



FÓRSA

2025 REPORT

Civil Service
Divisional Conference

28th - 30th May 2025

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Foreword

This report details the activity of Fórsa as the union enters its eighth year of operation with 89,000 members. The union continues to grow, continues to organise and continues to win. Growing Fórsa's membership and strength remains a priority, particularly at this time of intense global uncertainty.

There has never been as many people at work in the Republic. The Irish economy is now technically at full employment, and the workforce stands at more than 2.8 million people, up 3.7% compared with the previous year.

This creates a very significant challenge for the trade union movement, particularly in an economy that looks successful from the outside, but where massive structural challenges remain, each one of which affects working people.

Last May, each member of the union staff was assigned to either a divisional or functional team. This is providing a greater focus on objectives, while also offering a more streamlined system of management and accountability. During the past year, also, the union has focused its time and resources on organising for power.

The good news is almost 10,000 members joined Fórsa in 2024. However, this barely keeps pace with employment growth, so our efforts will be centred on knowing where our membership gaps are, building our membership density, and training and equipping an additional cadre of workplace leaders. This work has already begun in every division of the union.

As the population grows, so must public services. That means more people working

in services to meet the needs of our growing population, and laying down a challenge for Fórsa to ensure the expansion in employment is reflected in the expansion of our union membership, and to accompany that with a plan to build strength from the bottom up.

The challenge for individual members is to foster and encourage union membership in the workplace, to open up the conversation about union strength, and ensure that new workers know the importance of collective action, and where to go to seek advice and support.

Crucially, those who are new to the workforce need to be aware of how, by coming together with their colleagues, they can win better outcomes on the issues that matter to them.

In the last year, we've seen escalating tensions abroad, and there is growing economic uncertainty, about which we cannot afford to be complacent. Economic shocks to Ireland seem almost certain, and our unity and organising strength will be crucial in protecting members from the challenges we will face. But face them we will.

By being unified, strong and active, I fully expect we will face those challenges successfully.

Kevin Callinan
General Secretary

Introduction

The Fórsa biennial report 2023-2024 was finalised and distributed to branches and executives in May 2024. The report covered union events and activities and was adopted at the national conference in May 2024. This report covers developments in Fórsa's Civil Service division in the period between 2023 and

2025, in addition to a broader look at developments across the union during the same period. This includes a brief synopsis of the extension of the Building Momentum pay agreement, and leading into the negotiation and ratification of its successor, the current **Public Service Agreement 2024 - 2026**.



Civil Service

Organisation

Union officers

Officer elections took place at Fórsa's biennial delegate conference in May 2024, and Martin Walsh, of the Louth Health and Local Government branch, was elected Fórsa's new president. Julie Flood, of Fórsa's Dublin City branch, was elected senior vice president, Michael Crowe (DSP Executive Grades branch) and Tara Horigan (Health & Safety Authority branch) as vice-presidents, while outgoing president Michael Smyth of the School Completion Programme branch was elected honorary treasurer.

Subscription rates

Following the negotiation and ratification of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 last year, Fórsa members received pay increases across the board. As membership subscriptions are a percentage of a member's salary, the maximum rate of subscription increased in January 2025.

A maximum level for membership subs is set by the union's National Executive Committee (NEC). This is called the subscription 'ceiling'. This only effects members with annual salaries exceeding €57,125.

The union's two other subscription rates are unaffected by the change. These are the legacy rate paid by those who were members of the former PSEU of 0.62% on 31st December 2017 and the 1% rate for new and existing CO related grades in the Civil Service who have access to the former CPSU Benefit Scheme which was carried over into Fórsa.

Divisional Executive Committee

The current Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee is made up as follows:

Clerical: Helen Linehan (Chairperson), Siobhan Kiely, Jean Taylor, Paula Gilman, Declan O'Donnell, Christopher Crowley, Bernadette Bradley, Paul Salter, Martin Gallagher, Mary Dunne, Alannah Sweeney.

Executive: Sue Kelly (Vice-Chairperson), Eddie Quinn, Majella Murphy, John Buggy, Denis Conway, John O'Connor, Tanya O'Neill, Deirdre Mehigan, Kevin Melinn, Cormac Donoghue, Melissa Brennan.

Professional & Technical: Darragh Fox (Vice-Chairperson), Eugene Dunne, Gerry Wilson, Michael Peters, Thomas Madden, Anne Collins, Andrew Davies.

The following members also sat on the CSDEC par part of the 2023-2025 term:

Michelle McMorrough, Alan Hanlon, Isabella De Luca, John O'Connor.

Staffing

Éamonn Donnelly was appointed Deputy General Secretary of Fórsa in July 2022 and his post incorporates the role of head of Civil Service division.

Staff assigned to work within the civil service area are as follows:

Assistant general secretaries: Ian McDonnell, Clíodhna McNamara, Pat Ennis, Jim Mitchell, Mary Hurley, Paul Moyer, Paul MacSweeney, Una Faulkner.

Industrial relations officers: Donna Mooney, Ellen Brennan (FGE)

Lead Organiser: Bernie Aston

Seconded staff: Tony Conlon (DSP Clerical), Caitriona Oates (DSP Exec), Noreen O'Flynn (Revenue Clerical), Des Ryder (Revenue Exec)

Administrative team: David Moore, Mary Murtagh, Jade Kane, Gary Hearne, Monica Rooney. [Subhead] Civil Service Industrial Relations System



Civil Service industrial relations system

In accordance with several motions passed at the divisional conference in 2023, and consistent with its strategy, the Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee (CSDEC) continued to pursue access to the state's industrial relations machinery (WRC/Labour Court) for civil servants. The primary obstacle consistently raised by the official side was the requirement for legislative change regarding the definition of a worker as it applies to civil servants.

By July 2023, it became evident that the matter risked becoming mired in legal debate. Furthermore, the necessary legislation was not a government priority. As Fórsa sought to establish an industrial relations system equivalent in standards and access to that available to other workers, the union proposed a complete re-modelling of the Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) Scheme, which has operated since the 1950s. Fórsa suggested importing comparable processes from the state's existing industrial relations structures into a revised C&A Scheme.

Discussions began between the staff and official sides through a C&A Scheme Sub-Group established by the General Council in November 2023. Although progress slowed due to the sick leave of key members, discussions gained pace in late 2024. Agreement reached in principle on the following key elements of a revised C&A Scheme:

- A new dispute resolution procedure, facilitated by WRC officers, for trade disputes not addressed by broader national collective agreements
- Appointment of a WRC officer as independent chair of the General Council
- Revised adjudication and arbitration processes with defined timeframes, modelled on existing industrial relations mechanisms
- A new grievance procedure that includes access to a third-party hearing if internal resolution fails.

Fórsa anticipates the signing of a collective agreement on the revised C&A Scheme by May 2025, with the new system launched and operational by autumn 2025.

Probationary periods

Two external factors prompted renewed discussions on the duration of probationary periods. These periods arise in the Civil Service upon entry and upon promotion to higher posts. The external factors included the 'Whelan Judgement' – which determined that no probationary period may exceed 12 months – and an EU recommendation advocating a maximum duration of six months. The existing nine-month probationary system in the Civil Service is no longer fit for purpose, as appeals processes often cannot be completed within the timeframe required by the Whelan Judgement.

A General Council sub-committee established in 2024 to examine the issue, and its work is nearing completion. The official side advocated replacing the Civil Service Disciplinary Appeals Board with an internal appeals mechanism for promotion-related probation. The staff panel of unions, including Fórsa, did not agree to this proposal.

Discussions are likely to conclude with a probationary period of nine months, with formal confirmation of appointment after six months, incorporating review points at two and four months. This approach would enable completion of appeals within the remaining three months. Discussions concerning fixed-term workers are ongoing. A draft policy presented in April.

Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill

The primary objective of this Bill is to delegate dismissal authority for civil servants from the current level of secretary general to lower levels of management. The staff panel of unions has opposed the Bill since its initial presentation in 2018. The issue has recently re-emerged on the official side's agenda.

Fórsa has continued to lobby politicians to increase opposition to the Bill and has decided to renew its campaign. Nonetheless, contingency planning is required in the event the Bill is passed. In parallel with its political efforts, Fórsa will engage in industrial relations discussions to distinguish between prescriptive and enabling provisions, thereby maximising worker protections should the Bill be enacted.

Remote and blended working

A blended working framework document for the Civil Service agreed in 2022. The issue of flexi accrual while on blended working was not agreed and a disagreed report has been presented regarding same, which will proceed to arbitration. On the substantive issue of blended working, a narrative from external commentators developed around the need to review blended working models. An objective to review blended working arrangements in the Civil Service is contained in the Programme for Government. In November 2024, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) announced that it had reviewed its blended working policy and that office attendance days would increase from the first week of February 2025. Fórsa objected to this decision. The DSP position was that it had a right to review the policy under the framework agreement, which is correct.

The DSP did not see the need for consultation with unions on the matter, which is a breach of the Framework Agreement. The DSP stated that its policy is liberal, which is true for some areas but not for others, and that the decision was taken in the interests of staff collegiality and well-being. Fórsa argued that it could not accept a directive to workers to increase office attendance in the absence of consultation and analytics. Both Fórsa and the AHCPS, on 31st January 2025, instructed its members not to alter their office attendance policies regardless of any DSP instruction. The DSP instruction to workers was set aside, in order to allow the matter to be processed through normal industrial relations procedures. A draft disagreed report for arbitration has been presented and is under discussion. Other Civil Service departments were preparing to take similar steps to the DSP.

The discussion on blended working in the Civil Service, public service and wider work economy should not be played out as a solitary arbitration issue in one government department. In acknowledging the reality that a review of blended working is an element of the Programme for Government, Fórsa, through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), got the matter placed on the April agenda for the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF). The Fórsa position is that any review of blended working should be conducted in an holistic sense, taking into account the benefits or otherwise of blended working regarding worker well-being, productivity, contribution to the workplace and contribution to the State in terms of caring responsibilities, easing pressure on workers affected by the housing crisis, and how blended working contributes to lower commuting traffic and improved environmental factors.

Local bargaining on pay in the Civil Service

Within the Civil Service, claims have been lodged under the terms of the Public Sector Agreement 2024-2026 regarding clerical officers (this is part of an overall cross-sectoral claim) Executive and Higher Executive Officers and Administrative Officers (this is part of an overall cross-sectoral claim) and Engineer Grades Fórsa, II and III (see appendices). Further claims are being formulated both in cases where other grades have pay linkages to the claims already submitted or utilising alternative formulation of claims particular to an individual grade. The Civil Service Sectoral Action Plan contains progress and modernisation proposals regarding all pay increases contained in the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.

Equivalent Grades Committees

The Equivalent Grades Committees for clerical and executive grades were re-activated in October 2024 and were directly involved in the formulation of local bargaining pay claims for those grades.

Parental Leave

The age limit for access to Parental Leave regarding all children was increased to age 16. A further claim has been lodged to increase the age to 18 following adoption of a conference motion seeking same.

Civil Service Divisional Strategy 2025 -2027

The Divisional Strategy 2025 – 2027 will build upon the foundations laid down in the inaugural Divisional Strategy 2023 – 2025 ‘Reclaiming Fórsa’s Place’. The pillars of that strategy were Organising & Recruitment, Industrial Relations and Policy, Effective Communications. These pillars will continue into the new strategy in conjunction with a targeted issue-based programme of work for the next two years on matters such as pay bargaining, blended and remote working, Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill, outsourcing, wellbeing at work and threats posed to jobs by Artificial Intelligence, among other matters.

Industrial relations

Department of Social Protection (DSP)

Change in DSP over the past two years has been mainly driven by automation/digitisation, the consolidation of back-office functions, supporting Ukrainian refugees and the cost-of-living crisis. Fórsa and AHCPs has engaged with the department, with the assistance of the WRC, regarding improving consultation and industrial relations. This process is ongoing. There has also been engagement regarding the many proposed changes in DSP included in the Civil Service Action Plan. Progress on the Action Plan is linked to pay increases agreed under the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. branch consolidation as well as increasing branch density have been a focus in the past year.

Blended working

Fórsa and AHCPs were in dispute with the department regarding reducing blended working for Intreo Centre back office functions. The DSP said it didn't need to consult with unions regarding introduction of restrictions on blended working. While there were discussions on the proposed blended working restrictions, no analytics were provided supporting the proposed changes.

Both unions instructed members not to co-operate with the unilateral restriction which would have seen approximately 1000 DSP staff working in the office more. In response DSP deferred the blended working restrictions and this matter is due to go to

Adjudication/Arbitration. Separately, the Programme for Government commits to a review of blended working. Fórsa is seeking that the review looks at the benefits blended working has had (reducing CO2 emissions, staff wellbeing/retention and recruitment, benefits to work/life balance, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism) as well as examining any perceived challenges.

Intreo centres

Staff numbers in Intreo Centres (ICs) available to deal with customers face-to-face have reduced with the establishment of the National Processing Team (NPT) and National Intreo Contact Centre (NICC). Fórsa has sought additional staffing in customer facing IC roles and the implementation of an agreed template on staffing numbers. Fórsa members in a number of ICs are facing lengthy queues, frustrated customers, restrictions on leave, work-related stress and unrealisable output expectations.

Modern contact centre

Under the Civil Service Action Plan DSP has referred to the introduction of a modern contact centre to the department. Currently there are several contact centres in DSP. Some provide a mix of work with no more than 50% of time on phones. Fórsa is seeking input into contact centre model considering staff wellbeing and preference. Fórsa wants the contact centres to be sustainable with a mix of work that does not lead to staff burnout,

or that is overly restrictive on Fórsa's members. Fórsa is also seeking that blended working currently available in contact centres such as NICC is extended to Longford contact centre as soon as possible and is available to all staff under the modern contact centre model. Where there is a variety of work, feedback indicates improved work satisfaction and wellbeing, as opposed to the current practice of working exclusively via phones.

Ukrainian refugee/cost-of-living crisis and extreme weather events

Since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, 112,000 Ukrainian refugees have sought refugee status in Ireland. Fórsa members in DSP are providing supports to these and other refugees. Despite automation and back-office processing, there has been an increase in footfall in Intreo centres (ICs). New financial supports were made available by Government to people living in Ireland who are struggling to make ends meet due to significant increases in the cost of living.

Storm Éowyn created significant hardship with approximately 75,000 applications for the Humanitarian Assistance Scheme (HAS) being processed by Fórsa's Community Welfare Officer (CWO) members. These events have driven footfall to ICs and has put Fórsa members in ICs and Community Welfare Services (CWS) under extreme pressure. While there has been sanction to increase staffing in DSP the increase in numbers, the grading of the staff, remains inadequate to deal with the level of increased workload. Extreme weather events are forecast to increase due to climate change. This will put more pressure on members in CWS and ICs. The potential economic downturn following the tariff war instigated by the US will likely further increase demands on the services provided by members in DSP.

Staffing levels

Staffing levels in DSP have increased by approximately 11% since 2018. The only grades that have not increased in number has been the HEO and Services grades. Fórsa has raised concerns with the reduction in HEO posts particularly where there are increased demands on Community Welfare Officers and Case Officers. Fórsa has also highlighted understaffing in ICs.

Digital self-service

Following an independent risk assessment, complementing a comprehensive internal DSP risk assessment, DSP staff are operating digital self-service on the floor in ICs on a voluntary basis. An additional TCO was recruited in each IC to facilitate the rollout of digital self-service. Fórsa sought that DSP use technology to facilitate remote demonstrations carried out behind the protection of counters and noted that this worked when piloted in a small number of ICs. Fórsa indicated that it would keep this initiative under review.

Grade appropriate work

Agreement reached to carry out a joint union/management review of the technical report. The technical report, published in 2007, outlined IC grade appropriate work. Two adjudication findings have noted that new technology has automated and simplified certain processes and that certain tasks are now appropriate to the CO grade. DSP is now requesting that COs carry out other work which is graded at a higher grade in the technical report and is appropriate to the EO grade. Fórsa raised grading of work in ad-hoc facilitated negotiations under the auspices of the

WRC, in the context of the rollout of Front Office Back Office (FOBO). The matter of grading of work will now be assessed under the technical report review.

Community Welfare Services (CWS)

The demands on CWOs are greater than ever, particularly driven by the increase in storm and other climate-related damage, as well as significant rise in the cost of living and the large number of Ukrainian refugees Ireland has welcomed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Currently CWOs provides a daily on-duty service in 70 locations across the 26 Counties.

As part of the settlement of the dispute in Sligo over downgrading of CWS work – from HEO (CWO) to EO level – a review of the area agreed to include staffing levels, grading of work, capacity and services to the public. Although DSP has begun to increase the number of CWOs in CWS since 2022, the overall number of CWOs has been more than halved since the CWS function transferred from the HSE. This has led to the closure of CWS clinics as well as a curtailment of other outreach activities and home visits. The reduction in community-based services available to the public has driven increased footfall into ICs. Fórsa hopes that the review will give a framework to protect valuable CWS emergency services and will potentially lead to an increase in CWO numbers. Discussions on the provision of an on-call allowance for CWO members, who make themselves available for out-of-hours work, have concluded with the proposals withdrawn. Fórsa noted that to expand the on-call work span would require additional CWOs.

EOI/HEOI claim

The Civil Service Adjudication process recommended in February 2024 that an allowance should be payable to the union's Executive Officer Inspector (EOI) members. This follows on from a lengthy process, dating back to 2017, when the PSEU lodged a claim for an upgrade of EOI posts to HEO level, on the basis that work was interchangeable. An initial Adjudication finding recommended that an independent assessment be carried out to quantify whether the EO Inspector posts should be upgraded to HEO Inspector level, or an allowance be paid or the status quo should remain.

Following a detailed and comprehensive assessment process the assessor found that EOIs were doing work above EO level and that an allowance should be paid with the quantum of allowance agreed at Adjudication. The Adjudicator directed the department and the union to engage on the quantum of the allowance. Over a year has passed without any meetings on the quantum of the allowance with DSP initially advising they were precluded by DPENDR as it might impact negotiations on local bargaining under the Public Service Agreement.

DSP then advised that DPENDR has indicated that the allowance must come from the local bargaining budget. Fórsa has already lodged a claim at General Council relating to the three per cent local bargaining encompassing all the union's EO members and have noted that the EOI claim predates the current national agreement, and that the allowance is temporary and related to carrying out work in the Inspectorate, while the local bargaining monies will be permanently applied to the benefit of the union's members.

Public employment services

Fórsa and the department has in dispute regarding the transfer of Jobseeker Transition (JST) customers from the department to external Local Area Employment Service (LAES) companies. The department has indicated that it can transfer this work under a national wage agreement which provided for transfer of work to Local Employment Services. Fórsa sees the proposed transfer of the work in question as outsourcing and has argued that the customers will get a more comprehensive service from the union's members in DSP. This dispute will go to an Arbitration board hearing in May 2025.

Appeals Office

Fórsa forwarded the union's observations to DSP regarding proposed changes to the Appeals Office as part of a public consultation process established by the department. Fórsa has sought a detailed written response to the union's observations. The public consultation process follows on from AHCPS and Fórsa forwarding a submission to the Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands on the operation of the Social Welfare Appeals Office, following proposed changes to the Social Welfare Appeals Regulations. Fórsa's concerns related to the potentially undermining of the independence of the Appeals Office and changes to reporting and working relationships which would also have had potential implications for the union's MA members.

Fórsa and the AHCPS are referring matters to third party regarding the unilateral decision to more than double output targets, as well as breaching the HEO:AP ratio. Separately the adjudication recommendation on an independent process, to assess if HEO posts carrying out appeals should be upgraded to AP, has gone to tender.

Medical assessors

The union secured agreement on applying the higher scale to the Medical Assessor (MA). The backdating of the allowance has been referred to Adjudication. Fórsa sought that the allowance be backdated to when this local bargaining clause was negotiated but agreement was not reached on this. Fórsa has also seeking assurances from HR regarding use of AI in medical assessments and seeking greater flexibility in releasing staff on leave.

Acknowledgement

Since the last Fórsa biennial conference there has been a significant turnover in Fórsa reps. Some have retired or moved on through Civil Service mobility, while others have been promoted (including some into the AHCPS ranks). Fórsa acknowledges and thanks all those reps for their tireless work and engagement - in some cases they have represented their work colleagues over many decades - and wishes them well.

Central Statistics Office (CSO)

Inductions

The three local branches: CSO Cork Clerical, CSO Executive Grades and the CSO Professional branch rotate between them to deliver inductions in person in Cork to recruit new members as they arrive into the CSO.

Organising

The CSO Clerical National branch, CSO Executive Grades branch and the CSO Professional branch continue to map density and make contact directly to grow membership.

Statisticians

A long-standing claim on jump increments was rejected by the Civil Service Arbitration Board in 2024. The branch committee is currently looking at formulating a fresh claim to lodge with the Civil Service Arbitration Board. Fórsa is also progressing a claim under Local Bargaining which will be lodged in due course.

Field staff (CSO interviewers and EO coordinators)

Since 2018, Field Staff have been in receipt of a Home Office/Storage allowance of €16.01. The CSO identified that this figure was incorrect as it reflected the pre allowance cuts of 2010, and it should have been €12.77.

Management initially agreed not to pursue arrears, but DPER have now instructed that they recoup the arrears, which members have entered into repayment plans.

Additionally, there was the removal of a broadband/electricity allowance as this was never agreed by DPENDR for any department and members must make claims for tax relief with Revenue.

The reduction and removal allowances will see a claim formulated under Local Bargaining. A review of completion payments has been completed and a proposal from management on changes to allocation of work, and competition payments were rejected by the branch committee. A meeting in February 2025 discussed a counterproposal and management is to revert with additional information. It's hoped that an agreement to pilot proposals in Q1 and Q2 2025 would better inform parties on a successor to the 2018 agreement.

Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (CEDIY)

International protection/Ukraine crisis

Work and staffing in these areas presented problems and shift work introduced in late 2023, which is now coming to an end. These functions are now due to move under the transfer of functions to Justice.

Mother and Baby Home Redress Scheme

This sees the bulk of the clerical work outsourced to CPL. Because of the sensitivity of the matter the DEC approved that in this standalone situation this could be done but the department were reminded of their obligations under the national agreements.

Higher scales

Both the executive and clerical grades surveyed their members on foot of management's proposal to change the awarding of higher scales to 100% senior suitable. Both branches results were to keep the current arrangement of 50/50 i.e. senior suitable and criteria. A new agreement on higher scales awards signed off by both branches with management.



Civil Service No.1 Probation Service

Community Service Supervisors (CSS)

A CSS IR meeting are held on a quarterly basis and some of the items being discussed are H&S (PPE), Overpayments of flexibility allowance, Increments, Footwear, update following the CSS conference and internal career paths.

The Probation Service is seeking to introduce a new grade of Community

Service Manager. This has potential to impact the CSS's as well as the Probation Officer grades. Discussions are ongoing.

The probation assistant grade was introduced in 2023 and their role and branch representation are currently being discussed.

A draft competition booklet has been received for a service officer competition in Dublin and Limerick.



Irish Prison Service

(IPS) Chaplains

Fórsa's pay disparity claim was heard by the Civil Service Arbitration Board on the 11th November 2024 and Fórsa awaits a finding.

An Agreed Disagreed report has been received on seven-day cover and the matter referred to the WRC for conciliation. Fórsa awaits a meeting date. Chaplains contracts note they have to provide seven-day cover but they do not receive additional remuneration for weekends and bank holiday attendance as such payments are silent in their contracts. Fórsa recently won an identical case for a chaplain in the HSE but the IPS management and Department of Justice would not accept the precedent value of this and have refused the claim.

A draft report on the chaplaincy review has been received and an initial meeting has been held. Fórsa will seek to open discussions on the use of external CPL chaplain over direct employment as well as On Call for death in custody.

Huge upset has been caused to chaplain members in Mountjoy due to the Ifck on consultation locally and with Fórsa. There has been a lot of misinformation that the church was being removed and would be replaced by video booths so solicitors could consult with their clients.

The prison governor refused to meet with union representatives, and he had also refused to meet the Chaplain members, including the Workplace Representative. He finally agreed to meet with them in December 2024 but started that meeting by saying he didn't recognise Fórsa or its

reps. This has been raised at the Justice Departmental Council and the IPS are to officially respond.

Additionally, after seeing the station of the crosses removed, the pews removed and carpet ripped up they were put back in place around the 27th November 2024 but it appears that this was for them to be interviewed in the church by RTÉ, who also interviewed a prisoner and the Bishop on the church matter.

Legal Aid Board (LAB) mediators

Last year the LAB management outsourced mediation work to private mediators. A claim Fórsa lodged under the C&A Scheme and an adjudication hearing heard on the 22nd July. The outcome is that the LAB, although faced with constraints by legal policy on the use of such outsourced panels, failed to consult with us under central outsourcing protocols. The management side indicated that a review of the LAB was due and they will fully discuss the report with the view to direct employment over outsourced panels in areas where they can directly employ mediators. The report is awaited, and Fórsa expect it in the coming weeks.

The Head Chaplain position remains unfilled and Fórsa has sought this is filled without further delay.

Psychologists

The IPS were over dependant on the use of CPL Locum Psychologists and following a number of meetings Fórsa agreed a recruitment drive that saw nearly all nine positions filled.

Garda civilian teachers

A claim Fórsa lodged for flexible working hours and flexi accrual. Garda management rejected the claim even though they had previously offered this to members some years ago. The case heard by the Civil Service Adjudicator and his recommendation was that the civilian teachers have access to flexible working hours and flexi accrual. Management accepted this.

Technical Bureau

A claim Fórsa lodged in 2020 for an expert allowance/re-grading. Garda management delayed submitting a counterstatement to the claim until April 2023. The case heard by the Civil Service Arbitration Board on the 29th May 2023 and the 25th September 2023, with their finding issued on the 6th October 2023. The finding was that the Garda Civilian Photographers should be regarded to Forensic Scientist Grade III equivalent with effect from the 29th May 2023.

Organising

The Defence executive grades are embarking on a mapping exercise as well as a recruitment campaign.



FGE grades

Outsourcing

Fórsa has written to various departments seeking the numbers of people they employ to do security functions and cleaning functions as well as the costing related to employing them. Responses are being provided by some departments.

It was brought to Fórsa's attention that clerical officers were carrying out service officers work in Citywest for scanning refugees presenting for interviews. Having contacted justice, seeking this practice to stop and that service officers be employed to do this work, it was reported that CEDIY manage Citywest and that they employed a security company to do this work on a trial basis, with the view that if it works they would make this a permanent process.

Fórsa has written to CEDIY management informing them Fórsa requests this practice stop immediately and that Fórsa wanted to meet under Section five of the Public Service Agreement i.e. disputes as this is clearly outsourcing. Fórsa was at the CEDIT departmental Council in November 2024 and CEDIY management had not informed Fórsa of its intention to do this.

Garda HQ

Fórsa awaits an update regarding the superintendent of cleaners duties bilateral that was promised following Fórsa sharing Fórsa's observations on the draft document.

Claim for two supervisors of cleaners lodged previously at Staff Council. At the recent Staff Council they said they see it as being the same practice as was highlighted in the College review. Facilities Management is assessing the claim.

It was reported that a business case had been approved to run a service attendant competition but at the recent Staff Council HR said that they were not aware of this and are to raise it with the facilities manager who had said it approved.

Although management agreed to remove the external cleaner for the gym they remain in place. Additionally, it has been brought to Fórsa's attention that three/four external contractors are doing service attendant work around the HQ complex. Fórsa has written to management on this but have not received a response. This was to be raised at the recent Staff Council on the 26th November 2024 as well as the two letters Fórsa sent them on outsourcing. They are to follow up on these to get replies.

State Examinations Commission

The outsourcing of the packing of exam papers continues to be an issue. Fórsa met with management in December 2024 and management are to provide Fórsa with a number of clarifications including that they are compliant with the tendering policies.

A claim for an additional cleaner has been lodged and a claim for nightwatchman has been lodged and a hearing date is awaited.

Defence

A service officer review has been conducted and apart from increasing the numbers in Newbridge by two extra service officers all other locations are to remain the same.

Justice

The service officer panel has been exhausted and management informed Fórsa at the recent departmental council they have five vacancies to be filled and will fill these through a service officer competition the probation service is to run.



Policing, Security and Community Safety Act

Delegates from Fórsa attended the Seanad stages of the hearing of the Policing Bill and had positive engagement with then minister for justice Helen McEntee. This culminated in a clause being included in the Act that guaranteed from the date of commencement at least a 24-month period would be observed where the minister cannot alter Civil Service status for any serving civil servants within An Garda Síochána. The Act became law in February 2024. A series of engagements then occurred from March to June and one meeting in December where the terms and conditions of future entrants were discussed and agreed. These terms and conditions were a transposal, as close as possible, of all Civil Service terms and conditions. The most recent putative commencement date is the 1st of March. The commencement of the second stage of negotiations has yet to commence which will deal with serving staff.

Regional control centres

In September 2024, due to the implementation of the Midlands Rosters there was to be a change to the rostering of the RCCs. The staff side were told initially that this was just the movement of a day but subsequent engagement found that a cumulative loss would occur to members in these areas arising from 8.25 hours being paid for eight hours work, loss of eight Sundays approximately per annum and the payment of rostered overtime of

four hours per Sunday plus eight hours of Single Time Extra rather than 12 hours of Single Time Extra. Garda Management were cited for breach of the National Pay Deal and engagement commenced on the substantive issue of pay to date with meetings ongoing.

Blended working

Blended working commenced in October 2024 with a six-month review date on all outstanding issue with a date to be agreed for same at the time of writing.

Garda Press Office

A claim for an increase in the shift allowance based on hours worked has gone to DPENDER.

Internal mobility policy

This is still in discussions at Staff Council but in the interim a facility will be established centrally for applications to be progressed rather than the current ad hoc methodology.

Organisational review

There is currently an organisational review ongoing by management. Fórsa has sought to be included in the process.

Front of house

Following a meeting with management in June of 2024 where the Fórsa sub-committee brought a number of issues to the attention of management. Progress has been slow. A commitment to address outstanding hours owed Fórsa made at the most recent Staff Council.

Accommodation

Following the discovery of asbestos in offices in both Santry and Garda HQ remedial works have taken place and staff have been displaced for their safety.

Other individual matters were dealt with as required.



Tailte Éireann

Departmental Council

The inaugural Departmental Council meeting of Tailte Éireann took place on 5th of December 2024. The staff side raised several issues regarding the appointment of the chair which was eventually resolved.

Grade Assimilation of former OSI Grades

Following a series of engagements facilitated by Mr Kevin Duffy the matter was eventually subsumed into the interim IR process under the chairmanship of Mr Joe McDermott where a proposal was put to ballot of the membership. Once passed there was a significant delay in getting the pay and back pay forwarded to the surveying grades. In late December it became apparent that DPENDER had never granted sanction for the proposal that went to ballot. A meeting with Mr Kevin Duffy was convened for early January 2025 and a proposal was put to DPENDER for sanction arising from these negotiations. At the time of writing nothing has been received from DPENDER for the issue to proceed to re-ballot.

Branch amalgamation

An initial meeting was convened to allow for this matter to be discussed with the various parties. It agreed that the formation of Departmental Council to progress IR matters would initially take place. Lead organiser Bernie Aston will be arranging for this matter to progress with the assistance of local representatives and the assistant general secretary.

A number of other matters are being progressed daily as the establishment of Tailte Éireann is particularly fraught given that three very different organisations with very different cultures are amalgamating. Great credit is due to all members and local representatives for all the work that they are doing under these circumstances.

Courts

Out-of-hours Court Registrars District Court

Previous arrangements for out-of-hours attendance at District Courts were provided for by an adjudicated agreement from 1999. Given operational imperatives the following proposal has been trialled during 2024 and is to be made permanent in 2025. As well as the on-call and call-in allowances from the original agreement, any call in court attendance of four hours or less attracts four hours TOIL or equivalent payment which will be the default position. Similarly, any attendance of four hours or more attracts seven hours TOIL or equivalent payment which will be the default position. Any attendance on a Sunday or Bank Holiday attracts 20% of weekly contracted hours (typically seven hours). Several meetings took place on this issue in 2024 with a generally favourable uptake. It is yet to be made permanent at the time of writing.

Accommodation issues in Phoenix House

Arising from several complaints from union members to both Fórsa and AHCPs regarding heating issues in Phoenix House a sub-committee of Departmental Council established to address the issues. Two joint union management walkabouts occurred where staff were encouraged to outline their issues. A new manager was appointed and, at the time of writing, notable progress had been reported.

Revenue Commissioners

There have been numerous developments and wins for members by members since divisional conference 2023. From Revenue's perspective this has been achieved through the dedication of the branches over the last two years. Membership continues to increase and both branches striving for greater membership participation.

Organising for power

Revenue has been chosen as a pilot location for Organising for Power in the Civil Service. This involves intricate mapping, charting and organising in certain locations in Revenue. This work is ongoing with one-to-one meetings occurring with members on site. At the time of writing staff are about to be surveyed and the results of this survey will inform the agenda for a meeting with management in March. The number of members who fill in the survey will give an indication of how strong union participation is in this area.

Atypical working pilot

There is a mandate from Fórsa members to seek to achieve a four-day week in the public and Civil Service. The Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery & Reform (DPENDPDR) have firmly stated that they are not in support of same.

Therefore, creativity has been required to achieve this ambition. To that end, over the past 18 months Fórsa and the AHCPs have been in negotiations with Revenue regarding an Atypical Working pilot. Both unions surveyed their members in December 2023 with over 1200 members participating in the survey. This gave the branches the opportunity and intel to shape how this pilot would be constructed.

The objective of the pilot is to explore atypical working from a Revenue perspective and to identify potential options for Fórsa's future working

patterns. The pilot project will help to identify the benefits of atypical working for specific grades and roles. The pilot will occur in Business Division with a maximum of ten staff members from any one branch being accepted from the pilot. It is voluntary, staff self-select in and choose their hours to suit their own personal circumstances. Both Fórsa and the AHCPs have been heavily involved in the architecture of the terms of this pilot. It will last six months with a full review upon completion.



Open HEO

Negotiations with regard to the open HEO competition, advertised by Revenue, are still ongoing. At the time of writing, another meeting is scheduled for mid-March 2025 and further information has been received from the employer concerning the posts. The branch has consistently stated Fórsa's objection to open recruitment of HEOs. Promotion to the grade has always been through internal competition (save for some specialist ICTL posts).

By way of background, in July 2024 the chair of the Revenue executive grades branch wrote to CSD voicing concerns about the prospect of recruiting HEOs through open competition. This followed a remark made at an earlier Revenue departmental council (RDC) meeting where Revenue expressed the view that a HEO in audit is a specialist role and could be recruited through open competition, in line with the 2018-2020 pay deal.

It was subsequently reported at an RDC meeting on 17 September 2024 that the HEO vacancy rate was running at 12% and CSD needed to fill critical vacancies urgently. The prospect of an open HEO competition was again raised. The staff side (SS) reiterated its opposition to open HEO recruitment. A bilateral meeting was arranged for October 2024, with the branch officers receiving a draft of an open HEO competition booklet for observations. A reply issued reiterating the position that the HEO grade is not subject to open recruitment and that open HEO recruitment is a national issue to be addressed through general council.

Over two meetings in October 2024, the branch advised that if the employer proceeded to advertise this post it would result in a Civil Service-wide dispute, as the competition would breach the Civil Service Action Plan. The employer advertised the competition. In immediate response, Fórsa wrote to DPENDPDR stating that Revenue was using the Civil Service Action Plan to justify the competition. As such, Revenue's actions had triggered a Civil Service-wide dispute.

At a meeting of the Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee (CSDEC) on 17th October 2024, the DEC sanctioned a ballot of all CO and EO members across the Civil Service for industrial action.

The following day (18th October 2024), DPENDPDR advised that this was not considered a Civil Service-wide dispute and that no changes had been communicated to other departments or offices regarding HEO competitions. The reply further stated that this was a local issue between Revenue and Fórsa, and that Revenue remained open to constructive discussion.

Fórsa contended that it is a Civil Service-wide matter, citing similar claims in other departments. Regarding DPENDPDR's suggestion of further discussion, Fórsa confirmed its availability. However, in the absence of an agreed or arbitrated resolution, and in line with a DEC mandate, Fórsa will ballot members in the relevant grades across the Civil Service for industrial action.

A further meeting between Fórsa and CSD took place on 30th October 2024. The following outcomes were agreed:

- Revenue confirmed that the open HEO competition was not an attempt to introduce open recruitment to the HEO grade under the Civil Service Action Plan, acknowledging that such discussions fall under the remit of DPENDPDR.
- Revenue will hold an internal HEO tax specialist competition to run concurrently with the open HEO tax specialist competition.
- Revenue will endeavour to maximise the existing internal general HEO panel in advance of its expiry on 20 April 2025.
- Revenue and Fórsa will engage in further discussions on the use of specialist versus general competitions.
- Revenue and Fórsa will continue discussions on the broader recruitment model for the future.

The branch also secured the fast-tracking of a generalist HEO competition for Q1 2025. At the time of writing, the competition booklet is in draft format and expected to be issued to the branch officers imminently.

The branch's priority remains maximising promotion opportunities for members. A sub-group will be formed through departmental council to examine specialist versus generalist posts, including the implications of the 2003 integration agreement. Revenue has agreed to a formal review of the specialist HEO competitions, which will include a feasibility study. The purpose of these discussions is to prevent a repeat of the current situation. Revenue had taken

industrial peace for granted - an assumption that has now had repercussions across the Civil Service.

Revenue IR forums

Numerous Revenue IR forums took place during 2023 and 2024. Currently the divisions who are involved in the IR Forum process are Business, CG's, IPFMD, MED and Personal. Divisional IR forums are the best channel of highlighting issues that are local in nature. It was a priority of both branches that a rep from the division attend the meeting as they have firsthand knowledge of any issues.



Revenue Clerical branch

From 2017 the Revenue National Committee (RNC) discussed possibly amalgamating the Revenue Clerical branches. The RNC was the committee representing the 2000+ Revenue Clerical Officer members across 31 branches (11 Revenue Clerical branches and 20 General branches). After the Biennial Conference of May 2022 and the adoption of the Strategic Plan by Conference, the RNC accelerated their discussions regarding branch amalgamation. The RNC believed that by amalgamating Revenue Clerical members into one national branch it would strengthen their voice with their employer, but crucially, deliver a better service to members. This process was entirely member led.

In September 2022, the RNC voted unanimously to start engagement with the Strategic Change Team on how to possibly consolidate Fórsa Revenue branches. The RNC held three separate meetings during November 2022, for both reps and members, to decide if this is what they wanted to do.

The meetings resulted in strong agreement that amalgamation was the best way for Revenue Clerical Officers to be better served by the union. In December the RNC sought and received approval from the NEC for the amalgamation of the 11 Revenue Clerical branches to become the new Revenue Clerical branch. The new Revenue Clerical branch was created on 1st January 2023. The migration of Revenue members from general branches occurred consequentially in phase two of the merger. The Revenue Clerical branch – representing all clerical officers in Revenue – was therefore fully established on 1st January 2024.

Department of Justice

Fórsa met with employer, together with the Justice Executive Grades branch Chair, to address long-standing liabilities owed to Executive Officer grade regarding internal recruitment. Following unsatisfactory response from Employer, Fórsa has lodged claim at departmental council regarding liabilities owed to internal competitions for EO, HEO and AP grades. As part of the claim, Fórsa renewed its 2020 objection about the unilateral introduction of psychometric testing by the department for internal competitions.

The employer refused to discontinue the testing, despite acknowledging that certain aspects of the testing are utilised purely to screen out prospective candidates. Separately, the Justice Executive Grade branch would like to secure approval from the DEC to ballot branch members regarding the unilateral introduction, and continued usage, of psychometric testing regarding internal competitions, and the department's failure to adhere to sequencing agreements resulting in excessively high, and long-standing, liability figures. Fórsa requested a disagreed report at Departmental Council in February 2025.

Fórsa has lodged a claim at Departmental Council regarding unilateral downgrading of work from EO to CO level within the Join Family area of Visas regarding the decision-making function and weighing of rights. This was done unilaterally and without consultation with Fórsa. The downgrading of work also engages a further concern about the department's

failure to offer acting up assignments at EO level to deal with an accruing backlog of cases in this area.

Working with Justice and local branch regarding the matter of impending FSS Migration over to NSSO. This matter was on the agenda at Departmental Council for quite some time, and Fórsa has engaged with the department on several occasions to try and secure answers regarding which grades/employees will be migrating to NSSO and when; will the work of those who are migrating over change; which grades/employees will remain behind in Killarney as part of DOJ and will their work change or remain the same. Justice was dealing directly with NSSO to secure answers and identify the implementation date.

An instruction of non-cooperation was implemented regarding Probation Officer and Senior Probation Officer grades within the Probation Service after the Probation Service unilaterally implemented a revised policy and procedure governing issuance of pre-sanction reports to the District Court. Unbeknownst to the local branch, Fórsa, and members working in affected grades, the Probation Service had been in contact with members of the judiciary regarding issuance of these reports for quite some time. An internal working group was also formed, something which Fórsa, the branch and members only found out about when the Employer issued the new policy and stipulated that it would be implemented in early February 2025.

The Probation Service ignored Fórsa's request to delay implementation of the policy/procedure pending proper negotiations. Accordingly, an instruction of non-cooperation issued to PO and SPO members instructing them not to implement the new policy/procedure and to maintain the status quo pending proper consultation and resolution through established industrial relations avenues. Fórsa has since met once with the Probation Service and the department and have made clear that the instruction will not be lifted until the employer stands down implementation of the new policy/procedure pending proper consultation with the trade union and its members.

In relation to the Senior Probation Officer workload review, the Probation Service had committed to engage in a joint process to review the last document which issued in 2010. The local branch had provided the Probation Service with draft terms of reference and were awaiting a response. In September 2024, without warning, the Probation Service resiled from its earlier agreement to engage in a joint workload review for the SPO grade and disavowed that the earlier 2010 process that culminated in issuance of a jointly signed report constituted an industrial relations agreement. After raising the matter at Departmental Council with the department, and following issuance of the instruction of non-cooperation regarding pre-sanction reports, the Probation Service has now agreed to continue with the SPO workload review initiative and has undertaken to provide a response to the earlier draft Terms of Reference.



Attorney General

Engagement with members to address long-standing issue of securing access to Departmental Council. This matter is to be raised at General Council.



Chief State Solicitor's Office

There is ongoing engagement with the employer and members regarding hours of work, workload concerns, Organisation of Working Time Act concerns, and a Recording of Working Time pilot initiative introduced by the Employer. Five local representatives within the legal professional cohort were elected in December 2024.

A survey issued to members regarding the Single Building Project working group that formed in response to the impending office move to a new location. Concerns about the office move are also to be raised at departmental council, including concerns about lack of available desk space and concerns about confidentiality in an open office.

Legal Executives branch

The branch is to pursue a claim through local bargaining to rectify historical failure to implement 2017 arbitration decision addressing Staff Officer/Executive Officer integration exercise in favour of Legal Executive cohort who are aligned with the now defunct Staff Officer grade for pay purposes. Working with branch on an on-going basis regarding drafting of claim.

Legal Professionals branch

A claim is being formulated under local bargaining clause seeks to address and remedy long-standing pay inequities and inconsistencies regarding entry level legal professional grades, including a significant pay disparity between the state solicitor/prosecutor grade and the Solicitor Grade III entry grade in place at the Legal Aid Board.

Legal Aid Board

Pursuing claims through the recently revived Departmental Council and directly with HR regarding the following:

- Proposed implementation of recommendations made pursuant to a third- party workplace review conducted by Bakertilly. This organisational review did not encompass consultation with the trade union and has yielded a comprehensive report that includes findings and recommendations regarding general service as well as P&T grades, as well as the creation of a new leadership structure.
- Failure to clearly and fairly delineate levels of responsibility between Grade Fórsa and Grade II managing solicitors within various law centre practice areas.

Housing, Local Government and Heritage Conservation Ranger branch

Fórsa is working with the branch in pursuit of historical claim for re-grading to EO level, which it intends to pursue through local bargaining. Sean McHugh conducted independent job evaluation exercise in 2023 and his findings favoured re-grading from CO to EO level. The claim was originally rejected by DPENDR and will be revived through local bargaining.

Providing information and acting as a resource for the branch as it considers a possible branch merger under the broader union branch consolidation exercise.



Met Éireann and the Department of Housing unilaterally made decision to cease weather observation function at Knock Airport without notification or consultation. A claim Fórsa lodged at Departmental Council. The union is engaged in negotiations with MET/department regarding affected members and redeployment options.

Probation Services

Following branch consultation, Fórsa has agreed with the Department of Justice that Gerard Moran will act as an independent chair regarding the Probation Officer workload review exercise. The first meeting with Mr. Moran under this process will take place in March 2025.

Transfer of functions

Fórsa was recently notified that Met Éireann and other areas (yet to be confirmed) currently assigned to the Department of Housing will transfer to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Engaging with local HR and affected branches to ensure smooth transition for affected members/grades.



Transport

AMROB

Fórsa recently met with the employer and staff side representatives participating in the IRCG Review to formally ratify the list of items and terms of reference. Following this ratification, the department then notified Fórsa that a third-party consultancy firm has been retained to conduct a broad review of the Coast Guard, including matters pertaining to industrial relations that will overlap with the joint review Fórsa had already signed onto.

Fórsa recently issued correspondence to the department requesting further information on the scope of the third-party process, disclosure of related documents, and clarity on the department's proposed actions regarding contradictory recommendations being made or agreements reached pursuant to the respective reviews. Fórsa is awaiting a response.

Establishment of the National Professional technical Committee (NPTC)

Fórsa's Civil Service division is home to many highly qualified professional and technical members. They are employed across the Civil Service to carry out a myriad of roles in disciplines such as (but not confined to) archaeology, engineering, forensic science and meteorology.

Due to the nature of their work, they are required to hold a specific qualification to be both employed in their role and also to perform their professional and technical

duties. Often these members work alone or in small units across the service.

In order to better represent this unique cohort of members and to ensure that issues specific to their grades are raised and addressed at national level within Fórsa, a new committee is being established: The National Professional and Technical Equivalent Grades Committee (NPTC). This committee requires to be wholly representative of all the relevant grades.

Over the past few months, a steering group has begun the work of setting up this new committee. This work has included analysing the membership of Fórsa to gain a full picture of how many professional and technical members there are, determining where they are located and what their allocated branches are.

The NPTC Steering Group is currently:

- Developing a functional category-based structure for engagement, representation and communications
- Developing a mapping, density analysis and recruitment model in line with the proposed Organising for Power strategy
- Cross referencing all P&T grades and associated branches with Industrial Staff
- Developing for proposed circulation to all P&T groups, categories and grades, including a set of guidelines on the identification and construction of claims.

The Steering Group is continuing with its membership identification and density analysis, assisted by the union's membership section.

Civil Service Conference 2025

Subject to the approval of the Divisional Executive Committee and National Secretary, it is proposed to arrange the following at the next divisional conference:

- Fringe event
- Profile stand
- Presentation in main conference report

It is clear at this stage the NPTC is to play a crucial role in the preparation and progression of claims under the local bargaining clause of the PSA 2024 to 2026.

Transforming the approach to reasonable accommodations for disabled people

Fórsa engaged in the abovementioned review which sought to address deficiencies in policies and facilities for people with disabilities. Notwithstanding the reasonable accommodations required for people with declared disabilities on appointment and initial allocation, Fórsa was also particularly interested in the development of reasonable accommodations in the areas of duty allocation and further career path development following promotion.

In recent times another category of worker requiring consideration in terms of reasonable accommodations has come to light. This includes staff members who have been diagnosed with autism later in life who have now developed challenges in the workplace despite having functioned reasonably okay until recently.

The reality is that staff can acquire a disability at any point in their career, therefore there is a requirement to have a process in place to ensure (a) that staff concerned are fully comfortable in requesting reasonable accommodations and (b) adequate mechanisms are in place to assess and deliver on those requirements as necessary.

Fórsa and Department of Finance HR engaged jointly with Blue Line Consulting (who are facilitating the process and collating research on behalf of PAS) on the following:

- HR expertise/competence to assess reasonable accommodations requested by staff.
- Timing of the provision of information on reasonable accommodations.
- The above-mentioned process concluded last March with the production of a report which contains several recommendations and actions including the following:
- Establishment of a Disability Employee Resource Group (DERG) to support and approve service design around reasonable accommodation
- Appointment of a Disability Support Champion (DSC) for the Public Service
- Make appropriate training available to drive disability awareness and build capability in supporting better disability inclusion at the assignment and on-boarding stages
- Ensure accessible communications and planning for assignment and on-boarding, and update and enshrine data collection
- Professionalise the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) and/or equivalent roles and review its resourcing model
- Create expertise across the services in assistive and adaptive technology and solve consistency issues

- Establish a Reasonable Accommodations Team or network across the (Civil Service) organisation
- Update legal definitions of disability
- Develop the framework and establish a Centre of Excellence in the development and delivery of RA across the Public Sector to create change and remove barriers for people with a disability.

The full report was referred to the Divisional Disability Committee.

Planned branch strategy and development workshops

Fórsa's Director of Training, in consultation with the lead organiser, facilitated planned branch Strategy and Development Workshops for the GSOC and DETE Executive Grades branches. These events were well received and included the following:

- An in-depth look at branch roles and responsibilities
- Building a branch Executive TEAM
- Planning and conducting effective meetings
- Creating a baseline for the branch strategy
- Representing members

It is proposed hold further workshops for the OPW and the TCAGSM Executive Grades and Archivists branches shortly.



Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)

Review of the operation and efficiency of DAFM Departmental Council and Partnership

DAFM HR has formally proposed that Departmental Council moves from six meetings to four per year, because they do not have time to complete some items with the short lapse of time between meetings. This proposal is with the caveat that if a serious matter arises for either side, a DC meeting can be convened on that matter.

The various Fórsa branches attached to the DAFM have considered the proposal and are prepared to engage based on an overall review of the efficiency and effectiveness of Departmental Council and associated business, including Partnership and Staff Panel.

DAFM HR has agreed to this and the setting up of a small Departmental Council working group to consider all related matters/concerns and bring back related proposals. The Staff Panel is to engage bilaterally with HR on the establishment of the working group which will operate under an agreed term of reference.

The Departmental Council working group met during April 2025. It is agreed that for the duration of 2025 there will be in four Departmental council meetings with a staff side meeting taking place at least two weeks in advance of each for us to properly discuss prepare and submit

Fórsa's issues. There is allowance for two further Departmental council meetings if absolutely required.

Partnership meetings will remain independent of Departmental council inclusive of having its own meeting dates. There will be a review of these structures at year end where any concerns can be addressed around same.

DAFM Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication (badger vaccination) programme

The current agreement between Fórsa and the DAFM regarding the operation of the Badger Vaccination Programme expired at the end of January 2025. Both sides are engaged on a possible successor agreement.

The branch has significant issues/concerns with the current proposal from Management and therefore, as it is currently constructed, it is unlikely to form the basis of an agreement.

Fórsa acknowledges that there is a serious need for the eradication programme and that time is of the essence. It is also Fórsa's preference that a sustainable agreement which takes full account of the concerns and objectives of both sides is reached, if possible. This will necessitate early and constructive bilateral discussions to see if agreement

can be reached. The existing agreement is extended until end of April 2025 at which point the preference for both sides is to put in place a permanent arrangement.



Accommodation consolidation (nationally)

Accommodation consolidation is currently being considered and taking place across all departments and state agencies. The DAFM is no exception.

The DAFM has a significant property portfolio across the state. Some of it is owned and managed by the department and other elements are leased. All of it is maintained by the OPW.

On the 18th of November last the Chair of the DAFM Departmental Council convened a meeting of all parties to the council to provide a high-level overview of where the department is going, medium to long term, in regard to accommodation. It was a constructive meeting with management and the unions committing to engage collaboratively and constructively on projects and related matters as they arise.

Accommodation consolidation in Portlaoise

The on-going Consolidation of DAFM Accommodation in Portlaoise is progressing. It is a significant project and involves several building refurbishments and the relocation of several hundred staff.

Fórsa sought the establishment of a Departmental Council subcommittee to adequately and effectively represent members' interests. This has resulted in the development and publication of an issues log which ensures that all concerned are kept fully informed of all related developments.

Representatives continue to raise several issues and more on behalf of members, including parking and related safety and security, open floor plan etiquette and acoustics, kitchen and canteen facilities. This subcommittee will remain in place and active until all related works are concluded.

DAFM Accommodation consolidation Cork City (Hibernian House)

Similar to Portlaoise a significant DAFM accommodation consolidation project is underway in Cork City.

The most relevant and urgent aspect is the proposed relocation of the staff and sections currently based at Hibernian House in Cork City to the Revenue Commissioners building at Blackpool.

Initial engagement with local representatives was less than what it should have been and Fórsa has raised this matter with HR directly and through Departmental Council.

This resulted in Fórsa being provided with sight of the bill of requirements and a commitment to engage appropriately. The Committee will review same and revert after Christmas.

Fórsa continues to have regular consolidation meetings at Portlaoise and Fórsa's members at Cork transferred to the Revenue Commissioners building at Blackpool, Cork at the beginning of April due to OPW terminating the lease at

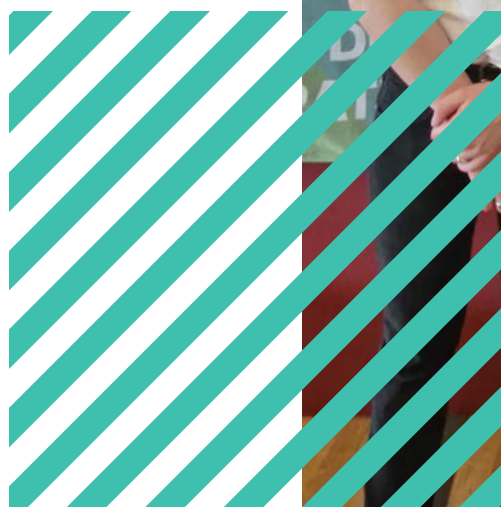
Hibernian House. There are substantive issues that need addressing. Consolidation meetings are now scheduled to commence work on this.

Internal mobility

Fórsa is engaged with the Department on the development of a revised Internal Mobility to the Technical Agriculture Officer grades. They have cited the Civil Service Action Plan as the basis for the engagement. The branch has significant issues and concerns in this regard.

Temporary needs policy

Fórsa is currently engaged with HR on a review of the department's Temporary Business Needs policy with a related bilateral meeting due to be scheduled. Fórsa's goal is to ensure extended absences, such as maternity leave, are backfilled to avoid undue impact on colleagues and/or accrual of workload while on leave.



Office of Public Works (OPW)

General grades and matters common to general and P&T grades blended working

Blended Working is currently working well within the OPW and there are no plans to make any changes to the current arrangements

Review of facilities at 1GQ

Following the decant of OPW operations from St Stephen's Green to its new Dublin headquarters at No.1 George's Quay in 2022, it has been agreed to conduct a joint review of all facilities and associated arrangements.

In preparation of this the AEHS branch are in the process of engaging with the entire Fórsa membership and collating the relevant issues and concerns of Fórsa's membership.

Report on the property maintenance – structure, capacity and capability review

Fórsa is continuing to work through the three outstanding membership concerns: Role of Case Officers (EO Grade), District Inspectors and the implications of increasing the financial sanction limit for Building Fabric Helpdesk approval.

To this end a meeting of the relevant Working Group (No.7) is scheduled to meet shortly to discuss and progress related matters.

Structure, capacity and capability review of the Heritage services

A capability and capacity review of the Heritage services section of the OPW is currently underway and is being carried out by Grant Thornton. This review is likely to impact significantly on all grades and roles in the section.

Fórsa is still awaiting the completion and circulation of the final report. In the meantime Fórsa has relayed the initial concerns of the membership to management through Departmental Council and advised that there are to be no changes to the terms and conditions of Fórsa's members outside of due process through Departmental Council.

Shortlisting policy

It remains the OPW Staff Panel's position that every candidate who submits an application for promotion, that complies with the necessary relevant criteria, should receive an interview. The panel also accepts that short-listing is one of several key recommendations arising from an independent review by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA), which is the principal regulator for recruitment and selection processes within the Civil and Public Service.

Considering the above the Staff Panel has agreed to the implementation of the current draft as a short-listing policy subject to the following:

- The short-listing is carried out by the interview board (only) where possible
- That there will not be a cap on numbers for interview, provided that all qualifying criteria is met
- That following each internal competition the interview board conducts a review of the process and, compiles a report identifying any possible improvements with recommendations as to how they might be implemented
- The related training programme remains under constant review and that same will be revised as required in response to legitimate needs identified
- The relevant policy remains a live document to be reviewed on an annual basis and that all feedback and observations from all relevant stakeholders will be considered and brought before Departmental Council for discussion and agreement prior to implementation.

In addition to the above, the Staff Panel also confirmed agreement in principle that there should be only one short-listing policy in the OPW for both Admin and P&T grades and that the P&T element remains to be discussed and agreed as part of the on-going P&T Review and with the AEHS branch committee.

Higher scales Executive grades

The Fórsa Executive Grade membership attached to the OPW have voted overwhelming (by way of secret (electronic) ballot) in favour of moving to a 100% senior/suitability basis for the awarding of the EO/HEO higher scales, bringing them in line with the awarding of CO, AP and PO higher scales already in place in the OPW.

The relevant higher scales shall be processed on the abovementioned basis.

Deployment of Executive Officers as supervisory managers

Heretofore Executive Officers attached to the OPW were excluded from supervisory management duties. This approach was an outlier in the Civil Service and seriously disadvantaged the promotion prospects of many of Fórsa's members.

The development of the role of Executive Officer grade in the OPW has been the subject of discussion amongst the relevant Fórsa membership for several years. It was also the subject of significant engagement between Fórsa and the Official Side (OPW HR) at Departmental Council.

This engagement included the development of supervisory management skills and relevant experience for Executive Officers and was first raised by Fórsa at (OPW) Departmental Council circa 2020 and resulted in a pilot being ran in 2023/2024 whereby Executive Officers supervised Clerical Officers.

The outcome of and response to this pilot was overwhelmingly positive and has resulted in the full roll out of increased responsibility for (potentially) all Executive Officers attached to the OPW.

Professional and Technical grades

P&T review

The interim report from this group, following the initial period of engagement, is now with the branch for consideration. The interim report comments on the following:

- Sequencing
- Conciliation Agreement 1539
- Career path development
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Shortlisting policy for P&T grades
- PCW 1%
- District Inspectors career path development
- District Works Manager – reinstatement of allowance
- Professional reporting structures
- Civil Service mobility scheme for P&T grades
- Competitions and Professional & Technical grade equivalence

All concerned will be kept apprised of developments as they arise.

P&T mobility policy

P&T mobility is a live issue with significant (positive and negative) implications across several employments and branches.

A draft policy received from the official side is currently being considered by the union. Because the matter is fraught with significant risk for some sections of the

P&T grades it is proposed in the first instance, for the draft policy to be evaluated by the NTPC as soon as it is fully formed.

Professional indemnity insurance

Comprehensive advice was received from Donal Spring Fórsa Solicitor.

In line with a request from the solicitor, the branch is collating a list of final concerns, following which Mr. Spring will furnish a full legal opinion.

OPW PCW 1%

Local discussions with OPW HR to resolve the third call arising from 2019 to 2022 series of awards concluded without agreement. The branch has sought that the matter be referred to a third party for determination.

Following this, the Chair of Department Council met with the branch Executive and is reviewing the file. He has undertaken to provide an independent opinion before the branch makes a final decision on the matter.

When the abovementioned matter is concluded, it is proposed to conduct a broader review of the OPW (PCW 1%) agreement and ballot the membership on any changes that may arise from or be proposed following such a review.

In this regard it is also proposed to consider the full implications of related correspondence dated the 11th of October 2022 from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which deals with the "Transition Period for Pensionability of PCW 1% Allowance in the OPW".

District Inspector's claim for a pay increase and career path progression

Following confirmation that their current claim has little or no prospect of success, the Sub-branch is in the process of reconsidering same in the context of the local bargaining clause of the PSA 2024 to 2026.

District Managers claim for reinstatement of PCW allowance

A Disagreed Report issued in this case and a submission on same was referred to a third party. Pending a date for an adjudication hearing Fórsa has had partial success in this matter.

OPW HR received sanction from DPENDR for the reinstatement of the District Works Manager's special duty allowance which agreed between IMPACT and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, in the context of Option A of Clause two (iii) of the PCW Pay Agreement (Report no 24). The allowance was unilaterally and inadvertently suspended in 2012.

The allowance became payable at an annual rate of €6,300.76 effective from 19th July 2024. The allowance will attract general round increases and will be deemed a pensionable allowance in the nature of pay.

It is DPENDR's position that DMW's recruited following suspension of this allowance in 2012, applied for roles advertised without the inclusion of any allowance and chose to enter an employment relationship which did not provide for this allowance. On this basis they have not agreed to sanction the retrospective element before today's reinstatement date.

Fórsa has now submitted a revised statement of case and appendices focusing on the retrospective element of the allowance for the affected DMW's, and is awaiting a date for an adjudication hearing.

OPW Art division and the establishment of permanent Art Collection Manager and registrar posts within the Civil Service/OPW

The art contractors who were Fórsa members have been successful in the recent competition sought by Fórsa to have their contractual roles filled as Civil Service posts.

In addition to the above an agreement was reached between Fórsa with the OPW which reflects an incremental credit offer to the members concerned. This is deemed and intended to reflect the ten years continuous service provided to the OPW on a contractual basis. This outcome represents the best which could have been achieved if the union's claim had progressed to an adjudication.

Additionally, the associated agreement also noted that the Scope section of the Department of Social Protection is currently examining whether the members should be regarded as having been in insurable employment during the currency of the contracts (or some of them) and related matters. This includes any appeal, review or consequent process. Nothing in

this agreement prejudices the position of either of the parties in respect of the Scope investigation.

Regarding the Scope enquiry Fórsa does not believe that the union's related case before the WRC (who are also a signatory to the Code of Practice on Determining Status) would deliver any more favourable an outcome.

Consequently, and with agreement of the affected membership, Fórsa has notified the WRC that Fórsa and the OPW have reached agreement on related matters and all related complaints, proceedings and disputes have been settled.

Architectural graduate concerns

OPW HR and the RIAI met with Fórsa on in December 2024 to discuss and progress the following:

- Pay claim (re-establishment of relativities)
- Pension accrual
- Blended working
- Access to Flexitime
- Haddington Road Hours (return of)
- Graduate programmes generally

Fórsa is now in the process of constructing a pay claim on behalf of the Graduates for lodgement with the RIAI.



Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC/FIOSRÚ)

Branch reconstruction

Following recent retirement and lateral transfers, Fórsa began a process of identifying new representatives and reconstructing the local branch.

The reconstruction of the branch continues and included the bespoke branch Strategy & Development Day delivered by Fórsa's Director of Training in November 2024. The branch found the event and subject matter discussed very beneficial.

GSOC organisation review project

Fórsa and GSOC HR are engaged in identifying the potential IR issues arising from the recent Grant Thornton conducted GSOC Organisational Review. GSOC HR management have committed to engaging fully with the union to address any issues arising.

Proposal to revise frequency of on-call rota for GSOC Investigators

The branch has agreed to operate the one in six ratios (which is an improvement on the previous arrangement of one in five) for the moment and on the basis that there is a comprehensive review of all rostering and resource arrangements.

Review of rosters and establishment of a GSOC roster and working time review group

Agreement was reached between Fórsa/AHCPS and GSOC Management that a collaborative and evidenced-based approach which takes account of both sides' requirements and interests in respect of rostering and working time was the best way forward.

This evidence-based research will be conducted jointly and form the basis of a structured and collaborative engagement designed and intended to deliver the most appropriate and optimal outcome for both sides, having full regard to all the circumstances.

Fórsa and the AHCPS agreed and jointly submitted a draft term of reference in respect of the working group, which management accepted is the basis of business. Roster negotiations are progressing well. The working group is currently in the process of constructing a joint survey of the needs and concerns of all parties.

Internal (GSOC) promotion competition policy

Fórsa secured agreement at (GSOC) Commission Council regarding the proposed introduction of an Internal Promotion Competition Policy for the Fiosrú – Oifig an Ombudsman Póilíneachta.

Fleet management

GSOC has engaged with Fórsa on the development and implementation of a Fleet Management system. The branch is satisfied that there are sufficient protections for Fórsa's membership contained in the policy and that the policy will not be used as a supervisory management tool.

Desk management policy

As the GSOC organisation orientates towards the new and expanded entity that will be FIOSRU, current accommodation facilities will be stretched. The organisation proposes to manage this through blended working and a desk management system which has been agreed at Departmental Council.

Sequencing and higher scales

It agreed at the most recent Departmental Council to set up bilateral meetings to discuss and develop revised organisational policies in respect of sequencing for competitions and the awarding of high scales.

All concerned will be kept apprised of developments as they arise.



House of the Oireachtas Ushers

The Joint Forum for the conduct of industrial relations within the Oireachtas Ushers service

The Joint Forum for the conduct of Industrial Relations within the Oireachtas Ushers Service (currently chaired by Mr. Sean Mc Hugh and aka Usher's Forum/Mc Hugh Forum) reconvened on the 29th of January 2024 following a 12 month suspension.

All parties signed a revised agreement underpinning the recalibrated Forum. This agreement is broadly based on the Fórsa submission of the 1st of September 2023.

One of the first actions of the recalibrated forum was the establishment of a local sub-group, operating under the auspices of the Joint Forum.

The purpose of this sub-group is to identify and operate the requirements and methods necessary for normalising contacts between the Fórsa Oireachtas Usher's branch and local management. It was to operate on a trial basis for an initial period following which it will be evaluated as to its effectiveness, efficiency and continuance.

It is envisaged that the proposed sub-group will meet on a (scheduled) monthly basis to discuss legitimate local industrial relations (IR) matters which are capable of being addressed/resolved locally without the need for escalation. It will also provide the organisation with a vehicle to inform the union of IR matters as appropriate in between Joint Forum meetings.

The sub-group will comprise of the following:

- Independent facilitator appointed by Oireachtas HR
- Official side delegation: Two members of management from the Office of the Superintendent
- Staff side delegation: Two Officers of the Fórsa Oireachtas Usher's branch

The facilitator will provide written reports to the Chairperson of the Joint Forum on business discussed and processed by the sub-group in between Joint Forum meetings.

Where agreement cannot be achieved on any matter, this should be reported to the Forum. Matters discussed at the sub-group and which remain unresolved may be submitted for consideration for inclusion on the agenda of the Joint Forum.

The chairperson of the Joint Forum may also refer matters to the sub-group for its consideration and report.

Review of working arrangements and practices concerning ushers employed at the Houses of the Oireachtas

Fórsa cautiously welcomed the recommendations contained in the Interim Report on the Review of Working Arrangements and Practices concerning Ushers employed at the Houses of the Oireachtas.

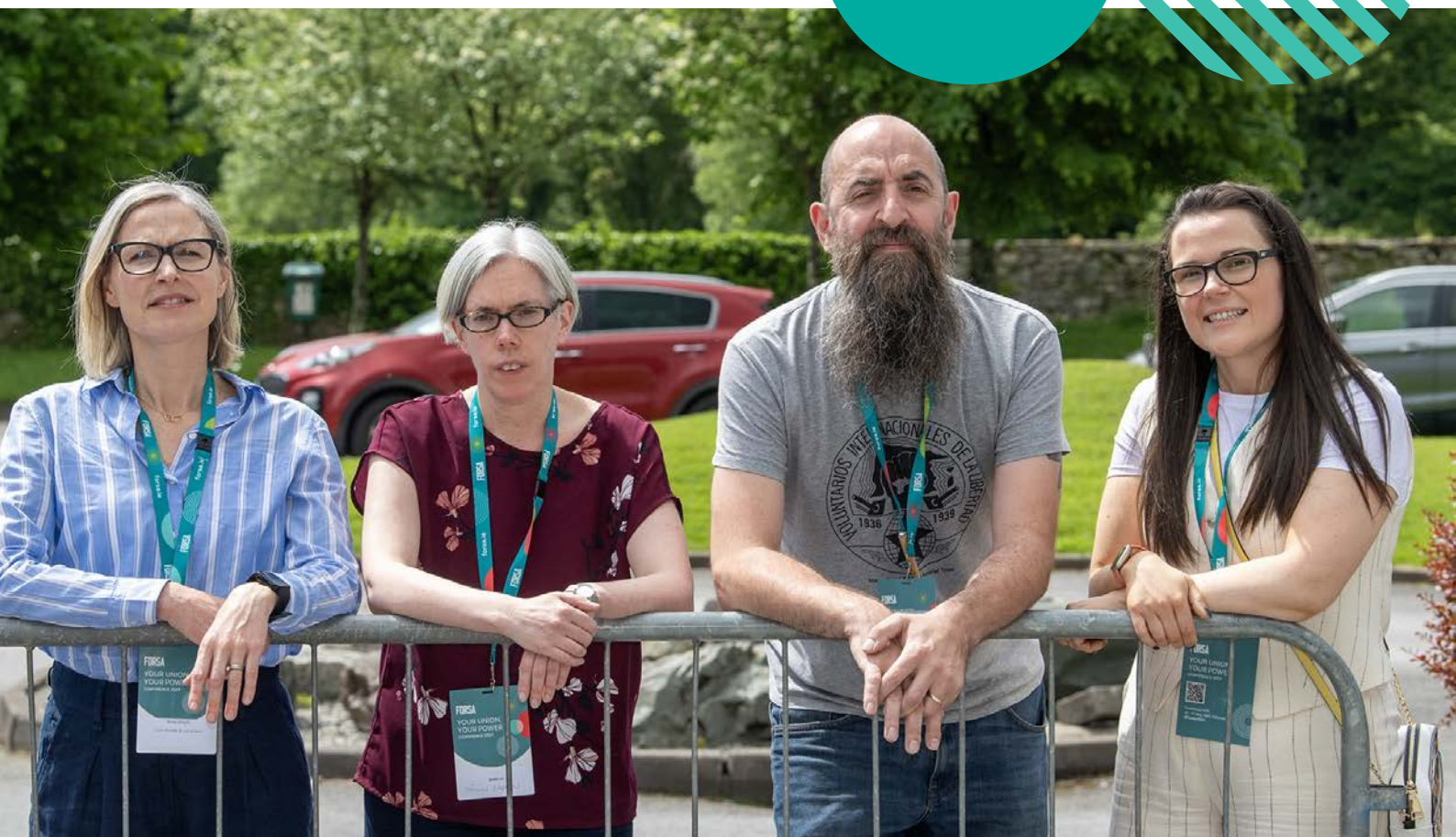
In seeking progress of the recommendations contained in the facilitator's interim report local HR engaged Adare Consulting to conduct a survey and focus groups to identify the views of all staff on related matters. The surveys have been described by the branch as credible, and the response has been overwhelming at 80+%.

Revision of working hours in relation to the Haddington Road Agreement Hours (HRA) and updated flexible working arrangements for civil servants

As Dáil Ushers may not always work a 35-hour week the provision of Section three of Civil Service Circular 14/2022 led to a fundamentally unfair application of same from the Usher's perspective.

The branch sought a derogation from Section three of Civil Service Circular 14/2022. That is not deliverable currently. It now transpires that if the branch pursues this matter as initially directed, it runs the risk of negatively impacting the overtime earning capacity of all Grade III Ushers and this would lead to a less optimal outcome for those of Fórsa's members.

Consequently, the branch has concluded that it is the best interest of the broader membership to abandon this claim.



General grades

Report on the forum on a family friendly and inclusive Parliament (Upton report)

Fórsa members from several branches submitted their observations on the Upton report and these formed part of the Staff Panel/joint union response to the recommendations contained in the report. Fórsa remains engaged on the matter.

Blended working

No major issues presenting with the implementation of the blended working policy.

Unfortunately, there a number of frontline roles which do not lend to blended working. Fórsa has asked that these be reviewed to see if there is any scope to apply blended working to those roles, even occasionally.

Issue of Junior Clerks (Executive Grade) being required to carry out the duties of clerical officers on an on-going basis

Several Fórsa members of Executive Officer grade and appointed to the role of Junior Clerks at the Houses of the Oireachtas have raised the on-going requirement to carry out the duties of Clerical Officers. This is particularly so following promotions and while waiting for the vacated Clerical Officer posts to be backfilled.

Fórsa recently had a bilateral meeting with local HR with a view to having the matter addressed as soon as resources come available.

All concerned will be kept apprised of developments as they arise.



OCFA branch

Proposed out-of-hours rota for librarians

In Q1 2023, Local Management at the Oireachtas Library Services sought to unilaterally introduce a revision to the out of hours rota for certain librarian services. This proposal had the potential to impact disproportionately and unfairly on a small number of Fórsa's members.

A bilateral meeting took place where it agreed that an evidenced based needs analysis in line with the resources that prevailed prior to pandemic, would be undertaken within a prescribed and agreed time frame. This involved about 28 staff across researcher and librarian grades providing the service as prevailed prior to Covid. The status quo has remained.

PCW 1% for staff attached Oireachtas library service

Fórsa engaged with local management on the requirements for making the awards under the PCW agreement. Agreement was reached and the branch and affected membership have approved same.

Capability and capacity review of Oireachtas library and archive services

A capability and capacity review of Oireachtas library and archive services commenced in Q2 2024. This review is likely to impact significantly on all grades and roles in the Section.

Oversight of the Review is provided by the Library Futures Team and is chaired by the Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services Division and will include the following:

- Principal Officer, Head of Library and Research Services (project sponsor)
- Temporary Head of Library (project manager)
- Head of Library (from December)
- Two senior librarians
- Representative from the ICT Unit
- Representative from the HR Unit
- Two Fórsa union (P&T) representatives from library staff to represent P&T library staff
- Two Fórsa union (P&T) representatives from Library staff to represent general grades staff.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI translation technology is being used in the Oireachtas since 2017. The OCFA branch acknowledges and accepts that AI has many advantages that suit both sides.

The expanded use and application of artificial intelligence technology in some areas of the Oireachtas Service is a cause of distinct concern to the OCFA branch. This concern relates to the risk that unobstructed additional roll-out of such technology could lead to the possible extinguishment of permanent posts.

Oireachtas HR have provided assurance that there will be no reduction in the number of posts in any grade because of AI.

The branch has sought that Departmental Council be briefed specifically at each meeting on all related developments to ensure that there will be no risk to current established posts. This request has been acceded to.



Department of Finance, PER and Associated Organisations branch

Transfer of operational and service delivery functions of OneLearning and SPS to the Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

It proposed that all training within the Civil Service shall be conducted through the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). It now forms part of a portfolio-based accreditation process intended to lead to greater professionalisation of the workforce.

In essence, this meant that all the operational and service delivery functions of One Learning and SPS transferred to the IPA. The proposal clearly had implications for One Learning and SPS service delivery across all Civil Service Departments.

The affected membership raised several issues including the following:

- Clarification regarding Civil Service Status
- Future deployment of all staff post transition
- Future career path opportunities
- Mobility opportunities
- Management of individual circumstances
- Where does all of this sit in relation to the on-going modernisation of the IPA

Two issues arose, one was the substantive issue of civil servants being unilaterally transferred to an agency outside the Civil Service. The other (secondary) issue was the determination as to which Forum should consider the substantive issue (the Arbitration Board or the Adjudicator). The unions won the secondary issue, and the substantive issue went to arbitration.

The (arbitration) hearing of the substantive issue took place on the 18th of April 2024 with the Arbitration Board finding against the unions and determining that “the facts are that the terms and conditions of the staff concerned are fully protected for the duration of the temporary deployment. No one in effect loses out as a consequence of the move. The move is driven by the transformation agenda in National Agreements over many years including the envisaged seamless inter-changeability between the Civil Service and Public Service.”

All concerned were extremely disappointed with the outcome.

Blended working at the Department of Finance

The application of blended work in the Dept. of Finance has been a cause of concern to the Finance, PER and Associated Organisations branch since 2022.

Fórsa believes that where it is found necessary to revise blended working arrangements in response to organisational need, the matter should be raised with the unions as soon as possible with tangible evidence of the need for the proposed change.

A policy within the Department of Finance of not consulting with the unions (including Fórsa) on any aspect of the development and/or implementation of the Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations culminated in February 2025 with a unilateral direction to affected staff in one division to increase their office attendance from two to three days per week.

Fórsa asked for the decision in question to be deferred for a period to allow for the matter to be brought before Departmental Council and for the unions to be briefed on the reason and evidence for the proposal. That request has not been acceded to.

In the context of the developments summarised above, Fórsa entered dispute concerning the unilateral alteration of the implementation of the Blended Working Policy to the disadvantage of workers, without discussion, analytics or consultation. No union could or should tolerate such a circumstance.

This resulted in the union issuing the following instruction: “members who have been working a blended or remote working pattern up to now are instructed by Fórsa to continue to work the same pattern and not to comply with any altered pattern which the Department of Finance has introduced until such time as this matter can find resolution”.

Following discussions with the department’s HR Management, the following was confirmed:

- All staff can continue to work their existing blended working pattern
- In parallel, the department will engage with the unions via the Departmental Council in respect of the background, timing and business need for (the) decision(s) to vary collective in-office attendance. If a dispute arises, it will be processed through the agreed Civil Service disputes procedures.
- At Fórsa’s request, blended working has been added (again) as a standing item to the Departmental Council agenda.

This outcome would not have been achieved without the willingness of members to take a stand. Had it been necessary to implement the instruction, only Fórsa members would have been protected while taking such an action.

Blended working survey conducted by the Department of Finance, PER and Associated Organisations branch

Outside of pay, working time is the most important (work-related) priority of staff. This was evidenced by the 75% response of Fórsa's membership (at the department of Finance) to a recent survey on blended working.

The survey identified significant factors arising from a one-day week increase in working from the office. These factors include, but are not confined, to the following:

- An extra day in the office is a significant burden on work-life balance, particularly for those with caring responsibilities
- An extra day in the office would decrease staff productivity
- Staff provide flexibility, with significantly greater numbers working past normal working hours in response to work pressures than they do to accrue flexi time or balance their flexi clock
- There are increased travel costs, with a fifth facing an additional cost of public transport per day of more than €27
- Staff have average travel times of more than one hour each way, coming

to more than two and a half hours combined each day.

Indicative survey

The first indicative survey undertaken by a Fórsa branch took place in February of this year.

The Finance, PER and Associated Organisations branch consulted the following groups within their membership as to how they wished to be considered in the on-going assembly of claims under the local bargaining clause of the PSA 2024 to 2026.

- Category Specialist
- Category Specialist Higher
- Employee Assistance Officer

The turnout was high and has helped strengthen union membership in the various sections.

Department of Transport

Office opening hours

Currently the opening time of the department's head office in Leeson Lane Dublin is 08.00hrs. Prior to the Covid pandemic, agreement had been reached in principle to change and bring forward the office opening time to 07.30hrs. With the advent of Covid, the matter was parked and was only recently revisited at a related bilateral meeting.

At that meeting it was agreed that both sides would now consider the matter, conduct research and test sentiment for the proposal currently, including consideration of the implications such a proposal might have on Fórsa's Service Officer colleagues.

Internal resourcing policy

The Department of Transport Staff Panel is currently engaged with the Official Side in reviewing a draft Internal Resourcing Policy.

It is proposed that the policy will deal with the following:

- Promotions
- Short-listing
- Acting up
- Internal mobility

Accommodation at Shannon office

Fórsa is aware of the deplorable state of the department's accommodation in Shannon. Fórsa has recently received reports that the situation has deteriorated further. It is proposed to move the affected staff temporarily to the Shannon town centre pending delivery of a more long-term solution in the area.

Fórsa has asked that local management keep the membership fully informed of developments. The union has also sought a copy of the issues log/concerns sent from local Management to the OPW so that the union can keep abreast of developments and address all legitimate and reasonable concerns of Fórsa's members.

Irish Coastguard

Fórsa v DoT: Coast Guard Vehicle Access Adjudication & Compensation

Just over a year after a favourable adjudication finding Fórsa has received details of the proposed associated payments in respect of each of the five officers party to the claim.

Awards ranging from €10,050 to €25,200 are on offer and are being considered by the members concerned.

Review of the industrial relations Issues within the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG)

Executive members will be aware that the relevant Fórsa AMRO and Marine branches have signed off on the Terms of Reference for the Review of Industrial Relations Issues within the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) and the (definitive) list of items to be considered by and during the review.

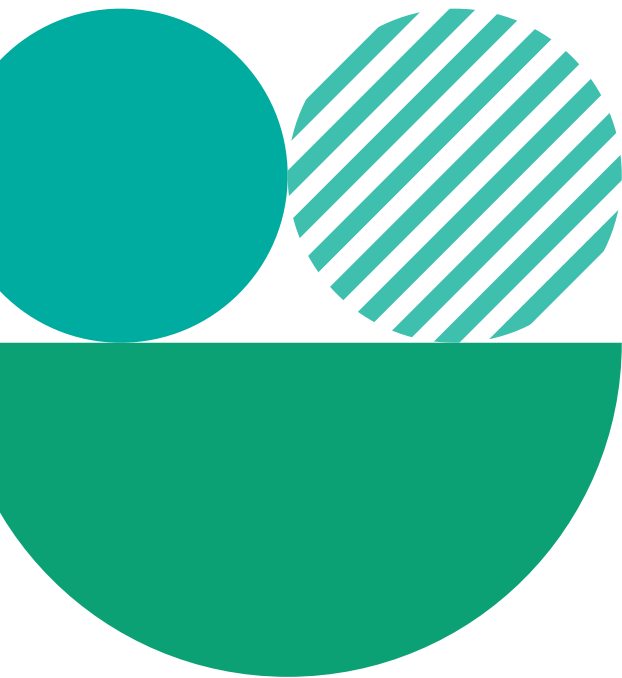
Subsequently, Fórsa became aware of an external review/process to be conducted by Crowe Consultants (now underway) and which is either directly or indirectly related to several matters the subject of the Fórsa/IRCG review.

This has placed a question mark over the relevance of the Fórsa IRCG review. Fórsa raised these concerns with department of Transport HR and sought the following clarification:

- What the status of outcomes will be should both reviews proceed concurrently and yield conflicting results, recommendations, and/or agreements
- Obtain full transparency and disclosure of documents specifying the nature and scope of the review to be undertaken by Crowe.

Fórsa met with department HR and Coast Guard senior management in January 2024 where assurances were given regarding full engagement going forward and a commitment to share research. It was also agreed that any recommendations arising from the Crowe review which have the potential to impact on Fórsa's members terms and conditions, will be brought before departmental council for discussion/negotiation as appropriate, prior to implementation.

The list of issues to be considered by the working group include health and safety, work programmes, wellness (PTR), and items raised in respect of the Risk Register.



Enterprise, trade and employment

Offices of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Authority and Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)

DETE HR is to facilitate a coffee morning at the department to introduce Fórsa and the AHCPS to the HR Departments of the CCPC. A similar exercise with the Corporate Enforcement Authority proved positive.

The aim is to establish a structured IR processes within both agencies and lead to recruitment opportunities for Fórsa in both organisations.

It is proposed to seek to establish sub-councils similar to what operate elsewhere including GSOC and the Ombudsman's Office.

Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) acting up policy

Following a recent membership divergence of views regarding the awarding and payment of Acting-up allowance, Fórsa has sought a review of the policy for Acting Up to more senior roles through Departmental Council.

GITI programme

Fórsa is advised by Fórsa's members that following a ministerial announcement on the 14th of May 2024 a workplace directive issued to the WRC Inspector membership directing them to carry out an additional inspection per week or four per month in risk areas other than where they currently call at nighttime.

Fórsa's affected membership is extremely concerned that this additional duty and the follow up work associated with it, including prosecutions, will lead to a material and onerous increase in their workload.

The matter is currently on the agenda for an urgent bilateral meeting with DETE HR to discuss the development and the associated concerns to Fórsa's members.

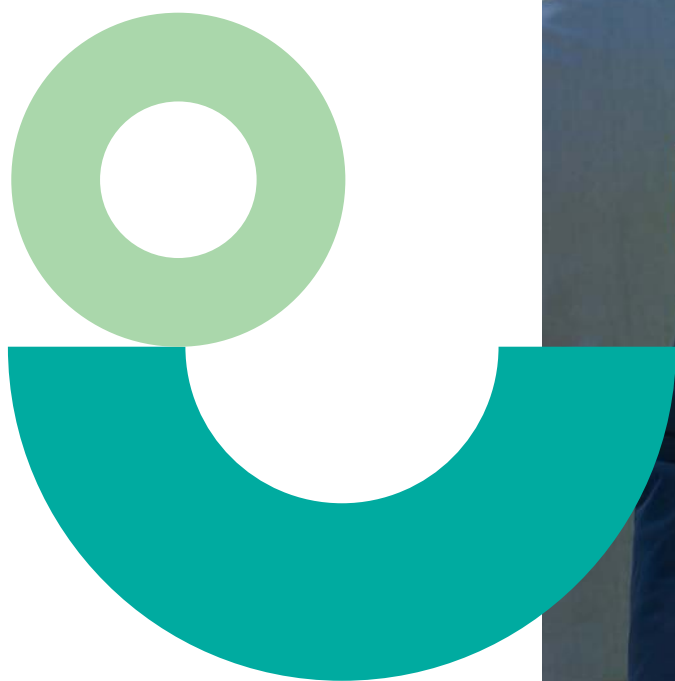
Tourism, culture, arts, Gaeltacht, sports and media

The proposed centralisation and relocation of all Dublin based departmental personnel to the new purpose-built facility at Leeson Lane Dublin two was deferred until early April 2025. The reason for the delay is a scarcity nationally of engineers to commission the complex building management system.



National Archives of Ireland

The National Archivists branch is engaged with Departmental HR Management and local Senior Management at National Archives Ireland and progressing several issues including resourcing workloads and blended working. Fórsa has also engaged in negotiations with department and has reached agreement on policies such as internal mobility and HR ICT policy.



National Shared Services Office

The Blended Working Policy which see's maximum flexibility being applied with the full accrual of flexi is under threat with a proposal to implement compulsory attendance in the office two days per week with effect from September 2025. Fórsa is still discussing this with HR and will take all necessary action to ensure the original negotiated policy remains.

The NSSO have introduced shared workspaces commencing with a pilot in Clonskeagh and is subject to review.

The last couple of years saw the NSSO's Pensions Service from an end-to-end delivery perspective change. The aim was to implement a streamlined, customer focussed and innovative service, providing excellent, accurate, timely and accessible pensions services, via multiple channels, to the civil and public servants who are NSSO customers, during their working life, at the point of retirement and beyond. The benefits are being assessed on an ongoing basis and we saw similar projects emerging with overpayments and annual leave.

Probation in the NSSO is currently managed by a performance improvement plan which approaches the subject in a negative context. It guides managers on what they need to do in respect of due process before deeming an officer to be satisfactory as opposed to a progressive approach in supporting a new recruit through the probation process in a positive way.

Fórsa has agreed a new policy with HR aimed at supporting members through the probation process. The union has been attempting to streamline the acting up policy across all locations and are currently engaged with the NSSO on a draft policy. Recruitment, organisation and retention is a continued focus for the BEC in the coming years.

Department of Education

2023/2024 saw a change in personnel on the HR team with a new HR Manager and a new Assistant Secretary being appointed.

A Blended Working Policy has been negotiated and agreed in the department which provides for three days working from home and two in the office subject to review. Fórsa is engaged with the department on the review and we continue to seek flexi accrual for members from both home and office.

This led to the roll out of ergonomic assessments to be dealt with by an external company. We negotiated the retention of the services for ergonomic assessments in house for the foreseeable.

Higher Clerical Scales have been reviewed and awarded satisfactorily up to end 2024.

We had agreement in principle for the reintroduction of the 1% PCW allowance for P&T grades across all DoE areas however the department are reluctant to progress the allowance and so we will seek to resolve the issue through the C&A process.

OPW Accommodation project is on-going as each location is reviewed.

2023 saw internal competitions for AP, HEO and EO with another HEO competition set for Q4 2024 and a new PO Competition.



Further higher education, research, innovation and science

A Blended Working Policy has been established and agreed in the department which provides for three days working from home and two in the office subject to review. A new HR function has been established in DFHERIS which will see a full separation of the function by mid-2025.

There is a gradual separation of policies affecting members post MOU and towards the end of 2024 we agreed a separation of the agreement on common promotion pools for Fórsa's admin grade members but a continuation for Fórsa's P&T grades for the next number of years.

The Professional and Technical grades in the DoE and DFHERIS are anxious to engage with the department with a view to establishing one team which will work on projects in both departments and will be staffed efficiently.

State Examinations Commission

Fórsa's EAM grades have on-going concerns in respect of the interpretation by the SEC of the Memorandum of Understanding that established the SEC in terms of the ratio of EAM's to seniors. Fórsa is awaiting some engagement from DPENDR to progress Fórsa's claim but it is proving difficult to get engagement.

The SEC were more than reluctant to agree a Blended Working Policy and after months of engagement we were not in a position to sign off on the proposals as they were extremely restrictive in nature. The proposal sets out a provision for one day working from home for approximately six months of the year with a ban on working from home for the other six months of the year. It implemented in some sections and is subject to review which is just commencing.

Office accommodation continues to be an issue for Fórsa's P&T grades nationally and an energy upgrade for the building is being carried out by the OPW.

Higher scales continue to be implemented satisfactorily.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The NCSE have engaged Fórsa in a consultation process on a restructuring programme which has been a positive engagement to date.

The restructuring proposal see's the current role of the Regional Manager's being split into policy roles and practical lead roles managing teams of Team Managers, SENO's, Advisors, Visiting Teachers and Therapists.

The policy roles are being staffed by existing staff (formerly Regional Managers – now National Development Leads) and the practical roles will be staffed by two new National Co-ordinators. Fórsa is also seeing an increase in staffing levels in all grades.

As the structure of the organisation changes and develops into five pillars, the administration teams develop also and increases in numbers.

There has been sanction to stand up a permanent Therapist service in the NCSE and Fórsa negotiated the terms and conditions of employment for new Civil Service Therapists in line with pay, terms and conditions for HSE equivalent grades. Fórsa has also recently negotiated the permanency of Behaviour Practitioners (Behaviour and Wellbeing facilitators) and this service is set to grow.

The demands on NCSE members is ever increasing and we would hope to see an increase in staffing levels in 2025 & 2026 as the duties increase over time.



National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)

Similar to the NCSE, the NEPS are also restructuring and splitting the role of the Regional Directors into policy areas and practical work practice areas. It was proposed that the regions would change from eight regions to six and the roles of the Regional Directors would split to seek to balance the demands of both providing a high quality educational psychological service to all schools in Ireland as well as meeting the demands of NEPS policy-related work with the department.

Fórsa sought a review of the admin grade structure within NEPS which has been agreed but remains in discussion.

Inspectorate

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced in November 2023 that the new First five Implementation Plan 2023-2025 includes the following actions:

“Bring together the functions carried out by Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate and the department of Education (DE) Inspectorate’s Early Years team into a single body that provides integrated care and education inspections. The work of the new integrated body will be underpinned by the development of a single quality framework for Early Learning and Care... (to) develop a single, integrated quality framework for ELC to replace Síolta and the two existing inspection frameworks and to be used as the common reference

framework for all inspection activities and for self-evaluation by ELC settings. This quality framework will integrate both structural and process quality and will support providers to assess and enhance their own performance and service delivery along the quality spectrum, from regulatory compliance to excellence.”

There is a commitment to draft Terms of Reference for two complementary steering groups that will commence these planning processes with a view to the steering groups being established and holding their first meetings in Q1 2024. This did not occur and as we move into 2025 these groups have yet to be established.

Milestones for the steering group on a single inspection body in 2024, included consultation with stakeholders (including unions) but Fórsa has no timeframe for this yet and it has not occurred to date. Members continue to be concerned as they still face uncertainty as to their future in the Civil Service.

Both Primary & Early Years and the Post-Primary Branches continue to work together in a positive way to bring about change and influence working practices within the Inspectorate.

Strategic Change

Several projects are managed currently by the Strategic Change team and the following report summarises the progress since the last conference.

Fórsa Strategic Plan

A strategy for the implementation of the plan and the evaluation of progress has been guiding the work of the team for the past two years.

An area of key importance was the implementation of Core objective no.1: Organising to create a stronger, more powerful union, which has 22 sub-actions committing the union to developing and applying a national organising strategy at every level of the union.

With expert guidance, from the late **Dr Jane McAlevey**, bespoke training centred on building high participation and developing power in workplaces was developed. The methodology, known as Organising for Power, has been presented to the NEC and Divisions and training delivered initially to all staff. Rollout across the union is ongoing and pilot projects in divisions have highlighted the potential of the structured approach that Organising for Power (O4P) offers.

Branch Supports, Development and Membership Engagement project

This project has been streamlining and standardising the materials and tools available to branches so that branches are able to devote more time to engaging directly with members.

A Workplace Reps charter, AGM guide, Branch Toolkit and branch merger guide were developed and tested with branches from each division. They had been participating in a pilot of the materials ahead of their launch to the NEC in September 2024. The next phase of the project, which includes communications and GDPR, will also see an expansion of participation in the development and testing phase.

The Branch Merger guide was developed in real time as several branches came together to increase their effectiveness. There are still a few branches with membership in single figures and others which are in the process of merging for various reasons and the guide continues to evolve.

Solas CRM project

This membership system project has now successfully progressed to Phase 2. The project team have steered the implementation of Phase 1, which required working closely with our tech partners and internal stakeholders to progress development work, testing and implementation as well as resolution of initial system faults. Additional functionality, requested following user feedback was scoped out, developed and implemented.

In parallel with continuing system development and testing, the project team have produced and delivered bespoke training, with training materials, for staff and branches and piloted these as the first tranche of branches were given access to

the new system. Further to this, the project team collaborated with colleagues in other divisions and functional teams to agree security protocols and identify business processes for review or refinement.

Although improving the data held on Solas is an ongoing process, we are now able to analyse and present information in ways which were previously beyond reach, helping us make more strategic decisions and contributing to the overall effectiveness of the union.

Solar PV Project

This project commenced in an effort to meet the commitments within the Strategic Plan to create a greener, more sustainable union, by improving the sustainability of union offices and working towards carbon neutrality.

To date, Solar PV has been installed in the union's Nerney's Court offices in Dublin, and this is contributing to a decrease in energy costs and Fórsa's carbon footprint. The financial savings are expected to ensure the installation costs are recouped over a period of 3-4 years. An SEAI grant has been secured and reduced the cost by 18% and work is ongoing to secure quotes for the union's other premises.



Membership Unit

General: applications, subscriptions, and data

Fórsa's director of membership is Seán McElhinney.

The Membership Unit processed more than 10,000 new member applications in 2024 and appointed a senior recruitment officer. This role is crucial in helping branches and divisions that wish to profile union membership at public and promotional events. The senior recruitment officer's efforts are instrumental in raising the union's visibility and attracting new members.

The team has also continued with major data enhancements, added more than 20,000 workplace Eircodes to Fórsa's membership system, and has created dashboards, accessible to staff and Solas users, which make it easier to obtain reports about members and assist industrial colleagues with building a high-participation union environment.

Additionally, we've established protocols for collections for non-paying members and to maximise retention, as well as taking steps to ensure that, wherever possible, members are paying their subscriptions by deduction at source.

The Membership Unit team is determined to play a supporting role to divisions, branches, and the national union in terms of recruitment and density building, and to expanding the membership base by ensuring that new members are seamlessly integrated into the union.

Fórsa Income Protection Scheme

This complex project undertaken by the Membership Unit delivers auto-enrolment to the union's income protection scheme. This initiative involved collaboration with multiple stakeholders and meticulous planning. Fórsa members now have increased security in the event they become too unwell to work, providing them with peace of mind and financial stability.

Fórsa Retired members project

This year, almost 200 retiring Fórsa members have already transitioned to retired membership. In 2025 Fórsa will appoint a membership development Officer, specifically focused on union building within Fórsa's retired members' section. This new role will focus on strengthening the network of retired members and ensuring their continued engagement and contribution to the union's activities.

The union's aim is to make Fórsa Retired Members the largest network of retired public servants, fostering a strong community of retired members who continue to contribute to the union's goals and activities, while advocating and campaigning in relation to issues affecting workers in retirement.

Reporting

As part of its commitment to enhance reporting mechanisms, the Membership Unit produces weekly and monthly reports that demonstrate recruitment progress across the union. These reports are shared with key branch, divisional, and national elected representatives and officers, ensuring transparency and facilitating informed decision-making.

Solas

The Membership Unit has doubled the number of members who have access to Solas, Fórsa's membership database. Currently, more than 80% of members are

in a branch with a trained and accredited Solas user. This reflects the union's commitment to providing activists with the tools and resources they need to succeed and participate in union activities.

Digital Infrastructure Development

In 2025, the Membership Unit aims to launch a new tool that will enable members to update their details and allow reps and activists to update us about changes to membership in their workplace. The team is also developing new collections protocols to make it easier for members in the private sector to pay union subscriptions.



Skills Academy

Fórsa's director of Membership Training & Development is Fiona Dunne.

Skills Academy

The Skills Academy training and development programme has been growing from strength to strength with keen interest shown for all workshops and programmes over the last number of years. This enthusiasm has been matched by the ambition of Skills Academy to create a strong supportive learning environment and pathway in which our workplace representatives can develop and build their capacity throughout their union journey.

This year our focus is twofold i) to identify additional skills and topics, in addition to the core programme, to ensure our workplace representatives can continue their role development and ii) ascertain how workplace representatives and branch officers are implementing their learning in the workplace and assess outcomes.

As the essence of training is empowerment, Skills Academy is working to ensure training participants are tasked with the skills to implement their learning thus increasing their influence locally. We will continue to work with branches, workplace representatives and officials to remove any challenges or barriers to this and will be carrying out a series of surveys and focus groups, over the summer period, to do this.

This will ensure that future requirements for training will entail workplace

representatives illustrating (with the support of their branch) the application of their learning to access higher stages along the learning pathway.

The programme

Running every month since January 2023, this year the Lunch and Learn series covered topics such as understanding neurodiversity to utilising the international BDS campaign for solidarity and learning about anti-racism practices to gaining a better insight into Public Service pay determination. The series continues to enjoy a high level of interest from representatives and members alike.

The Fórsa Induction programme, open to all new members, has identified those with an interest in stepping up and participating to a greater level in their workplace, and we are working hard in Skills Academy to ensure potential new activists are given the encouragement and support they need from their branch committees and Fórsa official to grow in that role.

Due to high levels of demand, the Level 1 Workplace Representative Training programme runs eight times every year across the country, ensuring as many skilled new representatives are entering their workplaces with an increased knowledge and capacity to undertake their role to the best of their ability.

The new calendar for the 2025-2026 academic year will be published in time for conferences and will be available at our Skills Academy stand present at every

Divisional conference. This year it will come in pocket and A5 size, opening as a wall poster for branch training officers, along with a digital version on the Skills Academy hub page on the website.

Several new skills workshops were introduced at branch executive committee level which includes time management, public speaking, negotiations Level 1, presentation skills and utilising local IR mechanisms, which enjoy a significant level of demand. Additional workshops introduced for the 2025-26 term will include a resilience workshop and Level 2 Resolving Industrial Conflict, along with a new leadership programme for our more senior activists.

We have also worked directly with many branches, designing bespoke workshops for the committee to suit their needs which include building a strong branch team, creating a baseline for branch strategy and learning a range of skills to operate a strong and dynamic branch. Upward of 15 workshops are scheduled every academic year with more currently being scheduled.

The path to learning will be paved with newly applied practices, and we look forward to working with all our branches to ensure they have the capacity to achieve great success for members locally.

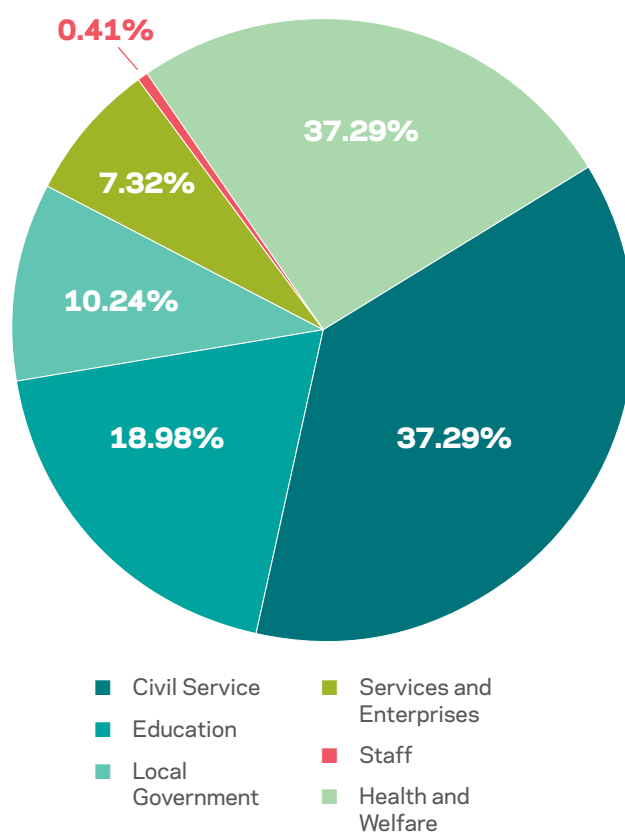
For a more detailed explanation of our courses and programmes, please contact the Fórsa Skills Academy skillsacademy@forsa.ie.

Learning by numbers

From September 2023 - February 2025, we have had engagement with approximately 1280 learners of which almost 50% are members taking the induction session (new and long-term members).

Between September 2023 and May 2024, 379 branch and workplace representatives participated in training with 260 participating to date in the Sept 24 - Feb 2025 period.

Learners by division



Communications and campaigns

Fórsa's communications incorporates three discrete areas of activity overseen by three directors reporting to the union's general secretary. These are digital (Kate O'Sullivan), membership communications (Hannah Deasy) and media relations (Niall Shanahan). Working cooperatively to ensure consistency and quality of union communications, the work of each director is integrated to maximise the effectiveness of the union's reach to internal and external audiences and are coordinated with the work of the Campaigns unit and divisional and functional teams.

Digital

In 2023 and 2024, the Fórsa website had over 4.6 million visits, seeing an average yearly increase of 650,000 extra visits since the last report.

A sub-domain was installed for digital campaigning. This gives us the ability to run petitions, email campaigns, and event sign-ups. It's useful for both building powerful shows of support and to increase member engagement. The latter has been extremely high, averaging between 10,000 to 15,000 signatures per campaign. We're seeing rates of up to 40% of engagement coming from sharing on WhatsApp for example, which is far higher than industry average.

The website 'hubs' are also an innovation that is working well for issues such as disputes, conferences, and campaigns. They are centralised sections of the

website with all the information members need, from 'how to vote', FAQs, resources like conference papers, etc.

Artificial Intelligence, specifically Generative AI, became a huge media story in 2024. The Director of Digital sits on the Fórsa AI working group as well as Unions 21's international group.

Training for members on digital campaigns and social media was rolled out through Fórsa's Skills Academy in 2024. More intensive training will be available following the successful pilot year.

On social media, the strategy was rolled out to focus on a mixture of operational information (e.g. ballot announcements) as well on building engagement and recruitment through win stories, value statements about unions, imagery that reflects members, and light-hearted content. Extensive outreach has been done to get more content from our members to great success. We now have a great range of people-focused imagery that is open, warm, and engaging.

Paid social media ads have been most successful in terms of recruitment on LinkedIn, as we're able to target employments. We run campaigns with a general Join Fórsa message, alongside ads during ballots as well as for events.

The social media landscape has gone through another round of changes in recent years, with Elon Musk notably now owning Twitter/ X. While Big Tech platforms have always had both a negative as well as positive influence, the negative

has increasingly become more visible in Western countries. In response to this and to ensure we are on the platforms our members are, we have created presences on BlueSky, Mastodon, and Threads, alongside Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok and LinkedIn.

Membership communication

The aim of membership communications is both to enhance the clarity with which Fórsa communicates with members, and to elevate members' voices within union communications. Fortnightly sectoral bulletins are issued to members across all divisions by the Communications Unit. These form the core outreach to members, keeping them up to date on union developments, workplace issues, and relevant national stories.

Readership of these bulletins is consistently very high, with each division hitting an open rate above 50% for each edition. Average newsletter open rates are between 15 and 20%. Such a high average demonstrates a high degree of trust in union news content among Fórsa members.

In addition, all union promotional materials, activities and events are coordinated through membership communications to ensure coherency, consistency and the highest standards of professionalism.

From 2023 to 2025, delivering successful divisional conferences and a biennial conference were a priority focus for the team, as well as supporting divisions with ballots and industrial relations, through the production of information tools such as 'Frequently Asked Questions', leaflets, and emails to members.

To empower members and make the union more accessible we are increasing the use of 'plain English' in union communications and creating more toolkits that include posters, leaflets and guides for members

A new Skills Academy communications training is being designed to enhance reps and branches' communication skills, strategies and techniques.

Video is becoming an increasingly important part of the union's communications work. Producing high quality videos allows Fórsa to communicate effectively to a mass audience, using storytelling to demonstrate the collective power of Fórsa's members.

Media relations

The union continues to develop its position in national media as an authoritative voice on industrial relations, public services, collective bargaining and a wide range of social issues.

Between 2023 and 2025, the union led on extensive media coverage on a wide range of issues, including public service pay talks, the community and voluntary dispute in health, the HSE Pay and Numbers dispute and the Aer Lingus/IALPA dispute.

Fórsa is regarded as a trusted source and welcome contributor by national and local media outlets, with daily engagement and regular coverage in national media and a growing presence in regional print and broadcast media.

Aligning with Fórsa's strategic plan, the union plans to continue the development of boosting local media relations activity, working with branches regionally to create media content and establish local representative voices in the media, to grow its presence in media opinion pages and radio panel discussions, and to increase the national media presence of senior and elected officials of the union.

General Election 2024

Fórsa called on parties and candidates to support the union's vision of a society that works for workers during the 2024 General Election. While not aligned to any political party, Fórsa's campaign encouraged trade union members to demand a society that delivers a decent quality of life for all workers, offers accessible, high quality public services, and which provides a secure future in the face of a changing climate and developments in technology expected to disrupt the workplace, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The union's general election manifesto, launched on 14th November, presented policy proposals to strengthen public services and enhance the working lives of Fórsa members, securing substantial media coverage.

The manifesto was published on Fórsa's dedicated [election hub](#), where members were encouraged to send a strong message to all political parties by taking part in Fórsa's email campaign, in addition to providing election materials.

The manifesto's priorities were informed by the Ámarach research, which drew responses from more than 20,000 Fórsa members.

These included:

- Meaningful pay increases, that go beyond inflation, that reward workers for their commitment to public service.
- The protection of remote and hybrid working arrangements, and a commitment to piloting the four-day week in the public sector, without loss of pay.
- Investment in high quality public services, including community healthcare, publicly funded

childcare, and availability of reliable public transport.

- Amend the industrial relations acts to give civil service workers access to the WRC and Labour Court.
- Legislate to modernise the outdated practice of excluding the majority of civil servants from engaging in political activity.
- Engage with unions on issues of serious concern in relation to the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2018.

Campaigns

Fórsa's director of Campaigns is Kevin Donoghue, Aisling Cusack is Policy and Research officer, and Mehak Dugal is Communications and Campaigns officer.

Research

The evidence-based approach continues to be a cornerstone of campaigning in Fórsa. Work is currently underway in the areas of remote work and political engagement as well as specific projects in health, and education.

In 2024, we published research relating to the experience of workers in local government and the civil service. Additionally, we published reports relating to election campaigns and worked with partners such as TASC (think-tank for action and social change) on more significant projects.

The unit has also undertaken larger projects to ensure we meet our obligations as set out in the strategic plan. Our most recent, aimed at improving our overall effectiveness as a lobbying organisation is expected to take 18 months and involve several phases.

Better In A Trade Union

Fórsa was one of the unions that took part in the Better in a Trade Union campaign in 2024. The all-island campaign continues this year and aims to ensure that all working people are aware of the benefits of being in a trade union, and the collective strength of organised workers. The centrepiece of the campaign was the first ever Union Week, which ran from Monday 29th April to Friday 3rd May 2024.

The campaign is, in part, a response to research that revealed that 44% of working people aged between 18-34 are interested in joining a union but hadn't yet joined one.

A host of member-organised events showcased the strength and diversity of the movement and included an impromptu concert by legendary singer Christy Moore in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Hall, a talk by Helen Corish in Red Books in Wexford on the 1911 Wexford Lockout, and Bohemians F.C, wearing the 'Better in a Trade Union' jerseys at an away game at Oriel Park.

Fórsa branches organised events in hospitals, schools, offices and colleges, with many hosting joint events with other unions in their workplaces. Fórsa's Youth Network also hosted a Mayday event in Dublin featuring a panel of young workers. Fórsa national secretary and ICTU vice president Katie Morgan described Trade Union Week as "a celebration of unions and union members, and it provides a perfect opportunity to talk to your colleagues about all the reasons they should join Fórsa."

Union Week gave a real boost in workplaces where events took place, with Fórsa noting an average increase of 25% in new membership applications.

A subsequent event at Áras an Uachtaráin in June celebrated the success of the campaign. President Michael D Higgins extended a warm welcome to union delegates, the lifelong trade unionist and founder of the teaching section of the Workers' Union of Ireland, he called on unions to "to play a leadership-defining role in the coming years as we build the future of our economy and our society," and where all workers, and people from all backgrounds, can flourish.

Branch Campaigns Officers (BCOs)

The re-activation of Fórsa's Branch campaigns officer network commenced in 2024. This included identifying vacancies in the network and surveying BCOs on supports required to effectively undertake campaigning activities. A plan has been developed to build skilled activists within Fórsa branches and will be delivered throughout 2025.

Ploughing Championships

Fórsa was one of 1,700 exhibitors represented at the 2024 National Ploughing Championships. It was the first time Fórsa exhibited at the event, which drew nearly a quarter of a million visitors.

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said: "So many in the agricultural sector are in employment, either full-time or part-time. We need to support those workers, and to support our members working at this important national event."

Fórsa will return to this event in 2025.

Local elections

Local and European elections also took place in 2024. The campaign focused on More Power to You, a campaign for improving local services provision and strengthened local democracy. The campaign's unit published a manifesto document ahead of polling day, with the key pillars of focus being housing, water, waste services, energy, and democracy.

Summer school

The annual summer series event returns in 2025. This year's programme will provide a range of sessions covering key campaign

elements. This event is open to branch campaigns officers and others with an interest in developing campaigning experience.

Stop the Stigma

The Stop the Stigma campaign has continued to make progress and Fórsa is recognised as a leader in the area. Several divisions have successfully engaged on this issue with employers through the industrial relations forums.

Those seeking to become more involved in campaigns or get more information should contact campaigns@forsa.ie.



International

Affiliations

Fórsa is affiliated to, and plays an active role in, the following international trade union federations: Public Services International (PSI), the European Federation of Public Service Trade Unions (EPSU), the International Transport Federation (ITF), the European Transport Federation (ETF), and Uni Global Union.

Fórsa is also one of the active international trade union affiliates of the Justice for Colombia (JfC) campaign. JfC was set up in 2002 by the trade union movement to support Colombian civil society in its struggle for human rights, labour rights, peace, and social justice.

Fórsa plays a leading role in Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFOP). Established by ICTU in 2007, the group works within the trade union movement to educate members and highlight the injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people, to promote further policy motions to help address Israeli human rights abuses, and to mobilise solidarity activity.

Developing World Fund

Fórsa's Developing World Fund provides ongoing support to education, development, and human rights projects across the globe. Funded by 3% of every member's union subscription, the Fórsa Developing World Fund gives over €600,000 a year to projects around the world, allowing the union to make ongoing contributions to human rights and development, as well as responding to humanitarian emergencies.

Since 2022, organisations including Self Help Africa, Concern Worldwide, Turkey/Syria ITUC Emergency Appeal, Vita Ireland, Justice for Colombia, the Irish Red Cross, UNICEF, and PSI International Projects and Tír na nÓg Children's Foundation have been supported through this fund. In the period 2022 and 2023 Fórsa supported international solidarity projects with over €1.3 million in funding.

Fórsa Gaza appeal

Fórsa has donated €100,000 to the UNICEF's Gaza Crisis Emergency Fund, with proceeds helping to provide humanitarian relief to the Palestinian people following Israel's ongoing war and continued bombardment of Gaza.

The donation was made following a meeting of the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) in November 2023 as part of the urgent humanitarian appeal. In addition, branches and members raised a further €32,000 for the UNICEF appeal. UNICEF Executive Director Peter Power has said that these funds allowed the organisation's global logistics supply chain to scale up operations on the ground in support of the team inside Gaza.

With Fórsa's support, UNICEF was able to transport significant humanitarian assistance to Egypt for onward delivery through the Rafah border crossing. UNICEF's efforts, including eleven airlifts, have been among the first deliveries to pass through Rafah, reaching those in

need with unprecedented speed. The funding has also contributed to UNICEF providing clean and safe water, hygiene dignity, tents and bedding, medicines, and food to the people of Gaza.

Since November 2023, Fórsa has participated in weekly demonstrations across the country, calling for an

immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The union continues to monitor the devastating humanitarian impact of the war on the people of Gaza and the West Bank.



Pay and related

Extension of Building Momentum

In the period under review the trade union side, in talks on public service, pay and conditions, continued to be led by Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan, acting in his capacity as chair of the ICTU Public Services Committee.

Fórsa continued its focus on cost-of-living pressures at its biennial delegate conference in May 2022 because inflation, by this time, had exceeded what had been projected when the Building Momentum agreement was negotiated in late 2020.

With the agreement also due to expire at the end of 2022, Fórsa said talks on a successor agreement would need to prioritise the restoration and improvement of living standards in the context of high inflation.

A pay talks process at the WRC in September 2022, secured a public service pay package – an extension of the Building Momentum Public Service Agreement – in a ballot of union members.

The main provisions of the deal were:

- Increases of 3% with effect (backdated) from 2nd February 2022.
- An increase of 2% increase from 1st March 2023.
- An increase of 1.5% or €750 (whichever is the greater) from 1st October 2023.

These measures were in addition to 1% or €500, whichever is greater, which fell due in October 2022 under the Building Momentum agreement.

The minimum payment of €750 a year from October 2022 meant the package was of greater value to workers on lower incomes. The overall package was worth 8% to a worker earning €25,000 a year and 7% to a person on €37,500 a year.

While neither side achieved all it sought in the negotiations, the revised terms were a significant improvement on those of the Building Momentum agreement, and worth more to those who needed it most.

Following a successful lobbying effort by trade unions, Budget 2023 included a series of short-term measures to help people with the cost of living, including electricity credits, increased social welfare payments and a series of once-off payments.

Fórsa members backed the extension of Building Momentum in an electronic ballot by a significant margin (91.3%) on a strong turnout (67%) and the union supported ratification of the pay measures at a meeting of the ICTU Public Services Committee (PSC) in October 2022. The revised pay deal would expire at the end of 2023, which meant that pay talks on a successor would need to take place before the end of that year.

Negotiating a new public service agreement

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan, in an address to INTO conference delegates in April 2023, said that unions would concentrate on key cost-of-living issues during pay talks on a successor to Building Momentum, including the need to “make good the shortfall in pay against inflation” during the remaining term of the pay agreement, acknowledging that the review didn't fully compensate for the rate of inflation, which averaged 8% over 2022.

With the extension of Building Momentum due to expire at the end of 2023, talks on a successor agreement were expected to take place in the latter half of the year. In late September, the ICTU's Public Services Committee (PSC) set out its priorities for the anticipated round of public service pay talks, setting its sights on securing appropriate pay measures in response to continuing cost-of-living pressures on working families.

The PSC also focused on stabilising public pay agreements, following an inconclusive process of engagement on Building Momentum's commitment to address outstanding issues affecting several public service grades, groups and categories. Unions said this was essential if a successor to Building Momentum was to commence with a solid foundation.

Another priority of the PSC was to normalise public service industrial relations – and to move on from a process of industrial relations shaped by the response to the 2009 financial crisis – through the final dismantling of remaining pieces of FEMPI legislation.

Unions also prioritised the pursuit of measures to ensure the ‘futureproofing’ of quality public services and public service employment. With the population of the State having just exceeded five million

people, unions said it was vital to ensure the State could continue to build and maintain quality public services designed to respond to people's needs.

An invitation to pay talks was eventually issued to unions in mid-November. The 19 unions affiliated to the PSC agreed that a multi-year agreement would only be possible if the Government made a commitment to repealing the remaining elements of FEMPI. Kevin Callinan noted the comments, made by the Minister for Public Expenditure in his invitation, that an agreement had the potential to provide certainty and stability in a ‘normalised industrial relations environment.’

Kevin said normalising industrial relations would mean dismantling the remaining elements of FEMPI, which continued to excessively centralise control in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, stopping ordinary industrial relations progressing, even in the event of agreement between employers and unions.

By mid-December, despite the slow pace of talks, unions had nevertheless secured a commitment on the repeal of FEMPI, in the context of a multi-year pay deal.

Kevin Callinan commented that the commitment on FEMPI represented an opportunity for unions to operate in an environment no longer bound by emergency measures, but that the intent of any draft legislation to deliver this needed to be clear.

Pay talks adjourned on 20th December, and the Building Momentum agreement expired on 31st December, without a successor agreement in place.

Public Service Agreement 2024-2026

Talks resumed on 9th January 2024. Unions reported progress on several key non-pay issues before the focus of talks shifted to pay. Despite initial optimism that the talks might progress quickly, unions were alarmed at the Government's opening offer, which it described as 'derisory'.

A revised offer was still viewed by union negotiators as lacking credibility, as it would have provided little more than an average of just €5 per week, before deductions, in the wages of low-income public service workers in the first year, with no payments scheduled prior to June 2024.

Unions expressed concern that the Government's opening pay offer illustrated its lack of preparedness to complete a sustainable multi-year pay deal. The talks adjourned to allow time for reflection on the Government side.

In a note to Fórsa members, Kevin Callinan said: "Public sector workers show up for our country and our citizens every day. They deserve to be treated with respect and an offer like this is neither fair, nor credible."

The Government has effectively undermined its own approach to negotiating a multi-year public service pay agreement. There have been months of delays, and they have allowed Building Momentum to lapse, which puts us in an unprecedented position."

In the same week, the officers of the PSC met with affiliate and non-affiliated unions and associations. At these meetings ballot wording was approved so that unions were ready to ballot members for industrial action should it become necessary.

Talks resumed on 25th January and continued for almost 22 hours at the WRC. On Friday 26th January, the officers of the

PSC briefed the 19 affiliate unions on the terms of a proposed new public sector pay agreement, advising that the pay terms of the new agreement, valued at 10.25% over 2.5 years, represented the "absolute maximum achievable" through negotiations, and the outcome of a challenging negotiations process.

The new agreement was set to run from 1st January 2024 to 30th June 2026. The balloting period for the unions extended until 25th March 2024, to provide adequate time for all unions to consider the terms of the new agreement and to ballot their members.

Union negotiators said the new pay provisions would, as unions had sought, deliver more for lower paid workers, providing pay improvements worth up to 17.3% for the lowest paid workers, while improvements in the pay adjustments due in 2024 – valued at 4.25% for the year – would mean that public service workers would receive more money in the first year than originally envisaged in the Government's initial pay offer, providing a noticeable difference in pay at a time when workers were still feeling the impact of three consecutive years of inflation.

The deal provides for the following pay terms over the duration of the agreement:

2024

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 2.25% or €1,125, whichever is greater, from 1st January 2024.
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st June 2024.
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on 1st October 2024.

2025

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 2% or €1,000, whichever is greater, on 1st March 2025.
 - A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st August 2025.
 - The first phase of local bargaining, equivalent to 1% of payroll cost, on 1st September 2025.
-

2026

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on 1st February 2026.
 - A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st June 2026.
-

The union's National Executive Committee (NEC) unanimously recommended acceptance of the terms of the deal in the ballot, and arrangements were made for a series of online and in-person information meetings. Fórsa commenced a ballot on the new public sector pay deal in February 2024.

The Fórsa ballot concluded on 15th March 2024, with members backing the new public service pay deal in a ballot which saw more than 52,729 members voting on the new pay terms. In total, 94% of members voted in favour of the deal, in a turnout of 67.3%.

In March, the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) announced it had ratified the new public service pay agreement following the aggregation of ballots by the 19 affiliated unions, most of whom had returned ballots

of their members with sizable majorities in favour of the new pay agreement.

Local bargaining

The agreement also provides for local bargaining, allowing trade unions to submit claims for improvements amounting to an additional 3% of pay costs, inclusive of allowances, for particular grades, groups or categories of employee (See Appendices ii and iii).

Local negotiations are to take place between July 2024 and June 2025, and agreements secured, to the greatest extent possible, through direct negotiations. Fórsa published its [position paper on the local bargaining element of the pay deal in July 2024](#).

The first [Fórsa claim](#) was lodged in December 2024. The cross-sectoral claim covering clerical officers, grade III roles, and library assistant posts. A second claim lodged in February 2025 covers EO/HEO/AO/grades 4-7 and related grades.

The full text of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 is available to download [here](#).

Pensions

During negotiations on the latest agreement, union negotiators secured a commitment that the pay increases would be applied to public service pensions for the duration of the agreement. In the main, this means that pension payments will be adjusted in line with pay adjustments for serving staff.

Pensions are adjusted in line with inflation (the Consumer Price Index, or CPI) in the case of the single public service pension scheme, which applies to all civil and public servants who entered public service employment on or after 1st January 2013.

This means that the pensions of members of this scheme are not affected by pay movements, including those in the proposed agreement.

The principle of pay parity under pre-existing pension schemes has been agreed for the lifetime on the new Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. The lump sums of people who retired on or after 1st January 2024 should also be revised by reference to the adjustments of basic pay as appropriate.

Travel and subsistence

Revised rates for work-related travel and subsistence took effect from 1st September 2022. They include changes to the standard domestic subsistence rates, overnight and day subsistence rates. Full details are available on the Fórsa website [here](#) and Revenue [here](#).

A further update to Domestic Subsistence Allowances was introduced with effect from 14th of December 2023. Full details are available [here](#).



Improving workers' rights

In March 2024, Congress published its **Challenging myths and improving working conditions in a strong economy** as employer groups sought to push back on reforms to the National Minimum Wage, statutory sick leave and pension auto-enrolment plans.

The Congress document challenges some of the arguments put forward by some business groups, which are regarded by unions as largely weak and occasionally false.

Many of the recent government reforms, such as new statutory sick leave entitlements, merely bring the Irish workplace into line with European peers, while some sectors pushing back hard against reforms, such as hospitality and retail, have experienced real employment growth between 2023 and 2024.

Adequate Minimum Wages Directive

Congress has argued that part of the solution to sector specific challenges are within reach, including the “transformative potential” of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive. The Government missed the deadline to transpose the directive into law before mid-November 2024.

In January 2025, an advocate general of the European Court of Justice that the directive be annulled its entirety. In a case taken by Denmark and supported by Sweden, the advocate general found that the European Commission and European Parliament had exceeded their authority by adopting the directive which is intended to provide stable mechanisms for updating

and increasing national minimum wage levels across the EU.

The specialist publication, Industrial Relations News, reported in February 2025 that these developments have raised trade union concerns about the development of an action plan on collective bargaining. Article 4(2) of the Directive obliges Ireland to form an ‘action plan’ to promote collective bargaining.

This obligation is reiterated in the latest Programme for Government, where it is stated that the government will: “Publish an Action Plan for collective bargaining in 2025 in line with our commitments under the EU Directive.”

The directive requires the state to promote collective bargaining and to facilitate the right to exercise collective bargaining and will be the subject of a Court of Justice ruling later this year.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap (GPG) is the difference between the average hourly wages of women and men. A gender pay gap will exist if the majority of lower-paid jobs in an organisation are carried out by women and the higher-paid roles are carried out by men.

The Gender Pay Gap Information Act was implemented in 2022 and sets out employers’ obligations on gender pay gap reporting. In October 2023, it was reported that Ireland’s gender pay gap (GPG) is 9.6%, according to the CSO’s **Structure of Earnings Survey 2022**.

Working conditions

Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022)

The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022) was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 29th March 2023. The Bill introduced a new workers' right to paid leave for victims of domestic violence and new rights for workers requesting remote work, both of which ICTU and Fórsa campaigned for. The legislation includes improvements to support working parents and carers balance paid work with family care, necessitated to give effect to EU law.

In March 2024, unions welcomed the new code of practice on requests for flexible and remote working. The code, which unions said strengthen workers' work-life balance rights, was developed by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and social partners. The draft code was developed by an ICTU working group, which included Fórsa representatives, and now provides a comprehensive guide on compliance with the Work Life Balance Act and best practice principles.

In January 2025, Fórsa instructed its civil service members in the Department of Finance and the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to continue to work their current hybrid working arrangements. The instruction was issued in response to staff directives to increase the number of office workdays from the beginning of February.

It was the first instance in which the Government has rolled back remote working arrangements for its own staff, following the publication of the new Programme for Government, which

commits the new administration to a review of remote and blended work policies.

Following a swift intervention by the Taoiseach's office, the DSP revised its position and advised staff they had the option to continue current arrangements while consultation takes place. Similarly, the Department of Finance issued correspondence to staff confirming there has been no change to the department's blended working policy, and that "all staff can continue to work their existing blended working patterns" as well as confirmation that the department will engage with the unions on the issue. Consultations are expected to get underway in 2025.

Fórsa in action

Membership survey

More than 20,000 Fórsa members took part in an Amárach survey in 2024.

Responding to the survey, 84% of members said that pay improvement would inform how they'd vote in the general election, while 74% said that they would be more likely to vote for parties that would commit to negotiating pay increases "that go beyond inflation."

Three quarters of members who took part in the survey expressed support for a four-day week and said they would support candidates and political parties that would pledge to run a trial of a four-day working week in the public service. Investment in community health is an issue of utmost importance to members with 81% saying they will vote for candidates and parties who make this a priority.

Fórsa Youth Network

The Fórsa Youth Network aims to strengthen and empower younger members by providing an open, equal and respectful space for young members to discuss matters relevant to them, while respecting the contributions of every member.

The Fórsa Youth Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place in October 2024. Each branch of Fórsa may nominate a maximum of one voting youth representative (under the age of 35) to attend meetings of the National Youth Network, and branches may send additional non-voting representatives to meetings.

A steering committee was elected at the AGM, and the new committee held their

first meeting in December 2024, outlining its programme of work for the year ahead. The Fórsa Youth Network is chaired by Hugh McInerney. More details about Fórsa Youth Network is available [here](#).

Fórsa's LGBTQIA+ Network

Fórsa's newly established LGBTQIA+ network was formally launched at the union's equality seminar which took place in November 2024. Fórsa's LGBTQIA+ network was formed following a motion brought to the union's biennial conference in May by Fórsa activist Rob Partridge. The network will work to support all members and staff who identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The seminar included contributions from veteran trade union activist Kieran Rose, retired Fórsa member and chair of Dublin Pride Philippa Ryder, and David Carlos Casanova Rinehart of the newly established Queer Library Alliance.

Fórsa President fundraiser

Four charities located in the Northwest received donations from Fórsa in 2024, made possible by funds raised at the Fórsa President's dinner in January 2024. Then president Michael Smyth and treasurer Julie Flood awarded donations of €6,000 to each of the charities on behalf of members.

The four charities were Ballybay Cancer Society; Errigal Truagh Special Needs Parents & Friends; SOSAD (Save our Sons and Daughters) Monaghan and Down Syndrome Centre North.

Fórsa 2024 biennial conference - Your Union, Your Power

There were 700 delegates in attendance at Fórsa's biennial conference in May 2024. Delegates elected a new officer board and was officially opened by a performance by singer Tolú Makay followed by an address by outgoing Fórsa president Michael Smyth.

Motions on housing dominated the opening session. Fórsa activist Anne Marie Ryan, from the Westmeath health and welfare branch, called on delegates to support the union's active engagement with government to advocate for "a meaningful and workable resolution to the housing crisis."

Helen Linehan, Cork general clerical branch, told delegates the branch had brought its housing motion to the conference because so many of her younger work colleagues were still living at home with parents or contemplating emigration because they could not find a home.

In his address to conference, Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan declared that Fórsa will take a lead role in building a better Ireland. He said: "Everything we have, we won by organising. Now we have to do more than we ever have before. We need to mobilise on the issues that will make our country a better place to live and work."

Conference also welcomed Fórsa member Esther Lynch, general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and Daniel Bertossa, general

secretary of Public Services International (PSI) who spoke about the work public sector unions across the world do to protect their members.

Four members working in local authorities spoke to both The Irish Times and the Irish Independent about the experience of dealing with aggressive and abusive behaviour by service users and far-right agitators, while the Skills Academy and the Membership Unit were among those hosting conference fringe events.

Conference also welcomed Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid. She told delegates: "We the Palestinians deserve to live, deserve to be viewed just as worthy as other human beings, for our right to self-determination to be acknowledged."

2024 Fórsa Members' awards

The inaugural Fórsa Members' National Awards were presented at the Biennial Conference in Killarney in May 2024. The new awards, distinct from the Distinguished Service Awards, are open to all members, regardless of years of service.

Members were encouraged to nominate members in seven distinct categories (organising, delivering for members, campaigning, recruitment, community champion, branch effectiveness and outstanding pandemic response champion), whose work they felt deserved

recognition, providing an opportunity to celebrate each other's hard work, learn from one another, and in the process build a more positive and productive union culture.

2024 Fórsa member award recipients

Mary Carty	Ballinasloe Branch
Mary Fuller	Cork Health and Local Government Branch
Marie Turner	Cork Health and Local Government Branch
Teresa Barrett	DSP Executive Grades Branch
Michael Cryan	DSP Executive Grades Branch
Dorothy Doherty	DSP Executive Grades Branch
Brian Reynolds	DSP Executive Grades Branch
Michelle Kenny	Dublin Hospitals Branch
Gina O'Brien	Higher Education Branch
Geraldine McCarthy	Limerick Health and Welfare Branch
Frances Tallon	Meath Health and Local Government
Dermot McCague	Monaghan Health and Local Government
Carol McGeough	Monaghan Health and Local Government
Paul Carey	NETB Branch
Kevin Lewis	NETB Branch
Mick Scully	Ordinance Survey Professional Branch
Helen Sheridan	Proposed by Officers/ATC Branch
Gerry Foley	Retired Members Group
Lorraine Currivan	State Enterprises No.1 Branch
Noreen O'Mahony	Cork Health & Local Government
Michael Doyle	Coillte
James Kavanagh	School Completion Programme
Niall Weldon	School Completion Programme
Maureen Keenan Barry	Dublin Central CS Clerical

Third level grant scheme

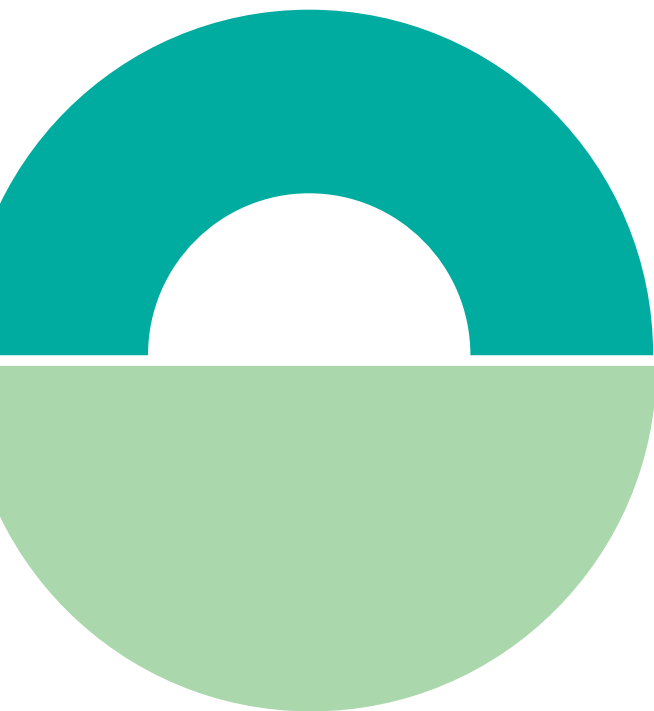
Fórsa's Third Level Grant support scheme for union representatives continued ahead of the 2024/25 academic year. The scheme is intended to assist union representatives in acquiring knowledge and skills that will help them to better carry out the role of a union representative.

Financial assistance is provided to successful applicants, enabling them to undertake a certified educational course at third level. Courses (not including post-graduate) must provide qualifications and skills which will benefit a member in their work, union, and personal life. The grant is not intended to assist in the progression of a members' professional development or career.

The scheme is open to all union representatives. A union representative role includes performing any role on behalf of their union colleagues at workplace, branch, vocational group or other level.

Only current, in-benefit members of Fórsa can apply, and must be able to provide details of their role, current or past, as a union representative.

Grants are based on the gross cost of undertaking the course up to a maximum of €3,000 per year. The amount awarded to successful applicants will be decided by the Membership Services Committee.



Future of work and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As AI continues to influence workplaces and dominate conversations and media, it is essential that Fórsa proactively addresses potential challenges related to discrimination, worker surveillance, data privacy, and job displacement. This was evidenced by the motions that were brought to the Biennial Delegate Conference last year. Following on from that, in July 2024, the NEC established an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Working Group to examine how to give effect to those motions. The working group has since examined these motions in-depth, identified critical areas for action, and made recommendations to ensure that Fórsa takes the lead in protecting its members from AI's potential risks, while also maximizing its opportunities for workers.

A lunch and learn webinar to take place on April 11th entitled 'An Introduction to AI in your Workplace'. Following this, Fórsa will conduct a survey of all members to establish further data in relation to the use and impact of AI in the workplace. This data will then be analysed in conjunction with information received through a mapping exercise across branches and workplaces. Preparations have commenced for a high-level seminar on AI and Trade Unions which will be held in Nerney's Court in October 2025. Once the date had been confirmed, branches will receive further details. We are also

engaging with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) who have considerable expertise in this area. The ETUI is the independent research and training centre of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which itself affiliates European trade unions into a single European umbrella organisation.

Appendices

Appendix i:

Claim for Civil Service Engineer Grades under the Local Bargaining Clause of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 (7th April 2024) available [here](#).

Appendix ii:

Claim for Executive Officer/Higher Executive Officer/Administrative Officer and Related Grades (Civil Service) and Administrative Grades 4 to 7 and Related Grades in Public Service (Health, Education and Local Government Sectors) under the Local Bargaining Clause of the Public Service Agreement 2024 - 2026) (February 2025) available [here](#).

Appendix iii:

Claim for Clerical Officer/Grade 3 and Related Grades under the Local Bargaining Clause of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 available [here](#).

Appendix iv:

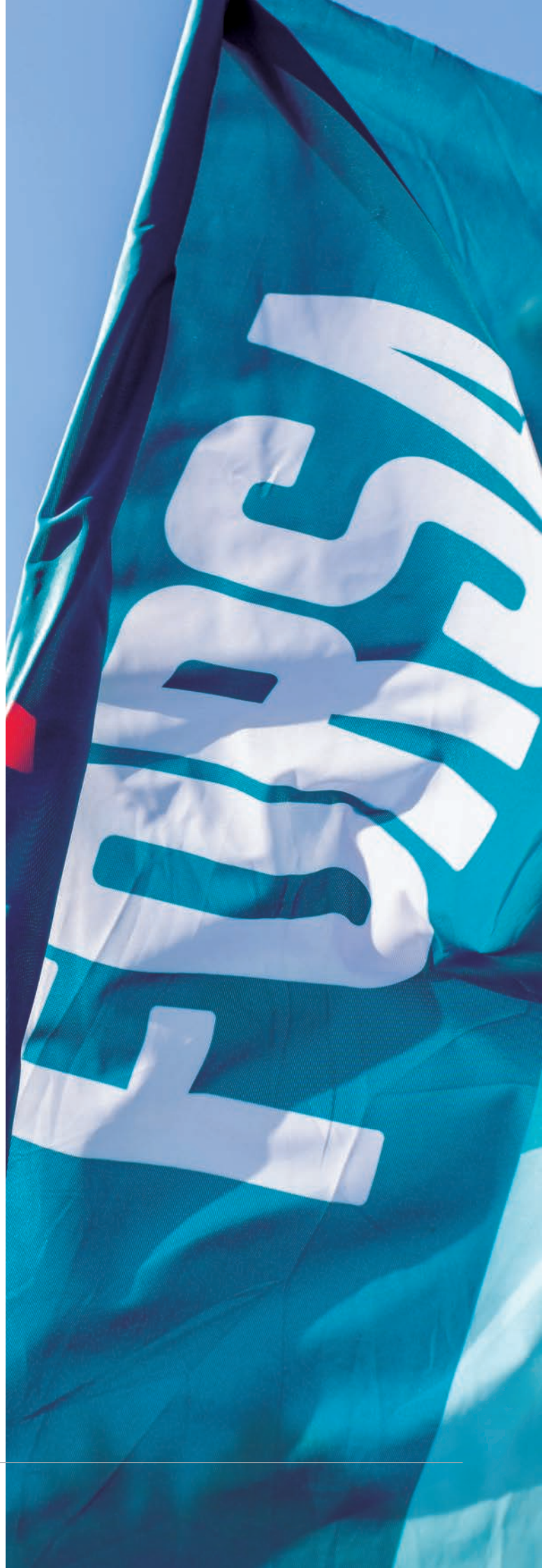
Right to Disconnect Policy for the Civil Service
Circular 05/2025 available [here](#).

Appendix v:

Civil Service General Council
Staff Panel Annual Report 2023
available [here](#).

Appendix vi:

Civil Service General Council
Staff Panel Annual Report 2024
available [here](#).





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28th - 30th May 2025
Galmont Hotel, Galway

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