

FÖRSA



Strategic Plan **2026 - 2030**



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Foreword

Five years ago, we adopted Fórsa's first ever strategic plan, an ambitious document that sought to shape and structure our work. Since then, it has proved to be an effective tool, keeping our work focused and enabling us to grow significantly.

Together, we have achieved so much, often in a challenging environment. From pay deals to union recognition agreements, we are proud of our collective achievements.

We are now on the cusp of reaching 100,000 members, a considerable milestone that reflects the hard work and dedication of members, workplace representatives, branches, elected leaders and staff.

Nonetheless, we live in volatile times. The need for strong trade unions is greater than ever. We must prepare for external threats, whether these are economic shocks, climate change, artificial intelligence, the housing emergency, or the rise of divisive narratives pitting worker against worker.

Higher union density, increased member participation, and more resilient workplace structures will secure our union's future.

This new strategic plan builds on Fórsa's achievements to date and seeks to further embed organising principles across our work, while building our organisational capacity, resilience and services for members. It outlines how we can stay ahead of the curve and make our vision for 2030 a reality.

The strategic plan 2026-2030 features five key goals that will drive the union's work to build strong workplace structures which ensure workers are organised and empowered, guiding our growth and strengthening our collective power to shape a better working life, build strong communities and contribute to a more equal and fairer world.

These goals are:

- 1) Strengthening workplace organising and collective power
- 2) Building a high participation union
- 3) Developing workplace leadership
- 4) Enhancing organisational capacity and capability
- 5) Building community and influence

Our aim is to become a high participation, high density union that is a powerful force in Irish society, connected in communities and driven by members.

To give effect to this strategy, we will need the full commitment of members, workplace representatives, branches, elected leaders and staff. As ever, solidarity is our compass. By setting shared goals we are placing our union in the strongest possible position for the future.

Current context

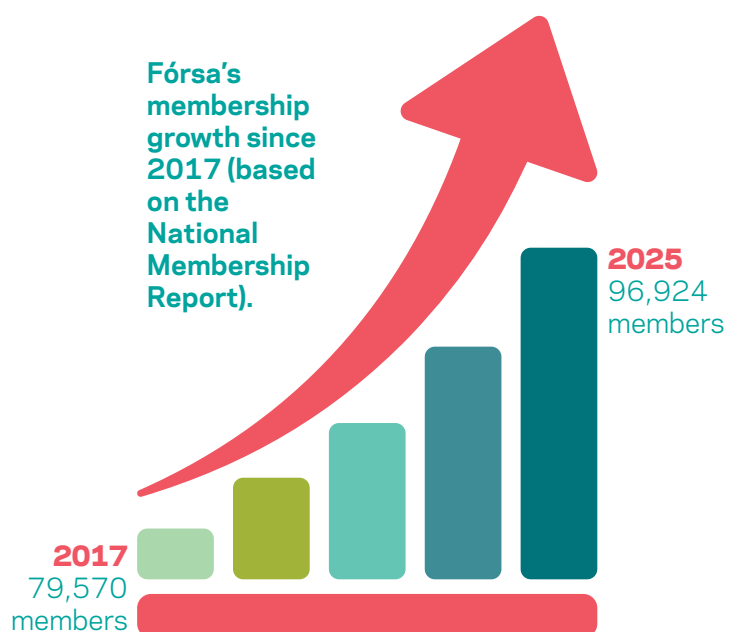
Fórsa's first strategic plan (2021-2025) strengthened the union's foundations and delivered major organisational gains. Membership now exceeds 100,000 - a decisive milestone that reflects targeted recruitment, stronger retention, and an organising led strategy rooted in workplaces and the lived experience of workers. Every division is larger today than when Fórsa was founded, with national growth exceeding 22%.

This momentum is reinforced by significantly stronger workplace organisation: more than 2,200 representatives now support our members, and through the development of the Solas system, we have also modernised our digital and data capability on an unprecedented scale, maintaining accurate workplace information for most members, including 96% coverage for verified email addresses. This organisational intelligence is one of Fórsa's most powerful strategic resources, enabling more responsive support and stronger, data-driven engagement with members.



2024 marked a decisive turning point. As Fórsa accelerated its shift toward a more organising led model, the union recorded its highest recruitment year ever, followed closely by another exceptional year in 2025. Retention also reached its best levels on record in 2025.

These developments now place Fórsa in a strong position to scale our organising approach, broaden our influence, and meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing Ireland.

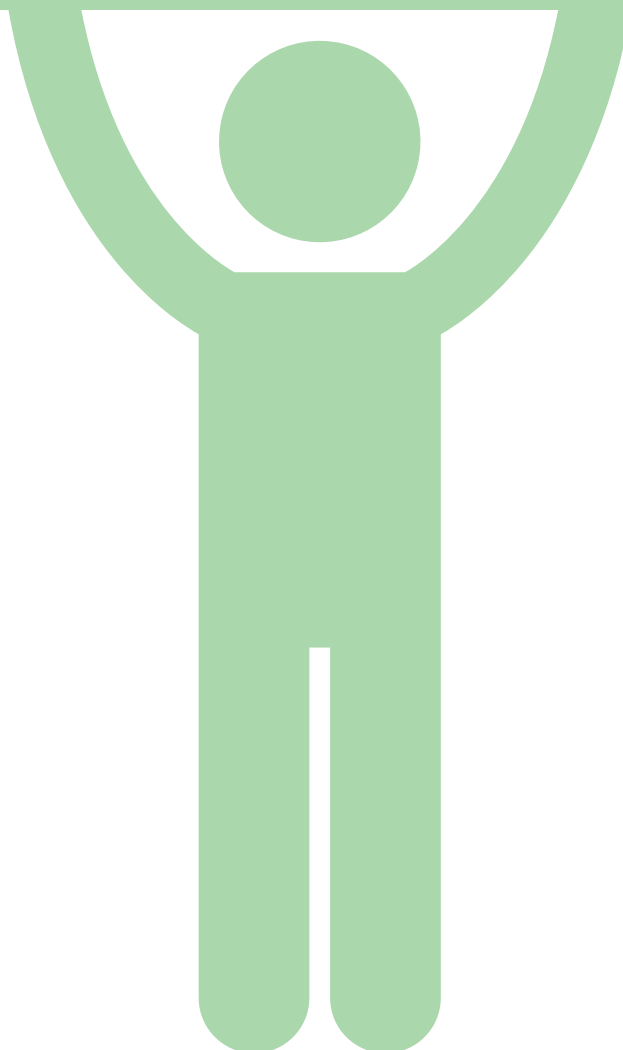


Mission



We organise, empower and represent workers. Through organising and collective bargaining we win improvements at work and strengthen public services, with members at the centre of how we plan and deliver.

We are building a high participation union of over 100,000 members all across Ireland. We build strong workplace structures which ensure workers are organised and empowered, using our collective power to shape a better working life, build strong communities and contribute to a more equal and fairer world.



Vision

Fórsa is a vehicle for positive change and justice in the workplace and beyond. We achieve this, primarily, by empowering workers to build their strength through collective bargaining.

Our vision outlines our aspirations for Fórsa by 2030. The purpose of the strategy is to make this vision a reality.

By 2030, Fórsa will be a stronger, highly influential trade union. The backbone of our organisation will be resourceful and skilled workplace representatives who possess the knowledge and tools to effectively organise. Active members, confident workplace representatives, and branches will build the collective power needed to win improvements at work. We will ensure workplace justice by delivering servicing excellence for members.



We recognise that organising and member representation reinforce one another; both are essential to building and sustaining worker power.

Fórsa's future successes will be ensured by building a high density, high participation union. We aim to achieve supermajorities in both density and participation, which will be reflected in consistently strong workplace organisation and supermajority ballot turnouts, while recognising that delivery will be phased, evidence-based and tailored to each employment through the implementation plan that will accompany this strategic plan.

The foundation of Fórsa's strength is well-organised workplaces where members are active, informed, visible and confident in exercising collective power. High union density, strong participation and capable workplace leaders are essential to securing strong agreements and improving members' working lives.

Values

Our values shape Fórsa's culture and guide how we work together to achieve our mission. They apply to members, workplace representatives, staff and elected leaders alike, and reflect the behaviours needed to build a strong, democratic and effective trade union. Together, these values shape the culture needed to build a high participation, high density union capable of exercising collective power and improving the lives of workers.

Shared leadership

Strong unions are built through shared leadership.

Leadership is exercised at every level of Fórsa. In workplaces, branches, campaigns and teams, people are encouraged to take responsibility, show initiative and support one another.



Shared leadership depends on collaboration. By working together and drawing on the experience and strengths of others, we make better decisions and strengthen our collective capacity.

By encouraging initiative and supporting people closest to the work to take responsibility, we build confidence, capability and resilience across the organisation both for members and staff.

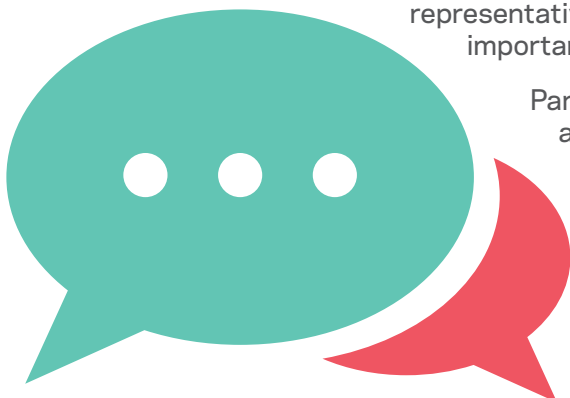
Shared leadership strengthens accountability, develops leaders, and ensures the union's success is built collectively.

Member participation and democracy

Fórsa is a democratic, member-led union that exists to empower workers.

The collective strength of the union comes from the participation of members in the life of the organisation and in the decisions that affect their working lives.

Members must have meaningful opportunities to shape union priorities, participate in campaigns, and contribute to workplace organisation in their branches and throughout the union. Workplace representatives, activists, branches, staff, and elected leaders all play important roles in supporting and strengthening participation.



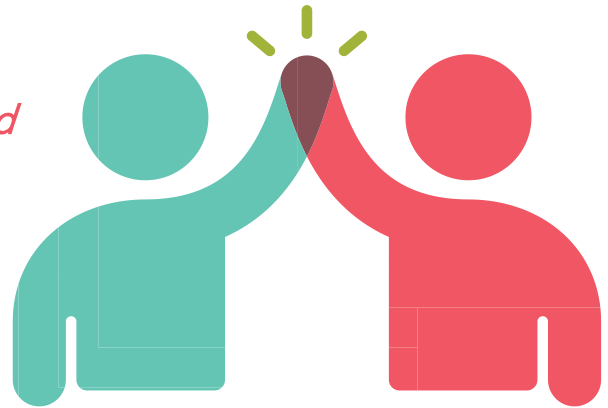
Participation is also a key measure of the strength, credibility, and performance of the union. By ensuring active involvement from members in workplaces, campaigns, decision making, and in resolving workplace issues, members consistently build the collective power needed to improve their lives.

By widening opportunities for members to participate and lead, Fórsa ensures that its direction and priorities remain rooted in the experiences and interests of the workers it represents.

Learning and growth

Fórsa is committed to being a learning organisation.

Organising, bargaining and representing workers requires continuous reflection and development. We strengthen our effectiveness by sharing experience, learning from both successes and setbacks, and reviewing our work openly and constructively.



We work as one organisation, sharing knowledge and supporting one another across teams, branches and divisions. By learning from one another and collaborating across the union we strengthen our ability to organise, represent members effectively and respond to new challenges. We are committed to a mentoring and coaching ethos to ensure institutional knowledge is shared and passed down.

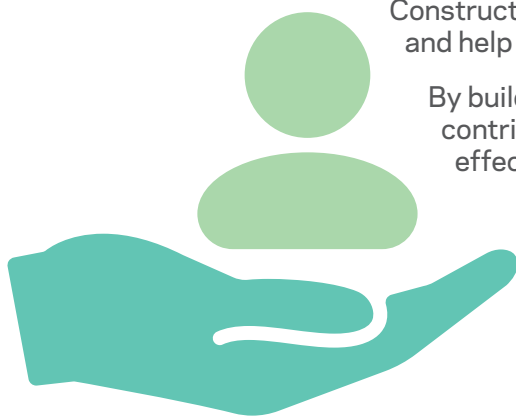
A culture of learning requires openness, trust and collective responsibility, transparency, and accountability to each other. By encouraging honest reflection and supporting one another to learn and improve, Fórsa will continue to grow as a stronger, dynamic and more effective union so that we can meet whatever challenges we will face in the future.

Trade unionism is primarily a skill, not an academic subject. Our approach to internal education for both staff and representatives should be delivered through an apprenticeship model based on mentoring and coaching.

Trust and respect

Trust and respect underpin strong relationships across the union.

We treat one another with dignity, integrity and openness. This creates an environment where people feel safe to contribute ideas, raise concerns, and participate fully in the life of the organisation.



Constructive challenge and honest discussion strengthen decision-making and help ensure we continue to learn and improve.

By building trust and showing respect for one another's roles and contributions, we strengthen the culture needed to work together effectively and for workers to exercise collective power.

We follow accessibility guidelines and standards so all members can access union information and communications on- and offline, and we use 'Plain English' principles to reduce barriers to participation.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Fórsa is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of our work. We uphold the rights of workers protected under the Irish and EU Equality legislation, including on the basis of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community.

We support meaningful participation and campaigning on issues of equality for all protected groups, and we promote their rights at work and beyond. We challenge discrimination, foster inclusive workplace structures, and ensure our organising, bargaining, campaigning and structures reflect the diversity of our membership.



Solidarity

Solidarity is the foundation of trade unionism.

Workers achieve the most when we act together. We support one another across workplaces, sectors and communities and recognise that collective action is the most powerful way to improve workers' lives.

Standing together in solidarity strengthens the union. The process of acting collectively builds confidence, relationships, and collective power among workers.



Solidarity reinforces our commitment to fairness, equality and justice.

We also uphold Fórsa's tradition of international solidarity. The challenges facing workers in Ireland are shared by workers globally; we cooperate across borders to champion high-quality public services and the common good.

We recognise the climate emergency and support a just transition for workers, including in sectors directly affected by climate policy, ensuring members are supported through change.

Strategic goals



STRATEGIC
GOAL

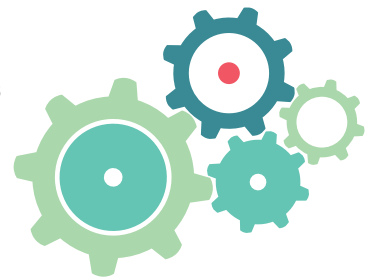
1.

Enhancing workplace organising and collective power

The foundation of Fórsa's strength is well-organised workplaces where members are active, informed, visible and confident in exercising collective power. High union density, strong participation and capable workplace leaders are essential to securing strong agreements and improving members' working lives.

Fórsa will:

- Strengthen workplace organisation by supporting members and representatives to build and maintain active and democratic union structures in their workplaces.
- Prioritise the identification, development and support of workplace representatives who can organise colleagues and strengthen collective bargaining power.
- Recognise participation as a key measure of union strength and proactively empower democratic member involvement in workplace union activity.
- Aim for high union density in organised workplaces, with the ultimate goal of supermajority density and participation reflected in strong workplace organisation and supermajority ballot turnouts; set phased, evidence-based targets through the implementation plan and targeted campaigns.
- Reaffirm representative coverage expectations, such as one representative per 25 workers, with mentoring and succession planning.
- Utilise the legitimate role of collective action as our ultimate strategy of leverage and use third-party institutions strategically.
- Ensure safe, healthy and psychologically safe workplaces by supporting health and safety representatives, strengthening workplace health and safety structures, and addressing psychosocial risks such as workload, stress, bullying, and dignity at work issues. Use health and safety as an organising tool, recognising that well-organised workplaces are safer workplaces.





STRATEGIC
GOAL

2.

Building a high participation union

Building a high participation union is central to Fórsa's strategy for strengthening worker power. Active participation strengthens workplace organisation, builds confidence among members, and ensures the union's priorities reflect the real experiences of workers.

Fórsa will:

- Create meaningful opportunities for members to participate in shaping union priorities, campaigns, and bargaining claims.
- Develop organising approaches that actively involve members in building workplace strength and collective power.
- Measure participation as a key indicator of union strength, including engagement in meetings, organising activity, campaigns, and ballots (measured in GDPR compliant ways).
- Support branches and workplace representatives to build cultures of participation and collective action in workplaces through ensuring that members are actively engaged in the process of industrial relations through the resolution of workplace issues.
- Integrate strategic communications planning across the union's work, recognising how this can enhance outcomes and build participation.





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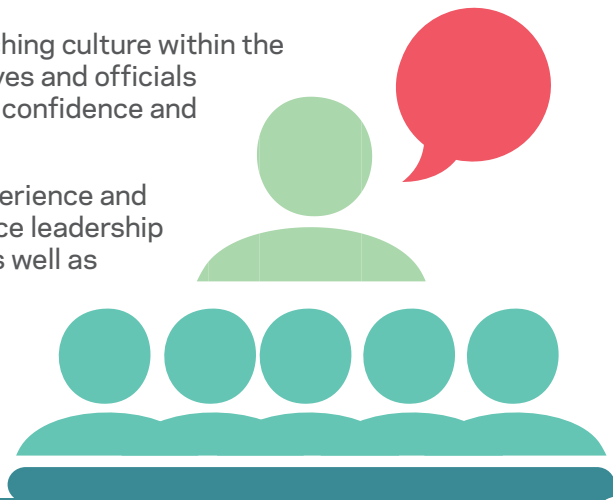
3.

Developing workplace leadership

Workplace representatives and branches are central to the strength and effectiveness of Fórsa. Strong workplace leadership enables members to organise collectively, participate actively in the union, and build the workplace power needed to secure improvements in pay, conditions and rights. Fórsa will strengthen how workplace representatives are identified, supported and developed.

Fórsa will:

- Improve the identification and recruitment of workplace representatives to ensure strong and sustainable leadership across the union.
- Strengthen training and development for workplace representatives so that it reflects the practical realities of organising and representing members, with role-relevant pathways (foundational to advanced).
- Develop a stronger mentoring and coaching culture within the union, where experienced representatives and officials support newer representatives to build confidence and skills.
- Promote learning through practical experience and peer support, recognising that workplace leadership is developed primarily through doing, as well as through formal training.
- Ensure representatives are supported with the resources, training and organisational backing needed to carry out their roles effectively.





STRATEGIC
GOAL

4.

Enhancing
organisational capacity
and capability

Delivering the ambitions of this strategic plan requires a strong, capable and well-supported organisation. Fórsa will continue to strengthen its internal capacity so that the union has the people, skills, systems, and resources needed to organise effectively, represent members, and support workplace leaders across all sectors. Fórsa will develop and implement a workforce plan that aligns staffing capacity, skills, and leadership development with the priorities set out in this strategic plan.

Fórsa will:

- Develop and implement a workforce plan to ensure the union has the staffing, skills, and leadership needed to deliver its strategic priorities.
- Strengthen recruitment and investment in people, ensuring the union continues to attract, develop, and retain the staff needed to support organising, bargaining, and member representation.
- Invest in the development of staff and workplace representatives so that the union continues to build the skills required for this work, including role-specific staff programmes.
- Ensure the union's resources are used effectively to support workplace organisation, representation, and campaigning.
- Build workplace visibility through effective materials, relevant communications, and member-led communications.
- Enhance the clarity of union communications by increasing the use of 'Plain English' principles and reducing jargon, to help members fully engage with union activities and campaigns.
- Maximise our media presence, influence, and prominence. Empower activists to speak to the media on member campaigns and disputes.
- Standardise core servicing practice so members experience consistent, high-quality representation and communication across teams and roles.
- Invest further in systems that can improve the integrated use of data, membership information, and digital tools to support organising, communication and participation, enabling GDPR compliant tracking of participation and communications, and better management information.



STRATEGIC
GOAL

5.

Building community and influence

Workers' lives extend beyond the workplace. Many Fórsa members are actively involved in their communities and community organisations. The challenges people face in areas such as housing, childcare, the cost of living, public services and climate change shape their ability to live and work with dignity. Fórsa recognises that building stronger connections between the union and the communities our members are active in strengthens collective power.

Fórsa will:

- Use the union's voice and influence to advocate for policies that support decent work, strong public services, and fair living standards.
- Develop approaches that recognise members' lives beyond the workplace and support collective action on issues that affect their daily lives.
- Establish campaign infrastructure that delivers on issues prioritised by members through conferences and their elected leadership, nationally and locally.
- Develop a systematic approach to political campaigning and lobbying, supporting cross-party, reciprocal relationships domestically and internationally, and empowering branches and members to coordinate grassroots political engagement.
- Recognise and support the role many members already play in their communities and community organisations.
- Support campaigns and initiatives that address wider challenges facing members, including housing, cost of living and access to public services.
- Work with other trade unions to strengthen collective action on issues affecting workers and their communities.
- Act as a leader in civil society in developing relationships with, and providing support to, like-minded organisations whose objectives and mission reflect our own.
- Cooperate across borders, building alliances with trade unions in Europe and around the world, giving effect to solidarity at home and around the world.
- Sustain commitments to increasing the use of the Irish language across union activity.



Delivering the strategy together

This strategic plan sets out the direction for Fórsa over the coming years. Delivering it will require the active involvement of members, workplace representatives, branches, elected leaders and staff across the union.

Fórsa's strength comes from the participation of its members and the leadership of workplace representatives and branches, supported by the work of staff across the organisation. By working together across the union we can strengthen workplace organisation, increase participation and build the collective power needed to improve workers' lives.

Delivering excellent representation to members facing workplace issues is a core function of the union. Strong workplace organisation and high levels of participation strengthen the union's ability to represent members effectively and secure improvements in pay, conditions and rights.

Fórsa will continue to ensure that organising and member representation reinforce one another, recognising that both are essential to building and sustaining worker power.

Fórsa will:

- Develop an implementation plan, with clear milestones, to support delivery of the strategic goals and ensure clear coordination across the organisation.
- Strengthen collaboration, transparency and accountability across the union so that members, representatives, staff and elected leaders work together to deliver the strategy.
- Support branches and workplace representatives to build strong workplace organisation and active, measured participation.
- Undertake a review of how member servicing and representation are delivered, with the aim of ensuring the union continues to provide servicing excellence for members while strengthening workplace organisation and participation; pilot a caseworker/support model for complex cases to protect organising time.
- Ensure that representatives and branches have the support, training and resources needed to build strong workplace structures and active member engagement.
- Report regularly on progress in delivering the strategic plan through the union's democratic structures, including quarterly NEC and DEC reviews and an annual update to members - including through Consultative Councils.



Governance and accountability

Fórsa will monitor progress in delivering this strategic plan and regularly review the impact of the work undertaken across the organisation.

The union will track a concise set of indicators linked to each strategic goal to understand where workplace organisation is strong and where further work is required. These indicators will help inform organising priorities, resource allocation and future strategic decisions. Measurement will be GDPR compliant.

Fórsa will measure progress through indicators including:

- Union density in organised workplaces (baseline → annual change) and strength of workplace structures (Goal 1).
- Member participation, including engagement in meetings, organising activity, campaigns and ballots - with the aspiration of supermajority ballot turnouts over time (Goal 2).
- Workplace representative coverage (including progress toward a ratio of 1:25), and development indicators such as training completion (Goal 3).
- Systems integration, membership information quality, accessibility compliance and data/MI improvements; staff development metrics needed to implement the strategic plan (Goal 4).
- Campaign reach, media coverage, alliances and measured impact on whole-of-workplace organising (Goal 5).



Progress will be reviewed through the union's democratic structures and used to inform future priorities and strengthen the union's work. By regularly reviewing progress and learning from experience, Fórsa will continue to build a high-participation, high-density union capable of exercising collective power and improving the lives of workers.

Conclusion

This strategic plan sets out an ambitious direction for Fórsa in the years ahead, by building on the success of the previous strategic plan which embraced an organising culture that has led to the growth and strengthening of the union.

The success of this strategy will depend on the active involvement of members, workplace representatives, branches, elected leaders and staff working together across the organisation.

Through solidarity, participation and strong workplace organisation, Fórsa will continue to grow as a high participation, high density union capable of empowering workers to deliver real improvements to workers' lives and building a fairer society.



