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Civil Service Quarterly

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SUMMER 2019



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Editorial

Route map to how we can best achieve our aims...

In this summer edition of CSQ we report on the second Civil Service Divisional Conference which was held in mid-May in Kilkenny. There is no doubt that there are organisational and communication issues arising in the division which were debated fully at the conference.

From this we have embarked on a programme of work to ensure that all of the members' concerns are fully addressed and that we maximise the opportunities that are available in such a strengthened new union.

Of more importance though at Conference 2019 was the debate on more than 200 motions, most of which we managed to deal with over the course of the three days.

It was very clear from the motions that the restoration of working hours is a priority for members as we head towards the next round of pay talks, with many motions addressing this important issue. Pay restoration, wage increases, pension protection and improved promotion systems are also key priorities set out at Conference 2019.

As we publish this edition, our Divisional Executive is assessing the major work programme established at the conference and considering the best approach to achieving our ambitious aims.

Also as we go to press, the ICTU Biennial Conference has taken place with some really important debates on motions dealing with employment rights, Northern Ireland, climate change, public services and international solidarity.

We also saw first-hand the strength of our movement as ICTU General Secretary Patricia King responded to the Taoiseach's speech in a most robust way, effectively taking him down on the key question of collective bargaining, stating that actually things hadn't changed that much

since Jim Larkin's time. She also referred to the Government's failed housing policy, telling the Taoiseach to protect our children and not to continue to allow them to suffer the shame associated with homelessness.

When we reflect on issues in the Civil Service, it is also important to note where we have been successful. In this CSQ, we report on the next stages of Mobility that are being rolled out in the Dublin Region for COs and EOs. This is an important development and comes within the timescale we set out at the start of the year and following which we can now concentrate on extending this important scheme to HEOs and AOs.

CSQ also reports on important departmental matters across the Civil Service, including an ongoing dispute over the introduction of the Front Office/Back Office initiative in DEASP and the recent advances in the Houses of the Oireachtas to improve the industrial relations environment.

The important message overall from this summer edition is there is much going on and much more to do as we prepare for a busy second half to 2019.

Derek Mullen
Editor



GENERAL COUNCIL UPDATE By Derek Mullen

The General Council is the main industrial relations forum for Civil Service unions, comprising mainly of senior, elected and full-time officials from Fórsa and other unions as well as senior officials from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). The Council is established under the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme. The Committee meets every month to consider claims from the union or management side and ongoing policy matters that affect the terms and conditions of civil servants.



Move to WRC

The move to the state IR structures has been delayed as the planned attachment to legislation allowing Garda access was stymied after concerns were raised by the AG's office, none of which are insurmountable. A Council sub-committee has been set up to steer the matter forward. In the meantime, staff panel will continue to address the key concerns and consider what aspects of the C&A scheme are worth retaining, such as the Departmental and General Councils.

Speaking to CSQ, National Secretary Derek Mullen stressed the importance of getting the move finalised as soon as possible.

He said: "It will help to modernise industrial relations in the Civil Service and allow us to deal with our business much more efficiently."



Subsistence rates rise

Standard domestic subsistence daytime rates for civil servants are to rise by 10% from 1st July, 2019. However, the current overnight rates will remain unchanged.

This means the daily subsistence five-hour rate of €14.01 increases to €15.41 while the 10-hour rate of €33.61 rises to €36.97.

Under the C&A scheme, staff side and management previously agreed that rates would be reviewed annually using the 'eating out' and 'accommodation' elements of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as a measure. A 5% rise in costs would then trigger an increase in subsistence rates.

Calculating overnight rates involved looking at an 80% accommodation/20% eating out breakdown over a 12-month period (March 1st to March 31st the following year). The calculation of cumulative costs relating to overnight rates came in at 3.54% - which was below the 5% trigger point.

The trigger point was reached for day rates as cumulative increases for food from March 2015 to March 2019 indicated a 10% increase was appropriate.

Overnight rates		
Normal rate	Reduced rate	Detention rate
€147.00	€132.30	€73.50

Day rates	
10hrs or more	5hrs but less than 10hrs
€36.97	€15.41

Accommodation		Meals
Vouched cost of accommodation up to €147.00	PLUS	€36.97

SEVERE WEATHER



WHITE OUT Braving the snow to go to work in Dublin Castle during the cold snap last year...

Picture: RollingNews.ie

Draft Civil Service red weather protocol referred to third party

A final draft red weather protocol is to be referred to third party following the failure to reach agreement on the inclusion of a final sentence dealing with time off in lieu as well as compensatory arrangements for members attending work during red weather red alerts and the situation for those who can't make it on duty.

National Secretary Derek Mullen claimed fears of contagion on the side of management were "ill-founded" and pointed out the HSE had already dealt specifically with such matters in their protocol.

The following is a key extract of what is proposed in the Civil Service:

In the event of a national severe weather emergency, the guidance from the National Emergency Coordination Group will be significant and should instigate clear communication from each of the Government Offices, i.e. there should be clarity around office closure and which staff are required to attend work.

Business Continuity - impact on staff:

Good governance is central to the effective operation of Government organisations. As the Civil Service is not uniform in structure, size, functions, nor location, each organisation should have a plan to ensure business continuity in the event of severe weather, which reflects its own

responsibilities and specific circumstances. There are many aspects to be covered in a business continuity plan; however, the focus of this guidance document is how to prepare a clear plan for the potential impact of severe weather on staff.

It is recommended that HR Units examine its organisation's continuity plan and incorporate the following elements if they are not already included in the overall plan:

- Consider the potential impact of staff being unable to attend the place of work and provide clarity around the requirement to attend work in such situations, taking account of advice from the National Emergency Coordination Group and being mindful of staff safety;*
- Provide clarity about essential and non-essential positions in each organisation;*
- Consider how alternative work practices could minimise disruption e.g. remote working;*
- Ensure clarity around the decision making process for closing offices, especially in shared tenancies;*

Ensure that each organisation has a communications plan for employees, and customers if relevant, to cover severe weather situations.

Use of temporary contracts

Discussions continue on the overall ratio of temporary clerical officers to permanent staff. Pressure to date has led to a significant reduction in numbers and it is clear that the main culprits are DEASP, Education, SEC and Foreign Affairs all with high usage well above the 5% ceiling we are seeking in discussion.

National Secretary Derek Mullen told CSQ: "If we can crack these departments and reach overall agreement on ceilings, then we should be a better position and avoid any further casualisation, the likes of which we see in DEASP with so-called project work."

Total Full-Time Equivalents						
	TCOs		Total staff		Total COs	
Agriculture	21		3200	1%	680	3%
CSO	11		770	1%	230	5%
Children & Youth Affairs	2		270	1%	46	4%
Communications	2		390	1%	49	4%
Courts	13		1000	1%	360	4%
CHG	2		540	0%	75	3%
Education & Science	41		1400	3%	300	14%
DEASP	363		6300	6%	2400	15%
Finance	3		310	1%	52	6%
DFAT	135		1400	10%	510	26%
Garda Civilian	88		2700	3%	1700	5%
Health	3		500	1%	70	4%
Housing	6		750	1%	76	8%
International Co-operation	3		220	1%	35	9%
Justice & Equality	2		2400	0%	790	0%
Legal Aid Board	29		410	7%	140	21%
NCSE	3		97	3%	2	150%
NSSO	13		750	2%	440	3%
OGP	2		220	1%	28	7%
OPW	12		750	2%	125	10%
Oireachtas	2		520	0%	140	1%
Ombudsman	1		120	1%	19	5%
RPA	2		520	0%	140	1%
PAS	7		201	3%	94	7%
PER	3		430	1%	37	8%
Revenue	77		6500	1%	2300	3%
Rural & Community	0		190	0%	54	0%
State Examinations Commission	71		250	28%	46	154%
State Laboratory	6		103	6%	6	100%
Transport	4		550	1%	120	3%
TOTAL	927	3%	33761	3%	11064	8%

DEASP

Talks continue on FO/BO Project

Negotiations are continuing with management at DEASP with Fórsa seeking agreement on all aspects of the FO/BO Project, including staffing, duties, grading, training, SWY, health and safety among many other issues.

A draft document received following a number of meetings in June was considered by the negotiators in advance of further meetings in July.

A Fórsa spokesperson told

CSQ: "In the meantime, a policy of non-cooperation continues for now as we reflect on the draft agreement received. The union will review this position in the light of progress during the talks.

"We have also advised members that they are not obliged to assist on the public floor with the operation of machines.

"This matter forms part of our negotiation as health and safety issues arise."

Revenue/1890 call-line

Unreasonable demands on staff

Rosters continue to be a big issue for members. Fórsa met with the senior management in the area, and were presented with what we thought would be a more fair and equitable roster.

The intention had been to move from a three-week to four-week cycle giving an opportunity for a fairer distribution of work as well as time off the phone.

Unfortunately that did not materialise when the roster went live.

In actual fact, it was probably worse than before – the reason being given was staff shortages.

Fórsa is scheduled to discuss this issue with management in advance of a meeting of the divisional executive. The union will be advising them that it can no longer tolerate the unreasonable demands being placed on its

members in certain areas. If these problems are not resolved, then Fórsa will be seeking to revert 1890 back to local management in each building.

Meanwhile, there is also an issue over national helpline business calls where a number of EOs continue to be regularly rostered on phones.

Fórsa told management that this practice must stop. Management had claimed this would only be a short-term measure. However, again this has turned out not to be the case.

Fórsa has conducted a survey of executive grades, and the results have been sent to management.

It was also an item on the agenda at a meeting of the Revenue departmental Council at the end of the month.

Loss of search derogation 'step too far'

There are still some issues of concern at both Dublin Airport and Dublin Port.

The continuing loss of derogation in Dublin Airport over the ongoing searching of our Customs members is creating huge obstacles as they go about their day-to-day work. Fórsa's view is that this measure has taken security at Dublin Airport a step too far and needs to be resolved.

The union met with the Department of Transport in a bid to try and improve this situation. At the meeting management representatives confirmed that they were



Picture: Infomatique (CC BY-SA 2.0)

aware of our grievances and the resulting difficulty this was causing to members.

We were advised that this process was to be reviewed after six months, and that the review was about to start. The Department of Transport extended an invitation to the union to take part in this re-

view. Meanwhile, in Dublin Port, while some additional work has been carried out at the plinths – where Customs officers take shelter – to make them safer, Fórsa has still a number of concerns. The union met with management to discuss the issue and sought clarification that a Health and Safety Authority inspector has examined the area. Fórsa is awaiting management's response.

Meanwhile, with the Brexit deadline pushed back to at least October, Revenue seems already well prepared for any significant volume of work with a large number of new staff in place in the

Partnerships

Most, if not all, divisional partnerships are up and running, and the next step is to get the house partnerships groups in each building operating. Fórsa will continue to oversee this important process.

PMOD goes live

The employee side has now gone live and employees will soon be able to view their tax affairs almost instantly.

trade facilitation unit. Management has offered additional training to the staff involved – with some taking up this offer.

Mobility update

The application stage for **Phase 1B** of the Civil Service Mobility scheme has now gone live. This allows for Mobility within Zone 46 – Dublin – for Clerical Officer and Executive Officer grades. The offer stage for the phase begins on 2nd September 2019...

Keeping it capital

- There will be a **Day 1** period for Phase 1B – this means that all applications received from 14th June 2019 until 4th July 2019 will be treated as made on 14th June 2019. Accordingly, applicants may see their waitlist positions regularly change during the Day 1 period, as new applications are made.

- Applications received after the Day 1 period will be queued on a daily basis.

- A restriction of **five organisations choices** will be in place from 14th June 2019 when making applications to Zone 46. This applies to Zone 46 **only**.

- Legacy dates do **not** apply to Phase 1B.

- Zone 46 will remain as a single zone, with organisations facilitating an internal transfer list for further moves within the zone.

- In general, staff members moving to or within Zone 46 will be assigned to an office in the **core location area**.

- The core location area includes all offices within a 4km straight-line radius from the GPO, O'Connell Street.

- An exception to this general rule is where the organisational headquarters are located outside of the core location area e.g. NSSO, Clonskeagh and Presidents Establishment, Phoenix Park.

- Following a move, a staff member may apply to their Local HR for an organisational internal transfer to an office location outside the core location area (where applicable). In general, a **minimum of one year's service** in the core location area will apply before the staff member can avail of an internal transfer.

Note 1: Applications made to Zone 46 during Phase 1A will retain their current applications and date of application. The Zone 46 waitlists will not be used to fill new vacancies during the initial application period, although offers that are already in progress should not be affected.

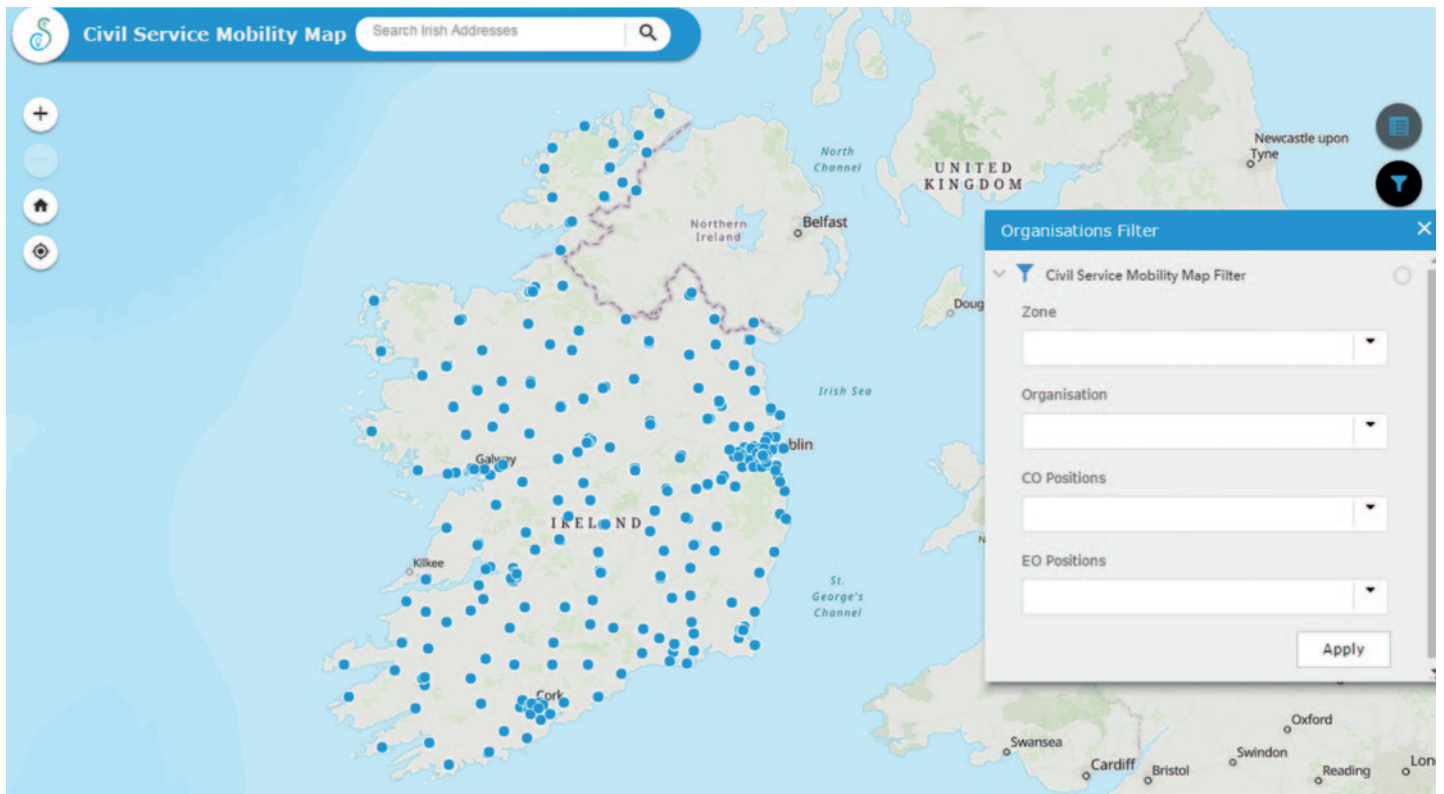
Note 2: The existing restriction on the number of Zone choices still applies, and applicants may have live applications to a **maximum of three mobility zones**.

Note 3: Head-to-Head; Interdepartmental 'Expression of Interest'; and secondment arrangements will expire with effect from 2nd September – an exception to this rule is for positions that attract an allowance.

Picture: Cian Ginty (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



ZONE 46 The GPO on O'Connell Street is at the centre of the core location area



Here's what applicants need to do and know...

1. Please ensure that **valid monitored home and business email addresses** are recorded (on Personal Information page on HR Shared Services self-service / Application Form if non-HRSS customers). This is the only form of contact/communication for the scheme. Applicants need to be contactable when they are out of the office.
2. If an applicant is **unsure** if they want an application, it is recommended that an applicant places it 'on-hold' or cancels it. An individual application can no longer be placed on hold where a receiving Local HR has progressed with the application, i.e. a pre-offer is made.
3. Please contact Local HR to ensure they are aware of any **Reasonable Accommodation** requirements.
4. Please note that there is **no automatic right to elective work arrangements**, e.g. Work-sharing, Shorter Working Year etc. These can be applied for in the new organisation following a move.
5. Please note that there is **no automatic right to flexi-time**.



AT YOUR SERVICE Marie Ralph and Michael O'Doherty of DPER Mobility



6. In general moves will take place **within 20 working days** of acceptance of formal offer.
7. Pay rates/allowances for performance of particular duties will **not** carry unless the new role includes the same conditions.
8. Please check the **job descriptions** for organisations as this will help to inform your selection choice.
9. If an applicant receives a notification informing that they are being considered for a mobility move, they should consider contacting the Receiving Local HR to clarify any specific matters with regard to the post in question.

Visit the Mobility website at <https://hr.per.gov.ie/civil-service-mobility/> for further information on all phases of the scheme along with the following:

- How to apply;
- Terms and Conditions;
- List of organisations per zone;
- Job descriptions;
- FAQs;
- Interactive mobility map which provides information on each Civil Service building, e.g. Wheelchair Access; Flexitime; 24/7 shift requirement; Irish language requirement etc.

Conference 2019 Some 400 delegates headed to Kilkenny in early May to attend the



PROGRESS GS designate Kevin Callinan noted Government had shown signs of 'flexibility' on the PSSA

Our focus will be on the concerns of members...

General Secretary Designate Kevin Callinan said bringing Fórsa into being had been a "great achievement" but flagged up what he called "the less convenient truth" that each of the former unions "had tended to do things as they had always been done".

He told conference that despite "extraordinary efforts" at integrating the former unions, a "fundamental stock-take" of systems and processes should take place – an exercise to be completed by the end of 2019 for NEC consideration.

"It is not rocket science," he said, "we are a membership organisation and we should aspire to modern, professional and state-of-the-art methods and be prepared to ask and answer a few questions about what needs to be done, what things do we no longer need to do and what things would be desirable if we had the resources."

Admitting change "could be difficult but also exciting", he said that as long as the focus remained on the "concerns of the ordinary member", the union had "nothing to fear".

Mr Callinan reiterated a call made in a speech at the IRN conference earlier in the year that an effective approach to industrial relations and public service pay was the ability to "change direction when the fiscal and industrial circumstances demanded it".

He said he had attempted to "shift the narrative beyond the language of crisis, even the language of restoration". He pointed out that the preamble to the Pay and Pensions Act 2017 [which gave legal effect to the Public Service Stability Agreement] had been marked by references to "economic vulnerability, debt, uncertainty and reductions in pay and pensions".

Conference was told that since that agreement, Ireland had recorded real GDP growth

of around 7% for 2017 and 2018 with the EC predicting 4% in 2019 and 2020. Inflation had also re-emerged eroding pay restoration in real terms.

Mr Callinan told delegates that CSO figures revealed that average earnings in sectors "with a strong public sector bias" lagged behind the overall economy in wage growth. Noting the number of motions before the conference on working hours, he said he understood that it "remained top of mind" for Fórsa branches. "Public servants were applauded when they accepted the Haddington Road Agreement, which included a third pay cut for higher earners and increased working time for most of the rest."

'Hard sell'

This, he admitted, had been a "hard sell" for union leaders but reminded conference that "these were torrid times for Ireland" with a one billion euro hole in public finances.

Workers agreeing to take another hit had, he suggested, "produced the savings that enabled the country to meet the harsh Troika bailout terms" as well as avoiding the imposition of another public service-wide pay cut under the FEMPI legislation.

Mr Callinan told delegates that though he believed the Haddington Road Agreement "had been the right thing to do at the time", he said that because of Ireland's current economic performance the restoration of pre-crisis working hours should form part of the mid-term review of PSSA.

"Recently government decisions have demonstrated a great deal more flexibility in what is do-able under the PSSA than was previously the case. We have a responsibility to progress it with government and we will do that."

Driving our new union forward

National Secretary Derek Mullen emphasised the importance of "carving out" a future pay bargaining model that incorporated a range of priorities "particularly inflation and general cost-of-living pressures as well as work-life balance and working time."

He told delegates PSSA had "taken us out of the restoration trap" and the nurses dispute had "opened the door" to address grade-specific concerns particularly through the pay review mechanism set up under the Pay Commission. Fórsa had also won a "very important early victory" on new entrants' pay in negotiations.

Mr Mullen said workers needed "greater autonomy over their working time" and pointed out that technology could both "expand choice" and provide for a better balance between work and personal life.

Describing the increased hours introduced under the Haddington Road Agreement as a "blunt instrument", he suggested it had given "no credence" to the changing face of work.

"Workers today are stressed like never before and good employers know the importance of resolving this issue. It should be a priority and will deliver better outcomes in terms of productivity and employee satisfaction." He described work sharing and shorter working year initiatives as good schemes but cautioned that some departments had to "step up to the mark and deploy them in a fairer and more consistent way".

On the move to the state industrial relations system, Mr Mullen said the old conciliation and arbitration scheme "had served us well" but was not fit for a "modern IR environment".

"We will keep what's best of the old system – particularly the councils," he added.

He listed a number of important agreements that had been brokered over the past year, including on probation, revised starting pay and promotions allowing analogous grades to move from the public service to the civil service.

"We're fighting a proposal to allow serious sanctions up to dismissal from the civil service at principal officer level – a responsibility that currently rests at secretary general level," but he warned, "This is a change that we're just not prepared to countenance."

Mr Mullen underlined the importance of the mobility scheme to members and spoke of developments in the next phase of negotiations, including mobility within Dublin, the inclusion of additional Fórsa grades in the

Civil Service Division conference – what follows is a selection from the three days of debate...



DEREK MULLEN 'We support properly thought out automation controlled by workers'



ANN MCGEE Fórsa already proved it is a 'force to be reckoned with'

scheme and the addressing of reasonable accommodation concerns for members with disabilities.

He admitted progress had been slow over the continuing difficulties with HR shared services and said a forthcoming survey on the issue would flag up members' concerns "with a view to putting in place an action plan to alleviate those difficulties".

But he cautioned: "If we can't get this fixed we will have to return to our overall 'nuclear' option which is to contemplate further actions to return HR services to line departments."

On promotions, Mr Mullen spoke about the need to find alternatives to psychometric testing as a means of short-listing large volume competitions.

Controlled by workers

Turning to automation and robotics within the civil service, he insisted that Fórsa would not support the "diminution of work" or the "worsening of good public services".

"Citizens don't want to talk to machines," he told delegates. "We will support properly thought out automation controlled by workers for the continued enhancement of good public services. Technological advancement will not be opposed as long as it meets the general principles we have set out and in particular if it does not lead to job losses and poorer services."

He said all change initiatives within the civil service should be the subject of negotiation and consultation. The union would not be found wanting but would not accept poor planning. However, outsourcing would be "categorically rejected" as a solution.

And Mr Mullen warned: "We will not countenance further debacles such as the recent illness benefit crisis in Social Protection – new technology must be fit for purpose."

He concluded: "This is not a time to be complacent and we won't be – there is much work to be done. We will redouble our efforts on your behalf as we drive our new union forward."

We must work together to carve out shared future

In a wide-ranging speech to conference, Fórsa President Ann McGee spoke both of the challenges and opportunities facing the new union.

She told delegates Fórsa had already "made its mark" and was being viewed as "a force to be reckoned with", pointing to a number of recent disputes as examples.

"In Roscommon when you see an attack like that on family-friendly workplace initiatives, you're aware that if it can be allowed to happen in Roscommon today, it could happen anywhere else tomorrow.

"Our members understood that and responded to that," she said, "and the solidarity shown at the rally was huge, strong and very encouraging.

"In Ryanair as a result of the dispute we saw the Fórsa name established throughout Europe and other parts of the world. What's interesting now is meeting people from other organisations who know who we are because of that dispute, who are interested in how it all happened."

Ms McGee underlined the importance of restoring time lost by low-income and middle-income civil servants during the crisis.

"Those who earned less accepted increased working hours but unlike their higher paid colleagues these workers have seen no restoration and are still carrying the burden."

Reminding conference that women made up 70% of Fórsa's membership, she emphasised how vital women's leadership was within the trade union movement.

"Developing and retaining talent is something that every organisation wants to do because it is the key to remaining competitive, so it behoves all of us to make sure that the

female talent doesn't walk out the door because the workplace or union becomes uncomfortable and stereotyped."

In building a "bigger, stronger union for all members", she acknowledged members had experienced a lot of organisational change.

"We knew that to build a singular dominant trade union out of three separate unions with strong public identities was going to be a massive challenge. We need to stay focused, and continue working together within this division to carve out a shared future for all the members.

New structures

"Throughout the country branch representatives are coming to terms with working within new structures, policies and procedures – drawn together these are necessary tools that enable Fórsa to act on behalf of its members."

She continued: "This has meant differing levels of change for different parts of the union which hasn't been easy for activists on the ground but over time, the wisdom of creating singular sets of structures, policies, procedures and staff organisation will solidify our union and deliver a platform for greater cohesion."

Ms McGee said that more than 5,000 new members had joined Fórsa in 2018 and as such had no "historical memory of the three amalgamating unions".

"Over time, this will become the largest block of our membership. In the meantime, we must continue to strive to retain the best traditions of our forerunners as we build a significant organised force and voice in our workplaces and in our wider society."

Conference 2019

DIVERSITY ISSUES

Tom Walsh, speaking on **Motion 170** (Transport, Tourism and Sport Executive Grades Branch), calling for an updated report into the career progression of people with disabilities within the civil service, pointed out to conference that research had last been carried out into the issue in 2002.

He asked: "What is the experience of people who have disabilities within the civil service? How have they progressed? Are they valued? Is the work they are given of a high standard? Is it suitable to them? I'd like to have a snapshot of where we are today."

National Secretary Derek Mullen, supporting the motion on behalf of the DEC, admitted there were clearly issues with career progression and recruitment, as well as reasonable accommodation and assisting technology. He said: "There is much work to be done but it's slow and much more needs to happen." Motion carried.

Sue Kelly (Ballina Clerical General), speaking on **Motion 172**, which called for the formation of a fully functioning disability committee, claimed it was an issue of paramount importance for the union.

"We have up to 1,500 people in this division who presently have no voice and have no representation," she told delegates. "The issues our members face are vast and innumerable and pushing it all under the diversity umbrella makes no sense." Motion carried.

PROMOTION AND TRAINING

Patrick Roarty, speaking on **Motion 177** (Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht Executive Grades Branch), called for "greater openness and transparency" over members who are successfully selected so "an eye can be kept on their progress." Motion carried.

Kevin Hurley (Cork General Clerical Branch), speaking on **Motion 180**, pointed out that many of his colleagues had been performing higher duty allowance EO duties "for years and years and years" and still are not EO's because they couldn't pass the psychometric tests.

"Management deem them suitable to perform the tasks but when they go for the tests, they're deemed unsuitable. There's something radically wrong there," he added.

A delegate from the Social Protection Branch described the psychometric testing as "an erosion exercise totally".

He added: "It's a scaling-down [process] so that they can get the people that they want into positions and ignoring the people who have the experience."

"At the end of the day, it's senior suitable not suitably senior!"

National Secretary Derek Mullen admitted members had been "put through the wringer" since the Croke Park Agreement had abolished senior suitable promotions.

Pointing out that it was going to be "practically impossible" to get senior suitable back on the agenda, he said: "The challenge for us as a union is to look at alternative systems of promotion, selection other than psychometric testing."



Bernadette Crombie (Legal Reform Branch) told the conference that senior members of staff brought a perspective to an organisation that many younger people couldn't.

"They have the corporate knowledge that is sadly lacking among many staff who are recruited on competency-based [criteria]."

"There is no substitute for memory and for organisational memory. We need to acknowledge and recognise that older members of staff have a lot to give as well." Motion carried.

ANNUAL SPECIAL AND SICK LEAVE

James Higgins (Agriculture Executive Branch), speaking on **Motion 147**, said it was "an absolute disgrace" that sick leave was cut under what he termed "those various agreements".

He added: "This issue is as high [priority] as getting our pay restored and getting our half an hour back. We need to get the six months back with full pay. This has to be dealt with and dealt with now as a priority." Motion carried.

Pictures: Dylan Vaughan; Brazier Media



Francis McHugh (EASP Executive Grades), speaking on **Motion 154**, pointed out that "a sick pay cut is a pay cut".

"Sickness is not a phenomenon," he continued, "it's a symptom – a symptom of sick building [syndrome], a symptom of increased and unreasonable workloads, a symptom of stress, a symptom of bullying..."

"How's that in keeping with a positive working environment or promoting respect and dignity in the workplace?" he asked. Motion carried. Na-

tional Secretary Derek Mullen in responding pointed to important developments arising from the Labour Court review, in particular greater discretion on access to Critical Illness Protocol.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES

Francis McHugh (Employment Affairs and Social Protection Executive Grades Branch), speaking on **Motion 4** seeking the removal of FEMPI legislation and the restoration of pay lost under it, emphasised the reforms that had been delivered by civil servants under PSSA.

He told conference: "We need to acknowledge [the] outstanding pay that needs to be restored against a backdrop of a worsening trend of a lowering of civil servants' wages as part of real trend of lowering wages."

"In 1999 workers in Ireland owned 46% of the value of those products and services that they produced. By contrast in 2017 workers took home 37% of what we produced."

Mr McHugh added: "The chief executives of listed Irish companies got paid increases of 6% in 2017 alone. It would take the average civil servant between 141 years and 230 years to earn what top Irish chief executives earn in one year on average. The next pay agreement needs to take FEMPI off the statute books in totality." Motion carried.

Ann Collins (Legal Professional Branch), speaking on **Motion 3**, said: "I still have members in my branch who still have not had pay restoration. We voted for the stability agreement [PSSA] despite the pay and pensions for the common good." Motion carried.

Peter Ryan (FGE Branch), speaking on **Motion 5**, claimed FEMPI legislation had hit "every one of us here" and had disproportionately hit the lowest paid. He urged Fórsa to "push and push on this", adding that the legislation was "causing substantive hardship".

Tony Conlon (PSO Clerical) told conference: "It is important that the Government realise that we have done more for this country than most in this country – including the bigwigs. We're putting into the country while they're taking out. Give us back our time and give us back our money!"

James Higgins (Agriculture Branch) said: "We have to see pay rises come – the private sector got pay rises, the semi state got pay rises, so our officials have to demand that we see pay rises to get back to where we were at."

He also pointed out that some civil servants would retire on less pay than they had when FEMPI legislation was introduced. Motion carried.

Don Deane (Cork CSO Clerical Branch), speaking on **Motion 9**, asked: "Why is it fair that civil servants won't be getting enough in their wages to pay rent in any city in Ireland pretty soon? That's where we're heading..."

Eric Kelly (Longford Clerical) slammed the public perception that all civil servants were highly paid, claiming as a result that the general public had "little sympathy for us in pay talks". He urged the CSO to release pay figures by civil service grade "so the public can see what our wages [really] are..." Motion carried.

Craig Curtis (Dublin Central Clerical Branch), speaking on **Motion 14** calling for the skipping of pay points to help boost the pay of lowest paid civil servants, claimed it was the single biggest reason for low retention levels among clerical officers. "If they do hang around [in the civil service], almost a decade into a career is too long to be losing out on thousands every single year," he said.

Patricia Dowling (OCFA Branch) agreed. "The fact is," she told conference, "most people are leaving [within] one or two years anyway. They're going elsewhere and getting higher pay and that is a loss of expertise within the civil service. We should be getting properly paid to do our job!"

National Secretary Derek Mullen acknowledged there was "much to be done" on incremental scales, but emphasised the importance of the new entrants' pay deal, "which happened much earlier than envisaged under PSSA and came at some considerable cost to Government." Motion carried.

Peter Ryan (FGE Branch), speaking on **Motion 25** calling for regularly-rostered overtime at Christmas to be paid on time, claimed it was driving some of the lowest paid members "into the clutches of moneylenders".

"You can imagine the pressure the low paid are under at Christmas to provide for children and family," he added. Motion carried.

Tony Gallagher (Letterkenny Civil Service Clerical Branch), speaking on **Motion 28** which called for the return of pension-related deduction payments made on overtime, suggested to delegates this wouldn't have happened if the Government had simply called them 'pay cuts'.

"They called them different names just to get them passed so it didn't sound as bad," he said. "They brought in the pension levy first and that was a pay cut. They applied it on overtime work – which doesn't count towards your pension – so, by default, it was a pension-related deduction." Motion carried.

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Theresa O'Donovan Smith (Revenue Executive Grades Branch), speaking on **Motion 120** and calling for the restoration of the Haddington Road working hours for all civil servants in the next pay talks, claimed the agreement had "punished us" with additional unpaid working hours that had impacted negatively on work-life balance.

"Fast forward to 2017," she continued, "and we were offered our previous hours at 34.75 but would have to endure a pay cut. Work-life balance is now a buzzword and what better way to improve our work-life balance than to remove this burden of unpaid hours?"

She added: "The crisis is over. We can't wait any longer. We need action now!" Motion carried.

One delegate speaking on the Haddington Road hours debate, told delegates he had worked out how much he stood to lose.

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Conference 2019

Continued from page 11

"If it stays the same at the extra two-and-a-half hours over the next 20 years as a civil servant at the same grade, I will lose €50,000."

He pointed out that this equated to more than two years salary.

Tony Gallagher (Letterkenny Civil Service Clerical) told conference that the extra hours issue was "at the top of our agenda" and that "we're prepared to do something about it".

Tony Conlon (PSO Branch) agreed. "I want to go to my branch and say we want to get those hours back and if we aren't getting those hours back, are they prepared to take industrial action. We have to be prepared..."

Pat Murtagh (Revenue Executive Grades Branch), speaking on **Motion 137**, told conference that all the drafters of the motion were asking for was for time to be given to those impacted by overpayments to "rearrange their own personal finances - to give people a chance to get used to the reduction in their pay". Motion carried.

Osal Kelly (Foreign Affairs Clerical Branch), speaking on **Motion 144** calling for the union to pursue a judicial review on the right of civil servants to involve themselves in political debate, claimed that the restrictions placed on Irish civil servants was "extremely unusual" by international standards.

"We're not going to get the opportunity to discuss this for another two years," he told conference, "and I'm not happy for the inexorably and painful rate of progress in addressing this issue to continue." Motion carried.

PROMOTION AND TRAINING

A speaker from Revenue Executive Grades Branch on **Motion 186** told delegates: "We need assurances that the promotion and transfer system is being conducted in a fair and balanced manner and that there are no barriers for our members." Motion carried.

SUPERANNUATION

A speaker from Employment Affairs and Social Protection Executive Grades Branch on **Motion 50** reminded delegates "a pension cut or a pension delayed is a pay cut." Motion carried.

A passionate debate then ensued on the protection of civil service pensions. National Secretary Derek Mullen, providing some background to the debate, said unions had faced a "battle royal" to protect pensions against the backdrop of the economic crisis and the demands of the Troika.

"There is a pensions crisis across all sectors of the economy. Defined benefits schemes are disappearing in favour of defined contribution schemes - in fact in some employments there were no schemes at all."

He insisted unions had a responsibility "to do the best we can to protect the pensions of all our members and ensure as much equity as



TOP TABLE Civil Service Division Chair Niall McGuirk, centre, took the helm at the Kilkenny conference



WELL DESERVED Jim Ryan receives Distinguished Service Award on behalf of his colleague Brian Wray

possible," adding, "In the last negotiations we had to make it very clear to the Government that we weren't prepared to give an inch more in terms of pensions."

Mr Mullen pointed out the union had been faced with "no choices or at least Hobson's choices" during negotiations.

Deirdre Meighan (Revenue Cork), speaking on **Motion 62**, seeking to combine B Class PRSI contributions with homemaker's credits for those who take time out for caring responsibilities, told delegates such people took a hit on pay and promotional opportunities and then at the end of their working careers also suffered a loss in their pensions. She noted: "It is an equality issue as it mainly affects women."



HONOUR Khristine Maguire receives Distinguished Service Award from National Secretary Derek Mullen

Motion carried. Phil Bately (Probation Officers Branch), speaking on **Motion 65** resisting the call to raise the pension age, told conference: "Some people want to stay in work, some people need to stay in work... but to increase the years mandatory would erode the possibility that we should all have the possibility and expectation of having a healthy and fulfilled retirement."

He added: "Workers should be able to look forward to their 'third chapter' in those years." Motion carried.

GENERAL

Niall Neely (Employment Affairs and Social Protection Executive Grades), speaking on **Motion 251**, slammed the industrial peace clauses – "that little piece at the bottom" – which he said had been part of every industrial agreement since the 1950s.

He told delegates: "The industrial peace clause is something we need to work around, not for it to be thrown at us every time. No longer should we have situations where we are afraid to take industrial action."

Mr Neely insisted the union should be representing members and not be worried about what the public thinks.

"We should not be afraid to go on strike... I don't want my leaders to be telling me 'No, you can't'. I need to feel that we are not afraid to sanction industrial action."

He added: "Please don't tell us the industrial peace stops a strike. Tell us how to work around it."

National Secretary Derek Mullen said the union had never given up the right to ballot members to take industrial action but had been "measured" on the issue because members had voted for successive national agreements containing such clauses.

He continued: "We're a democratic union and that democracy means that we can make choices about national agreements. We can make choices about whether or not we are going to support national agreements that contain an industrial peace clause."

Mr Mullen said the union had to "decide its battles" and was required under agreement to go to third party arbitration. "Words are easy in this room," he added, "[but] I have, as Head of Division, to respect the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act. If I don't do that, what happens? [Our members] have no protections under the law." Motion carried.

Oisín Murphy (Children and Youth Affairs Executive Grade Branch), speaking on **Motion 252**, asked: "What happened to the principle of an injury to one is an injury to all?"

He insisted it was vital for workers to have access to "our principal weapon... if we are to be effective as a union" and suggested repealing and replacing the 1990 Industrial Relations Act would be the "the biggest strike for workers in achieving the goals that make battles possible and winnable." Motion carried.



Michael Sheridan (Agriculture No. 1 Branch), speaking on **Motion 255** calling on Fórsa to start a campaign to end the "landlord takeover", warned that the developers were "coming back and thriving again" and claimed that Michael Davitt "would turn in his grave".

"If our union leadership doesn't wake up and smell the roses there'll be no roses in a few years time! God help the young people I see in

this room – there more over-60s than there is under-30s!"

Ciarán O'Connor (Limerick Clerical) pointed out that investors were "taking 84% of profits now", adding, "We need to fight back. Rents are skyrocketing, especially in Dublin. I don't understand how young people can afford a mortgage." Motion carried.

News

Garda civilians

Performance management

Management want to put in place a single integrated performance management system. They are proposing the Performance Accountability and Learning Framework (PALF) system, currently used by the Garda.

At the Staff Council meeting in June, Fórsa reiterated its position that the Performance Management Development System was the agreed per-

formance management system for use in the Civil Service. The union said it did not agree to any departure from this agreed system. The AHCPs also confirmed this was their position.

The disagreement to the proposal was recorded and both unions stated that given no agreement could be reached on the matter, it should be referred to adjudication.

EO offer letters amended

As of 17th June, 127 Clerical Officers have been promoted to the EO grade. However, issues continue to arise in the recruitment process, with the wording contained in the original offer letters referring to "acting arrangements", rather than "probationary arrangements". Fórsa took this to management and the 70 staff affected by the wording had their offer letters amended.

A review of the EO recruitment process and competition took place on 1st July. The union highlighted the significant number of issues that had arisen throughout the whole process in a bid to ensure they are not repeated in any future competitions. Fórsa also sought an alternative to management's stated preference for using psychometric testing for shortlisting in future competitions.

Divisional Policing Model meetings held

The four pilot areas for the DPM - Dublin South Central, Cork City, Mayo and Galway Divisions - continue to operate. Meetings have already taken place with members and management in Cork (20th May), Galway (10th June), DMR SC (19th June), with a meeting date awaited for Mayo.

Arising from these meetings, issues relating to staffing and Garda vetting delays were expressed by both our members and by management. The issue concerning the backfill of a hard fought HEO in the Governance Hub in



Picture: Eric Jones (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Cork has been addressed and will be backfilled by a HEO, rather than an inspector which had been mooted

Correspondence has sent to AC Finn, who has responsibility for the DPM, advising him of Fórsa's concerns over staffing and recruitment delays which the union insist must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Staffing and Garda vetting delays were also raised at the Staff Council meeting on 12th June, with an agreement to hold a follow-up meeting to progress these issues.

Garda Communication Centres

Fórsa: There will be no undermining of our role

Fórsa officials voiced their exasperation over changes without consultation to new starts' contracts of employment relating to dispatching duties at a meeting with AC O'Brien and HR representatives on 17th June.

Assistant General Secretary Eddie Walsh told CSQ: "Despite clearly advising them of our position, local management sought to engage our members in an informal manner in order to undermine our position.

"We made it clear to management that should they choose not to address these matters, we will be in dispute and will escalate our response to this undermining of our position."

While existing call takers are not contractually obliged to undertake dispatching work, newly-recruited call takers have dispatching duties provided for in their contracts of em-

ployment. Fórsa pointed out that there had been no consultation, engagement or agreement about such a fundamental change.

Management acknowledged the engagement had not taken place and expressed their wish to resolve the matter through dialogue.

Mr Walsh said: "Management advised us that they would write to local management instructing them to immediately desist in any further antagonising actions."

Meanwhile, a meeting is to be scheduled for staff and management to start discussions on the civilianisation of this role with particular emphasis on training, governance structures, reporting relationships, staffing levels, protocols and procedures.

Management stated that they saw the dispatcher role as being analogous to call takers

and should be filled by Clerical Officers.

Fórsa representatives, however, countered that they did not see it as a CO role, given the added risk and responsibility attached to the position and would be seeking to have the posts filled at EO level.

Mr Walsh added: "The instruction previously issued to all members in AGS that the status quo shall remain until such time as the appropriate consultation and agreement reached in respect to any change in work practices, remains in place."



Eddie Walsh

Garda College Templemore



No cooperation with T&A system

Garda management has been reminded that FGE grades at Garda College, Templemore are refusing to adopt or co-operate with the introduction of the time and attendance system. Currently FGE members sign in and

out of an attendance book. It is not known whether the teacher grades, also represented by Fórsa in Templemore, have previously signed up to the agreement.

Garda Information Services Centre

Staffing tops agenda

Fórsa met with GISC members and management on 30th April, 2019. The meeting confirmed that staffing remains a core issue, which has a knock-on impact on shifts and workloads etc.

GISC management met with national HR in mid-June to discuss

their business case for additional staffing.

And subsequent to that, Fórsa will be engaging with GISC management on this issue. Again, it seems that delays in the backfilling of posts are having an impact nationwide.

Roster Duty Management System

At the Staff Council meeting on 12th June, Fórsa representatives voiced their frustration that while all parties agreed no significant issues had arisen with the implementation of the RDMS pilot, management had still not provided the union with the draft report for review and sign off, prior to any further rollout of the system.

Fórsa underlined that where it is agreed that any further rollout is to take place, appropriate training on the system will have to take place for both management and staff.

As CSQ goes to print, Fórsa is to meet with the Chief Superintendent of Human Resources.

Civil Service Mobility Scheme requests

Those members requesting a move within their Divisional area do not need a formal transfer. They should instead address their requests to the Chief Superintendent of the Division who has authority to reassign staff within his Division.

Management has advised the union that the CSMS has led to a number of vacancies which they are having difficulty backfilling.

Garda ICT posts

Issues which arose with the internal promotion competitions for Project Managers (HEO) and Team Leaders/Supervisors (EO) in Garda ICT were addressed at a

meeting with management on 17th April. Other matters linked to existing members who are EO analogous grades within Garda ICT are being addressed through local discussions and engagement with management.

Consistency sought over acting posts

Fórsa is seeking to engage with HR to agree a transparent policy on how acting posts (both long term and short term) are to be filled going forward, in order to provide transparency and a consistent approach.



Picture: Sean McEntee (CC BY 2.0)

Garda HQ

Use of private contractor queried

Fórsa has queried the use of a private contractor on-site at Garda HQ. It is understood they are currently undertaking service attendant duties. The union also intervened on behalf of a member

who was being dismissed because a fixed-term contract had come to an end. The member continues to work in the position without any detrimental effects to his status.

OPW

Admin competitions

OPW has approached the union about introducing a shortlisting process for all future EO, HEO and AP competitions. Initially, they proposed to introduce it for the current round of competitions but

the union negotiated a stay. However, the union has committed itself to engaging in the next round, subject to agreement being reached on other outstanding issues.

Professional & technical grades issues

Fórsa is working through a number of matters on the professional & technical side in OPW, including one requiring group mediation. Following a long-awaited report on foot of the Architectural Technologist Review, the union is to take the branch's concerns to HR. Assistant General Secretary Clíodhna McNamara told CSQ: "We have issues with the continuing use of contract staff and are awaiting confirmation of numbers and identity of sections and locations. The lack of consultation and the response from HR does cause quite a lot of concern in OPW and is an issue that we are attempting to address."

Oireachtas



Picture: Kent McConnell (CC BY 2.0)

Parliamentary Reporters Group

Discussions have started with the Parliamentary Reporters Group on proposed changes to their work schedule and rosters with new arrangements being piloted after the summer.

Following a lengthy impasse and significant breakdown in relations between line management and branch reps, a new IR

Forum with an independent chairperson has been set up.

The Forum will deal with a range of issues, including updates on rosters/reception team; Saturday/Sunday tours proposal; restoration and changing room projects as well as weekend rosters, annualised hours and attendance registration.

Courts Service

Training opportunities

The AP and HEO competitions have concluded and panels have been created. The EO competition is currently under way with interviews set to be concluded by September. Meanwhile, management have said that staff – including those who were unsuccessful in being shortlisted for interview – will be provided with competency-based training to better equip them in applying for future competitions.

They also pointed out that training funds are available for those seeking to undertake further studies to enhance their career prospects and have encouraged Fórsa members to make use of them. For its part, Fórsa has advised its members to avail of these opportunities while they are available.



10 year strategy

Management have signalled that they are currently drafting a 10-year strategy for the future of the Courts Service, and that they will be seeking engagement with stakeholders on the initiative. Management has said it is committed to early engagement with Fórsa on any issues affecting members and this matter will be a standing item on future Departmental Council agendas.

PMDS update

Further engagement took place between the union and management over role profile forms which will be circulated to those affected staff.

NCSE

Implementation period for new structure is ending

The implementation period of an interim regional management structure at the NCSE is coming to an end following the transfer-in of three support services from the DES.

These services joined with the services already being provided by the SENO grade at the NCSE. The NCSE identified a new organisation structure and engaged with the DES on resource requirements to put this

structure permanently in place. The interim agreement is due to end in August and, as CSQ goes to press, the Government memo on the permanent structure has only just gone to PER. Members are patiently waiting to see if the permanent structure gets approval.

National Secretary Derek Mullen commented: "It is not an ideal situation to be in as we would have wanted a much longer nego-

tiation period as the interim year was not without difficulties and flaws. Not least being the roles, responsibilities and pay of new team and regional managers who are all within Fórsa membership.

"Should permanent sanction not be approved then we must revert to previous sanctioned structures which would cause a lot of issues for our members," he added.

NSSO

'Arbitrary' cut in numbers attacked

Fórsa has an on-going issue with HR concerning members working on the FMSS project at all four locations amid a decision to reduce numbers on the initiative.

The union has described the decision as well as the methodology used to reduce numbers as "completely arbitrary in nature".

It was also made without consultation or

reference to the union or to staff and as such is unacceptable.

Assistant General Secretary Clíodhna McNamara told CSQ: "Despite our best efforts to resolve issues for members, the employer continues to ignore the concerns that have been raised by us and so we have decided to proceed with a case to adjudication."

Branch amalgamation

Fórsa held its first round-table discussion with reps from both branches at all locations in Nerney Court before conference. A number of issues and topics were addressed at the meeting with a view to pulling together terms of reference for the potentially amalgamated branch. It is proposed to hold another meeting in September to progress the issue.

EO comp: complaints lodged

A number of staff members have lodged individual complaints arising out of the most recent EO competition. Fórsa propose to work with branches to identify areas of concern and address outstanding issues. There is a number of other concerns for members in the NSSO and we will work with branches to resolve these too.

Dept of Justice & Equality

Allowances secured for members

Fórsa has secured allowances relating to key holding and photocopying for two members of staff. Management have also been advised of their responsibility to members who have lost allowances as a result of being transferred to different locations within the department.

Department of Foreign Affairs

Clarification over development grades restructuring

At a recent Departmental Council, the Official Side confirmed they had met with AHCPs officials who were seeking further clarification on a few elements of the agreement. Once these clarifications have been provided by HR, AHCPs will follow

this up with their members. Meanwhile, HR confirmed that it is a bilateral agreement – and not a trilateral agreement – and agreed to provide a draft of the Development Specialist Counsellor (DSC) competition booklet in the coming weeks.



An Roinn Gnóthaí
Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine

Allowance submissions

Fórsa has met with individual groups within Agriculture No. 1 Branch, including Wildlife Unit, ERAD, and Meat Group members, to agree Departmental Council submissions seeking allowances for work not covered in the Technical Agricultural Officer grade. It is expected the claims will be made at the next meeting with DAFM on July 10th.

Meanwhile, a bi-lateral meeting took place with the Department at which a claim for the crop section was discussed as well as a claim for an allowance to recognise the need for staff to store and be responsible for costly technical equipment at their home addresses.

Dept to run SAO competition

The Department has agreed to run a Supervisory Agricultural Officer (SAO) competition following pressure from the union. Other competitions related to District Supervisor (DS) are planned but await lateral transfers and the commencing of the SAO competition.

Meanwhile, Agriculture No.1 Branch has agreed to a merit-based panel for successful candidates in future competitions within the grade. The Branch continued to object to DAFM imposing a stipulation of two years in a new location before any further transfer can be considered.

Call centre answering service concerns

A bi-lateral meeting has taken place where representatives from both Admin Clerical and Executive grades discussed concerns about a DAFM move to a call centre-based answering service being implemented in Head Offices. A further meeting with management has

been arranged. Issues have also been raised by the union relating to the application of higher scales for Executive grade members. The union understands that a review and recalculation of arrears will take place in the few cases that have been identified.

Increased activity over no-deal Brexit



Picture: Jeff Djavdat (CC BY 2.0)

Members have reported an increased level of activity in the DAFM as preparations are made for a possible no-deal Brexit in October. Ireland's air and sea ports are likely to see most activity as members are reassigned on a contingency basis to meet any needs that arise following any British crash-out of the EU.

Department of Education & Skills

Tullamore campus refurbishment



There are a number of on-going issues with the DES proposal to refurbish and create space within the existing footprint at the Tullamore offices on Portlaoise Road to accommodate potentially more than 90 members of staff.

These include the fire safety certificate and regulatory compliance as well as possible issues with measurements.

Assistant General Secretary Clíodhna

McNamara told CSQ: "We're awaiting full disclosure from Office of Public Works with due regard to measurements for desks etc, which our colleagues on the P&T side of the house will assess on receipt.

"There is a concern that they are trying to fit too many people into too tight a space, applying minimum standards and maybe not even those."

NEPS

Developing family-friendly policies

Fórsa has been working with NEPS executive branch committee specifically on family-friendly policies. We have resurrected bi-laterals with the DES and hope to start meaningful talks with HR again from September.

Civil Service No. 1 Branch

Fórsa meets with radio engineers

The union has met with radio engineers, a group that feel somewhat isolated in their specialist role within the Coastguard.

Assistant General Secretary Des Fagan told CSQ: "Members are seeking some recognition for the high responsibility they shoulder in their role as well as their workload within the department.

"These members are currently represented by the AMROB section of CS No.1 and are requesting a move to the Marine Branch as well as securing a 1% payment that was paid under the PCW."

Meanwhile, Fórsa has also met with senior management to develop and agree terms relating to the role of community service supervisors.

State Examinations Commission

Fórsa dismay that new posts are temporary

Staffing levels continue to be an issue despite a business case being made to DPER to sanction extra posts.

The SEC has secured additional staffing for the new online marking project. However, Fórsa has expressed its disappointment that these are temporary positions even though the project is permanent in nature.

National Secretary Derek Mullen commented: "There is an enormous reliance on overtime in this employment and it is a very difficult time for administrative grades as more and

more pressure is placed on them especially over the summer months. We continue to work with all branch committees in response to this."

Meanwhile, Fórsa has been unsuccessful in attempts to attain flexible working hours for seasonal contract workers and TCOs. The union is proposing to proceed to take a case to the WRC under the FTW Act in an attempt to secure flexible working hours and we propose to lodge a claim over the same issue to Departmental Council.

Irish Prison Service

HR functions shifting to IPS HQ

The Irish Prison Service (IPS) is in the process of becoming a Scheduled Office. To prepare for this, HR functions for all general service grades in the IPS are currently transitioning from

the Department of Justice and Equality HR section, to be managed by IPS Human Resources Directorate in IPS HQ, Longford. No issues have arisen as part of the transition.

Equality

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.

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.

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?

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.

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 in home, and therefore encourage more women to pursue

the Haddington Road Agreement also had a heavily gendered effect. It hit low to middle income earners hardest, grades predominantly held by women.

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. 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."

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 ban but there's still 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.



promotion. To further facilitate a better balance, Derek also believes there should be greater encouragement for men to make use of 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.

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.

Increased working time under the terms of



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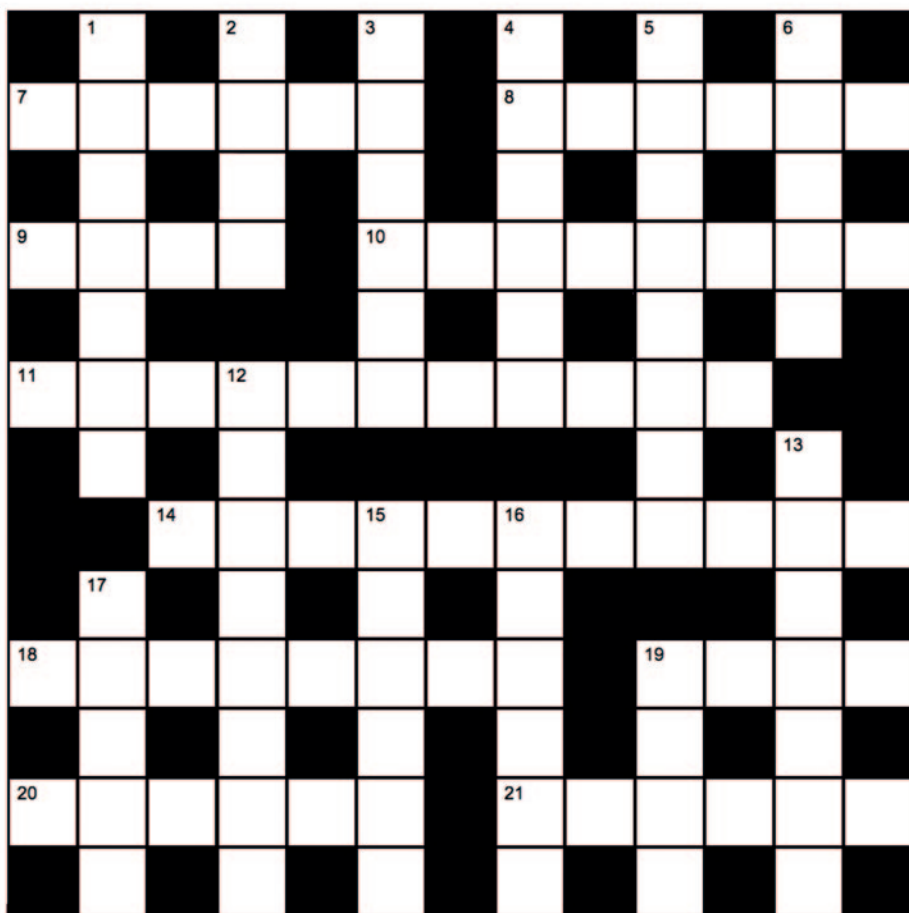
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02/19

Prize Crossword



Across

7. Mountain range, especially in Spanish speaking countries (6)
8. The seventh planet from the Sun (6)
9. Wexford star never gives an inch (4)
10. Wolfe Tone (8)
11. Sashes, that me father didn't wear (11)
14. Operation to repair a damaged blood vessel or unblock a coronary artery (11)
18. Basque city associated with the fiestas of San Fermín (8)
19. This Las - Racecourse in Wales (4)
20. Greek and Roman deity, and Soho theatre (6)
21. See 3 down (6)

Down

1. Soft metal for Nirvana (7)
2. Fionn Mac Cumhaill's dog (4)
3. And 21 across - Galway born author of 'The Silent People' and 'Flight of the Doves' (6)
4. Office furniture (6)
5. South East Asian country (8)
6. Remorse caused by feeling responsible for an offense (5)
12. Property based board game (8)
13. Rowers closest to the stern (7)
15. Collection of science fiction stories by Isaac Asimov, and Will Smith film (1,5)
16. Yellow-coloured liquid component of blood, found in some televisions (6)
17. Frank, and his Mothers of Invention (5)
19. This Off - Travolta and Cage film (4)

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Crossword 01/19 winner

Alan Perkins, Office of the Ombudsman

A **€100 One4All** voucher will go to the first correct solution opened.

Crossword entries for **Crossword 02/19** should be addressed to:

**The Editor, Civil Service Quarterly, Adelaide House,
19/20 Adelaide Road, Dublin D02 WA00
to arrive not later than Friday, 5th September, 2019.**

Name

Work Address

Union Branch

SOLUTIONS Prize Crossword 01/19

Across

1. Barack; 4. Roach; 8. Rodge; 9. Linford;
10. Siobhan; 11. Jake; 12. Ivy; 14. Lear; 15. Otto;
18. Elk; 21. Alex; 23. Unknown; 25. Trachea;
26. Obama; 27. Rated; 28. Enzyme.

Down

1. Baresi; 2. Red Rose; 3. Cheshire; 4. Ring; 5. Aloha;
6. Hedges; 7. Blini; 13. Yorktown; 16. Too Many;
17. Carter; 19. Kumar; 20. Innate; 22. Enact;
24. Chad.