FÓRSA

INDUSTRIAL ACTION 2026

FAQ

This document was last updated on: Friday 2nd October 2026

Frequently Asked Questions for Fórsa members working in the Civil Service

What should I do during the industrial action?

A union instruction issued to members working in the Civil Service, on Friday 18th September. It outlines the work to rule and non-cooperation actions you should follow as part of this industrial action. It is very important that you are familiar with the instruction and understand it.

This FAQ is a guide to help with general queries and will be updated as a live document over the coming weeks.

If a manager asks you to carry out any task or action covered by the withdrawal instruction, explain that you are following the union instruction and that the matter should be raised at national level.

How does a 'work to rule' work?

In general, 'work to rule' industrial action involves a worker working strictly to the terms of their contract, role or function.

If you don't have a contract or a description of your role or function, you should work to your usual role and duties and not carry out other additional duties that are outside of your contract.

Some union instructions may outline that specific task should cease.

For example, many instructions will state that members should not cover the work of a vacant post during industrial action, even though that might be part of your normal working day.

If your job description or contract allows for 'other tasks assigned by your manager', you should stick to your normal duties and not take on any additional or new tasks during the industrial action. You can ask your local branch or official if you are unsure.

A work to rule also means working strictly to your scheduled working hours and not doing unscheduled or un-rostered overtime.

It also often means a withdrawal of goodwill. Some examples of this could be taking on some duties beyond your job description to 'help out', and generally being flexible on working hours or duties beyond your contract. How this works in practice will differ significantly from workplace to workplace. Contact your local branch or official to clarify any queries you have.

How can I build visibility of the industrial action in my workplace?

Talk to your colleagues about why you're taking industrial action and use our resources to build awareness of the industrial action in your workplace and community.

You will find all ballot resources **here**.

Branches are encouraged to organise activities to build visibility in the workplace throughout the industrial action.

Some examples of visibility actions include distributing Fórsa lanyards and pins, encouraging your colleagues to wear the lanyards and pins, putting up posters, and organising group photos of members taking action.

Branches have been provided with materials to support these activities.

FÓRSA INDUSTRIAL ACTION 2026

FAQ

This document was last updated on: Friday 2nd October 2026

How do I decline something covered by the instruction?

Decline politely, and in writing where you can. Say that you are acting on a Fórsa industrial action instruction. **You do not have to argue the merits or justify the action.**

Keep a short note of every request you decline: the date, who asked, and what was asked.

My contract has expired and I am waiting on renewal. Could taking part put my renewal at risk?

This is official industrial action, and members are protected by their union when engaging in industrial action. Penalising someone for lawful participation would be victimisation which is not allowed. If you are treated differently, or feel you are being singled out, contact your rep as soon as possible. Do not wait to see whether it develops.

Half my office are members and half are not. How do we manage that?

The union instruction applies to members. Non-members are not covered by it and are not protected by the union during the dispute. If you know colleagues who are not yet members, now is the time to encourage them to join.

What happens if a member does not follow the instruction?

Under the union rule book, failure to act in accordance with union instructions during an industrial dispute is treated as conduct injurious to the interests of the union and can be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. In practice the first step is always a conversation, and the branch would far rather understand why a member is not following the instruction than pursue anything formal.

I am unsure whether a particular task is covered by the instruction. What should I do?

Ask before you act, not after. Contact your local rep or the branch, describe the specific task and who asked for it, and wait for an answer. Nobody is expected to interpret the instruction alone, and it is better to fully understand what it means to you and your work: carrying out work that you are instructed not to do, weakens the action, and refusing work that is not covered may leave you exposed.

What does this FAQ document cover?

This document covers questions asked to date about the work to rule industrial action that starts on Wednesday 30th September 2026. A separate strike FAQ document will be issued in early October before the national strike day on Wednesday 14th October 2026.

I haven't been able to attend one of the meetings to date – will there be more?

Yes. Emails are going to members regularly regarding information sessions. To date over 12,000 members have attended 15 meetings.

What does 'work to rule' mean in practical terms for staff in individual departments?

In short 'work to rule' means adhering strictly to the agreed terms and conditions of your employment. This means that you only do work that is appropriate to your grade.

You should check the links below before the beginning of the industrial action on Wednesday 30th September, so that you know what tasks are appropriate for your grade.

Members are protected by their union during disputes.
If you are not in the union, you won't be. Join Fórsa today.

This document was last updated on: Friday 2nd October 2026

The work that you perform in your department can vary greatly to that of a union member of the same grade in a different department. Therefore, you should refer to what you have stated in your PMDS role description to confirm what is appropriate for your role.

We advise all members to link in with their local branch or attend one of the information sessions if they still need clarifications about what they need to do.

To help you check this information we have included the following for administrative grades. After you check the link for your grade, you should also check your PMDS role profile.

CO: Clerical-Officer-job-descriptions-May-2019.pdf

EO: Executive-Officer-job-descriptions-May-2019.pdf

HEO: Microsoft Word - Higher Executive Officer job descriptions February 2020

AO: Career Path in the Public Service | publicjobs.ie

Where HEOs and AOs often carry out the same duties, how do we determine what duties are associated with each grade level?

AOs and HEOs are not the same grade – we have been fighting for some time regarding some employer's belief that these grades are interchangeable. AOs should be only doing the work as per your job description above.

Will specific guidance be issued for all grades working in public facing roles?

For members in public facing roles (Intreo Centres, Revenue phone lines, etc) this work continues but is subject to the work to rule instruction. For clarity, you are not to perform additional duties or attend different offices to facilitate vacancies not filled by management.

You are not to perform the work of a higher grade or volunteer for unscheduled overtime.

What is defined as a vacant post?

A vacant post is a role the employer has not filled. This can include a vacant post arising from short- or long-term sick leave, maternity leave, carers' leave, parental leave, parents' leave, shorter working year, protective leave, etc. You should not cover the work, duties or responsibilities of any vacancy during the industrial action.

Should I cover the work of a higher grade if they are on sick leave?

No. You should only be covering the work of a higher grade if you are in receipt of the Higher Duty Allowance. So, for example, a CO should not cover the work of an EO, nor should an EO cover for a HEO, and a HEO or AO should not cover the work of an AP either.

If work belongs to a colleague who is absent (sick leave, annual leave, etc.), should it remain undone?

You should not do this work, it should remain undone.

I am on probation, how does the work to rule apply to me?

If you are on probation and a union member, then you are protected by the Industrial Relations Act 1990. Therefore, a member on probation can, and should, take part in the industrial action.

FÓRSA

INDUSTRIAL ACTION 2026

FAQ

This document was last updated on: Friday 2nd October 2026

Where vacancies require staff to be borrowed from other teams to keep a building open, can that cover continue from the start of the work to rule?

No. Vacancies cannot be covered while industrial action is ongoing.

I have heard that we need to strictly adhere to the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997. What does this mean?

The Organisation of Working Time Act outlines what entitlements and obligations you have in relation to working hours. It still applies during the industrial action. All members are advised that they are entitled to regular breaks throughout the day. This needs to be strictly adhered to regardless of staff cover. You should take your breaks as they are scheduled and leave work at the end of your normal working day or shift.

Can I accrue flexi during the industrial action?

Yes, you can accrue flexi as usual, but you are not to perform voluntary or unscheduled overtime.

Can I perform overtime during the industrial action?

Regular and rostered overtime can continue, as this is normal work practice.

If you receive an allowance for overtime at unsociable hours, this can also continue.

Unscheduled, un-rostered, or ad hoc overtime is not allowed during the industrial action.

What is the distinction between regular overtime, which forms part of normal weekly income, and irregular or voluntary overtime?

Irregular or voluntary overtime is either additional hours worked after a full day has been completed or at weekends, including working at off-site events e.g. Ideal Homes Exhibition.

Should Service Officers who regularly open and close buildings on overtime continue their normal 9.00am to 5.30pm hours, including locking the building?

This is regular and rostered overtime, which is permitted during the work to rule as it is part of normal work practice.

I am on long term leave, what should I do?

If you are not at work during the work-to-rule period, you cannot participate in the industrial action. This includes maternity leave, long-term sick leave, parental leave, parents' leave, carers' leave, a career break, or any other protected leave.

I am on annual leave during the work to rule – what do I do?

As this is pre-approved annual leave you should maintain your leave and commence the work to rule when you return to work.

I receive an allowance or shift premium – what do I do during the work to rule?

If you receive an additional payment for working irregular hours which is outlined in your contract then you should continue to adhere to your contract, and the additional payment is unaffected.

FÓRSA INDUSTRIAL ACTION 2026

FAQ

This document was last updated on: Friday 2nd October 2026

Are we allowed to train colleagues appointed to acting-up positions during the work-to-rule?

No. You should not take on this additional work during the industrial action.

I have to attend an in-person conference, customer clinic, audit, site visit, during the work to rule, what should I do?

You should still attend. However, travel to and from the conference, clinic, audit, or site visit, should occur during your working hours, if it is not in your usual work base location.

If you are on flexitime, you may start your journey at 8.00am provided you are able to accrue flexi time for working before 9.12am and you must start your journey home in time to get home by the end of the flexi bands at 7.00pm. Again, you must be able to accrue flexitime between 5.30pm and 7.00pm.

I am currently working on the EU Presidency, which involves a lot of out of hours work and overtime, what should I do?

This overtime is structured and has been occurring since July, therefore it is currently permitted during the industrial action.

This may change if there is an escalation of the dispute.

What does that mean?

In general, during an industrial dispute, the union strike committee takes decisions designed to ensure that our dispute strategy maintains an advantage. While the EU Presidency is an important event the onus is on the employer to seek a derogation from the union strike committee if the consequence of any action is deemed to be critical.

What are APs and POs doing during the work to rule? Will I get in trouble with my manager?

Your AP and PO are likely to be in the AHCPS (Association for Higher Civil and Public Servants) and it has also just voted in favour of industrial action, therefore they will likely also be taking industrial action.

I am taking part in further education and training linked to my employment, should I still attend during the industrial action?

You may continue to attend, the work to rule does not affect your education and personal development.

What are derogations and where can I find out if my employer has requested a derogation?

Section 2 of the General FAQ covers what a derogation is: **FAQs - Public Sector Industrial Action 2026 - Forsa**. The employer must request a derogation, which will be assessed by the National Executive Committee (NEC), and the NEC will determine whether a derogation should be granted or not. If your employer has requested a derogation and if it has been granted this will be communicated via Fórsa Head Office to your local Branch.

FÓRSA INDUSTRIAL ACTION 2026

FAQ

This document was last updated on: Friday 2nd October 2026

I have to travel abroad for work, do I still travel?

If this travel was prebooked in advance of the industrial action commencing then you can travel. The work you are undertaking abroad needs to be in line with the work to rule instruction (hours of work, work appropriate to the grade, not covering a vacancy, etc.)

I am on a posting abroad, how do I comply with the industrial action?

If you are on a posting abroad you follow the work to rule as if you are working in Ireland. For the days of strike action (Wednesday 14 October 2026 and Wednesday 21 October 2026) this will be answered in the strike FAQ document in advance of the days of strike.

I work with 3rd party contractors, etc. do I continue doing this?

If this was a usual part of your day-to-day duties then continue with same. If this is part of your PMDS role profile also continue with same. If this is new work being requested of you then you should refuse. There is a union instruction not to engage with third party and external private management consultants for Fórsa members in the Local Government and Local Services division, the Health and Welfare division and the Municipal Employees' division, sectors with significant use of external consultants. This will come under review as the work to rule escalates.

I have an allowance (key holder, out of hours, etc) do I continue performing these duties?

If you are in receipt of an allowance for additional duties including opening and closing of buildings, out of hours work, weekend work, etc. then you continue with same.

My question isn't answered here – how do I receive guidance about what to do from Wednesday 30th September?

Send in your question to **csindustrialaction@forsa.ie**

I don't know who my local rep is – how do I find this out?

Send in your question to **csindustrialaction@forsa.ie** with the subject line 'Who is my rep' and stating your department and workplace location.

Members are protected by their union during disputes.
If you are not in the union, you won't be. Join Fórsa today.