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CSQ

Civil Service Quarterly WINTER 2019



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WINTER 2019

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Tacumshane Windmill, County Wexford, on a frosty winter morning.

Picture: Tony Mullen

**Important notice
to all members
on promotion**

Please remember to notify Payroll if you are promoted from CO to EO or higher as union subs will drop to 0.8% from 1%.

The 1% rate for former CPSU members was to fund the benefits scheme. The scheme carried over from CPSU to Fórsa but only covers former members of CPSU.

Editorial

Into our third year with a full agenda

As we arrive at the end of our second year in Fórsa, I am happy to report that with the assistance of additional colleagues in the Civil Service Division services have improved and we are busy dealing with a significant industrial relations portfolio, both departmentally and centrally.

As we go to press two key disputes in DEASP and DOJE are ongoing and heading to third party. Elsewhere we have turned the heat up with non-cooperation policies in Garda and Housing over failure to consult properly on the civilianisation and reorganisation initiatives in Garda and the centralisation of IT functions under OGCIO.

Following the final Pay Commission report there is much to discuss and progress for many of our professional and technical grades with legitimate recruitment and retention issues to address.

Centrally we have been very busy this year, with the latest phase of mobility up and running for Dublin and HEO/AP mobility negotiations well under way. Important new agreements have been secured including a revised Starting Pay on Promotion circular, which abolishes mark time and a skip increment agreement to deal with the new entrant pay scales.

Early in the New Year we face into potentially difficult negotiations on new attendance management proposals and further discussions on the transition of the Civil Service to the state Industrial Relations systems.

Pent-up demand on pay and hours were well aired at our Divisional Conference earlier in the year and form a key part of pay strategy as

we face into successor negotiations next year.

Organisational issues which arose at our Conference have been addressed resulting in more staffing for the Division and better communication across the Civil Service.

As we enter the Christmas season it is important to remember those who struggle at this time of the year. This can be a difficult time for many people and as we report elsewhere in CSQ, mental health illnesses are on the increase, homelessness is on the rise, many people are living in dire straits and it should cause us all to pause and lend a helping hand where possible.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all my colleagues, the DEC, and Branch representatives a happy and peaceful Christmas as we look forward to 2020, the third decade of the century and the third year of Fórsa Trade Union.

Derek Mullen
Editor



Survey spotlights concerns

Executive and Clerical Fórsa representatives and members from across the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (DEASP) network recently took part in a survey associated with the continued roll-out of Front Office/Back Office, commonly known as FOBO.

The FOBO model defines four teams - Front Office; Back Office; Activation Support Team; and Control Team - with each having different roles in claim processing.

It was envisaged that this proposed structural change would benefit all stakeholders who interact with the DEASP. However, as was clear from a recent Fórsa representatives seminar - and indeed its associated workshops - reps who advocate on behalf of Fórsa members throughout the DEASP held strong views on the consistent roll-out and implementation of this initiative.

Concerns raised were the continuing lack of consultation over FOBO roll-out, increased workloads, cuts in staffing levels and in many cases the lack of engagement and meaningful discussion on issues in the pilot locations.

Furthermore representatives voiced concerns on the potential impact this was having on DEASP clients, who were being negatively affected by the current operating pilot model.

In July, Fórsa advised DEASP of its intention to review the current FOBO interim agreement in October and called on the Department to put the further roll-out of FOBO on hold during this review process.

To date, eight offices have been restructured under FOBO with a further four offices transitioning. While the union continues to cooperate with FOBO in these 12 offices, a decision was taken that there was to be no co-operation with any further roll-out of the model, until such time as a trade union-led review was concluded and the parties had meaningfully engaged in any matters that emerged from the process.

It is also worth clarifying that Fórsa has consistently engaged with the DEASP on FOBO in a bid to resolve any issues raised by members and representatives alike.

Where are we at now?

Fórsa conducted its review during late October 2019 through the distribution of a FOBO-specific survey in the 12 FOBO pilot locations. The objective of the survey was to gather respondents' views and experiences on the roll-out of this model while at the same time facilitating the correlation of data.

The distribution of the survey was conducted by union representatives and staff. In some locations staff experienced difficulty in gaining access to the various workplaces to distribute the survey.

Despite some challenges, hun-



FOBO DISCUSSIONS Fórsa DEASP activists at a recent seminar in Dublin

dreds of DEASP Clerical Officers, Executive Officers and Higher Executive Officers took the opportunity to complete and return the survey.

Consisting of 11 questions, respondents were asked to identify any positive or negative impacts FOBO had on them. They were also asked whether or not FOBO had "improved the service to customers" and what impact - both positive and negative - the roll-out of the initiative had on leave arrangements.

The survey also asked respondents to identify the type of training and additional support they had received as a result of the roll-out and to highlight any concerns they had over health and safety in the workplace.

A detailed analysis of responses was completed and it was found that respondents were consistent in their replies to the survey.

While there was no identifiable opposition to the roll-out of any model that would help DEASP clients, what was clearly seen in the survey is that HEOs, EOs and COs do have significant concerns. These include: lack of adequate training; lack of resources; issues around the processing of claims; work-related stress; and increased workloads. Concerns were also raised over the lack of consultation or resolution to any of these matters.

According to Fórsa, a significant number of issues linked to accessing leave (including leave under family-friendly policies), health and safety and the potential impact on clients were also recorded and will be used by the union.

One respondent stated: "We need to stop and take stock of what is working and what is not working and address these matters properly." Another respondent, from a different FOBO office, commented: "We are not being listened to and we are certainly not taking the opportunity to learn from other offices either."

What's next?

As CSQ goes to print the Implementation Body has referred this matter to conciliation under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission. Fórsa was cited to the Implementation Body following a complaint filed by DEASP management.

Illustration: Xoan Baltar (CC BY 2.0)

Notwithstanding any of this Fórsa is committed to continuing to engage on this and other related matters and will represent and communicate your views. Your opinion, as members of Fórsa, matters and with that in mind we would encourage you all to engage with our network of union activists. You may be contacted by a union representative about this issue and we would encourage your input in this process.

DEASP Clerical Officer Ann McGee, who is also Fórsa President, told CSQ: "Over the last 18 months, we have consistently raised and communicated our concerns related to FOBO to DEASP management but to no avail. But now we have the data. I am extremely proud of us all across the entire department who have chosen to exercise our right to take part in this initiative and to complete this survey."

We have chosen not to sit quietly by and let what is reportedly a flawed system continue to roll-out until other matters are addressed

"We are not just advocating for ourselves but for the clients also. Our continued engagement with this matter is massively important as it isn't solely about the workplace issues that are now evidenced but it is also about respect - respect for ourselves, our colleagues and, indeed, the customers."

She added: "By supporting each other we can make change and I, for one, am committed to doing that and will work through Fórsa to have such matters resolved."

Echoing this sentiment, Higher Executive Officer Michael Crowe, who is also Fórsa Executive Grades Chairperson, said: "As Executive Grades within the DEASP, we stand with our Clerical Officer colleagues and again I and our national committee of Executive Grades are delighted at the high response rate to the survey."

"We have chosen not to sit quietly by and let what is reportedly a flawed system continue to roll-out until other matters are addressed. We will continue to support our union, Fórsa, in its endeavours in this regard and remain committed to working with initiatives that positively benefit our service users."

Fórsa will continue to represent and commu-

on FOBO initiative



TALKING STRATEGY Fórsa Civil Service Head of Division Derek Mullen addresses EO and CO grades reps from the DEASP at a recent meeting

nicate your views but your engagement is critical. We must organise and join together to form one consistent voice to increase influence and secure outcomes.

So it is important to engage with your local representatives on this issue. If you are not a member of the union, join us – and when local briefings and engagements are taking place, attend and encourage others to do the same.

In conclusion, we would like to thank all those who took the time to complete and return the surveys.

Your engagement is crucial and although it may seem to some of you that you are not being listened to within your employment, rest assured that your union is listening and will continue to.

For further information contact your local representative. Additional information is available from Fórsa Lead Organiser Bernie Aston at baston@forsa.ie.

Fórsa Industrial Relations Team:

Paul MacSweeney – pmacsweeney@forsa.ie

Paul Moyer – pmoyer@forsa.ie

FOBO module full details, go to:

<https://bit.ly/2MID1HZ>

BORDER MANAGEMENT UNIT

Premium success following third-party talks

A ballot on the payment of Sunday premium was held during November with a resulting unanimous vote in favour of industrial action, notwithstanding the restrictions set down under the national wage agreement.

The ballot arose following members' frustration at the slow progress of the claim through Departmental Council and the fact that individual and independently-referred claims had been settled at the WRC.

Fórsa has described the ballot outcome as "unprecedented" with 138 ballots issued and 132 returned. All votes returned were cast in favour of taking industrial action.

The matter is also subject to a disagreed report at the DJE Departmental Council.

Following the ballot and in advance of a likely oversight body intervention, it was agreed that the claim would be processed at adjudication during November. But the



WELCOME MOVE Fórsa members at BMU are to be paid a Sunday premium

adjudication was stood down by Fórsa when it became apparent that the terms the union had set to park the ballot outcome and go to third party were being broken by Justice.

Derek Mullen, Head of Division Civil Service, explained: "Essentially all parties had agreed to approach the adjudication in a positive fashion with a view to settling the claim and

recognising the right in law to the premium and the fact that the premium is paid elsewhere in the Civil Service.

"However, some difficulties arose arising from our understanding and as a result of this it was agreed that a separate third-party facilitation, under the auspices of Sean McHugh would take place on 9th December with a view to reaching settlement terms."

As CSQ goes to press, Fórsa is happy to announce that it was agreed through this facilitation process that the long-fought-for premium will be paid to all members in the BMU with effect from 1st January 2020.

However, agreement was not reached on the question of retrospection so it has been further agreed that this question will go back to the Adjudicator for determination under the C&A scheme.

The good news though is that the premium is agreed, which is a really important development in pay terms for all Fórsa members in the BMU in Dublin Airport.

Head of Division Derek Mullen welcomed the outcome, pointing to the importance of the solidarity shown by Fórsa members at the airport and acknowledging the work on the claim by AGS Eugene Quinn.

News

Fórsa fears over no deal after PSSA ends

The possibility that no public service pay agreement will be in place to follow the current deal when it expires at the end of next year has been raised by Fórsa at a meeting of ICTU's Public Service Committee, which represents most unions with members in the public sector.

The union's general secretary Kevin Callinan said Fórsa and other unions needed to prepare for the possibility, while urging the Government to inject more urgency into addressing problems with the current Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA).

Talks with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), which have been under way since April, have reached broad agreement on a basic

architecture for sectoral bargaining. This would allow unions to deal with grade-specific issues in talks early next year, with a view to implementing outcomes as part of a successor to the PSSA.

But there has, so far, been no agreement on the amount of money that would be available to meet such claims. More worryingly, the sectoral process is yet to be signed off at political level.

This needs to happen soon because a near-certain election in the first half of next year will telescope the time available for talks on a PSSA successor. It was expected that these would take place in the spring or early summer of 2020, but it's now possible that an election – or post-election coalition talks –

will be under way at that time instead.

Although PSSA pay increases are budgeted for 2020, next October's budget would have to make provision for 2021. The likely electoral timetable means it's increasingly feasible that negotiations and union ballots may not be concluded by then.

Earlier this year, Fórsa's Kevin Callinan led unions into talks when he said the PSSA was no longer adequate to maintain living standards and keep up with economy-wide wage settlements. Since then the problem has worsened, with average private sector wage growth now running at three times the rate of public service increases.

Unions therefore fear a nightmare worst-case scenario

where public sector pay continues to lag behind in 2020, and no deal is in place to deal with this in 2021 and beyond. The Nevin Economic Research Institute has predicted average economy-wide pay increases of 4% in 2020 – a year when PSSA increases will be a maximum of 2.5% in total.

Fórsa has also insisted that a mechanism for dealing with grade-specific issues, including recruitment and retention difficulties, must be put in place. It says the need for this has deepened since the summer, when the Government wound up the Public Service Pay Commission before it had made determinations for all but a tiny number of grades like nurses and doctors.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES REPORT

Boost staff and overhaul system

Bernard Harbor

Head of Communications, Fórsa

NAMA, the Central Bank, the National Treasury Management Agency, the Garda Ombudsman, the children's agency Tusla, and various State-established tribunals of inquiry are among more than 150 publicly-funded State bodies with no legal requirement to maintain and archive records for eventual release to the public, journalists and academics.

This is one of the findings of a comparative report of Ireland's national archives, which uncovers a system creaking under the pressure of staff and skills shortages, expanded responsibilities, new technologies, space constraints, and legislative shortcomings.

Published by Fórsa trade union in the week that new archival records are due to be made available to the public under the '20-year rule', the report also says that only four out of 61 State departments and agencies covered by the National Archives Act are up-to-date with their legal obligations to transfer records to the National Archives of Ireland. Only six out of the 61 bodies regularly transfer records to the national archives.

The union also says the annual transfer of records under the 30-year rule has been scaled back this year because of a lack of storage space. The report, which was undertaken on behalf of the union's Archivists' Branch by Creative Cultures and Associate, uncovers a substantial backlog in the processing of records, and in making them available to the public. It also identifies major shortcomings in

the digitisation of records and the development of online access.

This is largely due to serious staffing and skills shortages in National Archives of Ireland, which persist despite the additional workload attached to the new legal requirement to publish many sensitive records after 20 years, rather than 30, and the introduction of GDPR regulations. No additional staff have been hired to cope with the move from 30 to 20 years.

The report finds that National Archives of Ireland staff complement is currently 25% below the number identified as necessary in management's 2016 workforce plan.

National Archives of Ireland employs 40% fewer staff per capita than the National Records Office in Scotland, and 25% fewer than the Public Records Office Northern Ireland, while most of its employees have no relevant professional training. Professional archive staff are virtually non-existent in major State departments and agencies.

Fórsa official Sean Carabini said the crisis in the State's archives meant the quality of material made available to journalists, researchers and the public under the 20-year rule, 30-year rule and other services was in rapid and steady decline.

"In reality, most of the State institutions required to file material with the National Archives don't do so. And the majority of public service bodies set up since 1986 have no legal requirement to file with the archives at all. These include organisations like NAMA, the National Treasury Management Agency, State tribunals, the Garda Ombudsman and Tusla,

which have played, or are playing, key roles in Ireland's social, political and economic story," he said.

Fórsa is calling for a fundamental review of the relevant legislation with a view to extending its scope and updating legal requirements on information governance, data retention, GDPR and digital preservation. It also wants a rapid and comprehensive review of record management across the public sector, and larger and more suitable premises to store archives.

Mr Carabini called for an immediate increase in staffing from the current 45 to 60, in line with management's own workforce plan, with an emphasis on trained specialists.

"There are over 50 million records in the archives, many of which predate the foundation of the State. But there are not nearly enough staff in National Archives of Ireland or elsewhere in the State apparatus to properly maintain our public archives in line with the standards being set elsewhere.

"Furthermore, the scant and declining involvement of professionally-trained archivists, including in the digitation of records and IT more generally, is putting the quality of our national repository at serious risk as new technologies increasingly shape the way we keep records and tell our national story.

"Staffing needs to be significantly increased, with recruitment targeted towards specialist archival staff, conservators, and experts in building a functional digital archive," he said.



Sean Carabini

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Passport to the world of work

IBEC and Congress picked 3rd December – the international day of people with disabilities – to launch the Reasonable Accommodation Passports scheme to support people with disabilities in the workplace and set out what they hoped would be achieved by the initiative.

Often there are fears around what reasonable accommodation in the workplace means but it is hoped Reasonable Accommodation Passports scheme will help the conversations to happen.

Decent work is now a crucial part of Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals that chart the global development agenda for the next 11 years.

Target 8.5, set out under Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, states that: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.” ICTU General Sec-



INITIATIVE LAUNCH IBEC's Danny McCoy and Patricia King of ICTU

Picture: ICTU

retary Patricia King said: “We believe that social dialogue is a key mechanism to ensure that the goals are achieved and that is why we have embarked on this joint initiative.

“We hope that the scheme will prove a useful one for advancing the employment and retention of disabled people in Irish workplaces.” She continued: “The scheme was brought to our

attention by the TUC and the GMB trade union who brought a motion urging trade union support for such an initiative in Ireland.

“The motion, which has the strong support of our Disability Committee, acknowledged the significant benefit of quality work for disabled people and recognises the valuable contribution

that they make to the workplace. Equality legislation requires employers to make reasonable accommodation to enable disabled workers to carry out their work on an equal footing with others.

“The right of disabled people to decent work is often denied. We hope that this joint launch will lead to the widespread use of the model in Irish workplaces and makes a contribution to the attainment of decent work for disabled members.”

IBEC chief Danny McCoy said: “The Passport is a tool to support individuals in fulfilling their potential and contributing to their own success and that of the organisation. It is hoped that it will form one of the supports to encourage the employment of people with disabilities and open up conversations around reasonable accommodation.”

For more information check out <https://bit.ly/33YhJr>

Regional Workshops for Branch Treasurers

Overview & Audience This practical workshop will assist new Branch Treasurers to prepare their accounts ahead of AGMs in February and to complete the Branch Return Form. Treasurers who are having difficulty compiling accounts/responses to the Branch Return are encouraged to bring their files to the workshop. Note: For experienced Treasurers, training on matters related to the union finances will be provided in March 2020.

Course Outline This half-day workshop will be led by Margaret Hughes, Finance Officer, and staff from Accounts Dept

The following are the dates and locations of each workshop:

Tuesday 21st January – Nerney’s Court

Wednesday 22nd January – Galway Regional Office

Thursday 23rd January – Sligo Regional Office

Tuesday 28th January – Limerick Regional Office

Wednesday 29th January – Cork Regional Office

All workshops will run from 10am to 1pm with lunch provided at the end of the workshop.

Application Process Treasurers who wish to participate in this workshop should email training@forsa.ie for an application form and return no later than Friday, 3rd January 2020.

1. All applications must be supported by the relevant Branch Executive Committee.
2. Incomplete/unsigned forms will not be accepted.
3. The minimum number of participants for each workshop is 10 and the maximum number of participants for each workshop is 20.
4. Where more than 20 applications per location are received, a waiting list system will operate.
5. Successful applicants will be informed when they have been accepted for this course.
6. Wait listed applicants will be informed that they have been placed on a wait list.
7. Applicants should not attend for training unless they have received confirmation of their place.
8. Applications received after the closing date, will automatically be wait listed.

Travel & Subsistence A separate note will issue to all successful applicants in advance of the commencement of the training in relation to Travel & Subsistence arrangements.

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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.



NEW CLAIMS

More senior staff comps and addressing SO grade anomaly

As agreed at the Civil Service DEC in November, Fórsa has lodged a claim seeking competitions for more senior staff.

Civil Service Head of Division Derek Mullen told CSQ: "This claim is being pursued as an alternative to senior suitable promotions and is seeking to set aside a proportion of posts or have separate competitions for members with more experience, corporate knowledge and specialist skills.

"We have also lodged a claim to adjust the pay linkage for those professional and technical grades originally linked to the Staff Officer grade."

Mr Mullen pointed out that the process to integrate the Staff Officer and Executive Officer grades had been finalised in 2017 and had taken place in response to Action Point 16 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

"Historically, however, a number of professional and technical grades in offices across the Civil Service had been linked to the Staff Officer grade for pay and work determination purposes. There are currently roughly about 120 staff across a number of

Departments that still retain a pay linkage to the now-defunct Staff Officer grade."

The Departments are: Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Chief State Solicitor's Office; Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Director of Public Prosecutions; Education and Skills; Garda Civilians; Housing, Planning and Local Government; Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission; Legal Aid Board; and Revenue Commissioners.

Mr Mullen continued: "The majority of staff - about 90 of the 120 - linked to the SO grade are, as we understand it, located in the Department of Agriculture and the Legal Aid Board.

"Given that the grade to which they were linked for pay and work determination purposes, and given that the general service phase of the SO/EO integration has now been completed, Fórsa is calling for the final phase of the integration to now take place.

"We want the notional SO grade that many professional and technical staff are linked to replaced with a linkage to the Executive Officer grade, that now comprises of an integrated grade of EO and SO."

OTHER ISSUES



Possible HRA breaches

Following reports from a number of Departments, Fórsa is raising a potential breach of provisions within the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) over how overtime rates are being applied. There are also continuing discussions on new entrant pay anomalies arising from the circular.

Meanwhile over in Shared Services, the NSSO customer survey closed on 6th December. The union viewed this as an important survey designed to identify issues of concern relating to HR Shared Services and how it operates.

On the Arbitration front we still await the management counter-statement on our Red Weather Alert claim. We protested at this delay at the last Council and we expect progress shortly as a result.

Mobility discussions are continue for the HEO/AO grades, with particular issues arising issues over specialist posts.



FAIR PLAY, FÓRSA! Mandate's Denise Curran (back centre)

Traveller Equality Network launched

Fórsa recently launched the Traveller Equality Network to highlight the many issues that affect the Traveller community in the workplace.

These issues include dealing with the depth of structural inequalities facing Travellers from accessing workplace as well as socio-economic rights to public policy provisions affecting the community.

The initiative was officially launched at Sligo Town Hall on Saturday, 9th November by Mayor Gino O'Boyle. His introductory remarks were followed by contributions from INVOLVE CEO James O'Leary, Martin Ward of the Galway Traveller

eller Movement and Bernadette Maughan of the Sligo Traveller Support Group.

Event attendee Denise Curran, a long-standing activist with Mandate in Sligo, told CSQ: "I cannot stress enough the importance of these trade union-organised campaigns and facilities which serve to highlight the continued inequalities within Irish workplaces and the wider society.

"At a local level Mandate is only very proud and privileged to lend what support it can to Forsá on this very worthy cause. I am delighted to represent that backing by being present at the event. Fair play, Forsá!" she added.

Keeping you in the loop...

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Garda Area

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Fórsa upbeat after meeting AGS chief

Picture: Greg Clarke (CC BY-SA 2.0)



As members will be aware Fórsa has been grappling with major transformation initiatives in An Garda Síochána particularly the civilianisation programme and the proposed new policing model. To this end the union met with Garda Commissioner Drew Harris on 11th November, in what turned out to be a very positive engagement.

This meeting had been sought over Fórsa's serious concerns about the lack of engagement centrally on the new policing model. This was heightened by the fact that locally chief superintendents were pressing ahead with staff briefings.

As members will know the new policing model is a very significant transformation of Garda regions and divisions, as set out below:

Proposed new regions

- **North Western Region:** Running from Mayo to Louth and from Donegal to Galway. This would replace both the current Northern Region (Donegal, Sligo/Leitrim, Cavan/Monaghan and Louth) and all but Clare of the cur-

rent Western Region (Mayo, Galway and Roscommon/Longford).

- **Eastern Region:** This would incorporate both the current Eastern Region (Meath, Westmeath, Laois/Offaly, Kildare and Wicklow) and all but Tipperary of the current South Eastern Region (Kilkenny/Carlow, Waterford and Wexford).

- **Southern Region:** This would replace the current Southern Region (Cork West, Cork North, Cork City, Kerry and Limerick) and also subsume Clare and Tipperary.

- **Dublin Metropolitan Region** will remain unchanged.

Proposed new divisions

Divisions will be reduced from 28 to 19. The six Dublin divisions and Cork city division would remain unchanged, as would Kerry, Galway and Limerick. But all other divisions would merge with neighbouring ones. This includes: Cork North and Cork West; Clare and Tipperary; Mayo and Roscommon/Longford; Donegal and Sligo/Leitrim; Cavan/Monaghan and Louth;

Meath and Westmeath; Laois/ Offaly and Kildare; Wicklow and Wexford; Kilkenny/Carlow and Waterford.

Clearly there is the possibility of serious industrial relations issues arising particularly taking account of the fact that all this is happening simultaneously with the biggest civilianisation programme in the history of An Garda Síochána.

By 2021, Fórsa expects civilian staff numbers to double to at least 4,000, more than a



Commissioner Harris

Increase in civilian staff ... should bring new challenges, different work and promotional opportunities for our members

Meeting members and answering questions

Fórsa is also preparing to visit the lead divisions over the coming weeks - including Galway, Limerick, Meath, West Meath, Cork City, and DMR South Central - to meet our members and address important questions. These include issues around union organisation, attracting new members and representatives as well as ensuring that everyone is

fully briefed on the major industrial relations agenda we are dealing with.

ASG Thomas Cowman told CSQ: "This is a time of huge importance for our members in An Garda Síochána and we look forward to meeting them on the ground over the coming weeks to ensure we have the fullest engagement possible."

In conclusion, members

should note that until such time as the appropriate consultation and engagement arrangements are agreed with Fórsa the status quo should remain.

In the event of approaches being made by management, members are advised not to engage and are asked to immediately contact either their local Fórsa rep or the Fórsa office.

100% increase. As members will be aware civilian staff will replace gardaí as they move back into operational roles.

This should bring new challenges, different work and promotional opportunities to our members. However, as we said to the Commissioner, there needs to be better engagement centrally.

Currently Fórsa is operating a policy of non-cooperation with local briefings, but we did advise the Commissioner that we would change this position if we could agree satisfactory arrangements for central engagement and negotiation. To this end the 11th November meeting was very positive, with strong commitments for a major briefing and bilateral discussions, both on the new policing model and the ongoing civilianisation programme.

In focus...

History won't be kind to us if we fail to preserve our state records

Sean Carabini

Assistant General Secretary, SNA Branches

Recently, Fórsa published a report on the National Archives that was undertaken on behalf of the Fórsa Archivists' Branch by cultural and heritage development consultants Creative Cultures and Associate.

The report compares the National Archives of Ireland with similar-sized institutions across Europe, namely PRONI (Northern Ireland), the Rigsarkivet (Denmark) and the National Records Office in Scotland.

Before discussing the findings and recommendations of the report, a little background and context is in order.

Firstly, while many people will know the National Archives in relation to genealogy, the institution is about so much more than that. It is, quite simply, a record of our State. It is a record of the decisions we have made and the way in which we have made them – or, at least, it is supposed to be.

In reality, many state institutions that are required to file with the National Archives do not. Additionally, the majority of public service bodies that have been established since 1986 have no requirement to file with the archives as relevant legislation has not been updated.

The majority of government bodies struggle to devise or implement record management strategies, let alone introduce archiving protocols in conjunction with the archives.

A particularly worrying trend in recent years has been the non-involvement of archivists – generally – in relation to government IT plans.

There is a perception that simply scanning a record is the same as archiving it. But it is not. Scanning a document cannot tell you anything about where it came from or the process involved in creating and, therefore, when records are not properly archived, the reason behind the decision is often lost.

The Creative Cultures report is now available on the Fórsa website at <https://bit.ly/2DLILOy>

While there are a myriad number of useful, practical and necessary recommendations contained within it, there are a few key recommendations that deserve highlighting:

1. Increase in staffing

There are more than 50 million records in the archives. Many pre-date the foundation of the state. In short, there are not nearly enough staff employed either within the archives itself or within the general government (feeding in to the archives) to be able to properly maintain the National Archives in line with the standards

that are being set by our contemporaries in Europe. Furthermore, staffing needs to be targeted. Specific archival staff are needed. Conservators are needed. Those with the expertise in building a functional digital archive are needed.

2. Archive repository project

Currently, the archive warehouse in Bishop Street, Dublin, is being expanded to help the National Archives to address some of its capacity issues. But it is not enough. The OPW has been helpful in finding storage space in the private sector for our archive material. However, the large sums of money currently being spent on this would be unnecessary if there was enough warehousing space built. This has also had a knock-on effect to the volume of files that the archives can accept from those Departments that chose to meet their archiving obligations.

3. The 30-year rule

Of particular urgency is the need to recruit additional staff to meet the stated government goal of reducing the 30 year release rule of government materials to 20 years. Currently, there are no additional staff to meet this goal.



Picture: Public Domain

mation governance, data retention, GDPR and digital preservation. Furthermore, a complete review of record management in the public sector should be undertaken with immediate effect.

The US philosopher George Santayana wrote that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” and it could be added that those who do not learn from their mistakes are also bound to repeat them.

The National Archives should be a repository for the mistakes, the successes and the failures of the State. That ‘story’ is supposed to be held in the National Archives.

At present, this country is commemorating the decade of centenaries that led to the foundation of the State. While we have rightly taken care to ensure that we have commemorated these series of important events appropriately, we have somehow overlooked investing in the place that holds the documents that tell the story of what we have done with our country.

We call on the Government to take the appropriate steps to ensure that our archives can operate to the high standard that those who live in our state expect. Otherwise, how will we, as a nation, understand what we have been through if there is no legislative requirement to



National Archives of Ireland

State can't shelve its responsibility to future generations

Picture: Rural Matters (CC BY-NC 2.0)



RECORDING OUR STORY National Archives of Ireland in Bishop Street, Dublin

How will future historians be able to understand the story of the state when there is not enough shelving space to accept the records? What will we lose when it is found that we had far too few conservators to rescue and stabilise important documents?

keep the records of NAMA, no obligation to keep the records from any tribunal that has been established in the last 20 years, no requirement to keep the records of the Greyhound Racing Board?

How will future historians be able to understand the story of the state when there is not enough shelving space to accept the records? What will we lose when it is found that we had far too few conservators to rescue and stabilise important documents?

I can think of no more fitting legacy from this decade of commemorations than to do the right thing and invest in the place where the story of what we have done is kept.

News

Data Protection Commission

DPC to separate from Justice

The DPC is scheduled to separate from the Department of Justice and Equality on 1st January 2020.

A sub-committee of Departmental Council set up to oversee any IR issues met on 19th November, while AGS Eugene Quinn held separate meetings with DPC members in

Portarlington and Dublin on 12th and 13th November.

Local reps are being appointed to coordinate with Eugene to address members' concerns. One of the biggest issues to arise that a substantial number of staff wish to remain in Justice and Equality.

Picture: GetCredit (CC BY 2.0)



Central Statistics Office

Jump increments outcome awaited

Meetings about the outcome of the Arbitration Board on jump increments for statisticians are set to continue. Management will table proposals to give the same effect as jump increments over the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, issues over pay for enumerators and work scheduling

are being dealt with, and management is to provide information about the number of staff achieving full bonus payments.

In other issues, it is understood the migration to Soft Works Time and Attendance system may give rise to problems, and a detailed proposal is awaited.

Property Registration Authority

Bilateral talks on work-sharing

Talks on the limited allocation of work-sharing options are taking place at Departmental Council. A bilateral of clerical and executive grades is expected in the coming weeks to discuss this and other matters,

Meanwhile, a proposal from the Technical Branch over changes to team structures in Irish Life was made and discussed at a meeting on 9th July. No resolution was reached and further talks are set to take place.

Department of Education

Talks over planned HEO comp

Talks are continuing over the proposed HEO competition and Fórsa is also discussing the liability to panels at EO level.

AGS Clíodhna McNamara commented: "We have moved from a position of a liability of 60 two years ago to just nine for the internal panel. However, we are awaiting clarification from the department over their position on how these liabilities should be reduced."

He added: "Members in the department have been awaiting an internal EO competition for a long number of years and discussions are on-going."

Refurbishment move

After a long period of negotiation by staff panel led by the Executive Grade Branch of the Department, more than 60 staff are being decanted into the NSSO Offices in Tullamore in two phases with effect from the end of November on the back of a decision to refurbish the Department of Education office in the town.

Recommendations have also been made by the Fire Officer which the employer has given a commitment to implement during the refurbishment. Discussions will continue during this time.



Valuation Office

Valuation Work referred to the Oversight Body

The outsourcing of some valuation work was referred to the Oversight Body which arranged a conciliation conference in the WRC. However, this did not solve the matter and management have now signed contracts for this work to be carried out.

A meeting involving the Valuation Professional Branch and General Secretary Kevin Callinan took place in Nerney's Court on 20th June. It was decided to ballot members in the GVO Professional Branch on industrial action. This is now with the Branch Executive for further consideration.



Higher scales awarded to COs

The Department had not reviewed the awarding of higher scales to Clerical Officers for some time. However, the last quarter of this year saw the awarding of 12 higher scales - four to Dublin/Tullamore and eight to Athlone. This does not include the extra percentage due for 2019.

NCSE

First Dept Council held

The Departmental Council held its first meeting recently at which terms of reference were agreed. David Denny is to chair the Departmental Council, which will be made up of ASTI, TUI, INTO, AHCPs and Fórsa representatives. SENO members have welcomed its setting up and are looking forward to working with their colleagues on this forum.

NEPS

Conference 'success'

The NEPS Conference in November, described by AGS Clíodhna McNamara as a "success", saw a number of new members join the union.

It comes as Civil Service Division Lead Organiser Bernie Aston is working closely with the branch on a recruitment drive. Meanwhile, Fórsa has also arranged bi-laterals with HR going forward.

NSSO

SWY restrictions

Fórsa raised concerns with the NSSO about restrictions being placed on the SWY scheme for members. The Department imposed a restriction of four weeks in total across all locations, all sections and all grades.

The union pointed out that the stats gathered by the Department did not reflect a true picture of the

number of weeks members would like to apply for. This was because the Department was not facilitating applications but rather placing a restriction on applications for anything over four weeks.

Following these representations it was agreed that we would issue a joint statement with the



NSSO inviting members (staff) to indicate what they would like to apply for in line with the provisions of the SWY scheme if all else was equal and there were no restrictions.

AGS Clíodhna McNamara commented: "While there is no guarantee that the Department will lift the restrictions this year, it will give us a true picture of the stats and be very useful in negotiations going forward."

OPW

Data call on use of contract staff

Fórsa has highlighted what it calls a "communications difficulty with OPW HR on the professional and technical side of the house".

AGS Clíodhna McNamara told CSQ: "We have a number of outstanding concerns about the use of contract staff which is slow to be dealt with. We are still trying to get stats from OPW over numbers and projects etc. as it is clear that the use of contract staff is taking over from recruiting permanently into technical grades."

She added: "There is a long outstanding issue also left unresolved for the AEHS Branch on the Architectural Technologist Review which we are endeavouring to deal with but - once again - communications from the employer have been very poor."



Clíodhna McNamara

Shortlisting proposal put forward on comps

There is a shortlisting proposal on the table for competitions to EO, HEO and AP which the Executive Grade Branch and Clerical Grade Branch are considering. AGS Clíodhna McNamara com-

mented that while Fórsa had given a commitment to engage, "it's difficult to move forward on one issue while there is a lack of communication on other matters".

Taoiseach

Internal candidates can apply for PO comp

HR has agreed to allow internal candidates access to an impending press officer competition following representations by the Branch.

Meanwhile, Fórsa is also drafting a policy proposal to deal with 'secondment' arrangements in the Department which currently represents about 10% of core staff.

Dept of Housing/Environment

OGCIO to manage IT shared services

OGCIO is to manage I.T. shared services across departments with the project rolling out over the next number of years.

To date no commitment has been given that the 20-25

members of staff who have I.T. roles can follow the work to the shared service. Added to this, there is lack of information over temporary or contract posts relating to the project.

Primary & Post Primary Inspectors

Communication commitment

Following a number of concerns about communication and consultation, at our most recent bi-lateral with the Senior Management Group (SMG), commitment was given to communicate more effectively over projects, pilots

etc. in advance of implementation.

Both branches plan to come together in the New Year to meet with the SMG recognising that they have shared and common interest in a large number of IR issues.

Oireachtas



Picture: Kent McConnell (CC BY 2.0)

Atmosphere 'much improved'

Fórsa continues to make progress on a range of issues for the Usher Grade and, according to reports locally, the last few months have seen a "much improved workplace environment". Meanwhile, the pilot

on certain workplace changes for Parliamentary Reporters is ongoing with the issue of "compensatory leave" being the main issue that remains unresolved.

Meteorologists/CLME

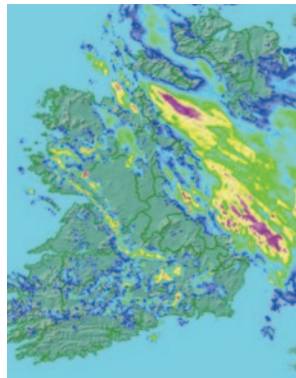
Recruitment and retention key issues

The main issue for professional/technical grades is recruitment and retention with a particular focus on the final report of the Commission on Public Sector Pay.

Discussions also continue with the Branch over shortages of staff in forecasting pending staff training.

Meanwhile, in terms of membership, there are plans to hold an induction day early in the New Year.

Picture: Met Eireann



In brief...

AMRO

Issues have also arisen over the recruitment and retention of professional/technical staff. This branch is also working on professional added years claim.

Dept of Rural and Community Development

A ballot is about to commence on the higher scales option for the CO grade. Meanwhile, there a continuing dispute over CO duties in Ballina.

Charities Regulator

Discussions are continuing over proposals to change the status of the Charities Regulator so that it becomes an independent standalone public service body.

Foreign Affairs/Irish Aid

Local hiring 'is akin to outsourcing'

An issue has arisen whereby work previously done by civil servants sent to work in the Irish embassy in London has been advertised in London for local hires.

These are direct employees of the embassy and are not civil servants. This has implications for the oppor-

tunities available to our members at Service Officer, Clerical Officer, HEO and Third Secretary levels.

As a result, Fórsa has written to the Department pointing out our difficulties with this and underlining that we may need to bring this to a third party. Since

then, the Department has clarified the situation to our satisfaction.

Meanwhile, agreement has been reached between Fórsa and Irish Aid/Foreign Affairs in relation to the Development Specialist area.

Picture: Scrawkabb (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht

Conservation Ranger pay review sought

Fórsa will shortly take a claim to the Department to seek a review of the Conservation Ranger pay arrangements. The level of responsibility of the position is similar to HEO level work. However, the payscale linked to it begins at €21,000. We are also seeking to resolve

staffing issues (possibly by competition) in the conservation, architectural heritage and placenames areas. In particular, we are seeking clarification on the status of the district regional manager posts and why they have not been filled.

In brief...

DPER

An internal competition for Executive Officer has just commenced in the Department.

GSOC

Talks over a Flexibility Allowance in certain investigation areas is continuing. The process is being managed by the branch committee.

Probation Service

Consultation with grassroots

Management have published a report undertaken by Velia that details future changes to working practices and structures in the Probation Service.

According to the union, some of these recommendations are welcome and some are not and Fórsa has begun an in-depth consulta-

tion with the members on the ground.

AGS Sean Carabini told CSQ: "We have started a roadshow that aims to capture the thoughts of as many members as possible in the Probation Service to ensure that we have the data required to tackle the issues in the report."

Legal Branches

Fórsa exploring pay anomalies

Fórsa is currently exploring a number of pay anomalies in the legal area. These include: starting pay and recognition of external experience; post-2010 pay cut anomalies; and jump increments (similar to the arbitration

in the CSO area in May 2019).

Meanwhile, in the Legal Aid Board, there are specific difficulties relating to unreasonable workloads and very sub-standard accommodation.

Forensic Science Ireland

Function merger deal in the offing

An agreement will shortly be reached with Forensic Science Ireland management and the Department of Justice over the merging of functions between FSI and the Garda National Technical Bureau. This will ensure that the necessary scientific qualifications needed to become an FSI scientist will be maintained.

A separate career structure for gardaí who enter the FSI with experience - but without the relevant qualifications - will be created.

Furthermore, as a result of the negotiations, a committee will be set up to explore possible promotional outlets for analysts in the

Picture: WorldSkills UK (CC BY 2.0)



context of the planned move to a new facility at Backweston.

AGS Sean Carabini commented: "It should be noted that the design of the industrial relations strategy was put together in open forum with all members in FSI on a number of occasions. Members have had input into the processes at all times. The direction and agreement have been member-led."

Revenue

Support call over panel guidelines

Revenue staff panel has asked divisions for support in approaching CSD to provide guidelines on transfer panels, inter-transfer panels, mobility panels etc. as there appears to be some confusion about them across all divisions.

Talks continue on SWY

Discussions continue on Shorter Working Year (SWY) issues given that the agreed process was not followed in some divisions. It has been agreed that going forward a letter will be drafted and agreed by both management and staff panel for people who wish to apply for SWY. Where possible, stats comprising of a wish-list, requests and actual leave allocated will be provided to the staff panel.

Agreement on rostered phone lines

Following an instruction from management for members to operate phone lines full-time during the school mid-term break, it has been agreed that a written agreement will be drawn up between management and staff panel. This will be based on existing arrangements of rosters, predicted times of spike in calls, lower staffing levels due to school terms, annual leave, and Shorter Working Year arrangements.

TRADE FACILITATION

Reassigning staff a temporary measure

As we face into the latest Brexit extension, Revenue management have said it is necessary to assign alternative work to Trade Facilitation staff because at present there is insufficient appropriate work to sustain the number of staff deployed there.

This is a short-term measure due to the continuing uncertainty about Brexit.

Following full consultation with senior management Fórsa agreed that a global 'expression of interest' would be issued to all staff recruited into Trade Facilitation. These additional staff were re-

cruited to deal with the potential increased volume of work which Brexit is expected to bring.

The purpose of the 'expression of interest' is give staff working there an opportunity to take up temporary assignments in an alternative location.

Senior management have already identified a number of areas, including Athlone and Portlaoise mail centres along with locations in Dublin, such as O'Connell Street, Bishop Square, and Damastown. Management also hope to assign some staff to the enforcement side of Customs.

TALK TO US

If things are getting to you

A registered charity



116 123 **FREE**

This number is FREE to call



jo@samaritans.org



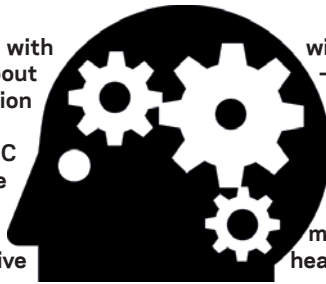
samaritans.org

Issues

When it comes to **mental health** it's about us all

At this time of the year many people struggle with their mental health - be it worrying or stressing out about money in the run-up to Christmas, dealing with addiction issues or a range of other factors.

Jarlath O'Connor, of Fórsa's Health Division and an NEC member, shone an important light into a very dark space in Ireland during a presentation at our last NEC meeting. He pointed out that we all need to speak up about mental ill health as it affects one in four of the population. We all live



with people who suffer with mental health disorders - our family, our partners or our colleagues and we need to look out for them and we need to remove the stigma that attaches to such illness.

In particular, Jarlath, who works in mental health services, emphasised there is so much more employers and unions can do to help members who are struggling with their mental health...

Seek help, take control

Jarlath O'Connor

Mayo Mental Health Services

Mental health is how we feel, how we relate to others and how we go about doing our day-to-day activities. Mental health can be positive and good but mental health can also be feeling poor, feeling down and feeling unwell.

It is important to know that the quality of a person's mental health isn't fixed. The biggest challenge for any person diagnosed with a mental illness is accepting the diagnosis - why did it happen to me?

The reality here is that it is not your choice. However, the way you choose to accept your diagnosis is your choice. You can dwell on it and therefore nothing will change and you will get into a rut or you can accept your diagnosis and start to learn how to manage it.

What are the signs that you need to look out for? Changes in behaviour, changes in your thoughts, changes in your interactions with

others - only you will know what they are.

The important thing is to have the early intervention because the longer you ignore something, the longer it takes to recover - early intervention is the key.

The reality here is that it is not your choice. However, the way you choose to accept your diagnosis is your choice

Early intervention in the first instance, could involve an informal chat with your family/partner/friend or even a colleague. Together a decision could be reached to start managing your feelings. You could access the Employee Assistance Programme, or you could visit your GP - either way it's a start.

If you are referred to the HSE services, you will be assigned a key worker who will liaise with you and your MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team). It's an evaluation of yourself and it's "all about you". It's about educating yourself about your diagnosis in a positive way, about knowing the facts, and recognising the symptoms. Empowering yourself to take control.

Employers need to judge the person not the diagnosis, support their staff in their recovery, have a plan in place that staff feel valued and support the recovery not punish it. Have open days about mental health.

All companies have a duty of care under Health & Safety to provide a safe place of work for their employees.

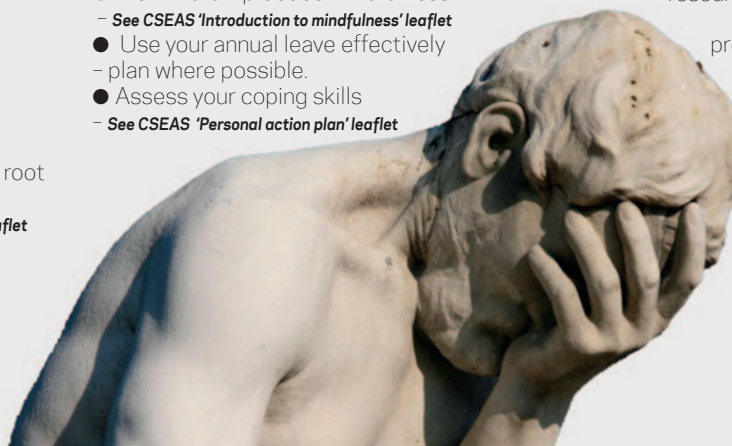
Good employers should also provide training in mental health that should be part of Health & Safety. Unions can also play an active role influencing such changes. We all need to speak up about mental health.

Reducing stress in your life...

CONSIDER

- Where possible and practical plan your day. Use 'to-do lists' or 'reminders' to help.
- Approach difficult tasks when you are most alert.
- Effective communication helps to resolve conflicts and clarify misunderstandings before they escalate into ongoing problems - See CSEAS 'Effective Communication' leaflet
- If you have had a particularly difficult phone call or experience, talk it over with a supportive other person. This helps to defuse emotional tensions before they take root in physical tension - See CSEAS 'Dealing with difficult phone calls' leaflet
- Develop problem solving skills - make a quick list of ways to solve a problem and experiment with different approaches.
- What situations in your daily life trigger a stress response - how can you change this?

- Learn to recognise your signals of stress and be proactive in the management of your stress - See CSEAS 'Stress management' leaflet
- Identify positive things in your working day.
- Reward yourself - little things - what are the things you enjoy?
- Be Mindful - practice mindfulness - See CSEAS 'Introduction to mindfulness' leaflet
- Use your annual leave effectively - plan where possible.
- Assess your coping skills - See CSEAS 'Personal action plan' leaflet



Civil Service Employee Assistance

The CSEAS provides a wide range of free and confidential* supports to staff and management of the Irish Civil Service designed to assist employees to manage work and life difficulties which, if left unattended, could adversely affect work performance and/or attendance and quality of life. The CSEAS, under central management in DPER is an important shared service element of the human resource structure in the Civil Service.

It plays a key part in an ethos of promoting employee wellness and organisational effectiveness.

Employee Assistance Officers (EAOs) are located in Dublin (Head Office), Tullamore, Cork, Limerick, Castlebar and Sligo, providing a shared service to all Government Depts/Offices

*Exceptions to confidentiality apply, for details, go to <https://bit.ly/2LfhwyI>

Contact CSEAS
Tel: 0761 000 030
Email: cseas@per.gov.ie
Website: www.cseas.per.gov.ie

Picture: Alex. E Proimos (CC BY 2.0)

Reducing stress...

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

- Deep breathing interrupts the stress response and relaxes your nervous system.
- Stretching interrupts the accumulation of muscular tension.
- Meditation gives the body time to relax and recuperate.
- Progressive Muscular Relaxation – a purely physical technique for relaxing your body when muscles are tense.
- Exercise produces endorphins – happy hormones that make us feel better able to cope.
- Be mindful of your alcohol intake when stressed.
- Imagery can be used in rehearsal before a big event, allowing you to run through it in your mind. It allows you to practice in advance for anything unusual that might occur, so you are prepared and already practiced in handling it.
- Watch out for that inner negative self-talk – challenge it.
- Schedule down time for yourself.
- Sleep gives you time to rest, relax and replenish your body and mind.
- Worry diaries are tools used to help manage worry especially at night time.
- Hobbies – Doing something you enjoy is a great way of switching off and recharging your batteries.
- Diet – Eat a healthy diet to support a stress free life.

See CSEAS 'Understanding stress' booklet for further information

REMEMBER – IF YOU ARE:

- **Worried or anxious**
 - **Feeling overwhelmed**
- TALK to a trusted colleague, manager, family member, GP or to the CSEAS...**

Other useful links...

Pieta House Preventing Suicide and Self Harm'
T: 1800 247 247; W: www.pieta.ie
Mental Health Ireland 'Your Mental Wellbeing'
T: 01 248 1166; W: www.mentalhealthireland.ie
The Samaritans Call free phone: 116 123
HSE 'Your Mental Health'
T: 1800 111 888
W: www2.hse.ie/mental-health
World Health Organisation
W: www.who.int
World Federation for Mental Health –
W: www.wfmh.global
Irish Hospice Foundation 'Think Ahead'
T: 01697 3188; W: <https://bit.ly/37ZfTip>



Picture: Sari Montage (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Call on Irish government to act over Israeli Army's systematic maltreatment of Palestinian children

This brutality must be ended

Leading Irish trade unionists have called on the Irish government to halt trade links with Israel in protest at the systematic maltreatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli military.

The call came at a recent two-day conference in Dublin on Palestinian children's right to a safe and just future. The event was organised by the Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP) in association with ICTU-affiliated unions on 22nd and 23rd November.

Speaking in advance of the event, TUFP's Denis Keane said an ongoing Israeli strategy of mass arrests and maltreatment of Palestinian children was being implemented on an "industrial scale," and appeared to be part of a deliberate policy to traumatise large numbers of children.

According to UNICEF, the United Nations agency for children, 59 Palestinian children were killed by Israeli forces in 2018. Another 3,472 were injured, while more than 200 children – some as young as 12 – were detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system every month. An earlier UNICEF report said the "ill treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalised."

Mr Keane told CSQ: "Israel is the only country in the world that prosecutes children through military tribunals instead of civilian courts, and it is doing this on an industrial scale. Even strong allies of Israel have expressed alarm at its treatment of Palestinian children.

"We are calling on the Irish government to take a stronger stand on Israel's deliberate policy of killing, injuring, imprisoning and traumatising thousands of children. It should end all economic and trade links with Israel until the physical and psychological maiming of Palestinian children stops."

Marking the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the TUFP conference came in the same week that the US Government declared it no longer considered Israeli settlements to be illegal – a move described in a subsequent Financial Times editorial as "a decisive step towards making Israel a de facto apartheid state."

The conference heard from former child detainee Ahmed Alsoos, who spoke about his personal experience, along with a panel of experts on the maltreatment of children in the Israeli occupied territories.

The event also brought together representatives from ICTU affiliates – including unions representing staff in education, childcare and child health – government representatives, representatives of political parties, and NGOs involved in addressing the needs of children.

Mr Keane said: "The suffering and psycho-



FIRST HAND ACCOUNT former child detainee Ahmed Alsoos (left), pictured with Khaled Quzmar

logical trauma endured by Palestinian children is not a by-product of the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. It is a deliberate policy of the Israeli occupying authorities. This demands a significant and appropriate response from Ireland and the rest of the international community.

"The assault on the rights of Palestinian children has caused alarm within the trade union movement for some years. That's why we have organised this conference addressing the denial of the rights of Palestinian children living under occupation."

Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP) is supported by almost all ICTU-affiliated trade unions on the island of Ireland. For many years the Irish trade union movement has had a strong position of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Twelve years ago, ICTU adopted a policy of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and put pressure Israel to comply with international law.

59

Number of Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces in 2018

3,472

Number of Palestinian children injured by Israeli forces in 2018

Source: UNICEF

FESTIVE TIPPLE...**Mulled Wine***... for some festive cheer***INGREDIENTS:**

- 2 clementines
- 1 lemon
- 1 lime
- 200 g caster sugar
- 6 whole cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 fresh bay leaves
- 1 whole nutmeg, for grating
- 1 vanilla pod
- 2 bottles Chianti or other Italian red wine
- 2 star anise

DIRECTIONS:

1. Peel large sections of peel from the clementines, lemon and lime using a speed-peeler.
2. Put the sugar in a large saucepan over a medium heat, add the pieces of peel and squeeze in the clementine juice.
3. Add the cloves, cinnamon stick, bay leaves and about 10 to 12 gratings of nutmeg. Halve the vanilla pod lengthways and add to the pan, then stir in just enough red wine to cover the sugar.
4. Let this simmer until the sugar has completely dissolved into the red wine, then bring to the boil. Keep on a rolling boil for about 4 to 5 minutes, or until you've got a beautiful thick syrup. This is done first to create a wonderful flavour base by really getting the sugar and spices to infuse and blend well with the wine. It's important to make a syrup base first because it needs to be quite hot, and if you do this with both bottles of wine in there you'll burn off the alcohol.
5. When your syrup is ready, turn the heat down to low and add your star anise and the rest of the wine. Gently heat the wine and after around 5 minutes, when it's warm and delicious, ladle it into heatproof glasses and serve.

IN VERSE...

Clare O'Reilly is a Fórsa member and works in the Department of Health. She is also a keen poet. Here she reflects on the less fortunate in society at this time of the year. We thought it expressed perfectly the theme to this edition of CSQ - *just keep an eye out for people and lend a helping hand whenever you are able...*

Christmas joy...

It was coming up to Christmas, the cards were piling in
Trees were going up all around with lights a twinklin'
Children were getting so excited, even adults too
Everyone was all agog, about their Christmas do!

Santa's letter had been written in every house in town
Favourite Christmas songs playin', to make a smile of each frown
'Have a good one' people wished each other with good cheer
And hoped all good things ahead for the New Year

But many were struggling to put on a brave face
And get through the season with as much good grace
The separated father who would not see his little one
Or the guy who sleeps on our streets at night, he has no home!

Or the guy who had buried his Dad last month
Or the girl who had lost her baby - due this month
Or one of the many who has a very sad story to tell
But does not, and instead, at Christmas time, smiles and wishes you well!

So think of these people as you put on the lights
And send them a wish or a prayer
And hope that somehow, this year, in your
Joy and happiness, they will share!

AND FINALLY...



**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

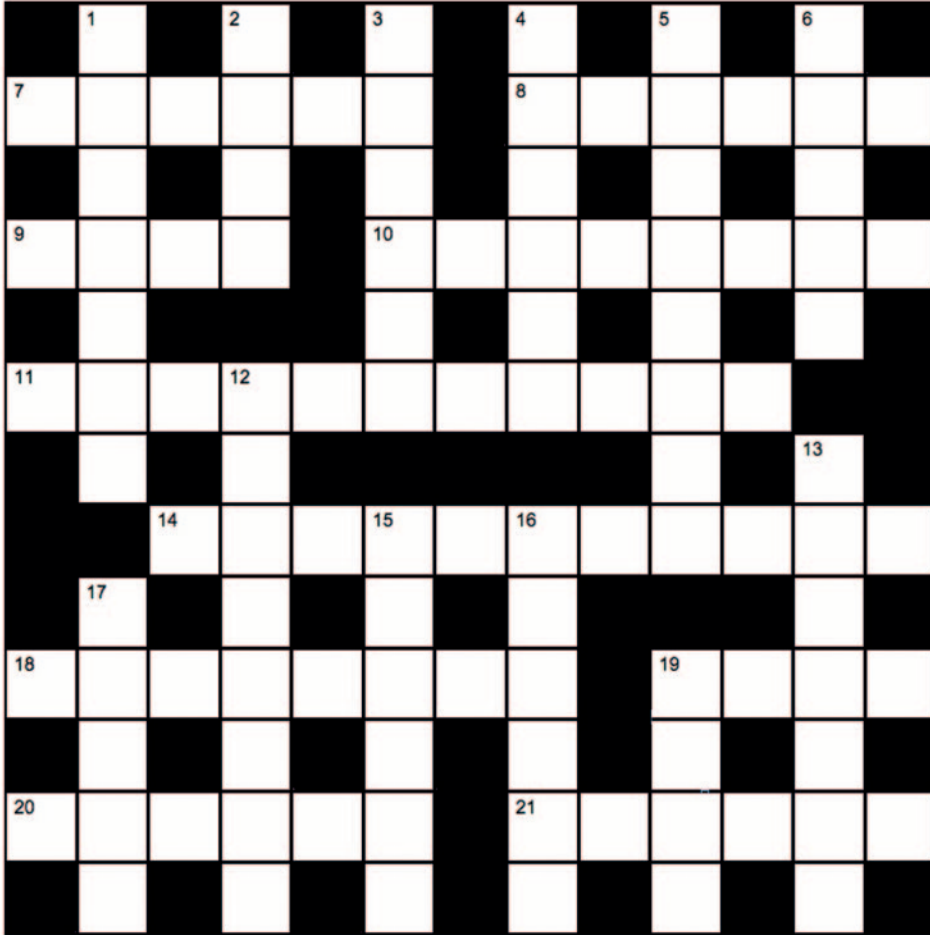
- ✓ €3m Personal Liability
- ✓ Alternative Accommodation

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04/19

Prize Crossword



Across

- 7. English romantic painter, JMW..... (6)
- 8. Number of players on a hockey team (6)
- 9. This after Full, Back and Pit (4)
- 10. "Den of" - A place of immoral behaviour (8)
- 11. Wasteful offspring from Luke's Gospel (8, 3)
- 14. Religious movement of the 16th century, associated with Martin Luther (11)
- 18. Absinthe is made from this plant (8)
- 19. 40th wedding anniversary gift (4)
- 20. Canadian capital (6)
- 21. Base unit of electrical current, name after French mathematician (6)

Down

- 1. This could be Norwich, Dijon, or Pat (7)
- 2. They had "The Power" in 1990 (4)
- 3. Welsh, Scottish novelist (6)
- 4. Pertaining to the middle, as in ligament (6)
- 5. Former England rugby captain, from Dublin 9 (8)
- 6. This Becomes Her - Meryl Streep movie (5)
- 12. Venison (4, 4)
- 13. WW II planes including Lancaster and Flying Fortress (7)
- 15. Brian was also known as Myles na gCopaleen (6)
- 16. Naval battle in the Pacific - June 1942 (6)
- 17. Burkina Faso was formerly known as Upper... (5)
- 19. Psychological thriller directed by Alfred Hitchcock (4)

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Conor Murray, Revenue

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to arrive not later than Friday, 14th February.

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SOLUTIONS Prize Crossword 03/19

Across

7. Moguls; 8. Atomic; 9. Prop; 10. Limavady; 11. Lamborghini; 14. Bichon Frise; 18. Disburse; 19. Stam; 20. Weylon; 21. Litmus.

Down

1. Boer War; 2. Pulp; 3. Ostler; 4. Warmth; 5. Souvenir; 6. Hindu; 12. Brisbane; 13. Israeli; 15. Harass; 16. Needed; 17. Winks; 19. Sage.