backyard barbecue.

Brillat-Savarin's book was published in December 1825, two months before his death at the age of 71. It hasn't been out of print since.

He's buried at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, where you'll also find Chopin, Oscar Wilde, Jim Morrison and Edith Piaf.

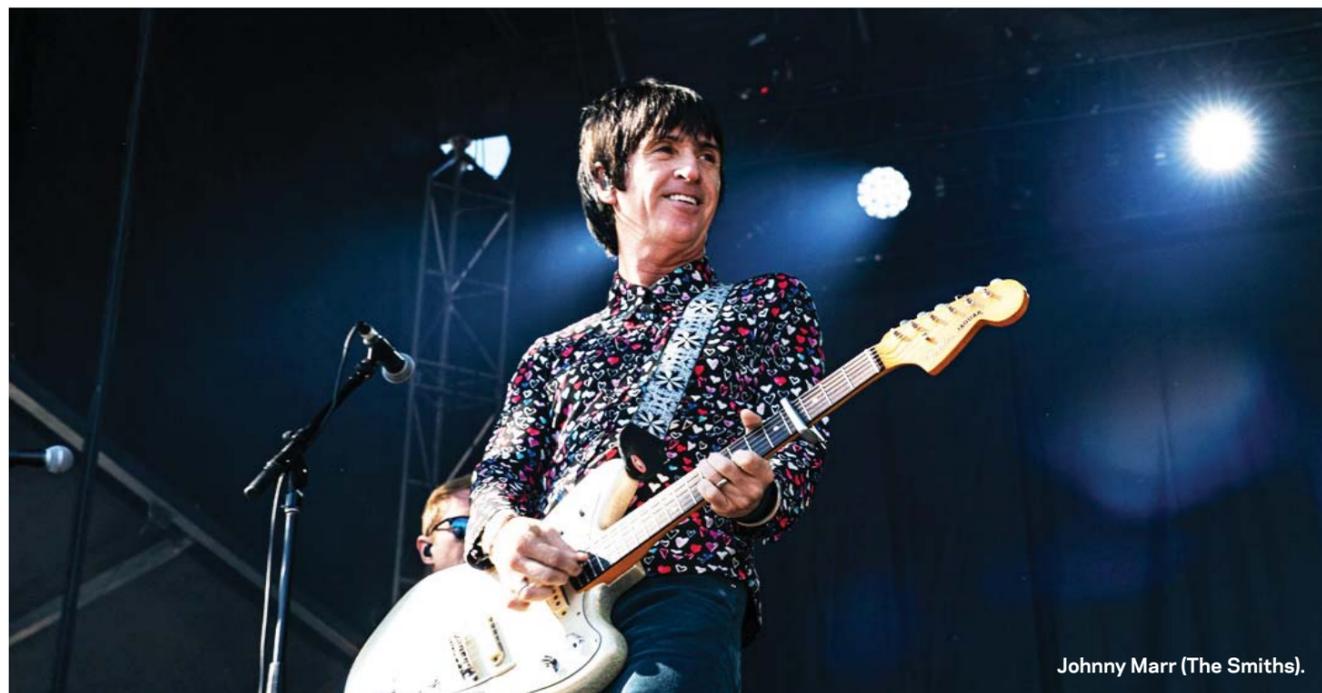
How's that for a dinner party guest list? ■



Raymond Connolly.

Times are hard in RAYMOND CONNOLLY'S corner of Dublin 11. With Arsenal trailing just behind their London neighbours at the end of the season, he is in the grip of a melancholy summer, where even the prospect of one-time legendary rock groups visiting Dublin on a legacy circuit tour isn't enough to lift his spirits. Not even The Cure at Malahide Castle in June could provide a cure, but we agreed on the genius of Robert Smith. So I asked him, in any band we cared to list off, who was the real genius behind the music? Lo and behold, Raymond was off on one of his legendary pulpit ponderations.

A real genius



Johnny Marr (The Smiths).

THE OXFORD Dictionary is a very useful tool. Take the definition of 'Anorak': "A waterproof jacket typically with a hood, of a kind used originally in Polar regions." It continues with a second definition: Origin (British) informal/derogatory, meaning "a studious or obsessive person with unfashionable and largely solitary interests."

It explains that the phrase refers to the anoraks worn by 1980s trainspotters. I am proudly of their tribe, and I choose to sport a Harrington jacket while reading the serial number on a southern to Brighton, but I refuse to accept that anoraks have solitary interests.

"Who was the real genius in The Smiths? Answering that question is easier now that Morrissey has reinvented himself as a passive-aggressive spokesperson for right-wing Brexiteer loons Britain First."

Take my editor. A classic anorak, he still believes musical culture peaked in Manchester around 1981. In his latest

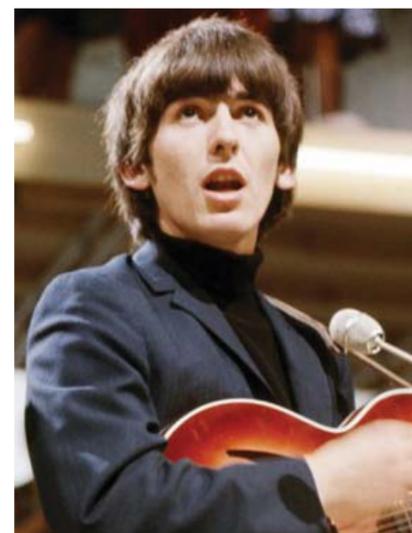
'anoraksic' (copyright Raymond Connolly 2019) obsessive outburst he raised the question as to who was the real genius in some of the musical acts we know and love. Reader, I suspect he had just had another Buckfast breakfast, but I humoured him.

The difference, of course, between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits. Aristotle famously proclaimed that there is no great genius without some touch of madness.

Hollywood eccentric Matthew McConaughey went deeper: "The man who invented the hamburger was smart. The guy who invented the cheeseburger

was a genius." Matthew's application to Mensa got lost in the post.

In an attempt to assess artistic genius we need to avoid the age-old Irish trait of begrudgery. When football genius Liam Brady left The Arsenal and signed for mighty Juventus in 1980, there was some bar-room begrudgery around Dublin's Whitehall claiming Liam's brothers were better players. A family friend enquired "Which one, the postman?"



George Harrison (The Beatles).

In the late 1980s, a close friend and I (a friendship that survived his use of a Filofax) were watching the Pet Shop Boys appearing on Top of the Pops "Raymond we could be like them." Of course he saw himself as the immaculately spruced Neil Tennant, while I was toggling out as monkey-hat-wearing Chris Lowe.

I was ok with this because Lowe was – in my opinion – the real genius in the Pet Shop Boys' innovative orchestral pop. More importantly, he's a passionate supporter of The Arsenal. Enough said.

"New Order: Bernard Sumner or Peter Hook? Given the ten-year feud between Hook and the rest of the band, the real genius was the lawyer who wrote up the settlement."

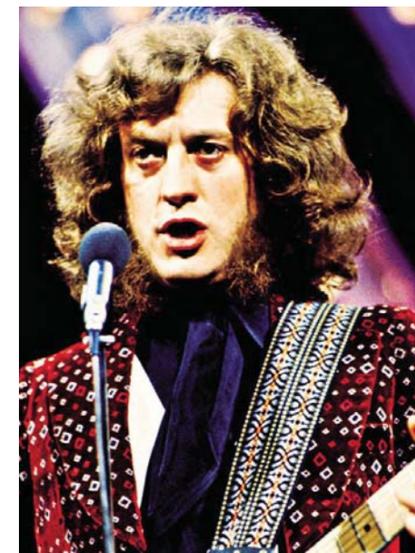
Who was the real genius in The Smiths? Answering that question is easier now that Morrissey has reinvented himself as a passive-aggressive spokesperson for right-wing Brexiteer loons Britain

First. So a show of hands for Johnny Marr finds unanimously in favour of his undisputed genius.

But is it really fair to discard Stephen Morrissey's lyrical genius because he suddenly morphed into a moron? Heaven knows I'm miserable now.

Fleetwood Mac guitarist Lindsay Buckingham is actually a genius... so they sacked him. What beautiful irony, they had a genius in their ranks and it was neither Fleetwood nor Mac. They played Dublin recently with Neil Finn of Crowded House assuming guitar duties, which resulted in a contractually-obliged rendition of *Don't Dream It's Over*. File that one under "careful what you wish for."

The Lennon and McCartney debate – an anorak favourite – will rage for infinity. Some will claim that the real genius was actually George Harrison, but it's a controversial minority view based entirely on *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*.



Noddy Holder (Slade).

I'm not really a Beatles guy, but the more I listen, the more I begin to fall into the McCartney camp. He was tuned in to many wavelengths, including the legendary Beach Boy Brian Wilson's ability to create layers of melody, and *Pet Sounds* provided an inspirational template for the Fab Four as they grappled with Sgt. Pepper.

The real genius in '90s Manchester City-supporting swagger merchants and sibling rivals Oasis was not a Gallagher brother. My theory is that it was Noddy Holder and Jim Lea of Slade. Oasis pretty much borrowed everything from them.

I'm tempted to tip the genius hat to Damon Albarn for Blur/Gorillaz/The

Good The Bad and The Queen and all his other irons in the fire. But he wore plus-fours on Top Of The Pops when Blur beat Oasis to the Number One slot and that was just naff.



Agnetha and Frida (ABBA).

Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus played equal parts in crafting a string of huge hits for Abba. Who can separate their genius? Well, if it wasn't for Agnetha and Frida we might never have known what the two boys looked like (great faces for radio in fairness) but if each of those girls was on 25% of the takings, that truly is genius.

"If it wasn't for Agnetha and Frida we might never have known what the two ABBA boys looked like."

We could look at bands like The Who, The Kinks and The Jam respectively and instinctively agree on the genius of Pete Townshend, Ray Davies and Paul Weller. Part of their respective genius was knowing exactly how to construct a brilliant ensemble around them. In Townshend's case, he opted for a drummer who had a basic problem keeping time. But it worked.

Over a Dublin 11 cocktail in my local (a "Singapore Sling", two parts gin, one part ice, three parts Tom Waits), my editor and I whittled this conversation down to New Order. Bernard Sumner or Peter Hook? In the end we agreed. Given the ten-year feud between Hook and the rest of the band, the real genius was the lawyer who wrote up the settlement.

On this one I am calling for the anoraks of the world to chill out and recognise that, in any great band, it's the sum of the component parts that really matters ■



Una-Minh Kavanagh.

Most of you will be packing your bags to head off on your holidays this season, so UNA-MINH KAVANAGH has got a range of practical tips for packing that bag like a well-seasoned and thoroughly prepared world traveller, along with some advice on enjoying your holiday food.

Don't forget your toothbrush



HAVE YOU ever had that situation where you're sitting on your suitcase to get it to close? Or wondered how the hell you were able to pack on the way out but not on the way back? If you plan on travelling anywhere in the world, you'll need to bring a bag with you, but quite often inexperienced packers will haul a lot of unnecessary things with them.

First things first

Before you put anything in your suitcase, check the weather. I've seen people many a time bringing the wrong sort of clothes to the destinations they're visiting. For hot countries it's best to wear clothing made of linen or cotton; heavy fabrics tend to cling to

your skin and trap sweat, something you don't need!

The fabrics should be breathable. For cooler countries Merino wool is a great shout. Though it's a bit on the pricier side, it can be used for hot and cold climates. Merino regulates your body temperature well, it'll keep you reasonably insulated, but you'll be cool, dry, and ventilated once you start working up a sweat and, if you're on the ski slopes, it provides a layer that'll keep you warm.

Make a list

Try to plan ahead and figure out what you'll be wearing and how you can mix and match. The list will help you focus in

on what you need and on items that you may forget. Realistically you don't need to bring that many clothes.

Stuck on what looks to pack? You can always bet on black. From your tops to your shoes, to your socks to your swimming togs. It matches everything and can easily transition from day to night. When it comes to lightweight items like tops, dresses and skirts, fold them by rolling to minimise wrinkles. With heavier fabrics like jeans and denim, they're best folded.

Don't forget that most of the time the hotels and hostels (and even Airbnbs) that you're staying in will have laundry facilities. And don't forget the outfit you're wearing counts as one, and you can always pack spare lightweight

clothes in your carry-on luggage if going further afield.

Consider packing cubes

Packing cubes organise your items in compartments that you can easily whip in and out of your case. They're handy if you're looking for something specific and you know for example, that it's in the blue cube.



You can simply take out the cube and unzip the full thing. Look for durable ones where the fabric is thin and lightweight. You can pick up packing cubes quite cheaply from places like Amazon or Eagle Creek.

Cut down on the extras

Take practical items for less space. Instead of shampoo bottles bring shampoo bars. You can pick ones up in LUSH or places like Small Changes and Noms in Dublin, or online at the littlegreenshop.ie. If you have a contact lens case they can become easy travel size portions for creams or foundation, and if you have an old sunglasses case they can be perfect to house wires and charging cords.

If you are carrying liquids, cut a small bit of plastic wrap for each of your liquid bottles. Unscrew the caps and place the plastic wrap over the bottle opening and pop the cap back on. This means that even if it pops opens nothing will spill and potentially ruin your clothes.

Be clever

To make the best use of baggage allowance, wear your heaviest items for boarding. When I was heading on the Camino, I wore my walking shoes in the airport and was able to switch out on the flight (remember those lightweight clothes in your carry on) ■

Let's eat!

Mindful street dining

Eating abroad is one of the most exciting things to do while on holiday, but for those who are looking for an adventurous dish, or the next best street bite, you need to be careful before you settle to chow down. Everyone's immune system is different, but you can certainly minimise your chance of getting sick with some street-smart tips.

Observe before you decide

Is the person handling food wearing gloves? While not all street vendors will have gloves, this is at least one precaution that you can take. Mostly importantly, is the person handling the food also handling the money? For me this is a big no-no. Money has touched so many hands and isn't worth getting an upset stomach.

Another thing to look at is, how busy is the place? If there's a dead atmosphere and no one is there, there's a chance that the food isn't popular. But that being said, look at who's in the line-up for food too. Seeing families in line can be a good sign. More variety in the customer base usually means that the food has been vetted enough that it's safe for everyone.

Particularly in Asia, there's a tendency to have the food displayed out in the open for many hours at end. However, the food is often bought straight from the market and incredibly fresh. Eat when the locals are eating at their regular mealtimes to ensure a steady turnover of food.

Be wary of ice

Ice is particularly refreshing in a hot climate, but is risky to take with your street food. We've seen ice being transported on motorbikes, chiselled using worn down utensils and touched

by hands that handled money. My policy is not to take drinks with ice in them. The same goes for eating salads, the water used to wash the vegetables isn't always as clean as you'd hope. Glasses also can be dirty, so I carry a stainless-steel straw with me that I clean myself.

Bring your own cutlery

In Asian street stalls the cutlery that you see quite often has been touched by many hands before being chosen and washed with water on the side of the street. I used to watch locals wipe down their chopsticks before they used them,



which was something that I adopted, though these days I now carry my own bamboo chopsticks, I bought them in Hanoi and they came in a lovely canvas pouch along with other utensils.

Trust your gut

When in doubt, if something is off, don't risk it. On a recent trip to Vietnam we were served plenty of undercooked chicken and duck. We sent it back to be fully cooked and even when it returned, I felt very wary but (foolishly) still ate it. That night I felt very ill and was confined to my bed for the night. My stomach was in ribbons.

Remember that travelling is all about the experiences we create but we must be mindful while doing so. It's easy to get lost in the moment and forget about our health, but with a few precautions you can have both an amazing holiday and an enriching experience ■



Kevin O'Hagan.

KEVIN O'HAGAN, Cancer Prevention Manager with the Irish Cancer Society, offers some practical advice on how to reduce the risk of skin cancer, in partnership with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Staying Sun Smart this summer

SKIN CANCER is the most common cancer in Ireland. Almost 12,000 people are diagnosed in this country every year.

Most cases of skin cancer are directly caused by UV rays from the sun. Outdoor workers (including construction workers, tradesmen, agriculture workers, fishermen etc), who spend most, or a lot of their time outdoors, are at a higher risk of skin cancer. That's why we're delighted to partner with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) this year to bring this message to workers across the country.

"Always remember to check your skin regularly. If you notice any changes please talk to your doctor."

UV rays, which burn the skin, can be harmful from April to September between 11am and 3pm. It's important to remember that UV rays can be present on both sunny as well as cool and cloudy days.

Many people are great for taking care in the sun when abroad, but less so when at home in Ireland. But it's just as important and it needs to be part of our daily routine, particularly if we work outside.

Recent research by the Irish Cancer Society found that 90% of the days between April and September had a UV

level high enough to do damage to the skin.

For anyone who works primarily outdoors, it's even more important to be aware of sun protection. To reduce your risk, simply follow our SunSmart code to stay safe in the sun.

- 1 Seek shade when UV rays are at their strongest – generally between 11am and 3pm.
- 2 Cover up by wearing a shirt with a collar and long shorts. Wear a hat that gives shade to your face, neck and ears.
- 3 Wear wraparound sunglasses. Make sure they give UV protection.
- 4 Slap on the sunscreen. Use sunscreen with SPF minimum 30 UVA protection (higher for children), twenty minutes before going outside and re-apply every two hours – more often if swimming or perspiring.
- 5 Be aware of, and check the UV index – if it's higher than three then burning is likely.
- 6 Keep babies under six months out of the sun.

Anyone who's working outdoors, or spending a lot of time outside, should take extra care if:

- You have pale or freckled skin that doesn't tan, or that burns before it tans
- You have naturally red or fair hair, blue, green or grey eyes

- You have a large number of moles (50 or more)
- You burn easily, or if you or a family member has a history of skin cancer.

If you are working outside, the best piece of advice to follow is to try and organise your day around the sun's strongest rays. So if you can, get a lot of your work done before 11am or after 3pm. If you take a break during the midday sun, you should be able to avoid the highest UV levels.

"Many people are great for taking care in the sun when abroad, but less so when at home in Ireland, but it needs to be part of our daily routine, especially if we work outside."

And always remember to check your skin regularly. If you notice any changes at all, like a mole changing colour or shape, or a new growth or sore that doesn't heal in a few weeks, please talk to your doctor.

For any concerns or queries about cancer, contact the Cancer Nurseline on 1800 200 700 or visit one of our 13 Daffodil Centres nationwide. For more information log on to cancer.ie



Protect your skin

-  Keep your hat on
-  Use the shade
-  Wear sun glasses
-  Use sun cream SPF 30 or higher

Spot cancer early

Get any skin changes checked by your doctor



One4all
Gift Cards

**Introduce a colleague or family member
and receive a €30 One4all voucher
when the account is open**

NEW AND IMPROVED LOAN RATES

CAR LOANS	Standard - 5 to 7 year term 5.97% (6.14% APR) ¹		Electric - 5 to 7 year term 4.97% (5.08% APR) ¹	
HOME IMPROVEMENT LOANS	5 year loan 5.97% (6.14% APR) ¹	7 year loan 6.47% (6.67% APR) ¹	10 year loan 6.99% (7.22% APR) ¹	
COVERED LOAN	Shares greater than loan - 4.97% (5.08% APR)¹			
HOME LOANS³	LTV < 50% 3.40% (3.45% APR) ²		LTV < 80% 3.60% (3.66% APR) ²	
EDUCATION LOAN	4.97% (5.08% APR) ¹			
PERSONAL LOANS	1 year or less 6.99% (7.22% APR) ¹	1 to 3 years 7.99% (8.29% APR) ¹	3 to 5 years 8.49% (8.83% APR) ¹	5 years or more 8.99% (9.37% APR) ¹

¹The APR (Annual Percentage Rate) included is an example only; all APR examples are based on a €1,000 loan over a period of 12 monthly repayments. ²The APRC (Annual Percentage Rate of Charge) included is an example only; all APRC examples are based on €200,000 over a period of 300 months. ³1st legal charge will be required. Lending criteria, terms & conditions apply. Interest rates quoted are variable.

APPLY TODAY, DRIVE TOMORROW!



Standard Car Loan
5.97%
(6.14% APR¹)

Electric Car Loan
4.97%
(5.08% APR²)



Call us on
01 887 0400



Visit us and apply
over the counter



Email us at
loans@dubco.ie



Apply online at
www.dubco.ie

¹APR (Annual Percentage Rate) included is an example only based on a €15,000 loan over a period of 60 monthly repayments of €289.92, Total cost of credit €2,393.51 & Total Repayment €17,393.51.

²APR (Annual Percentage Rate) included is an example only based on a €15,000 loan over a period of 60 monthly repayments of €282.97, Total cost of credit €1,977.13 & Total Repayment €16,977.13.

Lending criteria, terms & conditions apply. Interest rates quoted are variable.

WARNING: IF YOU DO NOT MEET THE REPAYMENTS ON YOUR CREDIT AGREEMENT, YOUR ACCOUNT WILL GO INTO ARREARS. THIS MAY AFFECT YOUR CREDIT RATING, WHICH MAY LIMIT YOUR ABILITY TO ACCESS CREDIT IN THE FUTURE.

Dubco Credit Union Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland



Dubco Credit Union Limited



DubcoCreditUnion



DubcoCU



Dubco Credit Union

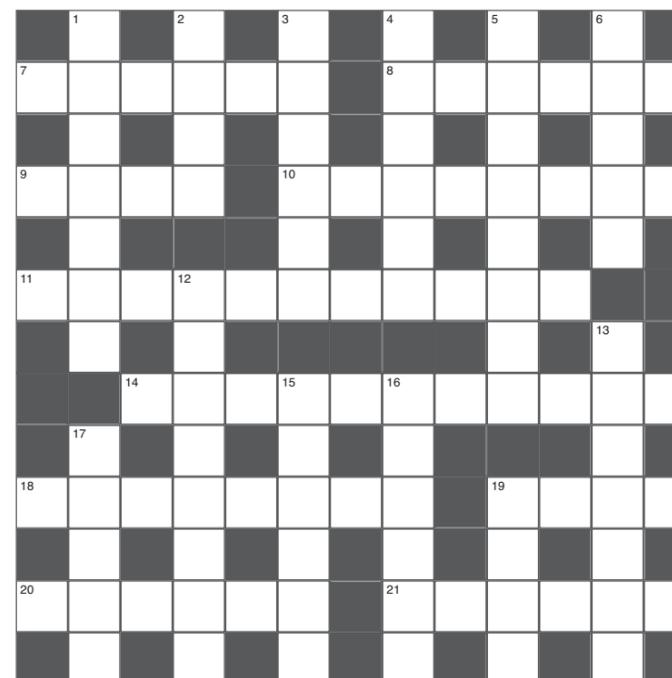


dubco.eu

Win win win

WIN €50 PRIZE CROSSWORD

Win €50 by completing the crossword and sending your entry, name and address to Hazel Gavigan, Fórsa crossword, Fórsa, Nerney's Court, Dublin, D01 R2C5, by Friday 6th September 2019. We'll send €50 to the first correct entry pulled from the hat.



Crossword composed by Peter Connaughtan.

ACROSS

- A deep narrow valley, and Dublin hospital (6)
- Animal fat in Waterford (6)
- Imran, former cricketer and Prime Minister of Pakistan (4)
- A burial place, usually associated with the Roman Empire (8)
- His pseudonym was "Heisenberg" (6, 5)
- Irish author of "The Break" and "Rachel's Holiday" (6, 5)
- Sergio, Barcelona defensive midfielder (8)
- François Duvalier was known as ...Doc (4)
- New York prison and Greek administrative region (6)
- This Park is the home of Laois GAA (6)

DOWN

- Hand Rob the instrument (7)
- Arabian country found in doom and gloom (4)
- He uses a foil or a sabre (6)
- You get this in side or in time (6)
- Semi-formal dress code for evening events (5, 3)
- Liverpool legend, Smith, died in April 2019 (5)
- Free from agitation of mind or spirit (8)
- Japanese dish of deep fried seafood or vegetables (7)
- This cold chap is on his way, according to Eugene O'Neill (6)
- The wise King of Pylos in Homer's Odyssey. (6)
- Capital of Ecuador (5)
- Number 8 or 10 in Rugby League (4)

ISSUE 6 (SPRING-SUMMER) WINNERS:

CROSSWORD: Richard Nash, Wexford. **QUIZ:** Noreen McCarthy, Cork. **SURVEY:** Anne Marie Gannon, Galway

ISSUE 6 (SPRING-SUMMER) CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:

ACROSS: 7. Dearth 8. Orrery 9. Cats 10. Biathlon 11. Oliver Tambo 14. Crawley Town 18. Schooner 19. Oche 20. Staten 21. Icicle **DOWN:** 1. Renault 2. Eros 3. Khyber 4. Sonata 5. Prohibit 6. Argon 12. Vermouth 13. Swahili 15. Waning 16. Earwig 17. Scott 19. Odin

PRIZE QUIZ

WIN €50

Just answer five easy questions and you could win €50.

YOU COULD have an extra €50 to spend by answering five easy questions and sending your entry, name and address to Hazel Gavigan, Fórsa prize quiz, Fórsa, Nerney's Court, Dublin, D01 R2C5. We'll send €50 to the first completed entry pulled from the hat.* All the answers can be found in the pages of this magazine.

- What is the name of the Irish woman who won three medals at the 2018 Gay Games in Paris?**
 - Fatima Flyer
 - Phoebe Driver
 - Philippa Ryder
 - Philomena Scooter
- Who founded the UK public ownership campaign We Own It?**
 - Boss Hogg
 - Cat Hobbs
 - Joe Bloggs
 - Snoop Dogg
- Name the Fórsa official who warns that the gig economy could become a 'high tech sweatshop'.**
 - Andy Pike
 - Derek Mullen
 - Ashley Connolly
 - Geraldine O'Brien
- Spot the TWO presenters of the Sligo branch podcast, Stronger Together:**
 - Niall Shanahan
 - Richy Carrothers
 - Rodrigo Frade
 - Irene Tiernan
- Name the photographer whose Palestine photos are now on display on Fórsa's Limerick offices:**
 - Hugh Jackman
 - Hugh Malala
 - Hugh Laurie
 - Hugh Grant

The small print*

You must be a paid-up Fórsa member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 6th September 2019. The editor's decision is final. That's it!

YOUR VIEW

WIN €100

How do you like *Fórsa*?

WE HOPE you enjoyed this issue of *Fórsa*, the magazine for *Fórsa* members. We want to hear your views, and we're offering a €100 prize to one lucky winner who completes this questionnaire.



Simply complete this short survey and send it to Hazel Gavigan, *Fórsa* survey, *Fórsa*, Nerney's Court, Dublin, D01 R2C5. You can also send your views by email to hgavigan@forsa.ie. We'll send €100 to the first completed entry pulled from a hat.*

The survey

1. What did you think of the articles in the summer-autumn 2019 issue of *Fórsa*?

Excellent

Good

Okay

Bad

Awful

Comments _____

2. What did you think of the layout, style and pictures in the summer-autumn 2019 issue of *Fórsa*?

Excellent

Good

Okay

Bad

Awful

Comments _____

3. What were your favourite three articles?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4. What were your least favourite articles?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

5. What subjects would you like to see in future issues of *Fórsa*?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

6. What did you think of the balance between union news and other articles?

The balance is about right

I want more union news

I want less union news

7. Any other comments?

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Fórsa branch _____

Health Insurance for *Fórsa* Members



Protect what matters

Let us help you choose the right health insurance plan for you and your family!

- Access to Public Hospitals
- Access to Private Hospitals
- Excellent Maternity Cover
- Money back on day to day medical expenses (GP, Dentist, etc)

Call the experts in Lyons Financial Services now!
01 801 5808 or email health@lfs.ie



Office 1, Dunboyne Business Park, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
 Phone: 01 8015808 Email: query@LFS.ie Web: www.LFS.ie

Lyons Health t/a Lyons Financial Services is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland

The small print*

You must be a paid-up *Fórsa* member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 6th September 2019. The editor's decision is final. That's it!

5 Fórsa members have been diagnosed with cancer so far*

Pink Power
Blue Power



"I required surgery so Pink Power was of great benefit to me. Literally saved my life"

"They found something abnormal during the assessment. It's early and hopefully caught in time"

Breast & Prostate Health Assessment and Education Programme
for members of Fórsa Salary Protection Schemes administered by Cornmarket**



Bookings are now closed. For more info, visit cornmarket.ie/pink-blue-power

*Source: Beaumont Private Clinic and Bon Secours Private Hospitals, 2018. **Health & Welfare, Local Government & Local Services and Education Divisions and Civil Service in Professional, Technical and Service Grades. Source: Cornmarket, March 2019. Quotes from Cornmarket survey of Fórsa, TUI and INMO members, 2018. Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd. is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. A member of the Irish Life Group Ltd. which is part of the Great-West Lifeco Group of companies. New Ireland Assurance Company plc is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. A member of Bank of Ireland Group. Friends First Life Assurance Company dac is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.