

A Better Deal, A Better Ireland

Fórsa Biennial Conference 2026

Plain English guide for delegates

Helping you have a better Conference

Whether this is your first Fórsa conference or your fifth, conference can feel like it has a language of its own. This guide will help you to follow what is happening. It explains the basics so you will know when to speak and let you feel confident asking questions.

Standing orders

These are the rules for how conference is run. They cover debate, speaking time, amendments, votes and what happens when time runs out. The Standing Orders Committee (SOC) are responsible for managing these things. They keep debate fair and organised.

Common debate

Related motions are debated together. There might be a lot of debate on motions before yours. Your motion will not be left out. You will have time to speak on your motion.

The motions are treated as formally proposed. You do not need to read your motion out. Each motion or amendment is normally voted on separately.

Proposing a motion?

Usually, the person proposing the motion speaks first. They might be a branch speaker for a branch motion, or an NEC speaker for an NEC motion.

A motion or amendment does not need a second speaker to formally second it.

Withdraw, remit, guillotine

Tell the SOC early if you need to withdraw a motion. The conference needs to agree to withdraw a motion once the agenda is adopted. Fill out the withdrawal form at the back of the agenda and give the form to the SOC to withdraw.

To remit means to send the issue to the National Executive Committee (NEC). They will review the issue at a later stage.

A motion is 'guillotined' when the time allowed for debate runs out before the motion was reached. Guillotined motions might be taken later at Conference. Motions that cannot be taken later are referred to the NEC to be reviewed at a later stage.

When you go to the microphone

Begin by saying: "My name is [name], from [branch]. I am speaking on Motion [number]."

Then say whether you are speaking in favour, against, seeking remission, seeking withdrawal, or speaking on an amendment.

"Motion X covers Motion Y"

This means that two motions cover the same issue. If Motion 53 covers Motion 54, conference might deal with Motion 53 because it addresses Motion 54.

If you are unsure, ask SOC before the debate starts.

Right of reply

You can request a 'right of reply' before the vote on your motion. You will usually request a 'right of reply' if there has been a spirited debate on the motion. It is a short, final response by the person proposing the motion, and not a second speech.

Only use 'right of reply' to answer points made or clarify something asked. Do not introduce new arguments. The person who proposed an amendment does not have a 'right of reply'.

Emergency motions – What are they?

An 'emergency motion' is a motion that is submitted after the closing date for submissions. This year, the closing date was 25th February. An 'emergency motion' must be submitted to the SOC in writing, and it must be about something that happened after the closing date.

The SOC speak to the branch who submitted the motion and prepare a report for Conference on the 'emergency motion'. Conference decides whether to accept or reject the emergency motion.

Point of order or fact

Any delegate can request a 'point of order' or a 'point of fact'. You use a 'point of order' to ask whether the rules are being followed.

You use a 'point of fact' to correct something factual. It is not a chance to make another speech.

Amendments

An amendment changes a motion by adding, deleting or changing words. It is debated before the final decision on the motion.

If an amendment is carried, the motion changes. If the amendment is rejected, the original motion stays the same. You cannot amend an amendment.

Speaking time

The person proposing a motion has up to four minutes to speak. Other speakers have up to three minutes to speak.

You speak once on a motion. An amendment, or a motion that has been amended, is treated as a new motion. This allows you to speak again to propose the amendment or amended motion.

If you are unsure

Ask. You are not expected to know everything.

Speak to your branch officers, your official, SOC, or someone experienced beside you. Staff in high-viz Fórsa jackets can help point you in the right direction.

This is your conference: every delegate has the right to understand what is happening and to take part with confidence.

