

REPORT

of the Executive Council

25

Winning Our Future in Uncertain Times

Biennial Delegate Conference

Waterfront Hall, Belfast
1-3 July 2025

STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions



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25

Section One
**Introduction
& Overview**

Winning Our Future in Uncertain Times
Biennial Delegate Conference

Foreword

By the President, Justin McCamphill

As we gather in Belfast for the 2025 Irish Congress of Trade Unions Biennial Delegate Conference, we meet at a pivotal moment—not just for our movement, but for every worker across this island. The past two years have tested us in ways we could scarcely have imagined, yet through the collective strength, resilience, and unbreakable solidarity of our movement, we have emerged with victories that once seemed impossible. These triumphs belong to every worker who stood on picket lines, who raised their voice in protest, and who refused to accept injustice as inevitable.

At the same time, we remember with deep respect those we have lost since our last conference—comrades whose courage and conviction shaped our movement. We honour them not just in words, but by redoubling our commitment to the causes they championed. Their fight is our fight, and we will carry it forward with the same unwavering determination that defined their lives.

Today, Irish workers face two interconnected threats: the reactionary agenda of the Trump administration and the opportunism of those who see this moment as a chance to push through long-desired attacks on workers' rights. These forces feed off one another, and we must confront both with equal vigour.

It is nothing short of scandalous that the Irish Government has still failed



Justin McCamphill, President.

to transpose the *Adequate Minimum Wages Directive* into Irish law. This directive is not merely a bureaucratic requirement—it is a vital instrument to empower workers, ensuring they can negotiate collectively, both in their workplaces and across entire sectors, for wages that provide dignity and security. Congress will not stand by while this government drags its feet. We demand immediate action, and we will hold those in power accountable until this directive is fully and faithfully implemented.

In Northern Ireland, workers have demonstrated the sheer force of collective action. On 18 January 2024, over 150,000 public sector workers brought this society to a standstill in a historic *Day of Action*. Their demand was simple: fair pay, properly funded public services, and an end to the political vacuum that left workers bearing the brunt of austerity. That day sent an unmistakable message—workers will no longer be collateral damage in political games or Westminster cuts.

Congress continues to engage with political leaders to deliver real change, but the reality for too many workers

remains bleak. Zero-hour contracts trap people in insecurity, poverty wages force families to choose between heating and eating, and exploitative conditions rob workers of their basic dignity. That is why the *Good Jobs Bill* before the Assembly is not just important—it is essential. Our task now is to ensure this legislation crosses the finish line before the 2027 mandate expires. We cannot afford to let this opportunity slip away.

Over the past year, the far-right has grown bolder—on the streets of Dublin and Belfast, across Europe and the US, and in the toxic underbelly of online platforms. Their playbook is as old as it is vile: they scapegoat migrants, target LGBTQ+ communities, and pit worker against worker by blaming the most marginalised for crises created by greed and mismanagement.

Our movement has faced down such forces before. In the 1930s, when fascism rose across Europe, trade unionists were among the first to resist. That legacy lives on today. As your president, I was proud to stand at rallies in Belfast and Dublin to declare that our movement remains on the frontlines against hatred and division.

The trade union movement has always led by example in refusing to tolerate injustice. At this BDC, we will focus on the *bystander approach*—because oppression thrives when good people do nothing.

Misogyny is not a “women’s issue.” It is a trade union issue. It is a workers’ issue. And it is the responsibility of every one of us to confront it—especially men in our movement. Whether in workplace banter, union meetings, or private conversations, we must

be the ones to call out sexism and challenge discrimination. Culture does not change by accident. It changes when each of us decides that silence is no longer an option.

The *Better in a Trade Union* campaign has made strides in raising public awareness and strengthening our affiliates. But it has also laid bare the scale of the task ahead. If we are to truly represent most working people, we must grow not just in numbers, but in ambition. That means reaching into every workplace, every community, and every sector where exploitation persists.

Workers across Ireland continue to watch in horror as the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza unfolds. Unions’ commitment to Palestinian rights did not begin with the latest headlines—we have campaigned for decades against occupation and apartheid. Now more than ever, the Irish Government must act. Passing the *Occupied Territories Bill* and ending all trade with illegal settlements is the bare minimum of moral responsibility. Words of sympathy are not enough. We demand action.

Finally, I want to express my deepest thanks to every affiliate, activist, and staff member who has kept our movement moving forward over these past two years. In particular, I pay tribute to our General Secretary, Owen Reidy, who embodies the highest ideals of trade unionism by combining strategic vision with unshakable commitment to all trade union members.

The road ahead will not be easy. But we stand united as trade unionists ready to meet the future.

Introduction

**By the General Secretary,
Owen Reidy**

The theme of the 2025 BDC *Winning Our Future in Uncertain Times* is most apt. The world has changed and remains in a state of flux. Far-right populist nativist politics continues to be on the rise across Europe and democracy in America is at stake with the election and actions of President Trump. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine continues, and in the last two years we have all witnessed on our phones, TVs and tablets the systematic genocidal actions of a disgraceful and incredibly right-wing Israeli government with the persecution of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. The world today feels more unstable every day, with the security that many people took for granted called into question.

At home, a new government in its first 100 days postponed a living wage for minimum wage workers, broke the promise of 10 days paid leave for sick workers, agreed to defer indefinitely a decision on abolishing sub-minimum wage rates for young workers, and delayed auto-enrolment for over 800,000 workers without an occupational pension. I am very proud that unions responded swiftly and firmly to these shameful decisions. Public opinion polling confirms that the majority of people share our outrage at this assault on vulnerable workers' basic terms and conditions.

Since we met in Kilkenny, we have also seen the outburst of far-right violence in Dublin and Belfast, attacks on



Owen Reidy, General Secretary.

migrants and on our frontline workers. I am again very proud of our quick and unequivocal response. We organised a vigil outside the GPO in O'Connell Street in November 2023 and a rally in Stormont in the summer of 2024. We condemned the violence, condemned those cowards and far-right agitators behind it and stood up for tolerance and decency.

The failure of social democracy and centrist politics has led to a sense of discontent and marginalisation. If we are to avoid a stronger far-right presence in Ireland, like in mainland Europe, we must ensure that economic justice is a cornerstone of economic and public policy.

Our unions in Northern Ireland secured significant pay increases in 2024 (and continue with this trend in 2025) after two years of industrial struggle and strike action on the streets and in workplaces culminating in January 2024 in the largest ever single day of strike action. In the Republic of Ireland, our public services unions negotiated a pay agreement which

delivered real pay increases for our public servants and reintroduced local sector bargaining. In the private sector, our unions continue to lodge real and progressive pay claims and are winning in the workplace and through third party negotiations. This activity across the island demonstrates how powerful and impactful we can be with the right strategic approach and actions.

Under the 2021-2023 presidency of Kevin Callinan affiliates endorsed and funded an unprecedented all-island *Better in A Trade Union* campaign to raise public awareness of the relevance and importance of trade unions in the workplace and wider society. I want to pay particular thanks to our outgoing Vice President Katie Morgan for her incredible work in bringing our affiliates together and managing this campaign with a very successful trade union week in 2024 and again in May this year.

As we arrive in Belfast for the 2025 BDC we are more determined to secure a better future. In the Republic of Ireland, we remain steadfast that the government must implement in full the potentially transformative Adequate Minimum Wages Directive. The 15 November 2024 deadline for transposition came and went. We will judge this government on the Action Plan which has to be adopted by the end of this year. If they do not adopt meaningful actions from the directive in this Action Plan there must be a clear and united response from the Irish trade union movement. In Northern Ireland, we are using the recent successful industrial campaign to leverage the Good Jobs agenda by pushing primary legislation that will make the work of unions more

impactful. We must insist on progress across the island and we must not leave one member or worker behind.

The impact of the Trump phenomenon and the re-emergence of a bipolar world moving away from sharing sovereignty and multilateralism has consequences for us all. That is why, with our colleagues in NERI, we have developed a comprehensive, radical and realisable New Economic Model blueprint applicable across the island of Ireland. As we know these issues come down to political choice. The model is grounded on four key fundamental principles upon which all economic and public policy should flow:

1. A productive, dynamic and agile economy;
2. More and better jobs;
3. Economic security;
4. Economic resilience.

These four pillars are more fundamental and necessary than ever before. This ground-breaking policy cannot merely become a nice glossy policy paper referenced a few times at conferences. Our unions and our trades councils must embrace it as their own. They must cascade this policy through their activists and members. We must together, agitate, educate and organise around such policy. This is our standard, our statement for a better life for all. This must be *the* policy position that the entire trade union movement in Ireland unites and campaigns on, until we see it implemented by governments. This policy is important because the trade union movement must always demand and have as its number one focus economic justice for workers and their families.

Since BDC in 2023, we have lost many dear friends and loved ones, (see obituaries p.16). My condolences to all who have lost a loved one. I want to mention two sad deaths, that of Macdara Doyle our campaigns officer in Congress and Jack McGinley who amongst many important roles in the trade union and labour movement was a permanent fixture at this conference as our chair of standing orders. Macdara died in August 2024 after a short illness, which shocked and saddened us all. He left behind his best friend and wife in Brónach and two wonderful children, now young adults in Ruaidhrí and Aoife. Those of us who worked with Macdara knew his family meant everything to him. He went about his work quietly and without ego and made a very important contribution particularly with his excellent work on the Raise the Roof campaign. Jack died suddenly in November 2024 upon returning from holidays in the Canary Islands. He was an academic, a trade union activist and leader, a labour historian and publisher amongst many other things. He will be sadly missed by us all but particularly by his wife Helen and his family and his union, SIPTU. Both Macdara and Jack will be remembered at this BDC.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing President Justin McCamphill for his leadership, friendship and support over his term of office. Justin has attended and spoke at union conferences all over Ireland and has represented Congress with distinction as our spokesperson at important rallies and events countering the rise of the far-right and standing up and speaking out for the plight of the Palestinian people.

I really hope you enjoy this BDC. I hope you find it stimulating and that you enjoy and find interesting the range of guest speakers we have for you. I hope you find the event thought provoking and inspiring and I hope you leave Belfast later this week more motivated and determined to play your part in building our trade union movement so we can win our future with strength and confidence in these uncertain times and win for workers and their families, build a better society and stronger fairer economy for all.

Enjoy the conference!

I. Executive Council 2023-25



Justin McCamphill
President



Katie Morgan
Vice President



Phil Ní Sheaghdha
Vice President



Joe Cunningham
Treasurer



John Boyle
INTO



Ethel Buckley
Siptu



Kevin Callinan
Fórsa



Kieran Christie
ASTI



Ashley Connolly
Fórsa



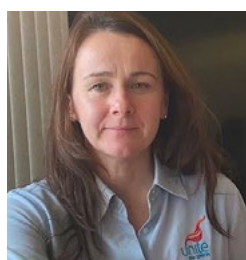
Karl Dalton
POA



Eamonn Donnelly
Fórsa



Séamus Dooley
NUJ



Susan Fitzgerald
Unite



Tom Fitzgerald
Unite



Mary Fogarty
INMO



Carmel Gates
NIPSA



Michael Gillespie
TUI



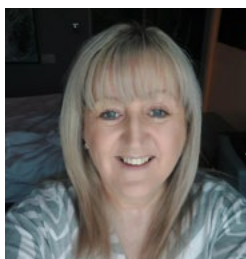
Frank Jones
IFUT



Paddy Kavanagh
Connect



John King
SIPTU



Erin Massey
CWU UK



Edward Matthews
INMO



Gerry McCormack*
SIPTU



Seán McDonagh
CWU



Patricia McKeown
UNISON



Brian Nolan
Connect



Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin
CWU



Lorraine O'Brien
Mandate



John O'Connell
FSU



Deirdre O'Connor
INTO



Sally Rees
NASUWT



Ciaran Rohan**
AHCPs



Anne Speed
UNISON



Daire Toner
NIPSA



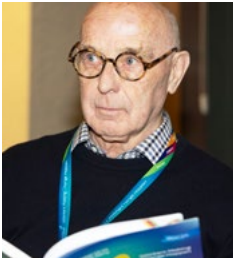
Betty Tyrrell-Collard
Trades Councils
Representative



Jacquie White
UTU



Michael Kerrigan
Observer, Youth
Committee



Tom Gillen
Observer, Retired
Workers' Committee

* Gerry McCormack, SIPTU resigned from the Executive Council in February 2024 to take up the position of European Officer with Congress.

** Ciaran Rohan was co-opted in February 2024 following the resignation of Gerry McCormack.

II. Obituaries

We lost a number of colleagues, staff and activists of individual unions since BDC 2023, including:

Miriam Duggan, serving ASTI president, who died in June 2023.

Tom Browne, former secretary of Galway Council of Trades Unions, who died in July 2023.

Sam Nolan, former secretary of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions, who died in April 2024.

Marjorie Trimble, UNISON activist, who died in April 2024.

Nick Broughall, former GPMU official, who died in July 2024.

Al Butler, former IMPACT national secretary, who died in October 2024.

Liam McCloskey, former INTO president, who died in October 2024.

Brian Hynes, former INTO president, who died in December 2024.

Frank Barry, UNITE activist, who died in February 2025.

Pearse McKenna, UNITE activist, who died in February 2025.

Seamus O'Donnell, former IDATU general secretary, who died March 2025.

The Executive Council offer our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased.



Macdara Doyle (1965 - August 2024) **Congress campaigns officer**

Macdara Doyle, died on 24 August 2024 following a brief illness. His death, at the age of 59, deprives his wife Brónach, daughter Aoife and son Ruairdhí of a devoted husband and father.

A life-long NUJ member Macdara did not lick his trade unionism from the cobblestones, his father Larry was a trade union official. His mother Marie was a teacher and Macdara inherited her love of language and justice.

His life-long passion for social justice was reflected in his activities as a member of UCD Students Union, his support for global solidarity campaigns and his abiding interest in Latin America. UCD shaped Macdara – it was there he studied History and English, graduating with a master's degree – and a future wife.

Brónach and Macdara had a shared interest in social justice, combined with a love of travel. They spent a year in Mexico, teaching English and translating texts. They saw at first hand the cruel impact of military rule on the indigenous people of Guatemala. And they got married in Cuba.

On returning to Ireland, Macdara broke into journalism, writing for *An Phoblacht*, *In Dublin*, *Big Issue*, *Hot Press*, *Sunday Tribune*, *Fortnight* and *Magill*, always looking beyond the narrow confines of the Republic of Ireland and the politics of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, while also writing about another great passion, music.

Reading the *Magill* archive you get a sense of the breath of Macdara's interests – his media column cast a jaundiced eye on coverage of contemporary affairs but remain relevant.

The headline from his 1988 column repairs apposite: "Negative reporting, unfounded claims and exaggerated headlines have dominated coverage of asylum seekers in Ireland."

His laser eye focussed on the global impact of Irish corporate giants such as Smurfit Cappa and Fyffes and on the devastating ecological impact of Monsanto. In a joint profile with Liz Walsh, he challenged the virtual canonisation of Peter Sutherland and never tired of railing against the naming of academic centres after imagined giant of Irish business.

Esther Lynch, General Secretary of the ETUC, recalls working with Macdara on a campaign to end workfare in the early 1990s. "With his journalistic skills, he helped co-write a guide for unemployed people about their rights and, importantly how to organise to improve those rights." For Macdara, his work in Ballymun with Esther was consistent with his work in Mexico: using his impressive literary skills to unlock the windows of knowledge.

It was Maurice Sheehan of *Mandate* who encouraged him to apply for a job with *Concern*. As communications officer his writing skills were put to good use by David Begg and Sally Ann Kinahan.

His report from East Timor, *After the Apocalypse*, published in *Magill* in March 2001 showed the impact that visit had on Macdara. Those *Concern* field trips re-enforced his commitment to social justice.

It was Sally Anne who encouraged him to apply for a job in *Congress* where David Begg recalls him giving a stunning interview.

As communications officer, he collaborated with the small team in Parnell Square, witnessing the highs and lows of social partnership, casting a cold eye on the arrival of the Celtic Tiger, the economic collapse, and the arrival of the Troika.

His writing skills, his intellectual rigour and his genuine commitment to the labour movement were Macdara's key attributes.

He could be impatient, stubborn, and irritated by the demands of the 24-hour news cycle. At times he could be incredibly laid back, even during an apparent crisis!

News-hungry journalists under pressure from a demanding editor would sometimes tear their hair out as an unflappable Macdara explained that there really was nothing to tell.

Macdara was a graduate of the Ronan Keating School of PR. Not being an instrument of policy or a prophet, he refused to predict the outcome of ongoing negotiations or complex

disputes, adopting the mantra: “You say it best when you say nothing at all.”

He embraced new challenges as campaigns officer. The Raise the Roof campaign brought him back to his roots, while his passion for the environment found an outlet in his work on Climate Change and Just Transition.

Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary of the NUJ, recalls a “cherished memory” of a day spent in west County Offaly with Macdara and his friend and colleague David Joyce.

“My brother Eamon was our guide as we visited Lough Boora and gathered cranberries near Ferbane. As we moved from town-to-town Macdara’s journalistic instincts kicked in, seizing on the need not just for a transition but a just transition for workers and their families.”

All of us will have our own memories of Macdara.

He wore his learning lightly but in unguarded moments revealed the depth and expanse of his interests. He was in Seamus Heaney’s great phrase a citizen of the Republic of Conscience and we miss him in these troubled times.

The Executive Council offer our deepest sympathy to Macdara’s family, colleagues and friends.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



Dr Kieran Jack McGinley
(1954 – November 2024)
Chair of the Standing Orders Committee

The trade union movement lost one of our most respected, committed and recognisable figures with the sudden death of Dr Kieran Jack McGinley on the 25 November 2024.

Throughout his life, Jack, as he was generally known, was a passionate advocate for workers’ rights either through his trade union activism or public campaigns, all the while giving forty-five years of service to Trinity College Dublin. He also worked tirelessly to forge strong links between Ireland and Cuba.

Jack was best known to many of us as a driving force in the Irish labour history community. He served twice as President of the Irish Labour History Society and once as its treasurer. He was also at the helm co-ordinating the landmark international conference in September 2023 marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Society. Just as important was his founding of Umiskin Press, which took its name from the Donegal townland of his family roots.

Jack was an important figure in Congress. He was Chair of the Standing Orders Committee, taking over the role at the 2013 BDC. Under his stewardship

he ensured the orderly and fair running of conference. His overriding objective was that delegates got the opportunity to make their contribution to the shaping Congress policy.

The Executive Council offer our deepest sympathy to Jack's family and friends.



Larry Broderick (1958 – July 2023)
Former member of the Executive Council

Larry Broderick embodied the trade union values of integrity, courage, and compassion. His unwavering resolve in the face of adversity and his ability to empower others to speak up against injustice left an indelible mark on the labour movement in Ireland.

Larry was not merely a leader but someone who understood the power of unity and collective action. Through his leadership, he inspired bank workers to stand together in solidarity, advocating every day for fair wages, safe working conditions, and dignity in the workplace.

Whether negotiating with employers or mobilising workers for action, he remained steadfast in his belief that every individual deserved to be heard and treated with respect and fairness.

Beyond his role as a trade union leader, Larry was a family man, husband and father, mentor, a friend, and a guiding light for many of those around him.

He took the time to listen to the concerns of others, offering support and guidance with empathy and understanding. His door was always open, and his words of wisdom continue to resonate with all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Larry never wavered, members wellbeing was first and foremost in his mind and he had an extraordinary ability to keep going until he was satisfied that he had gotten the best deal for the individual he was representing.

He is sadly missed by all who knew him.

The Executive Council offer our deepest sympathy to Larry's family and friends.



Jimmy Somers (1939 – January 2024)
Former treasurer of Congress

Jimmy Somers died aged 84 on 12 January 2024.

He was an official with the ITGWU, and when the ITGWU merged with the FWUI to form SIPTU, Jimmy became the vice president of the new union and later SIPTU general president.

Jimmy was a member of the Executive Council for many years and served as our treasurer.

Following his time at SIPTU, Jimmy moved to the Labour Court and also served on the Labour Relations Commission.

He was politically active, standing as a Labour Party candidate in a number of general elections during the seventies and eighties and served as a councillor on Dublin City Council.

SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham said "Jimmy will always be remembered as a razor-sharp negotiator, a staunch defender of working people and a skilled political operative across the trade union movement. He was one of a kind. A trade union stalwart and a gentleman to his fingertips."

He will be missed by all of us.

The Executive Council offer our deepest sympathy to Jimmy's family and friends.



Alice Somers (October 2023)
Former director of education at the People's College

Alice Somers died on 18 October 2023.

Alice spent all of her adult life as a tireless and committed political and trade union activist.

She was an active member of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (now SIPTU) and the Labour Party. As a political activist, Alice was involved in many campaigns on the social issues of the day and she had a keen interest in improving the rights of women.

Alice will be particularly remembered for her work in promoting adult education. Alice worked for over twenty years in the People's College. She had a deep commitment to the work of the College and while working there expanded the number of courses provided, making further education accessible to thousands of workers.

She will be fondly remembered by all that knew and worked with her.

The Executive Council offer our deepest sympathy to Alice's family and friends.

III. The Economy

A New Economic Model for Ireland

A motion was carried at the 2023 BDC to develop a new economic model for Ireland. Specifically, the motion called for a debate throughout the trade union movement to help develop a comprehensive long-term model of economic development for both economies on the island of Ireland.

We know from history that the economy is always in a state of transition. The proper response to change is not to look backwards and defend the status quo, but to design a system that protects households, people and the quality and quantity of employment. Our economic goal is to build an 'anti-fragile' and resilient economy that prospers irrespective of external conditions. To achieve this goal, we need to identify our 'no regrets' moves and understand what a high-road strategy based on good jobs and economic security looks like.

We can use strategic foresight to identify many of the key economic megatrends for the current and coming generation. These include climate change, technological disruption, demographic shifts and deglobalisation. Each of the megatrends has profound implications for the labour market and for existing economic strategies. Certain sectors and regions may fall into decline as will demand for certain skills.

The New Economic Model (NEM) project seeks to articulate what a

productive and resilient economy founded on economic security and on more and better jobs might look like, and to identify the practical real-world policies needed to achieve this vision.

The ingredients/goals of the NEM are framed as four pillars:

- A productive, dynamic and agile economy;
- More and better jobs;
- Economic security;
- Economic resilience.

Pillar 1 describes the problem of a potentially lower growth future. It then considers how, in this context, we might achieve continuous improvements in living standards. The paper goes on to discuss the compelling need to shift the structure of the economy away from low productivity jobs and to promote a 'Good Company' model at enterprise level. In addition, the paper argues for strengthening the economy's productive and innovative capacity through uplifts in investments in infrastructure (e.g. renewable energy, public transport, housing), in people (i.e. their skills and human capital) and in dynamism and innovation (e.g. R&D spending). Other dimensions to a productive economy are also discussed including the concept of an 'entrepreneurial state' and the need to address structural market failures in housing and banking.

Pillar 2 starts from the reality that wages and labour income will continue to be the main source of income for the vast bulk of the population.

However, while high labour force participation rates and full employment are crucial, they do not guarantee living standards. Therefore, we want the jobs of the present to be of high quality and capable of supporting household's well-being needs and people's full participation in society. That means we need to pursue a high-road approach to employment that promotes good jobs. Any job might be better than no job, but an 'any' job approach is not good enough. The paper focuses on eliminating the various barriers to labour supply (e.g. caring needs, skills, housing) and labour demand (e.g. boom and bust macro policies, skills mismatch, the quality of the enterprise base). The paper also focuses on job quality and proposes a set of reforms (e.g. collective bargaining, trades union access, adequate minimum wages) designed to uplift the average quality of jobs in the economy.

Pillar 3 brings the discussion on to economic security and well-being and to the policies that are needed to protect people through the inevitable transitions, shifts and shocks that characterise all modern economies. People will lose their jobs and existing jobs will change so we will need safeguards to prevent people and regions from falling off the economic cliff. Laissez faire policies are not going to protect or resuscitate falling behind households and regions. Already our economic and social model is failing too many people. The challenge is disruption without destitution. With this in mind the paper proposes a set of strategies to give greater agency and control to the workforce, to develop a social insurance model that enables people to make economic transitions, and, as a final backstop, to develop an adequacy-based welfare system

buttressed by strong and universal public services as a final backstop.

Pillar 4 emphasises that in an uncertain world we need our economies and societies to be capable of adapting and flourishing even while under external or internal stress. This means avoiding short-termism and learning from the mistakes of the past. We need to make choices that look ahead with a progressive but sustainable fiscal policy, policies that embed price stability, and policies that meet the challenges of the future such as climate change.

The NEM ultimately forms a set of complementary but evolving policy recommendations designed to resolve the problems and achieve the goals described in the four pillars.

Links to this work can be found on the NERI website.



Northern Ireland Economy

The Northern Ireland (NI) economy has experienced modest, but not exceptional growth over the last 2 years. This growth has been driven almost exclusively by private sector activity given the constraints on public sector output during the period. The labour market performed well, with increases in employment and jobs remaining steady over the period. The main concern for the NI economy remains job quality and productivity, with performance on both issues inextricably linked. Employment and economic inactivity have remained surprisingly strong

over the last number of years despite exceptional levels of turbulence. The task for policy now is to move from a position of protecting the quantity of employment and output to one where the quality of both is promoted and developed.

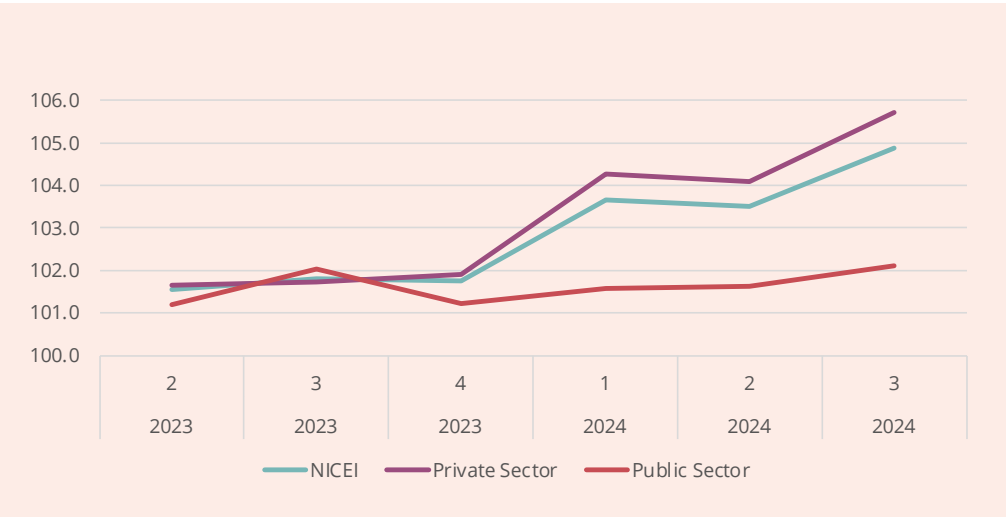
Looking at some of the key indicators, the chart below shows the path of economic output in NI from just before the 2023 BDC until the third quarter of last year. It shows that output grew by 3.2% including growth of just under 4% in the private sector in contrast to 0.9% growth in public sector output. Looking at the main subsectors of economic output, the construction sector has seen the largest increase, growing by 16.5%. The services sector, which accounts for 52% of all output, grew by 3.7%, while the production and agricultural sectors contracted by 1.3% and 4.8% respectively.

Within the Services sector, both Business and Financial Services and Retail and Distribution grew modestly over the time period compared to stagnation in the Transport and ICT sectors. Other services which includes

Professional Services and Administration fell over the period, having reached a peak of output in mid-2023. On the production side of the economy, the story is less positive with manufacturing output falling by 1% between the second quarter of 2023 and the third quarter of 2024. The contraction was fairly broad based with Food, Textiles, Computers and Electronic, and Fabricated metals all seeing a drop-in output. The largest contraction was in Machinery and Equipment, which accounts for 7.5% of all manufacturing output, falling almost 25%. Transport equipment which accounts for 12.4% of all manufacturing output increased by almost 17% over the period while Pharmaceutical and Chemicals also grew by 5.4%.

Overall growth in output was driven by Services sector growth in the more traditional areas of activity. The decline in production is concerning because of its role in determining the overall level of productivity, which is, in turn, a key determinant of living standards. There has been a lack of productivity data produced for NI in recent years,

Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index Q2 2023-Q3 2024



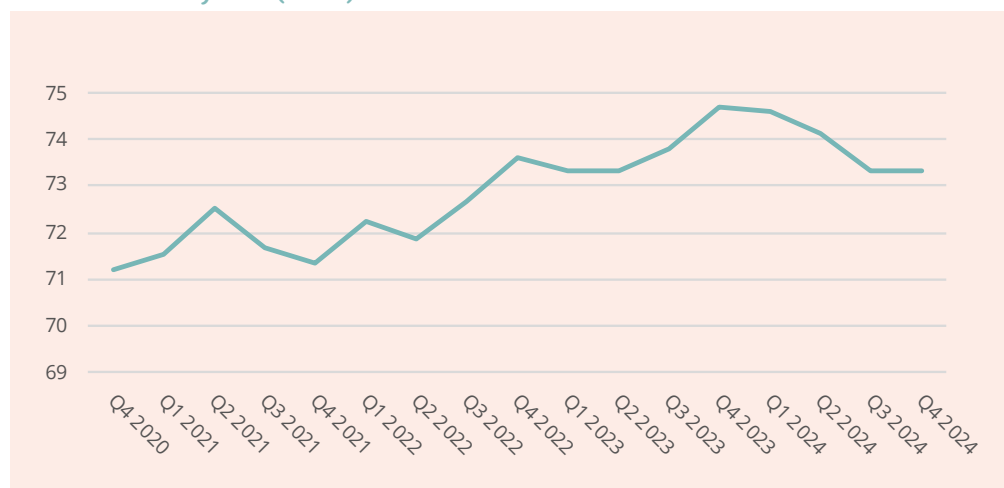
but at the NERI we have estimated that Ireland produced 2.8 times as much output per employment as NI. While those figures are obviously skewed by the range of distortionary factors in Ireland's economic output data, even when compared to Great Britain, NI is still only producing 86% of the UK average. The task of raising NI's economic performance still remains both urgent and necessary.

Looking to the labour market, the picture remains broadly positive over the 18 months following the 2023 BDC. Economic activity or participation is one of the most important, but often misunderstood indicators of the condition of the labour market. It determines what proportion of the available adult population is directly engaged with the labour market. NI has historically had low rates of economic activity and this has been identified as a key weakness in our economic performance, but the reality is necessarily more nuanced. The reasons for not entering the labour market are many and diverse and are not always fully captured. Nonetheless, the rate of economic activity has increased over the last number of years.

Over 2024 the working age rate of economic activity in NI decreased steadily by an average of 1 percentage point (pp) over the year. While this may first appear to be a deterioration, it simply returns NI to the position it was in at the beginning of 2023 and brings it back to average rates that were seen in the 5 years from 2014 to 2019. While activity rates for the adult population as a whole followed a similar path, the rate of economic activity in those aged 16 and above is now 1 percentage point lower than the average of the years pre-2020. While much of the improvements in economic activity in recent years have been due to the increasing participation of females in the paid labour force, on this occasion, the increases have been evenly split by gender. In terms of age, the increases have also been dominated by the upper age brackets, with the 18-24 age group actually seeing a reduction in activity, but such changes are not uncommon in this age group due to students moving in and out of the labour force.

The position of economic activity then ultimately impacts the employment

Economic Activity Rate (16-64) 2020-2024



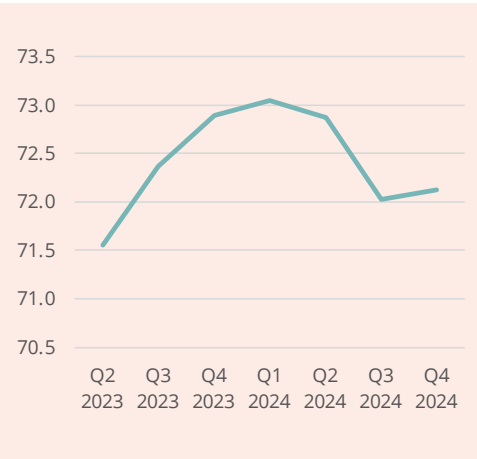
and the unemployment rate. As the chart below shows, the employment rate has followed a similar path to economic activity over the last number of months, but by the final quarter of 2023, it had stabilised at a level 0.5 percentage points higher than it was in Q2 of 2023. This trend has then allowed the unemployment rate to continue a downward trend throughout the entire period. Apart from a small increase in the third quarter of 2023, the unemployment rate has continued down to a new low of 1.4%.

The Northern Ireland labour market has performed remarkably well in the context of disruptions of the past few months. It is also clear that the supply and demand for labour remain strong and that policy now needs to be turned towards boosting the quality of that employment. While the improvement of economic activity over the last number of months has been welcome, NI is still below the rate in Ireland and Britain. One of the keys to unlocking a greater labour force participation rate lies in boosting employment and job quality.

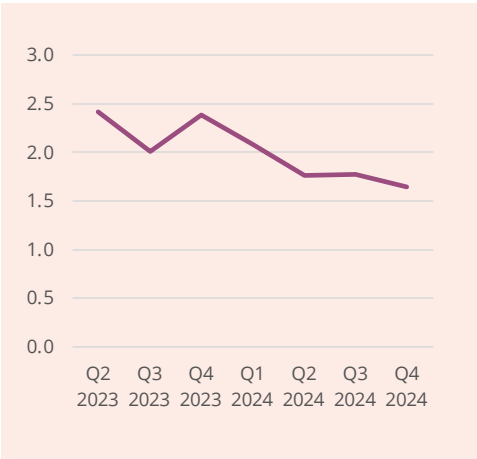
Simply put, many people who have left the labour force did so because of work which is of such poor quality that it affected their health and well-being. Poor quality work is not just about pay, it covers many other aspects and specifically the nature of the work itself. Poor quality jobs can be those which are insecure or where the hours can be uncertain and even excessive. They can be jobs where the pace of work is highly intense and controlled and where people feel they have almost no control over their working lives. Add to that poor management, lack of support and no chance of recognition or progression. Boosting job quality by increasing employment rights, trade union membership and access to collective bargaining are, therefore, crucial to improving the long-term performance of the NI economy. Bringing greater participation and boosting productivity will ultimately be key to delivering improved living standards.

Looking to the key determinant of living standards, we have seen some significant movements in wages over the last two years. While the worst of the inflationary crisis appears to have

Employment Rate (16-64) 2023-24



Unemployment Rate (16+) 2023-24

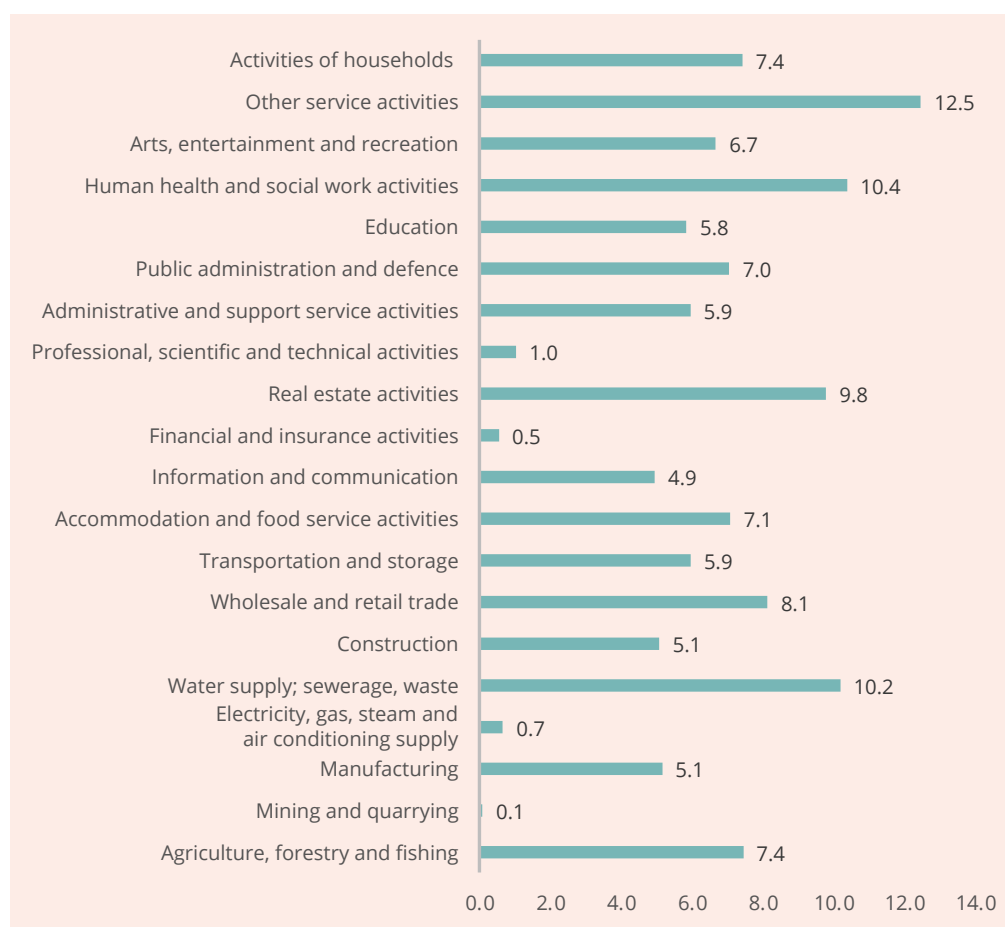


passed, there has still been significant price increases over the last 18 months. While wages grew by just over 10%, prices also grew by just under 3.5% leading to a real term increase of 6.5%. Naturally this figure has not been spread evenly across sectors. Professional services and Financial Services saw very small increases of 1% and 0.5% respectively. Some of the largest real terms increases were in public sector dominated industries of Health, Education and Public Administration, which is not surprising given that a number of public sector pay deals were concluded over 2024. However, as many of these pay deals also included back pay, it is not accurate to compare

them only to the price increases that have occurred since July 2023.

In the 18 months before BDC 2023, wages in the Public Administration, Education and Health sectors grew by 0.2%, 3.6% and 0.3% respectively. Over that same period, prices increased by 13.9%, meaning that all three sectors saw large, double-digit falls in real terms pay over that period. Taking this together all three sectors have seen real terms decreases in earnings of between 6% and 3% meaning that future pay deals will need to make up ground lost to price increases, even though the worst of the inflationary crisis may be behind us.

Inflation Adjusted Change in Earnings July 2023-January 2024



Republic of Ireland Economy

A Booming Economy

The Republic's economy has generally performed very well over the last two years. In many respects the economy has never been stronger. There are record levels of employment and employment rates along with historically low levels of unemployment. The unemployment rate was 3.9% in February of this year while long-term unemployment is also very low at just 1%.

Employment increased by just shy of 160,000 in the last two years, including by a robust 2.6% (70,000) in the year to the final quarter of 2024. To put the Republic's performance into context, EU average annual employment growth has been 1.2% since 2000. The biggest job creating sectors in the last year were Health & Social Work (+17,200 net new jobs), Construction (+14,700) and ICT (+14,000). On the other hand, there were job losses in Wholesale and Retail trade (17,300) and Administration and Support (6,400).

The economy has also been doing well from an output perspective albeit with the usual caveats. GDP is an unreliable and flawed measure of the health of the economy and has been very volatile in recent years with implausibly large GDP growth of 16.3% and 8.6% in 2021 and 2022 followed by a decline of 5.5% in 2023 and then a return to growth (1.2%) in 2024. These figures do not reflect underlying trends in terms of employment creation and hours worked. The GDP volatility reflects, amongst other things, the timing of corporate investments, the timing of Covid lockdowns, as well as fluctuations in manufacturing exports.

GDP remains highly reliant on and inflated by a small number of large foreign multinationals. The reliance on a small number of highly profitable US firms poses a risk to the sustainability of the economic model. The Republic is highly exposed to a tariff war and to changes in the US corporation tax rules or rate. Gross value added in the multinational dominated sectors is €226 billion whereas the other more domestically focused sectors account for €274 billion. While they account for 4 in every 9 Euros of economic output the multinational dominated sectors account for a much smaller share of output.

The more useful and domestically meaningful modified domestic demand (MDD) indicator of economic output grew by 2.6% in 2023 and 2.7% in 2024. While MDD growth was faster in 2021 (8%) and 2022 (8.8%) those figures are artificially inflated as they coincided with the release of the pent-up demand when the economy came out of lockdown post-Covid. Personal consumption has held up reasonably well over the last two years notwithstanding the surge in the cost of living and the fall in real wages and incomes. Consumption increased 2.3% in 2024. The government's unduly loose fiscal policy has helped stoke demand in recent years.

Cost of Living and Wages

The inflationary spike has now broadly come under control with the consumer price index averaging growth of 2.1% in 2024. Annual inflation peaked at 9.2% in October 2022. The inflationary spike was caused by the post-Covid demand surge, supply chain problems in the wake of Covid, and perhaps most significantly the shock to energy and

other commodity prices from the war in Ukraine. The European Central Bank (ECB) responded to the rising inflation by raising interest rates in order to choke off demand and therefore price inflation. The surge in price levels gradually abated over a two-year period with the Republic finally reaching its sub-2% inflation target in August 2024.

While inflation has now broadly come under control, prices in the economy remain significantly elevated from their pre-Covid levels. Prices increased 20.1% in the five years since the onset of the Covid pandemic. Price growth has also been uneven with electricity prices up 60.9% over the five years and private rents up 30.5%. The impact of the cost of living shock has not been felt evenly across the population. A tariff war would ignite an increase in prices and could potentially lead to another round of monetary tightening and higher interest rates.

The cost of living crisis weakened the financial position of many households, although real incomes are now finally growing once again. The proportion of persons living in households in enforced deprivation increased from 13.7% in 2021 to 15.7% in 2024 although this figure does represent an improvement on 2023 levels (17.3%). More than 1 in 9 workers experienced deprivation last year as did close to half of all lone parents, 3 out of 8 people with disabilities, and 1 in 3 renters.

The historically tight labour market has led to the return of real wage growth for workers after two years of declining living standards. Average weekly earnings were €980 in the final quarter of 2024 representing an increase of

5.6% on the previous year. With annual inflation averaging just 1% during the quarter it meant average real wage growth was close to a very robust 4.6%. Hourly wages were growing even faster at 6.2%. Recent wage growth has been particularly strong in sectors such as Information & Communication and in Education reflecting labour shortages in those sectors. Weekly earnings are highest in the Information & Communication (€1,685) and Financial, Insurance and Real Estate (€1,329) sectors while wages are lowest in the Accommodation and Food Services sector at just €447.

The Public Finance Mirage

At first glance the public finances appear to be in really good shape. There have been large surpluses in recent years. Unfortunately, this headline picture is somewhat misleading. The public finances have been benefiting in recent years from an enormous and unsustainable surge in corporation tax receipts. Much of these tax receipts are concentrated in a tiny number of foreign US multinationals and in some cases are a consequence of the location of Intellectual Property assets to the Republic of Ireland for purely tax minimisation reasons. Corporation tax receipts have increased from €5 billion to €25 billion in just nine years and are now so large that they exceed the entire health budget. Such revenues are highly vulnerable to changes in the performances of these companies, changes in the US tax code, or even just changes in how these companies manage their tax affairs.

The public finances are also flattered by the strong performance and cyclical position of the economy. It is unclear whether the current low levels of

unemployment can be sustained over the medium-term. Finally, the public finances are set to deteriorate in the years to come as the fiscal costs of an ageing population increasingly weigh on the public finances. Our analysis is that the public finance position, while appearing strong, would actually be somewhat vulnerable in the event of a shock to the economy. This suggests the need for prudence in upcoming budgets.

Cracks in the Model

The Republic's economic model continues to underperform in a range of respects. We can take just two examples to illustrate. Housing supply remains far below housing demand. New dwelling completions were just 30,000 in the final quarter of 2024. This represents a decline on the 2023 figures and is far below the level needed to meet demand. Property prices and rents continue to surge and to grow faster than wages making housing ever more unaffordable for ordinary workers. House prices increased 91% between 2015 and 2024.

The Republic's environmental performance has also been lamentable. While greenhouse gas emissions fell by 6.8% in 2023 they still amounted to 55 million tonnes of CO₂. The Republic's per capita emissions were the second highest out of 27 EU countries in 2022. Notably, the Republic spent €4.7 billion on fossil fuel subsidies in 2022 notwithstanding its rhetoric around meeting environmental targets and the government is currently facing billions of Euros in fines if it fails to meet its greenhouse gas targets, as seems likely. Agriculture explains the Republic's outlier emission status with the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

sector contributing 39% of emissions despite accounting for just 4% of employment and 1% of gross value added to the economy.

Prospects and Risks

The baseline prospects for the economy are relatively good. A tight labour market suggests ongoing real wage growth and there is little evidence of a slowdown in the labour market, albeit that jobs growth is likely to slow somewhat in the years ahead. Inflation should average close to the ECB target of 2% annually over the next two years. The ECB is likely to continue to pursue its lower interest rate policy and this will act as a stimulus to investment and to household consumption. Finally, looser fiscal rules and fiscal policy in Europe could act as a stimulus to growth.

However, there are a number of risks to the near-term outlook. Policy decisions in the US have immense import for the Irish economy particularly in relation to tariffs and to tax reform. Changes in these areas could significantly damage goods exports and corporation tax receipts. Tariffs would lead to reduced scope for multinationals to make profits, might ultimately lead to slower rates of foreign direct investment and lower employment levels, as well as lower corporation tax and income tax revenues. Ultimately, tariff wars could plunge the global economy into recession. Corporation tax reform in the US could lead to intellectual property assets being moved out of the Republic. If so, this would have profound consequences for fiscal sustainability.

There are also numerous strategic risks that need to be addressed.

- a. Protectionism and de-globalisation threaten the Republic's economic model with tariffs, on-shoring and interventionist subsidy competition all likely to weaken and possibly even reverse foreign direct investment into the country,
- b. Fiscal sustainability could be endangered due to a confluence of factors including policy failures such as pro-cyclical tax cuts and a narrow tax base, a reliance on unreliable windfall taxes from a small number of corporations, the fiscal costs of an ageing population, the infrastructure and other costs from the green transition, and pressure for higher spending on defence,
- c. Infrastructure deficits are creating capacity constraints in the economy and if they are not tackled will increasingly become bottlenecks to growth and undermine competitiveness and the green transition. Infrastructure is deficient in energy, water and housing to name just three areas, with ongoing issues in relation to planning, project management and skills shortages in construction,
- d. Various megatrends including climate change, an ageing population and technological change will all cause significant disruptions to the economy and labour market. A debate around a new dynamic but sustainable economic model will be needed if we are to adequately respond to these shocks. The trade union movement needs to be at the forefront of that debate.

Headline Economic Indicators

	2022	2023	2024
Output (percentage real growth)			
GDP	8.6	-5.5	1.2
Modified Domestic Demand	8.8	2.6	2.7
Personal Consumption	10.7	4.8	2.3
Labour Market (Q4, thousands)			
Employment	2,616.7	2,706.4	2,776.4
Of which part-time	561.3	592.4	580.7
Unemployed	112.6	117.7	116.1
Hours worked (millions)	82.2	82.5	85.6
Prices (Annual percentage change)			
Consumer Price Index	7.8	6.3	2.1
Weekly wage growth (Annual to Q4)	4.6	2.6	5.6



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Section Two

Work of Congress

Winning Our Future in Uncertain Times
Biennial Delegate Conference

I. Industrial & Organising

Collective Bargaining

Since our last BDC the Executive Council has prioritised the promotion of collective bargaining. Congress's *Better in A Trade Union* (BIATU) campaign and the subsequent *Respect at Work* campaign organised by our affiliates SIPTU, CWU, FSU and Mandate both promoted collective bargaining and workers joining unions in novel ways.

Post COVID-19 and based on the research carried out by the BIATU campaign and academic research from UCD, it has been clear that the demand for collective bargaining and workers' desire to join unions is on the rise. The UCD *Union Voice in Ireland 2021* research demonstrated that 44% of workers not in a union wanted one and 67% of 16-24-year-olds not in a union, wanted one. We are working with UCD on a 2025 study which unlike the 2021 one, will be all-island and we expect the sentiment to be at least similar.

Clearly, the demand is there and must be met. In 2022 the LEEF High Level Group (HLG) report made some critical recommendations around collective bargaining in an Irish context which included the removal of the employers' veto and introduced the concept of good faith engagement, among other things. While the cabinet signed off on this report in October 2022, despite our considerable efforts, the report has yet to be implemented.

The Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, potentially the most significant directive on workers' rights and collective bargaining in over 20 years, was also to be transposed by 15 November 2024. The day came and went, and the government have to date, failed to properly transpose this directive into Irish law. In the case of the LEEF HLG report, we hear excuses of possible clauses being potentially unconstitutional, yet our legal advice is strongly to the contrary. In the case of the directive, the government took the view that no primary legislation was required to transpose. It is clear that because of employer union pressure, the government are at best lukewarm to any change and at worst are seeking to frustrate same. We are conscious that the Action Plan required by each member state on the implementation of the directive is included in the current Programme for Government. It is crucial that we as a movement hold the government's feet to the fire on the Action Plan and ensure that we see appropriate legislative and policy changes that promote collective bargaining,



Congress General Election Manifesto 2024.



Private Sector Committee Chair, Neil McGowan (SIPTU) & Vice Chair, Fionnuala Ní Bhrogain (CWU).

that facilitate the right to exercise collective bargaining and that seek to ensure we achieve high coverage and crucially greater density.

A Congress technical group has been set up and is liaising with the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and IBEC on this and reporting to the Executive Council monthly. The government has issued a public consultation on the Action Plan and we prepared a template response which we asked affiliate unions to use in responding. We do not expect the social partners to agree on the Action Plan, therefore it will be for the government to choose how far it goes in the implementation of the directive.

Developments in the Private Sector

Industrial relations in the private sector in the period since the last BDC has been dominated by the efforts by unions to maintain their members' living standards in the face of high levels of price inflation. According to

the Consumer Price Index (CPI), prices increased by 6.3% in 2023 and by 2.1% in 2024. While price increases are forecasted to continue to moderate and gradually return to more normal levels it should be noted that CPI has increased by 19.8% in the five years to January 2025.

In response, the Private Sector Committee, though its annual pay bargaining guidance, has encouraged unions to seek wage increases through collective bargaining negotiations that would protect the standard of living of their members.

The pay bargaining guidance for 2024 encouraged unions to seek pay increases in the range 4% - 6%. The guidance for 2025 was to seek increases in the range 4% to 7%. In both 2024 and 2025, the pay guidance was framed to reflect the prevailing strong economic conditions and the likelihood that pay bargaining had not kept pace with price inflation in earlier years. It should be noted that average earnings increased by 5.6% in 2024.

The guidance also encouraged unions to seek improvements to non-pay benefits such as shorter working time, additional annual leave, improved sick pay, paid family leave and pension benefits.

Sectoral collective bargaining remains an important part of the industrial relations landscape in the Republic of Ireland. There are four functioning Joint Labour Committee's in the following sectors - contract security, contract cleaning, early years' services and English language schools. The other legal mechanism that provides for sectoral collective bargaining are Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs). While SEOs could be used in any sector of the economy they have been used exclusively in the construction and related sectors to date. In the period under review a revised SEO for the construction sector has come into force. This SEO provides for pay increases of 3.4% in 2025 and 3.2% in 2026.

A review of the Private Sector Committee took place in 2024. As an outcome of this review, revised arrangements for meetings were agreed. It was also agreed that the committee would hold an annual seminar. In 2024, the seminar focussed on the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive and the Report of the High-Level Group on Collective Bargaining. In 2025 the seminar marked the 25th anniversary of the National Minimum Wage Act. The review also recognised the value of inviting external speakers to present to the committee. In the period under review, Minister Peter Burke and Minister of State Emer Higgins, the CEO of IBEC, Danny McCoy and the new Director General of the WRC, Audrey Cahill have addressed the committee. As part of the review, it was agreed to appoint officers. Neil McGowan SIPTU (Chair) and Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin CWU (Vice Chair) are the current officers of the committee.



Ministers Peter Burke and Emer Higgins meeting with the the Private Sector Committee



Public Services Committee.

Developments in the Public Sector

Since the last BDC in July 2023, the most significant development in the public sector was the conclusion of a new Public Service Agreement. The agreement, negotiated by the Public Services Committee and running from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2026, is a comprehensive agreement covering pay and a range of non-pay issues. The pay terms of the agreement are summarised in the table below.

The agreement also contains a local bargaining clause which provides unions with the opportunity to further increase

pay or improve conditions of employment through negotiations in agreed bargaining units. The first payment under the local bargaining provisions is due to be paid on 1 September 2025. At the time of writing, discussions on arrangements for the establishment of the Local Bargaining Units at national and at sectoral level are continuing.

The agreement also provides for a key role for the WRC, Labour Court or Arbitration Board in the resolution of disputes, in a return to the normalisation of industrial relations dispute resolution mechanisms across the public service.

Date	Pay adjustment
1/1/2024	2.25% of annualised pay or €1,125 whichever is greater.
1/6/2024	1% of annualised pay.
1/10/2024	1% of annualised pay or €500 whichever is greater
1/3/2025	2% of annualised pay or €1000 whichever is greater
1/8/2025	1% of annualised pay
1/2/2026	1% of annualised pay or €500 whichever is greater
1/6/2026	1%

The government has also committed alongside the agreement to repeal the remaining elements of the FEMPI legislation, which was another demand from public services unions. The Public Service Committee officers continue to push the government side for the implementation of this commitment.

During the period under review, the government enacted legislation to provide a legal basis for the continued affiliation of PDFORRA and RACO to Congress. During the passage of the Defence (Amendment) Bill 2023, Congress along with the PDFORRA and RACO successfully lobbied the government to remove provisions that would have prevented certain grades in the military from joining and being a member of one a representative organisation.

The officers of the Public Services Committees are Kevin Callinan, Fórsa (Chair), John King, Siptu (Secretary), Phil Ní Sheaghdha, INMO (Vice Chair) and John Boyle, INTO (Vice Chair).

Sectoral Developments

Developments in the construction sector

The Construction Industry Committee (CIC) brings together the five affiliated unions representing workers in the construction sector. The CIC is recognised by the main employer organisation the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) for collective bargaining purposes.



Construction Industry Committee Chair, Andy Smith (BATU) & Secretary, Andrew McGuinness (SIPTU) with Alison Gilliland (CWHT).



Congress, PDFORRA, RACO & EUROMIL before the Oireachtas Committee on Defence on the Bill.

Date	Pay adjustment
1/1/2024	2.25% of annualised pay or €1,125 whichever is greater.
1/6/2024	1% of annualised pay.
1/10/2024	1% of annualised pay or €500 whichever is greater
1/3/2025	2% of annualised pay or €1000 whichever is greater
1/8/2025	1% of annualised pay
1/2/2026	1% of annualised pay or €500 whichever is greater
1/6/2026	1%

Since 2016 the minimum rates of pay, pension, and sick pay for workers in construction have been determined through Sectoral Employment Orders (SEO). There have been five SEOs in the construction sector to date. In terms of pay, the SEO's have provided for the following increases in pay.

While the SEOs are a very important instrument in setting certain minimum terms and conditions of employment, matters not covered by the SEO are bargained through the National Joint Industrial Council (NJIC). In the period under review, significant improvements were negotiated through the NJIC to the industry sick pay. At the time of writing, the NJIC are examining union proposals around the operation of the SEOs with a view to making recommendations to government for amendments to the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015.

In March 2024, the CIC together with the CIF and the Construction Workers Health Trust (CWHT) launched the Clean Air Site Campaign.

In January 2024, Alison Gilliland was appointed as general manager of the CWHT and the Construction Workers Benevolent Fund.

The officers of the CIC are Andy Smith, BATU (Chair), Andrew McGuinness, SIPTU (Secretary) and Barry Murphy, OPATSI (Vice Chair).

Developments in the community and voluntary sector

There has been a concerted campaign by unions in the community and voluntary sector to create a sustainable and durable system of pay determination for workers in the sector. In October 2023, a pay agreement was reached that provided pay increases totalling 8% over 12 months as follows:

Date	Pay adjustment
April 2023	3%
November 2023	2%
March 2024	3%

The October 2023 agreement provided that the parties would reconvene in 2024 to agree further pay adjustments. At the time of writing, further pay proposals have been negotiated that provided for a pay increase of 9.25% over 2 years as follows:

Date	Pay adjustment
October 2024	2.25%
April 2025	1%
November 2025	1%
April 2026	1%
October 2026	1%

The proposals also contain a commitment to link the workers in the sector to future public sector pay agreements. Following ballots of members, the proposals were accepted and implementation is now underway.

Developments in the aviation sector

Congress continues to assist unions in the aviation sector in the co-ordination of collective bargaining. In the period under review, new multi-year pay agreements were concluded in both the Dublin Airport Authority and Aer Lingus.

There was industrial action and a strike involving pilots in Aer Lingus in 2024 who are members of Fórsa. The dispute concerned pay for pilots. The dispute was settled following the intervention of the Labour Court which issued a recommendation that was accepted by both Fórsa members and Aer Lingus.

One of the major issues that has arisen in aviation is the application of the passenger cap regulations at Dublin Airport. Congress raised the issue of



Community and Voluntary Sector agencies campaign



IALPA strike at Aer Lingus

the likely impact of the passenger cap on job creation and job retention at Dublin Airport. Congress met with Minister James Lawless TD to discuss our concerns. At the time of writing, the issue of the passenger cap has been referred to the European Court of Justice.

Developments in apprenticeships

The Government has continued to reform the apprenticeship system. Over recent years there has been two different systems for apprenticeship training, namely the craft system and the newer consortium-based system. It is the government's stated objective to merge the two systems and discussions have been on-going through the LEEF apprenticeship sub-group. In these discussions, Congress is pressing to ensure that in a merged system unions remain centrally involved.

Congress has also been pressing to have apprentices covered by the National Minimum Wage Act.

One of the key forums for the development of policy on apprenticeships is the National Apprenticeship Alliance. Congress is represented by Paddy Kavanagh, Connect and Karan O'Loughlin, ESU on the Alliance.

Industrial disputes

The following industrial disputes were notified to Congress in the period under review:

Employment	Unions
Community & Voluntary Sector agencies	SIPTU, Fórsa, INMO
Healthcare workers	GMB, NIPSA, UNISON, UNITE, SOR, CSP, RCM
Teachers NI	INTO, NASUWT, UTU, NAHT
University sector NI	UCU, UNITE
Further education NI	UCU, NASUWT
NI civil service	NIPSA, PCS
Royal Mail	CWU
Arrabawn Co-Op	SIPTU
National Ambulance Service	SIPTU
Retained fire fighters	SIPTU
Emerald Airlines	Fórsa
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	GMB, NIPSA, UNITE, SIPTU
Education Authority NI	UNISON, GMB, NIPSA, UNITE
Vista Therm	UNITE
Water services of Local Authorities	UNITE
MEBSAC employers	UNITE
SEDA College	UNITE
Tara Mines	SIPTU, CONNECT, UNITE
Rehab Industries	SIPTU
GMC Engineering	SIPTU
National World	NUJ
Wyett Nutrition	SIPTU
Severfield	UNITE
Translink	UNITE, SIPTU, GMB
Kerry Foods	SIPTU
Seagate Derry	UNITE
Pritchett Lakelands Dairies	UNITE
Glen Dimplex	UNITE, SIPTU

BT	CWU UK
Spirit Aero Systems	UNITE, GMB
Balcas	UNITE
Aer Lingus pilots	Fórsa
University Hospital Waterford	UNITE
PSNI	NIPSA, UNITE
National Advocacy Service	SIPTU
Harland and Wolff	UNITE, GMB
Health Service ROI	Fórsa, INMO, UNITE, CONNECT, MLSA
BIMM Institute	IFUT



Health Service ROI dispute.



MEBSCA dispute.



Translink dispute.



Health services dispute.



Retained fire fighters dispute.



Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council dispute.



Community and Voluntary Sector campaign.



BIMM Institute dispute.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) continues to play a crucial role in assisting unions to resolve disputes and ensuring that workers can vindicate their employment rights. The WRC provides a range of services including conciliation, mediation, adjudication, advisory, inspection and information. The table below shows the level of activity in each category.

The WRC Board consists of two members appointed to represent the interests of workers, Ethel Buckley, SIPTU and George Maybury. David Begg, the former general secretary of Congress is the current Chair. Audrey Cahill was appointed as the new Director General in 2024 following the retirement of Liam Kelly.

Activity	2023	2024
Conciliation		
Conferences	606	657
Facilitation	84	104
Mediation		
Telephone	155	172
Face to Face	559	722
Adjudication		
Complaints	6172	7316
Hearings Held	4785	4779
Decisions	2951	2712
Advisory		
New Projects	11	17
Inspection		
Concluded	4727	5,156
Wages Recovered	€1,950,601	€2,158,870
Information		
Calls Answered	61,800	59,431
Web Visits	4,600,000	4,300,000

The Labour Court

The Labour Court is the court of last resort in industrial relations disputes and employment rights disputes. The table below provides details on the activity of the Court across the main areas of its jurisdiction in 2023 and 2024.

The current worker members of the Labour Court are Clare Tracey, Paul Bell and Teresa Hannick. Kevin Foley retired as the Chairman of the Labour Court in March 2024 and was replaced by Louise O'Donnell. Louise is a former official with Fórsa and a former member of the Executive Council.

Category	2023	2024
Industrial Relations Cases	353	234
Equality Cases	146	159
Unfair Dismissals Cases	173	135
Working Times Cases	80	123
Payment of Wages Cases	112	159
Terms of Employment - Information Cases	78	104
Transfer of Undertakings	15	21
Redundancy Payments Cases	44	38
Minimum Notice Cases	37	31
Minimum Wage Cases	6	8
Part Time Working Cases	5	1
Fixed Term Working Cases	14	28
Other Cases	78	78

Trades Councils

ROI Trades Councils

Building local trade union organisational capacity was one of the six targets for action in the *Trade Union Renewal* report adopted by BDC 2023. The others were to: roll out a generic multi-media public relations campaign (BIATU); increase resource sharing by affiliates; promote Congress policies on post COVID-19, better work and life balance, just transition and the

environment; explore further the potential of developing a Congress Digital First Media Platform; and increase collaborative cross-union organising.

A proposal on engagement with trades councils and ONE centres was considered by the Executive Council in the autumn following BDC 2023. Assessment of the outcomes of an audit of trades councils in the Republic carried out prior to BDC 2023 was deemed central to the plan to give effect to *Motion 9 - Delivering a stronger*



Anti-racism solidarity, Waterford Council of Trade Unions

movement through a programme of renewal and growth which was passed at the BDC.

That audit had identified that there were significant resource issues for many trades councils (TCs) including the absence of full-time staff support, training, financial inadequacy,

communications deficiencies between the trades councils and the Executive Council/ head office and participation deficits at local level with poor attendance by several affiliates including the larger unions.

Engagement with trades councils in the Republic was co-ordinated from the Dublin office by Eoin Ronayne until his retirement in late summer 2024, as part of his seconded role to Congress, overseeing the various elements of the *Trade Union Renewal* report, while Kevin Doherty in the Belfast office continued co-ordinating with TCs in Northern Ireland.

In the Republic, contact was made with all registered TCs to establish activity levels and assess the extent to which the outcomes of the earlier audit applied to each, either at in-person or online meetings where representatives of councils responded to the request for engagement. A successful initial all-island trades councils' seminar was held in February 2024 in Dublin focusing on the trade union renewal project, the



May Day march & rally, organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions

BIATU campaign and the role the trades council could play in it as well a presentation on the New Economic Model consultation process. Ad-hoc online meetings of the TCs in the Republic were resumed and plans were made for a media training course to be run online. Head office also engaged with a number of councils in preparing its submission to a Departmental review of the strategic policy committees (SPCs) regulations and then again in connection with nominating trades councils' representatives to the SPCs and ETBs formed after the local elections in the Republic in May 2024. Meanwhile, a number of TCs, most recently in Wexford, continued to operate effectively with several affiliated unions now providing their services to members from the same physical location giving the trade union movement public visibility to members and non-members alike.

While several TCs engaged directly and very cooperatively in meetings, to establish their current status and concerns, either in person or online, a number of councils including some larger ones, did not and it appears some have reached a worrying level of inactivity.

While there is some crossover between activists on the TCs in Cork and Galway with ONE Cork and ONE Galway, there has traditionally been a strong involvement of full-time officials with both ONE centres. Meetings were held with both ONE centres to identify, as with the TCs, the issues and requirements which needed to be addressed to sustain and rejuvenate their activity levels. Stabilising and growing ONE Cork and ONE Galway would have to precede any expansion of the centres to other locations. Both identified work pressure on full-time officials within their own trade unions as

a particular difficulty while the non-replacement of a Congress staff member assigned to co-ordinate and manage the ONE centres was highlighted as being a significant issue in sustaining ONE centres' activity levels.

A detailed report of that engagement with the active trades councils and ONE centres was presented to the Executive Council setting out their concerns, needs, proposed solutions and requests for supports. A comprehensive workplan was proposed which included targeted actions to address the commitments in Motion 9 from BDC 2023. Critical to a successful implementation would be the allocation by affiliates of full-time officials, as part of their core responsibilities, to a number of pilot trades councils where clear work programmes could be devised or are already in place. Subject to the identification of this new resource, albeit on a part-time basis, agreed local work plans would be drawn up and activated. A further proposal was the creation of an 'interim financial support fund' created through donations from affiliated unions nationally which could be allocated by the Executive Council to trades councils submitted clearly defined and attainable work plans.

Detailed consideration of the report at General Purposes Committee and the Executive Council identified serious resource concerns within Congress Head Office and among affiliated trade unions as an impediment to the roll out of the proposed workplan. It was agreed to defer further action pending the appointment of a new Congress official who would be assigned this area of responsibility as part of the new post's job description.

NI Trades Councils

Currently, there are active trades councils (TCs) in Ballymena and Antrim, Belfast, Craigavon, Derry, Fermanagh, Mid Ulster, North Down and Ards, and Omagh. In addition to this, Causeway TC has recently been re-established.

All TCs come together quarterly at meetings of the Trades Councils Consultative Committee (TCCC) to share information and initiatives and to develop and coordinate joint campaigns.

All TCs were involved in supporting or organising rallies for the generalised day of strike action across Northern Ireland in January 2024. Some of the other activities local TCs have been involved in include:

Ballymena and Antrim Trades Council (B&ATC) have lobbied Mid & East Antrim Borough Council on employment opportunities and the impact of high rates levels.

Belfast and District Trade Council (B&DTC) and Community Arts Partnership, supported by Belfast City Council, ran a successful May Day community festival after the march



Belfast & District Trades Union Council, May Day.

and rally, to involve families, BME and other communities in May Day. They have also been engaged in a range of anti-war events including in solidarity with Palestinians and the Sudanese people. B&DTC were involved in the anti-far right protests in Belfast and held a public meeting on how to combat the far-right.

Craigavon & District Trades Council (C&DTC) worked with Palestinian solidarity groups to run a number of events in their area. C&DTC supported unions engaged in industrial action including Vista Therm. They are also involved in Save Craigavon Lakes and Save the Lough campaigns. C&DTC worked with Lurgan Heritage Project to produce a video to mark the death of Spanish Civil War and WWII veteran Jim Haughey

Derry Trades Council (DTC) run the Worker's Rights and Social Justice Week of events with Derry City and Strabane District Council, alongside the May Day march and rally each year in Derry City. They also organised a number of historical and cultural



Anti-racism solidarity, Fermanagh Council of Trade Unions.

events as part of the week. They have also held protests against racism and against the slaughter in Palestine.

Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions (FCTU) supported CWU in their campaign to save the BT/EE call centre. FCTU also support the campaign for the restoration of services in the Southwest Area Hospital. FCTU also continue to run events to mark Workers Memorial Day.

Mid Ulster Trades Council ran protests and a public meeting on the situation in Palestine.

North Down and Ards Trades Council (ND&ATC) have been working with a Bangor based charity that fights food poverty across the borough. ND&ATC engaged with ethnic minority support groups and local media in response to Far-Right protests outside a hotel where asylum seekers are being housed.

Omagh Trades Council (OTC) organise an annual event to mark Workers Memorial Day. OTC held a well-attended protest in response to the shooting of a PSNI officer in Omagh.

To maintain and develop the work of trade's councils, the TCCC appeals to unions to ensure that they affiliate to and encourage their members and activists to engage with the trade's councils in their local areas.

The Work of Sector Groups

Higher and Further Education Sector Group

Over the past two years, the Higher and Further Education Unions Group has remained committed to advocating for its members and ensuring

representation in key discussions concerning higher education policy and funding. The group, comprising of six unions—SIPTU, UNITE, FORSA, TUI, Connect, and IFUT—continues to meet formally three times a year, supplemented by additional meetings on an ad hoc basis. This structured approach has allowed the group to respond swiftly to emerging issues and maintain a coordinated strategy.

A significant achievement of the group has been leveraging its 'Group Status' to gain formal recognition and establish a productive dialogue with the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Through collective pressure, the unions have amplified their voice and influence, ensuring that critical issues affecting workers in higher education are raised at the highest levels.

Despite these successes, the absence of genuine sectoral engagement across the higher education sector remains a persistent challenge. As outlined in the Congress 2020 publication *The Case for a Publicly Funded Higher Education Sector*, this lack of coordinated sector-wide dialogue continues to be a focal point of the group's advocacy efforts.

Retail Sector Group

The Retail Sector Group has been campaigning in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland for action to address the issues that affect the retail sector and those working in it. The objective of the group is to ensure a more uniform and coherent approach across the island of Ireland in dealing with the national and international corporate labour/ social strategies of the major multi-national retailers.

The Irish government has established a stakeholder forum for the sector. The Retail Forum is tasked with making recommendations to the government on actions to make the retail more sustainable and protect jobs. Gerry Light represents Congress on the forum.

At the time of writing, efforts have been made to persuade the devolved government in Northern Ireland to establish a similar forum.

Energy Sector Group

The Energy Sector Group continues to provide important input into the development of Congress policy.

In the period under review, the group undertook to review and update of Congress energy policy with a specific focus on energy costs and supply dependency. The subsequent *A Brighter Future* publication was launched at the SIPTU TEAC divisional conference. It points to the failings of the current system and makes a number of recommendations, including:

- Bringing the State back into having a bigger role;
- Establishing an independent, expert group to look at our future energy supply;
- A Citizen's Assembly to inform the vision of the sector.

The Work of Committees

Health & Safety Committee

The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) is reconstituted after every Congress Biennial Delegate Conference and following its reconstitution in 2023 the following were elected as officers of the Committee – Chairperson, Pat Kenny (CWU); Vice Chairperson, Lynn Coffey (Fórsa) and Frank Barry (UNITE); Secretary, Conor McDonald (ASTI).

The Committee works through sub-committees and has formed the following sub committees:

- Strategy
- Safety Reps
- Mental Health
- Bullying
- Legislation
- Workers Memorial Day

In Ireland in the ten-year period between 2015 and 2024, 446 people died in work-related incidents and many thousands more were severely injured or made ill. In 2024 alone, 33 people died in work-related incidents.

Stress and mental illness continue to be major workplace risks as well as issues such as serious Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) and far too many unnecessary accidents.



A Brighter Future, November 2024

The development of the role of the safety representative continues to be a priority for the Committee. Congress welcomes the continued focus on safety representatives by the Health and Safety Authority which is, in conjunction with members of the Committee, continually developing the supports available to safety representatives.

This culminated in the safety representatives conference which was held in Dublin Castle in November 2024. HSC Chairperson, Pat Kenny and HSC member and HSA board member, Dave Hughes spoke at the conference.

This conference highlighted the great work undertaken by safety reps and heard that worker participation is the key to safe and healthy workplaces and those organisations with active safety representatives tend to be safer and healthier for everyone.

Representation: Congress, through the HSC, has representation on a number of important bodies. The board of the Health and Safety Authority is appointed every three years by the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and comprises representatives from employer and employees' organisations in addition to five nominees from the Minister. Board members serve a three-year term. Congress is represented by David Hughes (INMO), Michelle Quinn (SIPTU) and Deirdre McDonald (ASTI).

During this period and after extensive lobbying by Congress, Congress was granted 4 seats on a newly established HSA advisory group. The **Health and Social Services Advisory Committee** (HSCAC) includes Congress reps Phil Ní Sheaghdha (INMO), Linda Kelly (Fórsa),

Kevin Figgis, (SIPTU) and Clare Moore (Congress). The HSCAC is jointly chaired by Dave Hughes and Terry O'Niaidh. The HSCAC is an advisory committee to the board of the Health and Safety Authority and has been established to provide a forum for key stakeholders to advise and support the Authority in promoting best practice in occupational health and safety in the sector.

The Advisory Committee for Safety & Health (ACSH) is a tripartite body based in Luxembourg which advises the European Commission on OSH matters and assists with the preparation, implementation and evaluation of activities in the field of safety and health. The Congress representative is Sylvester Cronin (SIPTU).

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (Bilbao) was set up by them to provide the Community bodies, the member states and those involved in the field, with technical, scientific and economic information of use in the field of safety and health at work. The Congress representative is Dessie Robinson (Fórsa).

Frank Vaughan represented Congress on the Health & Safety Committee of the ETUC during this period.

Activities: Marking International Women's Day 2025, trade unionists from North and South gathered in Dublin on 2nd March to examine the issues facing women in relation to workplace health and safety.

The seminar *One size does not fit all* heard about issues as diverse as accessing basic toilet and hygiene facilities on construction sites, to the paucity in research on women's occupational health.

Congress Vice President Katie Morgan chaired the session and praised trade unions for pioneering work in building menopause and reproductive health awareness. SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley introduced a panel discussion which also focussed on stress and psychosocial risk, noting that women are not only exposed to risk in the workplace but frequently return home to additional caring burdens.

Carol Scheffer, CWU official and President of UNI Global Women's Committee outlined cross sectoral measures to tackle violence and harassment in the world of work. UNITE representative Maggie Kobik spoke about the challenges facing women on construction sites including lack of access to basic toilet and hygiene facilities. The seminar was also addressed by members of the Congress Health and Safety Committee including Karen Eccles (INMO) and Deirdre McDonald (ASTI) as well as a representative from the Health and Safety Authority and the Shelly Asquith from the TUC.



Congress Vice President, Katie Morgan.



One size does not fit all seminar, delegates



One size does not fit all seminar, speakers.



One size does not fit all seminar, panel.

As well as the key event to mark Workers Memorial Day in April 2024 and 2025, the Committee worked with the Health and Safety Authority to ensure that the Safety Reps Handbook was updated and highlighted at BDC in 2023.

We also promoted the proposal from the ETUC on a Zero Deaths campaign theme for Workers Memorial Day and have continued to lobby the DETE to seek support for this important campaign.

Work Positive: Building on the Executive Council motion which was passed at the BDC in 2023, the Committee continued to promote the issue of managing stress for trade unions as employers.

A key focus in the motion was the use of the **Work Positive** toolkit which is available to use free of charge from the Health and Safety Authority. Work Positive is a State and stakeholder supported psychosocial risk management process that helps organisations identify ways to improve employee wellbeing.

In 2024, Congress took the lead and used Work Positive as a tool to survey wellbeing within the Congress staff. The Committee welcomed this move and hopes that other unions will follow suit and see this as a positive and needed resource.

Workers Memorial Day 2024 and 2025: Workers Memorial Day is a major event in the trade union calendar and is also a major event for the Health and Safety Authority.

The Committee again took the lead in organising the event in 2024 and 2025, working collaboratively with the Health and Safety Authority as well as with IBEC and the Construction Industry Federation.

The Garden of Remembrance has become the natural home for this solemn, reflective yet ultimately uplifting event and in 2024 Congress Vice President Phil Ni Sheaghdha led the proceedings. Congress General Secretary Owen Reidy addressed an audience of nearly 200 people and was joined by Minister of State Emer Higgins and Health and Safety Authority CEO Conor O'Brien. Beautiful and moving music was played by the Communication Workers Union band.

Workers Memorial Day 2025 took place on Monday 28th April when Congress General Secretary Owen Reidy and HSA CEO Conor O'Brien laid a wreath along with Minister for State Neale Richmond at the Garden of Remembrance.



Workers Memorial Day 2024.

Workers' Memorial Day, 2024





Chairs Maxine Murphy Higgins & Margaret Coughlan welcome the Mayor & President to conference.

ROI Women's Committee

The Women's Committee officers for the period were Chair, Margaret Coughlan (Bray Trades Council); Vice Chair, Lynda Scully (SIPTU), and Secretary, Moira Leydon (ASTI).

As well as all the regular events including conferences, seminars and the Women's Council of the Isles, agenda items for the Committee included:

Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV): November 2023 saw the introduction of paid domestic violence leave. Trade unions have been raising awareness of domestic violence as a workers' issue for many years and have successfully negotiated paid leave at the enterprise level. Congress also participated in Women's Aid 50th anniversary conference and published a blog for the 16-days campaign. We also met with CUAN - the new DSGBV agency regarding potential partnerships in tackling violence against

women. We are working in partnership with the White Ribbon Project on a course to develop workplaces free from DSGBV.

Referenda: Following a constructive engagement with Minister Roderic O'Gorman, the Executive Council agreed to support a YES YES vote in the February 2024 referenda. There was a robust exchange with the Minister on the failure to follow the advice of both the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality to include both care within the home and the wider community. Unions felt that this was a lost opportunity for the value of care in all its forms, the vast majority of which is provided by women, to be reflected in our constitution. Both referenda were defeated.

Stop the Stigma: Congress worked closely with Fórsa, FSU, CWU, INMO, INTO, SIPTU, UNITE, and ESU calling

for employers and Government to implement mandatory workplace menstrual and menopausal policies. 'Stop the Stigma' launched its position paper in Leinster House in October 2023 which includes extensive research and a draft policy of recommended workplace policies in relation to menstruation and menopause.

Gender Pay Gap and Pay Transparency Directive: Our ability to assess the impact of gender pay gap reporting has been greatly hampered by the lack of a central portal for companies to upload their results. Government has indicated that a portal will be ready for reporting companies by the end of 2025. This year also sees the extension of the legal obligation to report on the gender pay gap to every organisation in Ireland with over 50 employees. The Department estimates that a total of 6,000 organisations will be required to report their gender pay data to the new portal. Congress continues to work closely with the ETUC to seek effective transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive and has submitted detailed

views to the Department in that regard. We also continue to be an active member of the ILO's Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) and spoke at their annual meetings in Geneva in October 2023 and in Paris December 2024.

Public childcare services: The Committee met with the National Women's Council of Ireland in Summer 2024 in order to strengthen ties and subsequently participated in the launch of the Alliance for Public Early Education and Care in September 2024.

Fertility treatment leave and early miscarriage leave: the INTO kept the Committee briefed on their campaign for legislation that would make provision for paid statutory leave for the purpose of early pregnancy leave and fertility leave. We are planning a cross-union campaign on this topic to urge the Government to introduce this much needed legislation.

National strategy for women and girls: Congress and affiliates continue to engage with Government on the development of a new national strategy and will seek to develop all of this work through submissions on same.

NI Women's Committee

The Women's Committee officers for the period were Chair, Maxine Murphy Higgins (NASUWT) (until January 2025 and thereafter Secretary); Vice Chair, Tina Creaney (NIPSA) (until January 2025 and thereafter Chair); Vice Chair, Una O'Farrell (PDA) (from January 2025, and Secretary, Eileen Gorman (FSU) (Retired in 2024).



Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Jilan Abdalmajid at Women's Committee conference.



Women's Committee conference.



Women's Committee conference.

The Women's Committee work included:

National Women's Conference: The Women's Committee worked together to organise the National Women's Conference in 2024 in Athlone, the theme was *Valuing Care in all its forms - a prerequisite for a sustainable economy*.

The Conference was honoured to receive the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid. The Ambassador gave a moving speech highlighting the plight of women and children in Palestine and thanked the trade union movement for their support and solidarity. The Ambassador received a standing ovation of several minutes.

The Women's Committee also organised a women's seminar in the Fairways Hotel in March 2025. The seminar focused on themes of tackling the far right and the connections between misogyny, racism and other forms of discrimination.

Women's Council of the Isles: The 2023 WCol took place in Llandudno, Wales hosted by the Wales TUC Women's Committee.

The Wcol took place in Derry in 2025. Despite difficulties experienced due to a red weather warning, the meeting heard from each of the Committees on topics as diverse as dealing with miscarriage and tackling the far right in schools and workplaces.



NIC-ICTU Chair, Jackie White (UTU) addressing Women's Council of the Isles.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women:

Statements were issued to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November which highlighted the action being taken by trade unions in pursuing workplaces and society free from gender-based violence.

The Women's Committee supported an event organised by NASUWT focusing on 'The Bystander Approach' which included a screening of a film featuring Jackson Katz exploding myths around 'rape culture' and misogyny.

ROI Retired Workers' Committee

Following decades of dedicated service to the Retired Workers Committee, Margaret Browne (FSU) stood down as secretary due to ill health. Margaret was a committed trade unionist and champion of older people throughout her term of office. The committee wish to record their heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to Margaret.

Ann Walsh (AHCPs) was elected secretary, and Jimmy Whelan (Unite) was re-elected as chair at the first meeting of the reconstituted committee in October 2023.

One of the first actions of the committee was to write to the chair

of the Public Sector Committee, Kevin Callinan (Fórsa) in relation to pension increase policy ahead of the public sector pay talks. The committee wish to record their appreciation of the Congress negotiating team for maintaining parity between the pay of serving staff and pensions for the duration of the current pay agreement.

At their last meeting of 2023, the committee was joined by Padraig Peyton, president of SIPTU's retired members' section and Michael Taft, SIPTU economist for an update on their pension promise campaign. The committee voted unanimously to support SIPTU's campaign.

Our annual North-South age seminar returned to Wexford in 2024, with the ROI committee taking the lead on planning and hosting retired delegates from across the island for two days. The topics covered by guest speakers ranged from the invisible work of family carers to the impact of car-free zones in town centres on older people and others with limited mobility to the work of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament. In April 2025 the Northern Ireland committee hosted for two days in Newry.

The secretary represented the committee at the Department of Social Protection pre-budget forum in Dublin Castle in July 2024, which was attended by the Minister and her senior officials. In preparation, the committee agreed their budget priorities and prepared a pre-budget submission.

One positive to come from Budget 2025 was a relaxing of the qualifying rules for Fuel Allowance for pensioners. The committee undertook an awareness raising campaign, designing an information



Retired Workers Committees Chairs, ROI Jimmy Whelan (Unite) and NI Margaret Galloway (PCS).

leaflet that explained the rule changes and application process, to encourage take-up of this payment towards the cost of heating a home during the winter months. Their leaflet was published in Congress affiliated unions' publications and shared with the committee's own network of groups.

The committee also made a comprehensive submission to a public consultation on health care and social care services and supports for older people. The submission focused on out-of-pocket costs for older people not covered by the medical card or a GP visit card schemes (if under 70); the delay in delivering on a commitment to establish a statutory right to home-help; and the impact of the recruitment moratorium on lengthening waiting lists, patient safety and quality of life. -

The committee sent a letter of solidarity to the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, and a letter of congratulations to the newly appointed Minister for older people, Kieran O'Donnell TD. They receive a warm reply back from both.

The committee wish to record their appreciation of Jimmy Whelan (Unite) for his chairmanship, Ann Walsh (AHCPS) for secretarial support, and Natalie Higgins (general secretary office) for her assistance over 2023 - 2025.

NI Retired Workers' Committee

The Retired Workers' Committee (RWC) continues to forge ahead with an ambitious agenda under the chair of Margaret Galloway (PCS), and its Vice Chair Hugh Rafferty (Unite). The committee was reconstituted in January 2025, with the chair being



Retired Workers Committee seminar.

re-elected and a new Vice Chair, Archie Thompson (Unison).

Two age seminars were held in joint session with the RoI RWC in March 2024 in Wexford and April 2025 in Newry, with the NI committee taking the lead for planning and hosting retired delegates from across the island in 2025. The seminar heard from engaging speakers from the NI Commissioner for Older People, National Pensioners Convention, Age NI and members from Unite's retired section. Our guest of honour at the seminar dinner was the outgoing NI Commissioner for Older People, Eddie Lynch, which gave delegates an opportunity to thank him for his support and friendship over his two terms.

Members of the RWC are active in the retired sections of their own affiliates, and also with the All-Party Group on Ageing and Older People and its chair Claire Sugden MLA. Age NI hosted in 2024 a pensioners' parliament in the NI Assembly chamber with age groups (including trade unions) discussing pressing issues such as fuel poverty and services for older people.

RWC members were also active in a campaign to preserve the great universal



Retired Workers Committee seminar.



Retired Workers Committee seminar.



Retired Workers Committee seminar.

service of the concession pass for over 60s, which was threatened in the wave of proposed cuts which came from every devolved department under the period of suspension. Congress affiliates informed its response, which was supported by street demonstrations outside the Department of Infrastructure. Congress policy since 2019 has been to extend free public transport to everyone (now a trend across many cities in Europe). The 2019 motion from the PCS trade union and voted by conference overwhelmingly in favour stated:

"Fully funded, free public transport, provided by the public sector would remove the significant barriers to social and economic inclusion of the island's citizens from the elderly to the young, those in rural areas to cities. It will provide secure employment. It will connect communities. It will help create a greener environment and tackle climate change."

Margaret Galloway attended and addressed the BDC in Kilkenny in 2023 on a motion from the Executive Council on behalf of retired members. The motion called for action in both jurisdictions on the rising cost of living. The conference endorsed the motion's call for authorities in both jurisdictions to make permanent State support for household energy bills and make it easier and more affordable for older homeowners to undertake home energy upgrades, as well as to copper fasten gains in State Pensions and secondary benefits made in recent years, such as the UK's pension triple-lock.

A motion from Fermanagh Trades Council (FTC) on participation of retired workers in the decision-making process of Congress was remitted for further discussion which took place in 2024 and involved the general secretary, assistant general secretary, president

and officers from FTC and both RWCs. The outcome of the discussions was endorsed by the Executive Council.

Youth Committee

The Youth Committee continues to



Youth Committee Chair, Ronan Sharkey (NASUWT).

play a pivotal role in representing young members across the trade union movement, championing their voices, and driving initiatives that reflect their concerns and aspirations. Chaired by Ronan Sharkey (NASUWT), the committee has seen tremendous growth and increased influence over the past two years.

The committee has been active in ensuring youth representation at various levels of the trade union movement. From July 2023 - July 2024, Ronan was the nominated Youth Committee Observer on the NIC and ETUC Youth Committee representative, participating in meetings and events in Brussels and Bilbao. Michael Kerrigan (Fórsa) is the Youth Committee Observer on the Congress Executive Council and was nominated to the ETUC Youth Committee in 2024.

The Vice Chair, Maeve Richardson (SIPTU), led key projects, most notably the design and implementation of

the *Your Rights at Work Guide*, a crucial resource that equips young workers with essential knowledge of their rights. Maeve also represented the committee at the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI).

The committee represented Ireland's young trade union members in Europe and joined delegations with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to Berlin and Dusseldorf. Hollie Greg (CWU) joined the FES British-German Trade Union Youth Forum delegation of young trade unionists from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to Dusseldorf to discuss critical issues such as the fossil-fuel phase-out, structural change in heavy industries and the fight against the far-right. Maeve Richardson (SIPTU) joined the FES delegation to Berlin to meet with DGB youth, Jusos (SPD Youth) to visit the Bundestag to discuss a wide range of youth issues including the climate crisis and Palestine.



In March 2025, Michael Kerrigan (Fórsa), John Lawler (ESU) and James Joy (Fórsa) joined the Congress European officer and EPSU in a delegation to Brussels to meet with the ETUC to discuss the Traineeship Directive, proposed by

the European Commission. The Traineeship Directive aims to improve working conditions for trainees. However, the ETUC warns that the directive's current scope is too narrow, potentially leaving trainees without adequate protections, particularly those in unclear employment situations. To be effective, the directive must include:

- Clear standards on fair pay linked to minimum wage requirements.
- Stronger action against abusive or fake traineeships.
- Better resources for labour inspectors to enforce the rules effectively.
- Guarantees that it does not weaken existing national protections or create a new worker category that undermines trainees' rights.

The following day the delegation met with Irish MEPs at the European Parliament to highlight the realities faced by young Irish workers and to stress the importance of a strong Traineeship Directive that safeguards young people across Europe. MEPs from the European People's Party (EPP), Renew Europe, Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the Left, expressed strong support for an ambitious directive and committed to ongoing engagement with young trade unionists on this and other key policy issues.

Another key focus for the committee has been increasing youth engagement in trades councils and reinforcing the voice of young members in decision-making spaces. Given the decline in young trade union membership in recent years, recruitment remains a priority in the committee's work. The committee actively participated in the *Better in a Trade Union* campaign, advocating the benefits of union



Youth Committee delegation meeting with MEPs.

membership to younger workers.

The committee members maintained a high attendance record at various rallies, demonstrations and events. The committee was also active in support of various industrial disputes. In addition, the Youth Committee engaged with the Congress Anti-Racist Workplaces Project, Trade Union Friends of Palestine, Irish Second Level Students Union (ISSU), National Youth Council of Ireland and the National Union of Students NI (NUS USI) supporting various solidarity actions, rallies and campaigns.

As a result of these efforts, the profile of the Youth Committee has risen significantly, with membership growing to an impressive 22 young workers. The committee remains dedicated to empowering the next generation of trade union leaders, ensuring that the interests of young workers are well-represented and championed.

Disability Committee

The Disability Committee, chaired by Michelle Quinn (SIPTU), met during the period and worked on the development of a neurodiversity guide published on the international day for people with disability 2024. We also made a submission to the Department of Social Protection on proposed revisions of disability payments.

Our Congress Equality officer participated with a wide range of stakeholders in the AHEAD Inclusive Employer Framework Core Advisory Group. The framework will be launched in Autumn 2025.

Unfortunately, progress on the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024 (CES) was non-existent during the period. Congress used the opportunity of the report submitted by Government in relation to ILO Convention 159 to express its frustration at the delays and submitted detailed views on this.

We also participated in the NDA consultation in relation to their final review of the strategy. This has since been published and offers an in-depth analysis of Ireland's efforts to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities over the past decade. The report concludes that significant challenges remain, as evidenced by the persistent disability employment gap and the continuing fragmentation in and inflexibility of support services frequently described

by disabled people when consulted. Congress will engage with government on the new National Disability Strategy, which will contain an employment pillar and must address the issues identified in the NDA report.

Global Solidarity Committee



Global Solidarity Committee Chair, Ann Piggott (ASTI).

The Global Solidarity Committee met regularly and held two annual summer schools in Armagh (2023) and Limerick (2024). These were well attended and discussed a wide range of global solidarity related topics.

The Committee adopted a programme of work with a number of standing items on the agenda at each meeting, including:

- **Palestine:** the committee fed into all of the work reported under Global Solidarity p.120 and mobilised within their own unions and workplaces for actions in solidarity with Palestine, including the Trade Union Day of Action held across the country on 1 October 2024.
- Tackling the far-right / anti-racism.



Neurodiversity Guide, December 2024.



Committee, Vice President Phil Ni Sheaghda & Kevin Callinan (Fórsa) meeting with Senator Black.

- Educational element integrated into many meetings including a session on the Julian Assange case, and Walaa Sabah of We Are Not Numbers story telling initiative in Palestine, the situation in Colombia from Justice for Colombia and an intervention from Todd Brogan ITUC on their democracy campaign.
- **ILO:** The Congress equality officer kept the committee abreast of ILO developments and his participation in the International Labour Conference (reported under Global Solidarity p.120). On the third anniversary of the coup in Myanmar, Congress wrote to Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, seeking support from the government to ensure implementation of the Commission of Inquiry established in accordance with article 26 of the ILO Constitution.
- **Coalition 2030:** Committee is kept abreast of developments in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals from members of the steering group of Coalition 2030. Our Committee member Sandra Corrigan (INTO) was elected Chair of the coalition during the period and is accompanied by SIPTU's Daniel Higgins. Congress continues to participate in SDG stakeholder fora.

II. Northern Ireland Committee

The Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) has been well served by the committed and efficient leadership of Paddy Mackel (UCU), whose two-year term as NIC Chair ended in November 2024 with the NIC-ICTU BDC in L'Derry's Guildhall. The conference saw the elevation of Jacquie White (UTU) to Chair, with John-Patrick Clayton (Unison) elected Vice Chair at the first meeting of the new NIC in December.

We want to record our gratitude to those members who have stepped down after their mandate ended in November 2024; Helen Crickard, Angela Moffatt, Denise Crilly, Richard Neal, Ronan Sharkey and Jackie Pollock who retired in 2024.



NIC-ICTU Chair, Jacquie White (UTU)

Campaigning

Workers Demand (& Get) Better

At the last BDC in Kilkenny, Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy addressed delegates, reporting the unprecedented wave of industrial action sweeping every sector of the economy and society of Northern Ireland:

"The numbers of workers in both the public and private sectors engaged in industrial action seeking fair pay, in the teeth of the worst cost of living crisis in half a century, is unprecedented in our history. Workers across the north at every level of our economy and in every sector of employment have been forced to take industrial action."

The blame for the crisis was firmly aimed at the then Conservative government in Westminster and its Secretary of State, Chris Heaton-Harris, who throughout over two years of industrial turmoil refused to meet the NIC-ICTU leadership.

A core demand of the unions was to remove the Tory blockage and see a return of the devolved institutions at Stormont, and with a better financial deal which could begin to address the damage of 14 years of austerity and a hard Brexit. But the first priority of any improved financial settlement would be a fair deal on public sector pay.

The delivery system for those demands was the strategy launched in late 2022 by the then AGS, Owen

Day of strike action, 18 January 2024



Reidy, *Workers Demand Better*. In Armagh later that summer of 2023, trade union leaders met to discuss the ongoing squeeze and develop a shared strategy of lobbying and industrial action.

In September, the unions launched *Smart Money: Better Options for NI's Public Finances*, detailed proposals which were summarised into four steps: Drop the debt; A mechanism for real transformation of public services; Replace the Barnett Formula; Tax changes made at Westminster.

Smart Money was extensively promoted to politicians and media commentators and received widespread praise for its clear and realistic analysis and proposals. In particular, many NI political parties utilised arguments in the document as they engaged in talks aimed at restoring the institutions at Stormont. The real

target for change was the Secretary of State, and Gerry Murphy did not mince his words:

"There must be no more quick fixes. We propose instead a new transformation fund for the type of reforms required for our NHS and other public services. This would be separate from the block grant and would involve Stormont departments submitting bids for specific reform projects to HM Treasury. Therefore, this avoids making the same mistakes of previous deals where funding for long term problems was granted on a short-term basis.

"In the medium term, NI should have a funding settlement established on a needs-based system that ensures public services match those available elsewhere in the UK.

"The part Westminster can play is outlined in ICTU's 2020 *No Going Back* report which highlighted the fact there are significant areas of UK under-taxation. Closing these gaps would potentially make available significant amounts of money for investment in public services".

There was another strike rally on 22 September, featuring health workers, FE lecturers, journalists and civil servants who were undertaking strike action. Unions represented included NIPSA, NUJ, Unite, Unison, GMB, UCU, RCM, SoR, and CSP.

In November union leaders met and agreed a strategy which would see a series of public events and interventions, alongside developing industrial action which was emerging from every



Smart Money policy paper, Sept 2023.

corner of the public sector. In December, as political talks at Hillsborough Castle, the UK government made an offer of a 'package'. Our AGS responded: "It is clear that the financial offer being made by the UK government falls well short of what is required".

Later in December came the announcement of 18 January 2024 strikes. Gerry Murphy said:

"Workers in Northern Ireland cannot be held hostage by this process any longer. The Secretary of State has accepted that public sector pay needs to be settled and has admitted that he has the money to settle it. A worker's pay is not some bauble to be dangled in a political negotiation. This money must be made available to settle these disputes now.

"In the absence of any movement on these issues, trade unions in Northern Ireland have no option but to intensify our programme of industrial action. The next step will be generalised day of action on 18 January bringing together all workers currently in dispute".

As January began the Secretary of State remained unwilling to even speak to the trade union leadership. Our offer of talks went unacknowledged. On the eve of the strikes, the head of the NI Civil Service Jayne Brady called for funds to be released for pay to stop the strike action being pursued and said "there is an urgent need to provide an immediate budget allocation." This was also by this stage the position of every NI political party. The trade union movement had won the popular argument.

That 18 January's strikes and rallies were demonstrations of industrial and public solidarity on a scale never seen before in NI. Each industrial dispute had been mandated by the votes of trade union members. Every stage of this campaign for fair pay and better budgets from accountable local political institutions, had the input of small and large trade unions. Unions worked with every political party to ensure that our message was clearly understood and our economic analysis appreciated by all sides.

Within days, the money had been unlocked and the locally accountable parties had resolved remaining issues sufficiently to return to the NI Executive. Devolution had been restored with a financial package sufficient to settle pay claims across the entire public sector.

Speaking after a meeting with the new NI Minister for Finance Caoimhe Archibald on 5 February, Mr. Murphy added:

"The Minister made clear to us that public sector pay was an immediate priority for her and her department. We welcome the Minister's commitment to settle these disputes as quickly and comprehensively as possible. The NIC-ICTU stands united and firm in our collective industrial action. That action has successfully brought us to the point where we can resolve these issues".

On 15 February, the Minister for Finance announced that an allocation of £685m had been made available to departments to allow them to begin pay negotiations with public sector trade unions. The largest wave of industrial

action in the history of NI ended with the vindication of trade union policy positions for the previous half-decade.

Public Engagement & Organisation

The next challenge was for the trade union movement to be recognised appropriately as the largest civil society organisation in Northern Ireland. Congress has engaged with elected representatives at all levels, from local councils to the NI Assembly, the Executive, the Oireachtas and Westminster, in the many forums set up to address the economic and social policy issues, including lobbying political parties on protecting jobs and workers' rights.

The Labour Relations Agency (LRA) roundtable continued to meet. The purpose of this body is to bring together representatives of workers and employers, including the CBI, Chambers and FSB, to discuss important employment related matters. Separately, NIC-ICTU co-ordinates the trade union side of the Collective Consultation Working Group (CCWG), which is a regular engagement forum with employers supervising the changes to, and impact on members of, public sector pensions.



Launch of Democracy at Work.



Launch of Democracy at Work.

In March 2024, NIC-ICTU launched a new document in the Long Gallery at Parliament Buildings, with Conor Murphy MLA, Minister for the Economy. *Democracy at Work Social Dialogue and the Tripartite Model*. The aims of the policy paper can be summarised with these three objectives:

- Introduce the case for a social dialogue model including trade unions as equal partners, common among administrations across Europe and in these islands.
- To recall that a form of social dialogue, the 'tripartite model', served us all well at an earlier time of crisis, during the 'troubles' and the more recent Covid pandemic. However, that inclusive model has gradually eroded with trade unions pushed to the sidelines.
- To highlight the undermining of the tripartite model on crucial non-departmental public bodies, such as the HSENI, and Tribunals.

Trade unions saw this event as the initial honouring of a pledge made in late 2019 in the New Decade New Approach agreement, which committed to:

“creating good jobs and protecting workers’ rights... where workers have a voice that provides a level of autonomy, a decent income, security of tenure, satisfying work in the right quantities and decent working conditions...”

As well as this, NIC-ICTU facilitated meetings between relevant ministers and trade unions in order to negotiate settlements to the wide range of disputes, with most being promptly resolved. A key meeting was held with the Finance Minister, Caoimhe Archibald in May with all of the unions representing public sector workers who had taken industrial action.



Launch of Democracy at Work.

There were further positive developments in early summer when a UK general election was called, with the promise of changed circumstances across the UK as well as locally. The NIC discussed and agreed that certain policy areas needed to be highlighted to assist with the serious public conversation during the election period:

- Completing B/GFA & honoring commitment to Bill of Rights.
- Scrapping the Legacy Act and

return to principles of Stormont House agreement.

- Action on climate change and a Just Transition to Net Zero.
- Improved relations with EU.

After Labour’s comprehensive election victory, Gerry Murphy said he “looks forward to full engagement” with the new NI Secretary of State, Hilary Benn and his Minister of State, Fleur Anderson both of whom NIC-ICTU had worked with while in opposition. There has been regular engagement with the Northern Ireland Office on non-devolved matters since July 2024, with the trade union movement utilising the goodwill of the new UK government to make its case for a better fiscal deal for NI, as well as the unfinished business of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The opportunity to highlight concerns about the accelerated crisis in Palestine was regularly exercised.

New Employment Bill

In July 2024, the Department for the Economy opened a public consultation with proposals to update and substantially improve workers’ rights in Northern Ireland. NIC-ICTU has been lobbying for such legislation since the *Better Work Better Lives* campaign and has been engaged in negotiations with political parties, government officials and other interested groups, such as members of the Labour Relations Agency’s Stakeholder Forum.

Key for Minister Conor Murphy is what he calls his *Good Jobs Agenda*. The four aspects of a good job, as defined by the Carnegie Framework are: terms of employment; pay and benefits; voice and representation; and a healthy work-life balance.

Below are what NIC-ICTU, after detailed work with employment law experts and practitioners across our movement, define as the key aspects of this new legislation:

- Promotion by NI Executive departments and statutory agencies of collective bargaining.
- Access for workers to join trade unions and a right of access for a trade union representative to access a workplace.
- Simplification of the process of have a trade union recognised to represent workers in a workplace.
- Protections for trade union representatives including the right to take official industrial action free from the fear of dismissal or victimisation.
- Statutory rights for trade union equalities representatives.
- Electronic ballots for union elections and industrial action.
- A single employment status category of 'worker' with the same floor of employment rights and protections currently enjoyed by those designated as employees from day one.
- A right to seek flexible working arrangements.
- Replacing zero-hours contracts by requiring employers to provide guaranteed contractual hours per week.
- Clearer employment contracts and itemised payslips.
- Public procurement to improve employment models.
- Preventing fire & re-hire.
- Reform of employment tribunals.
- A new single enforcement body to transform the fragmented labour

enforcement system and prevent labour exploitation by providing end-to-end protection for workers.

- A comprehensive review of work life balance measures.
- Strengthened flexible leave entitlements as well as access to family leaves (maternity, paternity, parental, carers leave, bereavement leave/s).
- A right to disconnect.

After initial welcomes from all political parties, all of whom were lobbied at Stormont and at their party conferences, a campaign of obstruction by some business groups began to sow doubts in some political support. In order to challenge a series of assertions about the content of the bill and the process of consultation, a NIC-ICTU delegation gave detailed evidence in February 2025 to the NI Assembly Economy Committee:

"The consultation on the proposed Good Jobs Bill contains 31 proposals under four themes. 19 or over 60% of these simply align Northern Ireland with Britain's standards. The remaining 12 proposals are under active consideration by the British Government also and are essential to ensure workers in Northern Ireland are not left behind again. However, parity should not be our only ambition.

"We welcome the package of proposals to be brought forward in the proposed bill and reflected in the recent consultation. We see it as a commitment to raising the minimum statutory floor of working conditions here. We support this because the evidence shows that poor quality jobs have a negative effect on workers, the

economy and society. A Good Jobs Bill will play a significant role in addressing several key economic policy issues in Northern Ireland.

“The quality of jobs also impacts on productivity, another key issue for us all. Our economy has, by any measure, underperformed over the last two decades. It needs to move toward a high-productivity model of economic development, and this is a policy goal which has a cross-party consensus.

“The evidence is clear - investing in good jobs - functions as a driver of productivity.

“Poor-quality jobs are linked to high turnover, slower innovation, and lower productivity, leading to broader societal costs, including higher healthcare expenses and lost tax revenue. Raising the minimum floor for wages and working conditions can mitigate these negative factors.

“The Good Jobs Bill will also go some way in addressing the disparities between responsible employers, who offer fair wages and decent working conditions, and those who rely on exploitative, low-cost labour models. By establishing these minimum standards, the bill will help create a fairer environment that encourages and gives cover to employers that invest in their workforce”.

Campaigning for a comprehensive new Employment Bill remains a key priority for NIC-ICTU during the remainder of the mandate of the NI Assembly, which ends in May 2027.

Equality and Human Rights

Equality & Human Rights Sub-Group (EHRSG):

The Equality and Human Rights Sub Group continues to meet with members of the NIC, equality officers from affiliated unions together with Chairs of NIC-ICTU Equality Committees.

During the period, the EHRSG engaged with the Dedicated Mechanism Unit (DMU) of the Northern Ireland Human Rights and Equality Commissions.

Senior officials of the DMU attended meetings of the NIC to give briefings on their work including in relation to Article 2 of the Northern Ireland Protocol. In March 2024, the Commissions published their advice in relation to the applicability of the EU Pay Transparency Directive to Northern Ireland.



B/GFA seminar, political panel.

25 Anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (B/GFA):

2023 marked the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the B/GFA.

To mark this anniversary, Congress organised a seminar in December 2023. The seminar brought together a range of speakers from the trade union movement, political parties and from government and the UK opposition.



B/GFA seminar, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Hilary Benn.



B/GFA seminar, Minister Norma Foley.

Congress president opened the seminar and UNISON's Patricia McKeown chaired the first session which featured a representative from all the main political parties in Northern Ireland. Speaking were Jonathan Buckley (DUP), Declan Kearney (SF), Matthew O'Toole (SDLP), Tom Elliot (UUP) and Eoin Tennyson (APNI).

Addressing strand 2 of the B/GFA, was the Minister for Education Ms Norma Foley TD with then Shadow Secretary of State Mr Hilary Benn MP representing the UK government.

Daniel Holder, Director of the Committee for the Administration of Justice represented civil society and the event heard from senior trade union leaders from across the island on the importance of the B/GFA - and most



Congress Assistant General Secretary, Gerry Murphy.

particularly the full implementation of same, including a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Strategic Equality Strategies:

The New Decade New Approach agreement promised the publication of long-awaited social inclusion equality strategies. In late 2020, the Department for Communities invited NIC-ICTU to nominate onto co design groups for the Gender Equality, Disability and Anti-Poverty Strategies. Nominations were Clare Moore (Congress), Taryn Trainor, (UNITE) and John Patrick Clayton, (UNISON). Co design groups were also established to deliver a sexual orientation strategy. We await publication of the strategies.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace:

Sexual harassment in the workplace or associated with work continues to be a significant issue for many workers, predominantly affecting women. As part of ongoing joint work, Congress has worked with the LRA to publish guidance on preventing sexual harassment.

The guidance is endorsed by Women in Business and was launched by the Minister for the Economy Conor Murphy in March 2024 as part of International Women's Day.



Eliminating Sexual Harassment from the Modern Workplace, March 2024.

Violence Against Women and Girls strategy:

Following the high profile murders of women including Sarah Everard and Ashling Murphy, the Executive Office announced the development of a an Ending Violence against Women and Girls strategy, something which the trade union movement has been calling for over many years.

Congress was pleased to note that the draft framework and action plan, which was consulted on in 2023, included among the priority actions, the establishment of a workplace working group to include trade unions and employers.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy:

Congress is represented on the current advisory group to the Domestic and Sexual Violence strategy and responded to the call for views on the new strategy.

Disability Committee: The Disability Committee officers were Chair, Lucia Collins (NIPSA); Vice Chair, Pete Brennan (SIPTU) and Secretary, Pauline Hurst (UTU).

The committee organised a well-attended seminar on mental health focusing on the HSENI's Stress Management Standards as well as the equality law issues for trade union representatives.

The committee held regular meetings which included guest speakers from Disability Action as well as the National Union for Supported Employment. Members of the committee and secretariat contributed to strategic engagement on the Department for Communities Disability Employment Strategy and members of the committee North and South attended the Harkin International Summit which was held in Belfast for the first time.



Belfast Pride.

LGBT: Following on from engagement with Belfast Pride, NIC-ICTU organised a coordinated presence of trade unions at Belfast pride. It was agreed that this was extremely successful and gave significant profile to trade unions at the largest parade in Northern Ireland. The

secretariat also had engagement with Pride Committees in Foyle and Omagh. It is hoped that this can be developed for 2025 to include a coordinated programme of events.

The work of the Women's Committee is reported under The Work of the Committees p.72.

Challenging Racism & the Far-Right

After the horrific murder of three children in Southport and attempts to kill others, there was a wave of unrelated racist violence triggered by misinformation on social media and cynical manipulation by 'respectable' politicians and international actors.

Congress President Justin McCamphill said:

"The message from trade unionists then is the same that we stand with all victims of hate crime; we support our public servants who defend the vulnerable and we have zero tolerance for divisive misinformation or attempts to spark violence."

After a wave of violence and arson targeting Muslim-owned businesses in Belfast forced the NI Assembly to break its summer recess and debate the violence at Stormont, NIC-ICTU called for a public rally at the steps of Parliament Buildings for trades unionists and all those across our community who share our values of equality, diversity and solidarity. We worked with the community and voluntary sector to ensure a large and representative turnout. Speakers included NICVA Chief Executive Celine



NIC-ICTU Chair, Paddy Mackel speaking at the anti-racism rally at Parliament Buildings.



Say no to racism, Unison.

McStravick, Unison Regional Secretary Patricia McKeown with Unison member and NHS worker Susan Magutkuona, as well as NIC-ICTU chair Paddy Mackel (UCU) who told those gathered:

"It is clear that the protests and violence we have witnessed did not occur in a vacuum and that much of that agitation has its roots in decades of neglect and underfunding by successive UK governments, which has enabled mistrust and resentment to fester. Those concerns need to be addressed urgently and we in the trade union movement will be at the forefront of demanding change.

"Equally, however, it must be emphasised that ongoing racist attacks and violence that we have witnessed across many areas in the community are shameful and completely unjustifiable. The trade union movement stands

together with all citizens who have been threatened or attacked, regardless of creed, class, colour of our skin, or race."

Education Trade Union Group (ETUG)

The ETUG is made up of teaching and support staff unions organising in the education sectors, chaired since 2022 by Alan Law (NIPSA) and Marie O'Shea (INTO). It meets regularly to develop education policy matters for the NI trade union movement. It lobbies policymakers, as well as the public and was a useful hub of information across 12 unions, both in outlining the effects of budget cuts and co-ordinating support for unions taking industrial action. Both teaching and support staff took several days of strike action as well as months of action short of strike in separate disputes.

Sadly, the withdrawal of DUP ministers from the NI Executive at the start of 2022 truncated the pro-active engagement between the ETUG and MLAs in Stormont. ETUG members briefed some political parties on policy priorities despite the effective suspension of the NI Assembly, which meant there was a suite of education issues ready for the attention of Stormont when it was revived in early 2024, with a new education minister, Paul Givan from the DUP.

There was legislation from the previous mandate on reforming FETO, the regulations exempting schools from many important parts of equality legislation. ETUG had also lobbied in support of a Private Members Bill promoting integrated education, reiterating the long-held support for an education system which is secular and pluralist.

ETUG and its members also lobbied for safer and more tolerant school environments for students and staff, by supporting a comprehensive relationships and sexuality education curriculum which addresses the needs of this society and empowers our young people to make informed choices and effect change in their own lives. Related to that was a robust campaign against sexual abuse and harassment in schools and staff being trained and equipped to deal with its manifestations, including on social media.

But the main item for ETUG was support for members in dispute over pay, as well as grading for support staff. Threats to education budgets were constant. For instance, in February 2023, ETUG welcomed the refusal

of the board of the employing body to support severe cuts.

“We welcome the Education Authority Board refusing to back the draft savings plan. However, we are concerned that a letter that has been sent to schools today does pass on the need for savings to be made by them, and also about the direction given in the letter to defer entering into any new contractual arrangements for staff or services. The members of the Education Trade Union Group have a duty to speak out for our members and the students they serve in our schools.”

Suspension of the NI Executive meant that devolved government departments were prevented from using monitoring rounds to redistribute funding from other sections of the state to the Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA). The EA was provided with an indicative budget allocation by the DE on 30 March 2023. This position was confirmed in a final allocation letter on 1 June. By October, the EA was forecasting a £201m funding deficit in 2023/24. Despite claims of profligate spending by Stormont departments, these shortfalls are the result of external inflationary pressures such as hikes in energy costs.

In these circumstances, widespread strikes happened, involving every union with members in the sector, including affiliates who had never before taken strike action, the NAHT. ETUG is separate from bargaining structures, but acted as a support and information hub for affiliates during these historic disputes. The pressure worked, and with

the restoration of the NI Executive with the financial resources and political will to justly resolve the disputes, by the summer of 2024 all of these had been settled to the satisfaction of thousands of members.

The ETUG were also invited to brief the NI Assembly education committee after restoration. This allowed discussion on issues such as those mentioned above, our opposition to academic selection at 11, and other initiatives such as Free School Meals for every child, a UK-wide campaign led by Unison, and a long-standing Congress policy.

At the time of writing, ETUG was engaged in challenging the Education Minister Paul Givan on his proposals for a new management authority to support the controlled schools' sector. The concerns raised by ETUG include:

- There was no prior notification of the staff unions within the EA.
- The Minister's description of the EA as failing controlled schools without providing any context or taking account of years of underfunding.
- The failure of the Chief Executive of the EA to defend the organisation.

The ETUG do not believe that this review is warranted but nevertheless are seeking commitments that: recognised unions will be consulted with during the review, and any new board will have a balance of members which reflects the full diversity of NI including trade union representatives.

The ETUG recognises that there is an argument that this is justified as maintained schools have a separate managing authority but believe that

creating a new body is a retrograde step and that the Minister should focus instead on delivering a single managing authority for all teachers and support staff.

In late 2024, there was a serious incident at a school in north Belfast involving children from a refugee background which escalated into serious community tensions. This prompted a discussion within the NIC-ICTU's education unions, alongside our friends at Belfast City of Sanctuary, with whom we support and work with through our migrant workers' project. The Congress anti-racism project officer was also involved and offered practical advice which will support engagement with external groups and officials, as well as informing the Congress trade union education programme.

ETUG unions held a series of meetings involving our affiliates who represent support staff as well as teachers and are identifying where the present system of managing incidents involving ethnic and racial differences is working and, crucially, failing students and staff alike.

ETUG engaged with the Education Authority NI and Department of Education to catalogue the resources available for a school which finds itself in a similar situation as that school. From that, ETUG are compiling this information into a short briefing paper for the NI Assembly education committee, as well as the Minister and officials in EANI and DE. The committee was briefed in spring 2025, and this work is ongoing.

The Work of Committees

Health Committee

The Health Committee continued to meet regularly online, with interventions in the media, and with the NI Assembly Health Committee. The structures of partnership between trade unions and management established under the *Delivering Together* strategy endorsed by the NI Executive alongside long-standing bargaining structures, ensured that the trade union voice on workers' concerns and ideas were heard as the health crisis evolved over the year.

The Health committee's Chair Anne Speed (Unison) and Vice Chair Claire Ronald (CSP) continued with the support of over 12 affiliated unions representing workers across the health and social care sector. In February 2025, the committee was reconstituted and with JP Clayton (Unison) becoming Chair, and Claire Ronald remaining as Vice Chair.

Health unions were represented by NIC-ICTU's representative on both the Public Health Agency and the Department of Health's Improvement and Transformation Advisory Board (ITAB). In addition, the myriad transformation workstreams had union representation reflective of the specialisation of each. Health trade unions continued to seek a consistent approach to engagement in order to shape decisions before they are taken.

Significant changes have been made to the bodies established with regards to the transformation programme across health. The management board for rebuilding HSC services created during the pandemic has been replaced by a new performance and transformation executive board. These new structures were established without consultation being undertaken with trade unions, which the Health Committee challenged as well as expressing concern at the terms of reference for ITAB. The committee is engaging with these structures in order to ensure that trade



NI Health Committee Chair, John-Patrick Clayton.



Message on walls of Royal Victoria Hospital, January 2024.

unions are represented, but continue to reserve our position regarding ongoing participation.

In particular, affiliate unions representing physiotherapists, allied health professionals and radiographers were concerned about the lack of implementation of recommendations made within workforce reviews conducted within these areas. A lack of investment in training and recruitment of specialist staff was a major area of concern. Within midwifery, there were concerns there was no sense of what the optimum midwifery and maternity support workforce should be both now and in the future.

A review process was also underway in relation to the social work care workforce and had to be incorporated into the implementation of the post-2019 dispute framework agreement on safe staffing. Bargaining structures advised NIC-ICTU of their interventions on workforce vacancies and the burden of agency staffing costs.

These intensified as the cost of living crisis impacted on the already suppressed wages of workers at all levels of the NHS. Faced with an intransigent Tory government and no NI health minister or Assembly scrutiny committee to lobby and negotiate, health unions balloted members for industrial action, receiving large mandates for action short of strike action, and full strikes. Notably, these ballots were being passed in unions with little or no history of taking industrial action at all, let alone strikes.

There were several days of strike action involving several affiliates taking co-ordinated action, and there was a series of strike rallies at Belfast City Hall with feeder parades coming from the city's three main hospitals. These culminated in the generalised Day of Action on 18 January 2024, which brought out almost the entire NHS workforce, aside from those workers whom it was agreed would provide emergency cover or stay on duty providing essential healthcare. And

as noted elsewhere in this report, the pressure worked in achieving acceptable pay settlements and pledges of legislation on safe staffing.

To address health inequalities, we need a model of public health which requires not only radical reform of the health and social care system, but also a radical change in the way all government ministers and departments take their share of responsibility for the health and well-being of all the people. Health outcomes are not just the responsibility of the Department of Health, HSC Trusts or the various arms-length bodies. A significant, cross-governmental approach is required to tackle health inequality.

An example of how the NI Assembly and its health committee benefitted the working lives of NHS staff was the successful passage of a Private Members Bill on car parking charges in hospital grounds. However, this legislation has been suspended by the NI Assembly as the health trusts have not made adequate preparations for its implementation in early 2024.

Arts and Culture Committee

In February 2024, the NIC re-established the Arts and Culture Committee (ACC) to promote, develop and protect the interests of workers in arts and culture sector, and for greater support and financial investment in the sector.

A main element in the work of the ACC has been its support for the campaign for greater funding for the sector and recognition of the contribution arts and culture workers make to cultural, societal, and economic growth. As part of this, the new committee has responded to a number of consultations including the Arts Council NI 10-Year strategic plan 2024-34 consultation.

The ACC also promotes trade unionism through arts and culture and vice versa.

The Chair of the ACC is Alice Adams Lemon (Equity) and Angela Moffatt (Prospect) is Vice Chair.

Private Sector Committee

The NIC re-established the Private Sector Committee (PSC) in February 2024. The committee assists the NIC by responding to all issues pertaining to the private sector.

The committee is working with NERI on mapping the NI private sector to identify opportunities for unions to organise and to better understand issues affecting workers within the sector.

The committee also considers issue including skills development and apprenticeships, job retention, Just Transition, pay, promotion of union successes in the sector and the sharing of relevant information, including organising strategies.

The Chair is Alan Perry (GMB) and the Vice Chair is George Brash (Unite).

Community and Voluntary Sector Committee

The NIC established a committee of unions organising in the community and voluntary sector to aid organising and to promote, develop and protect the interests of workers in the sector.

The committee have organised a campaign for better pay conditions and greater employment security within the sector. Activist training and a seminar to launch the campaign have been arranged.

The Chair is Anne McVicker (UNISON).

UK Covid Inquiry

Congress is a core participant in the UK Covid Inquiry, alongside colleagues in the TUC, WTUC and STUC.

This has involved working with affiliates and a substantial amount of records and data covering the period 2008-2022, as modules 1, 2 and 3 examined the UK's preparedness for a pandemic, how it handled the pandemic from February 2022-24, and how the National Health Service coped. Module 6, on the impact of the pandemic on the publicly and privately funded adult social care sector was responded to in early 2025.

Thus far, NIC-ICTU has delivered detailed responses to requests for evidence under the Inquiries Act 2005, and on two occasions Congress AGS Gerry Murphy delivered oral evidence.

Module 1 revealed how the UK's public health system had been ground down by a decade of austerity. Module 2c arrived in Belfast in April 2024, and heard evidence from politicians, senior civil servants, health officials and 'ordinary' people affected by the pandemic. According to NISRA's figures, over 4,000 people died of Covid-related illness in NI between February 2020 and October 2021. About ten per cent were of working age. These were the people for whom Gerry Murphy gave evidence on the second day of the public hearings in Belfast.

Gerry Murphy noted that the highest proportion of the 391 deaths of people of working age was amongst process, plant, and machine operatives (12.91%), whereas professional and technical occupations had the lowest rates (4.5%).

A great many in front-line and essential work were in lower paid roles, who

could not safely work from home, and were already suffering health disadvantages. That included many who worked in health and social care, but also those who kept transport moving, who cleaned public spaces, who worked in food processing and manufacturing.

There had been a refusal of NIO ministers or the devolved NI Executive to engage with trade unions on anything like the level seen in the devolved administrations in Cardiff and Edinburgh.

Despite the constructive engagement of individual ministers in departments such as health and education, this was not sufficient in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.

The primary mechanism through which the Executive sought to engage with representative bodies during the pandemic was through the Strategic Engagement Forum, formed at the outset of the pandemic and brought together employers, trade unions and statutory bodies including the PHA and HSENI. After a good start mitigating the initial impact of Covid on workplaces and keeping essential commercial and public services going, Mr Murphy added that:

"the Forum was unfortunately largely ignored by the Executive.

"The strength of consistent and embedded social partnership is demonstrated by the tripartite arrangement which exists between the Fire Brigades Union, employers, and Chief Fire Officers, which involved considered consultation and co-working from all three sides. It is notable that not a single fire fighter died of Covid-19."

The inquiry continues.

May Day

Still the largest May Day parade on the island, in 2024, NIC-ICTU Vice Chair Jacquie White (UTU) chaired speeches from Belfast & District Trades Council's Kerry Fleck (CWU), Scottish TUC General Secretary Roz Foyer, Congress Vice President Phil Ni Sheaghda (INMO) and Uniglobal's Regional Secretary Oliver Roethig

In her remarks to the pre-march rally, Ms White told the participants:

"Trade unions from across this island and these islands come together on May Day to celebrate their victories and to mark their setbacks, but we can safely say that this year, trade unionists in NI have never been as strong or influential. This follows months of industrial action and strikes and lobbying for the interests of all working people.

"We demanded better and we are not going back. That demand for better was heard loud and clear across the north in recent months.



2024 May Day march.

Marking the success of Better in a Trade Union, Ms White concluded:

"This is the end of Ireland's first Trade Union week. But the example of what every union in Northern Ireland delivered in the past few months is the best advertisement.

"Workers in all jobs are better off in a trade union.

Belfast Trades Council also hosted a series of events to celebrate May Day. *Our Work, Our Lives, Our Place* is a joint project with the Community Arts Partnership and the NIC-ICTU supported by unions and Belfast City Council.

All-Island and East-West Engagement

The North/South Committee

Early in 2023, Congress relaunched the North/South Committee with new membership. The members are from both the Executive Council and the NIC.



Congress President, Justin McCamphill (NASUWT) marching on May Day.

The committee worked on a seminar to mark 25 years of the B/GFA, delivered in Dundalk in late 2023, to look at motions 3 and 7 from BDC 2021 and to feed into the work of Congress participation in the LEEF shared island sub-committee where we are represented by Owen Reidy, Gerry Murphy and Justin McCamphill. The committee meets 4 times a year.

The Council of the Isles

Each year the leadership of the 4 trade union federations across Britain and Ireland meet to discuss and debate the trade union issues of the day and to share our analysis of major strategic issues facing unions.

The 2023 Council of the Isles was hosted by Congress and took place in October 2023 in Belfast. Congress was represented by Owen Reidy, Justin McCamphill and Gerry Murphy. Issues discussed included the industrial action then widespread and its impact on the political situation in NI, trade union renewal, the EU Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, social partnership in Wales and campaigning techniques.

III. Labour Market, Social Policy & Equality

Labour Market

Adequate Minimum Wages Directive

A major focus of Congress's work has been the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive. Congress has taken part in the European Commission Expert Group on the transposition of the Directive, which adopted a guidance report in November 2023, the ETUC Adequate Minimum Wages working group, the ETUC *Wage-Up* project monitoring transposition, a European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) project mapping transposition, and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's technical working group on the establishment the Action Plan to promote collective bargaining. Congress also worked with the German *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* think-tank on its 2024 survey on trade union access to workers completed by University of Limerick academics, organised a Eurofound briefing in February 2024 on minimum rates in collective agreements,

made presentations on the Directive at the NERI labour market conference in May 2024, and engaged with TASC in a report on the January 2025 opinion by the Court of Justice advocate-general on Denmark's legal challenge to the Directive.

Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF)

Congress continues to engage in the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) process which is chaired by the Taoiseach. The forum is an opportunity for the trade union movement to engage with the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and senior cabinet ministers on economic related matters. From our perspective, we would like to see this form of social dialogue migrate from one of merely consultation to one whereby we can see clear policy wins. At the time of writing, the LEEF terms of reference is under review.

Congress is represented by the General Secretary, Owen Reidy, the Vice President, Phil Ní Sheadgha, our former President, Kevin Callinan was replaced by our Vice President, Katie Morgan mid-term, and the Treasurer, Joe Cunningham.

LEEF also operates several sub committees chaired by the relevant line minister. The membership of Congress team is a mix of the Congress senior staff and members of the Executive Council/ affiliates. The sub committees currently include pensions, employment rights, childcare, housing, health, apprenticeships and shared island.



Congress & Eurofound briefing for affiliates.

The Low Pay Commission

The four-year roadmap for turning the minimum wage into a living wage worth 60% of median hourly earnings by January 2026 was unilaterally extended by Government in April to 2029. On 1 January 2024 the hourly rate had increased by €1.40 to €12.70, and again by 80 cents to €13.50 on 1 January 2025. The roadmap had been on course to meet the agreed 2026 target. Congress has made comprehensive submissions to the Low Pay Commission stakeholder consultations each year setting out the case for maintaining momentum, and robustly defended each pay rise across the media.

Throughout our engagement with the Low Pay Commission and the Labour Employment Economic Forum (LEEF) on moving to a living wage, Congress has been firm in our position that sub-minimum rates for workers under aged 20 are outdated, out of line with EU norms and grossly unfair to young workers and good employers. The Low Pay Commission agreed and, in March 2024, unanimously recommended sub-minimum rates be abolished for younger workers from January 2025. After delaying tactics on taking a decision on the recommendation before the election, the new Government agreed to defer indefinitely a decision as part of its Action Plan on Competitiveness.

Congress wish to record their appreciation to the employee representative member of the Low Pay Commission for their work - Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin, Michael Taft and Gerry Light.

Labour Market Advisory Council

Congress has participated in the Labour Market Advisory Council (LMAC) and its sub-group on

the evaluation of labour market programmes. LMAC advises the Department of Social Protection on labour market policies, particularly related to public employment services. Most of the 12-member Council are employers' representatives.

A major focus of LMAC activity was the preparation of report for the Government' mid-term review of its *Pathways to Work 2021-2025* strategy. The final LMAC report reflected Congress's (and other LMAC members') emphasis on the need for the public employment services to actively promote and monitor quality employment, but this was not incorporated into the Government's revised strategy, issued in May 2024. Congress also focused in LMAC's engagement in 2023 with the OECD's review of Ireland's skills strategy. The OECD's report issued in 2024 did incorporate Congress's recommendation for including trade unions on the National Skills Council. The Government has since implemented this recommendation.

AI in the workplace

Following significant progress on the passage of the EU AI Act in June 2023, Congress was invited to share our position on the Act and, more generally, on AI usage in the workplace and in the management of workers with the Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment at a public sitting. Congress has also engaged on these matters with representatives from the European Commission and Microsoft Ireland, through our work on the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs and the National Competitiveness Council, and directly with members at affiliated unions' conferences.

Congress's manifesto for the June 2024 European Parliament elections called for a just, human-centred, digital transformation as well as the effective regulation of artificial intelligence, with the 'human in control' principle incorporated into EU law. Congress continues to campaign for legislation applying across the island on algorithmic systems at work and, taking account of the rapid speed of change in this field, to develop a comprehensive policy on AI in the workplace, including with the European Trade Union Confederation and Congress is represented on the ETUC AI ad-hoc group.

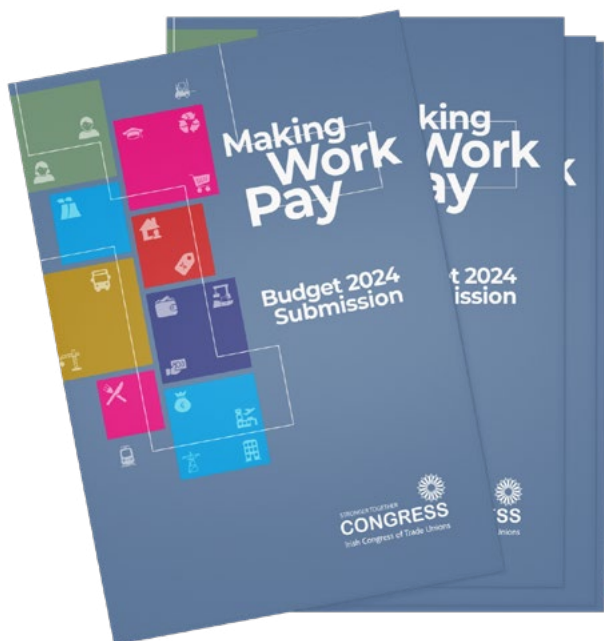
Budgets 2024 and 2025

Congress issued pre-budget recommendations, prepared with the NERI, for Budget 2024 *Making Work Pay* in August 2023 and for Budget 2025 *Building a Better Economic Future* in August 2024. Both recommended targeted supports to address the cost-of-living crisis, reductions in user-costs



Budget 2025 submission Building a Better Economic Future.

for public services, social welfare increases in excess of inflation as part of a multi-year strategy to benchmark rates against median earnings, and increased investment in housing, health, early years, education, infrastructural deficits, and the green and digital transitions. Both strongly advised against tax cuts and highlighted the need for an increase in the overall level of revenue raised, as a share of national income, to meet long-run public spending needs, and proposed raising employers' and self-employed PRSI closer to the norms of other high-income European countries and a scaling back of the very generous and distortive tax breaks ('tax expenditures') currently enjoyed in many sectors and by high-income individuals. Congress, with the NERI, engaged directly with the Ministers for Finance and Public Expenditure on both sets of recommendations in September 2023 and in August 2024 respectively.



Budget 2024 submission Making Work Pay.

Social Policy

Congress once again experienced an exceptionally busy period, being at the forefront of the social policy response to the cost-of-living crisis, significant social legislative reforms and countering the new government's series of U-turns on commitments to raise minimum employment standards.

The Social Wage

A series of permanent measures to reduce out-of-pocket costs for working families were introduced or expanded over 2023-2025, in line with our *No Going Back* and *Social Wage* campaigns and pre-budget recommendations.

Fuel Allowance for Over-66s

Fuel Allowance is a payment to help with the cost of heating your home during the colder months.

It is worth **€24 a year per household** which you can get in two lump sum payments of €482 or €33 a week for 26 weeks between September and April.

There have been big changes to how you qualify for over-66s. As a result, 85,000 more older people now qualify for Fuel Allowance.

IT COULD BE YOU! (or someone you know)

NEW Qualifying Rules

People aged 66 or over no longer need to be getting a weekly social welfare payment to qualify for Fuel Allowance. This opens it up to Class D PRSI (child and public services).

NEW Maximum Weekly Income Limits

Single people over 66 are now able to have an income of up to €234 a week (before tax) to qualify.

Couples are able to have a combined gross income up to €468 a week.

This includes the State Pension.

NEW Savings Limits

The amount of savings and investments that are not counted in the means test has more than doubled for people aged 66 and over. The first €50,000 is now not counted, your local Citizens Information Centre can help explain the new capital means test assessment rules.

Household Rules (no change)

To qualify for Fuel Allowance you must be living alone or only living with:

- spouse, civil partner or cohabitant and/or dependent child.
- person getting Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit and is caring for you or your spouse or partner on a full-time basis.
- person getting Jobseeker's Allowance.
- other people who would be entitled for a Fuel Allowance in their own right.

Lower Energy Bills

People who get Fuel Allowance are eligible for free energy efficiency improvements up to €50,000 on their family home if it was built before 2006.

An SEAI surveyor will visit your home and recommend the upgrades needed based on the age, size and your heating system. The SEAI will hire a contractor to carry out the work.

Over-66s receiving Fuel Allowance are the main beneficiaries of the scheme.

More Information

You can find out more about the Fuel Allowance payment at www.gov.ie/heat and the fully-funded SEAI energy upgrades to www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/fully-funded-upgrades-for-eligible-homes

CITIZENS INFORMATION CENTRE
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Peoples Workers Committee
www.icjc.ie

Fuel Allowance for over 66s information leaflet.

A new triple Child Benefit payment (€420 in 2025) - the Newborn Baby Grant, is now paid to all families in the first month after a birth or adoption. Free GP care was expanded to all

children under 8, which otherwise can cost from €50 to €75 per visit. The universal subsidy for childcare fees increased by 53% to €2.14 an hour (up to €96 a week/ €5000 a year) for each child under 15, and families using a childminder are now eligible, which was an important win for our members in health services and others working outside 9-5 standard hours. Free hot school meals are available to all primary school children and will be rolled out to all secondary schools over the next five years. All families of children in primary school no longer have to pay for schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks. The scheme will cover all second level students from this year. It is set to benefit over 200,000 families with a child in the Leaving Cert cycle around €740. The upper age limit for Child Benefit was increased from 18 years to 19 years where a child is in full-time education (€140 a month in 2025), closing an anomaly that has long been a bugbear for many of our members.

Congress continues to engage extensively with national and local media to raise awareness and encourage uptake of these new measures and directly with members through affiliates' communication channels and at their sectoral and national conferences.

Sick Pay

Statutory sick pay increased from three to five days in 2024. It had been intended that it would increase to seven days in 2025, in keeping with a government commitment to get to a minimum 10 paid sick days a year for all employees from 2026. The new right to paid sick leave followed from our *Make Sick Pay Mandatory* campaign. However, and despite strong pushback from Congress,



Challenging myths and improving working conditions in a strong economy (NERI).

including a paper countering the business lobby hyperbole, prepared by the NERI, *Challenging myths and improving working conditions in a strong economy*, the Minister delayed signing the Order to vary the entitlement to seven days in 2025 before the general election, claiming more time was needed to consider the business impact of statutory sick leave. In April, the new government decided to stop the roll-out of sick pay at five days, thereby breaking a pandemic dividend promise to workers to guarantee all workers at least 10 days paid sick leave. At five paid days, Ireland now has the stingiest statutory sick leave scheme in the EU and UK.

Pay-related Unemployment Benefit

Legislation introducing a new contributory pay-related jobseeker's benefit, designed to protect workers from a sharp fall in living standards during short gaps in employment was passed in July 2024, bringing a successful end to the Congress-led *Flat Broke* campaign. From March 2025, PAYE workers who lose their job receive up

to 60% of their previous gross wage, capped at €450 a week, for the first three months of unemployment. The replacement rate and upper amount are reduced after three and six months. Ireland had been one of just four member states, along with Greece, Malta and Poland, to pay the same flat-rate weekly payment to all unemployed workers (€244 a week in 2025). Building on the experience of the pay-related Pandemic Unemployment Payment and the temporary closure of Tara Mines in July 2023, Congress and affiliated unions strongly championed this legislation through its passage through the Oireachtas.

Family Leave

Parent's Leave and Benefit was increased from seven to nine weeks in August 2024 for working parents in the first two years after their child's birth, in line with the requirements of the 2019 Work-Life Balance Directive. Congress welcomes the commitment



Pay-Related Benefit for Unemployed Workers, February 2024.

in the new programme for government to move from paying parent's benefit at a flat-rate (€289 a week in 2025) to a pay-related payment, and to explore extending to maternity, paternity and carer's benefit. We have long highlighted the link between low family leave payment rates and the low take up by men and the implications for the gender pay and pensions gap.

A new right to request flexible working arrangements for caring purposes was introduced in March 2024 and five days unpaid leave per year to provide care or support to a sick relative or other member of a worker's household was introduced in August 2024, as required by the directive also.

Congress again played a central role in championing this legislation through the Oireachtas and raising public awareness of the purpose of and application process for these new entitlements.

Pensions

Pension auto-enrolment finally became law in July 2024, ending twenty-years of successive governments promising to tackle our alarmingly low occupational pension coverage among private sector workers. At the time of writing, quasi-mandatory contributions into an employee's retirement savings by some 800,000 un-pensioned employees, their employer and the State will commence from January 2026, following yet another delay. Congress had considerable input into shaping the final design of the new pension scheme and the smooth passage of the legislation, as well as raising awareness and communicating the benefits of this significant pension reform to affiliates and general public.

Congress welcomes the renewed commitment in the programme for government to keep the qualifying age for the State pension at 66. To close the gap between anticipated pension expenditure and the Social Insurance Fund's (SIF) resources, PRSI contribution rates for employees, employers and the self-employed will be gradually increased by 0.7 percentage points over five years. The additional income raised (€1.6 billion a year from 2028) will build up the SIF surplus while Ireland still has a young population, in preparation for the not-too-distant future when we won't.

To incentivise workers to continue working longer, a new option was introduced in January 2024 to allow workers defer drawing down their State pension at 66 for up to four years in return for a higher weekly payment rate. Our work continues for an option to allow workers who have worked continuously from a young age to draw down their pension before age 66. Congress has long argued there is a sizeable and growing number of workers who are forced to retire earlier than they would wish. Delays in drafting new legislation to allow workers in the private sector remain in their job where they do not consent to a company's retirement age below the state pension age, meant it had not passed before the general election. Legislation is now expected to be in force from 2026.

Remote Working

Following the Congress-led *Make Remote Work* campaign, government legislated for a new workers' right to request remote work. The provisions in the Work Life Balance Act came into force in March 2024 along with a WRC code of practice for employers

and employees on making and handling a request to work remotely. Congress had a central role in writing the Code and undertook extensive communications and awareness raising to promote it among members and workers more generally.



Congress & Ibec debate remote working, RTE PrimeTime.

Contrary to alarmist headlines about employers ordering staff back to the office, CSO Labour Force Survey data shows hybrid working remain remarkably high and stable three years on from the lifting of all lockdown restrictions, with the number of people working from home at least some of the week surpassing one million for the first time at the start of this year.

Equality

The equality work of Congress continues to be guided by our Women's Committee and Disability Committee and, since December 2023, our *Stronger Together Anti-Racist Trade Unions & Workplaces Project*. The majority of the activity on these is reported under The Work of Committees p.43 and Education and Training p.87.

Other related equality work over the period includes:

- Congress equality officer was appointed by Minister Joe O'Brien to the advisory committee to the National Action Plan against Racism and has been participating on that group for the past year.
- Congress hosted a guest blog from Kieran Rose on the history of trade union involvement in LGBT solidarity.
- Continued coordination of trade union input for the Worker Employer Advisory Committee to IHREC meetings, including speaking at the 2024 IHREC conference on socio economic inequality and also at IHREC's 10-year anniversary event.



Congress with Together for Public outside Leinster House.

- Participation in Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Forum meetings and a founding member of the public model campaign calling for our long-held position on the need for ECEC to be a public good.
- Participation in Children's Rights Alliance advisory panel for their annual report card



Kieran Rose presenting Congress with his book Trade Unions and progress for LGBT people.



SIPTU at Pride.



Fórsa at Pride.



INMO at Pride.

- ETUC Steering group meetings on “Trade Unions Against Discrimination” project and participation in learning seminars.

ETUC Women’s Committee

Congress is represented on the ETUC Women’s Committee by the NI equality officer and the committee met a number of times during this period.

The committee led on work including lobbying on the proposed new EU Directive on Gender Based Violence as robust as possible.

While welcoming the adoption of the directive in May 2024, the ETUC Women’s Committee voiced frustration that it failed to adequately deal with gender based violence in the world of work, despite repeated interventions by ETUC and Confederations.

Also disappointing was the decision imposed by France and Germany to exclude Article 5 on the harmonised definition of rape based on consent in line with the standards of the Istanbul Convention.

In June 2024, the Executive Committee of the ETUC adopted a special **resolution** on the offensive to combat gender based violence in the world of work.

IV. Education & Training

Anti-Racist Trade Unions & Workplaces Project



Launching just two weeks after the appalling events of November 23rd 2023 in Dublin, Congress's *Stronger Together Anti-Racist Trade Unions & Workplaces Project* was established in December 2023.

To date, there have been two phases of the project; Dec 2023 to October 2024, and a second phase which began in November 2024 and will continue until September 2025. Both iterations the work has been enabled through generous funding from the Ireland Against Racism Fund.

In light of the aforementioned riots, and an observed rise in anti-immigrant and far-right discourse and rhetoric, its advent could not have been more timely. On establishment, the project was immediately inundated with requests for support, guidance and training from among affiliated unions and beyond, symptomatic of a desire within the trade union movement to provide an effective response to new challenges arising.

Training: The provision of training was a core element of the project, and continues to be a mainstay of the outputs delivered. For each trade union requesting an input, bespoke content is designed in consultation with representatives and staff, in

order to meet the most relevant need of members of the particular union. Utilising core principles of Community Development, Group Facilitation and Critical Race Theory the training delivered is participative and skills based, offering participants a safe space to explore racism and its effects on workers. During phase 1 of the project, such was the demand for the portfolio of workshops on offer that over 1,200 attended or took part in a Stronger Together related training event, with 26 sessions delivered across the country, including several in Northern Ireland.

In addition to this bespoke training, phase 1 of the project also included the development of a number of specifically targeted workshops. Both *Training the Trainers* and *Ethnic Minority & Migrant Worker Leadership* training events were staged in the



David Carroll, project coordinator

first phase of the project. The *Training the Trainers* workshops enabled trade union representatives with experience in the fields of education and training delivery to broaden their skills to encompass antiracism training, ensuring a broader delivery of work with an inclusive focus. The *Ethnic Minority & Migrant Worker Leadership* training also fulfilled another important objective, that of prioritising the advancement of such groups within the trade union movement and among its leadership. The training was delivered online and in person and both interventions were designed by Dr Lucy Michael, a foremost expert in developing effective responses to racism and in the study of Leadership for Ethnic Minorities.

For phase 2 of the project, it was decided to considerably increase the number of both the *Training The Trainers* and *Ethnic Minority Leadership* workshops to four of each. It was also felt vital that such events should be offered in locations outside the capital, to ensure adequate geographical reach.



Ethnic minority & migrant worker leadership training.

Phase 2 of the project also saw the introduction of a newly themed workshop based on the positive feedback received by an initiative originally delivered in phase 1. At

Congress's 2024 Summer school in Limerick the project partnered with Doras, an NGO working with migrant populations in the Midwest to facilitate a workshop on trade unions and civil society joining forces to combat racism. Originally proposed as a result of initial project scoping which revealed its proven international efficacy as a tool for collaboratively and effectively combatting racism, the workshop drew a packed attendance. As such, for phase 2 of the project it was decided to partner with INAR (Irish Network Against Racism) to develop and run a similar set of workshops in four locations across the country.



Anti-racism project research findings invite.

Research: While these training elements represent a core focus of the project's work, there have been several additional complementing stands which have further embedded antiracism work throughout the trade union and other relevant structures.

Among these, the research strand was of particular importance. Establishing an evidence base, which collated the experience of ethnic minority and migrant worker trade union members and that of trade union responses, was especially vital. While a plethora of works have confirmed the unfortunate occurrence of racism in the workplace on an international level, there existed something of a dearth in Irish research

to date. For the project, two cohorts were interviewed; ethnic minority/migrant workers who were members of trade unions and trade union representatives themselves.

Each of the research participants generously granted a considerable amount of their time to participate in the study, and importantly, of their lived experience. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the research illustrated that experiences of exclusion and discrimination based on race were all too commonly experienced by workers in Ireland. Likewise, the insight of trade union representative and staff proved equally as valuable. Despite the sector taking an inclusive and progressive stance on tackling racism, the testimonials shone a light of existing deficits of expertise within the movement. This baseline of information gathered important information on what the trade union movement needs to address such gaps into the future. As such, the research was an effective resource for developing potential new endeavours for phase two of the project.

Tool-kit: In addition to the research study, the project also produced an on-line tool-kit, available to download from Congress's website. The kit was designed to be an accessible and practical resource for those embarking on anti-racism endeavours in their organisation. This comprehensive resource was road-tested by affiliates to ensure its applicable use in the trade union movement, and was launched as part of the project's inaugural national conference, staged in Dublin in September 2024. Over 60 delegates attended the event, which saw a range of speakers, presentations and panel discussions.



Panel at national conference on anti-racism in the workplace & unions.

In addition to trade union speakers, presenters were also invited from a range of relevant civil society organisations and public bodies, such as the Hope & Courage Collective, the Workplace Relations Commission and FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centre). The project was also delighted to welcome the newly appointed Special Rapporteur Against Racism, Dr Eburn Joseph, who both spoke of the importance of the project and its work. Many of the delegates were people who had supported the project in some form or taken part in an element of its training, and as such the event also offered useful networking opportunities.

Additional activities: In addition to the outputs outlined, there have been additional activities relevant to the field, which the project has also undertaken. In March of 2024, the project was honored to host our European colleagues, for an event co-organised in partnership with the ETUC. For the fourth in a series of two-day long seminars focused on discrimination, the Dublin event was devoted to the issue of racism, and in particular, its intersectional effects. Alongside organising and hosting the event, the project inputted to delegates on the intersectional relationship between

racism and homophobia. In May 2024, *Stronger Together* was also pleased to address those in attendance at the May Day 2024 rally for workers, held publicly in Dublin City Centre.



Minister Joe O'Reilly at Congress/ ETUC seminar.

While, the majority of the project's outputs have been focused on trade union-specific interventions, there have been several other invitations to collaborate on initiatives deemed in keeping with its objectives. In January 2024, the project was invited to partake in the organisation of Le Cheile's *Stand Together* march. Initially taking a role on the outreach committee, the project was subsequently invited onto the overall steering group of the event, and contributed in various ways including trade union mobilisation and press promotion for the event..

For the second phase of the project, a subsequent Congress/ Le Cheile partnership worked to host a rally in Dublin's to mark the one year anniversary of the events which had blighted the city the year previously. Both events drew significant attendance from the public, and sent a clear, powerful message as to the trade union moment's rejection of bigotry in all its forms. This partnership is just one example of numerous initiatives that the project has been involved in. Other partnerships, with organisations such as Akidwa and

FES have furthered the objectives of *Stronger Together* and ensured it has the broadest possible reach.

Recognising and validating the intersectional nature of discrimination has also seen the project to lend its support to advancement of LGBTI identities within the trade union movement and beyond. Whether speaking at the launch of FORSA's LGBT network, or working with LGBT Ireland on harnessing the grassroots activism generated by the Marriage Equality Referendum, in order to face the emerging challenges posed by the far-right and other actors intent on rolling back on equality and inclusion, this intersectional approach remains at the core of the project's ethos.

Distinct challenges remain. The trade union movement needs to address a lack of diversity among its stakeholders, and the movement would be naïve to see itself as impervious to the recent rise in racist rhetoric and actions. However, the reception granted to the *Stronger Together Project* by Congress staff in both Dublin and Belfast offices and from among the trade unions affiliated to Congress, is testament to the will, determination and motivation to continue to work to ensure that our workplaces and trade unions are safe spaces for all.

Congress Centres Network

The Congress Centres Network came into being during an era of mass unemployment in the 1980s. The Centres were established by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to provide support, resources and a range of services to the growing numbers of unemployed workers, many of whom were trade union members.

The Congress Centres have a long history of providing lifelong learning opportunities for the employed, unemployed and persons on low income. Over the years, the centres have endeavoured to address the educational deficit faced by low-skilled individuals and recently unemployed higher-skilled persons. In this regard, the centres are ideally placed to identify and, more importantly, to support these individuals in the development of skills, particularly where they might otherwise be reluctant to admit to a learning need. The centres afford them the opportunity to come forward in a safe, confidential and supportive environment to further their training and gain workplace skills, ranging from basic to advanced levels.

During training, learners are exposed to opportunities for further engagement in lifelong learning. The centres provide invaluable training services to their members for their own professional development in the workplace, this also allows workers who are under-employed to secure more permanent positions such as IT skills, Management Development Training, Shop Steward Representation and Training Delivery and Evaluation ("Train the Trainer"). The Congress Centres provide a valuable resource for their communities by providing a range of services including an Information Service, a Secretarial Service and training in interview techniques and other courses, as well as English Classes to Foreign Students. All are available to unemployed, union members, workers and low-skilled persons.

All centres offer a tailored approach to their learners' needs whereby the learner can review the learning outcomes that have been defined and

assist in the setting of additional new learning outcomes, to suit their specific needs. All co-ordinators ensure that validated programmes are delivered applicable to the learner's needs.

Apart from services provided directly to clients, the centres are involved in a variety of community development initiatives through its network of contacts with other organisations. These include SOLAS, DSP, Citizens Information Centres, Community Services Councils, the Labour Court, EURES, the Northern Ireland Justice System, National Radio, ETBs, CV Pillar, the Wheel, AONTAS, Local Enterprise Boards, Skillnet, the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed and lobbying government for educational resources and workers' rights.

The Congress Centres Network (CCN) has continued to encounter difficulties during the course of this reporting period.

Following difficulties in securing Department of Social Protection contracts to continue their Community Employment (CE) schemes, a number of centres have been forced to be close their doors. Arrangements were made to transfer CE participants to other schemes and the respective Boards dealt with trying to arrange an orderly closure of the companies running the respective centres. These centres were long-standing members of the network and all had a very strong trade union culture and tradition. Their boards and coordinators made a significant contribution to assisting the unemployed and the vulnerable in their areas and their closure represents a sad loss to the trade union movement.

Despite these difficulties, the network has continued to operate as an effective support for the vulnerable and marginalised in our communities, with quiet work helping the unemployed and others.

The centres run Major Awards from QQI Level 3 to QQI Level 6. These Awards includes eight minor awards to include modules such as: E-Business Studies, Web Authoring, Internet, Work Experience, Communications, Customer Service, Book-keeping - Manual & Computerised, Payroll - Manual and Computerised, Reception and Frontline Office Skills and a number of others.

Because of the nature of the work done by the Centres, all participants learn transferable skills, e.g.

- Communication - written, oral and reporting
- Telephone / reception skills
- Design, development and implementation of training programmes
- IT skills / tutoring
- Administrative skills
- Book-keeping and payroll - manual and computerised
- Organisational and management skills
- Job seeking skills / work experience
- Customer care skills
- Retailing skills
- Personal / interpersonal skill

Staff are trained on an ongoing basis to enhance their chances of gaining meaningful work. The training undertaken from 2023 to present by CE participants included a wide range of programmes such as: word processing, E-Business studies, payroll, communications and train the trainer.

QQI Re-Engagement Programme

Since the last BDC, the Congress Centres Network has successfully re-engaged with QQI as a new provider. This new provider is Education and Training Services Trust Company Limited by Guarantee (ETST) which was formed by the Executive Council for the purposes of providing training programmes within the Network. In 2024 the validation of programmes got underway and will continue for the next 18 months.

The People's College

The Peoples College continues to develop, grow and progress and we recognise the many people and agencies that have assisted the college over the years, but none more so than the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, affiliated unions and Solas, without whose help and assistance would not have developed as it has. In 2024 an agreement was reached at the Executive Council, that the affiliated unions would increase their yearly subscription to help the continued growth of the college.

The college has endeavoured over the last few years to promote its courses amongst a wider audience, and in 2024 a large number of new students joined the college. The college attracts young students from abroad to learn our language and other languages too. The Irish class has become very popular and attracts a variety of international students including French, German, Polish and Ukrainian.

Since the last BDC, the college has maintained its position as a key provider of opportunities for lifelong learning for its members - trade



People's College Choir at commemorative concert for Sheila Conroy.

unionists, their families and the general public. It is inclusive in its appeal to all age groups and we have members as young as 60 years of age coming to learn and improve their digital and computing skills. It is well known that maintaining an active mind is essential to good general health and well-being, especially in the area of mental health.

There is little doubt that the highlight of the period under review was the commemorative concert 'An Extraordinary Life', held in Liberty Hall in May 2024. The event was held to mark the enormous contribution of the choir's founder, Sheila Conroy, and to highlight her enormous contribution to Irish society as a tireless campaigner for the rights of women. The choir wish to acknowledge the contributions of the speakers, Ethel Buckley from SIPTU and our President, Fionnuala Richardson. In addition, there were many who assisted in making this event successful and the choir wish to place on record its grateful thanks to SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham and to Paul O'Sullivan, Laura Woods and the staff at Liberty Hall for their

support in enabling this event to take place.

Our students enjoy the social aspect of being part of the Peoples College community and many of our classes organise outings - social, creative and educational trips and events in Ireland and abroad.

We are constantly looking for new ways to promote the college and improve communications with affiliated unions and despite many challenges facing us today, and the rapidly increasing local competition, the college continues to progress in recent years. While addressing such challenges and others, the college remains wedded to the values of education for democracy, solidarity and comradeship which inspired our founders in 1948. Uniquely, our college is a learning community administered by the students for the students together with delegates nominated by affiliated trade unions.



IR Training at the Labour Court.

IR Training

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress had offered representation and advocacy training for officials and activists involved in representing members at the WRC and the Labour Court. The content of the training courses required that they be held in-person and because of the public health restrictions the training was suspended.

In 2025, Congress resumed this training offering with a slightly modified training course. Over the course of 2025 almost 60 participants will have been through the training. The training, which is done over three days and involves a mock hearing of the Labour Court, is given by Kevin Duffy and Michael Halpenny. It is intended to expand the offering in 2026.

NI Education

The Trade Union Education Programme

The NIC-ICTU Trade Union Education Programme (TUEP) is a vital resource for all trade union officials, representatives, and members. It provides a forum for trade unionists to come together to develop their knowledge and skills, and to learn from the experiences of others. Around one thousand learners participate in the

training and seminars offered by NIC-ICTU each year.

Academic studies show that professionally trained union reps make a real difference in workplaces. They improve workers' terms of pay and conditions; protect members and jobs; ensure safer working environments; promote equality, wellbeing, fairness, and social cohesion; and enable access to skills, training, and development.

TUEP continues to develop the programme to meet changes in the workplace, economy and society.

TUEP prepares workers for new developments in the world of work through, for example, our *Climate Crisis and the Workplace* course. Recognising that the workplace will be affected by changes resulting from the climate crisis this course looks at a 'just transition' to a greener economy, where workers have a central voice in planning the transition and encourages learners to be part of the efforts to decarbonise and move to a more sustainable, zero-waste, circular economy.

The *Menopause and the Workplace* course has been designed to create greater awareness of the menopause as a workplace issue. It is designed to highlight factors that may negatively impact on workers experiencing the

menopause, identify risks and discrimination, and consider best practices tackle the workplace issues facing workers experiencing the menopause.

Another new course *Neurodiversity in the Workplace* has been designed to give reps the skills and confidence to represent and support neurodivergent members and to advocate for more inclusive and equal workplaces.

TUEP worked with TUEP to develop a BDS course to assist unions and reps to understand and consider how to implement BDS.

At the request of affiliates TUEP deliver workplace specific training on handling grievances and disciplines to joint classes of frontline management and union reps. This training is aimed at improving understanding and providing alternatives to triggering disciplinary processes.

As union representatives are more effective if they possess up-to-date skills and knowledge relevant to their role TUEP are now offering opportunities for 'repeat' or 'refresher' training in a limited range of accredited courses. TUEP regularly review courses to ensure that the content meets the needs of the modern workplace ensuring that reps keep abreast of legislative changes, developments in best practice workplace policies and wider skills.

TUEP assisted the Congress Ant-Racism Project coordinator, to deliver anti-racism and BME leadership training in Belfast.

TUEP continue to develop new training initiatives for Belfast City of Sanctuary to support ethnic minority workers on topics including *Reporting Workplace*

Hate Incidents and Sharing Good Practices, and Workplace Harassment and Discrimination.

TUEP also provided a training session for Belfast Health & Social Care Trust aimed at BME and Refugee workers on employment rights and discrimination.

For further information or if you wish to enquire about arranging bespoke courses for your union please contact the NIC-ICTU education officer, Kevin Doherty.

About the Programme: TUEP contains progression pathways for union officials, union representatives, health and safety representatives, equality representatives, union learning representatives and members. All courses are accredited through Open College Network (OCN). On successful completion learners will obtain level 2, or 3 Awards, Certificates, or Diplomas. The courses are free and are run mainly on a day release basis over 3, 5, 10 or 32 days depending on the level of qualification attached to the course. Online evening courses are also now available.

The programme is delivered in partnership with the South Eastern Regional College and OCN NI, and it is supported by the Department for the Economy.

The NIC-ICTU Education Department also designs and delivers bespoke courses to meet the needs of affiliates which can be run in affiliates offices, the workplace and other locations.

The majority of TUEP courses are delivered in person, but some are delivered online, or through a hybrid model. The method of delivery will be continuously reviewed.

Accredited Courses: TUEP offers the following core union reps courses:

Certificate courses:

- Trade Union Reps Stage 1
- Trade Union Reps Stage 2
- Certificate in Employment Law
- Health and Safety Stage 1
- Health and Safety Stage 2
- Union Learning Reps

Diploma Courses:

- Employment Law
- Occupational Health and Safety

In addition, TUEP offer a further and developing range of accredited courses, including:

- Ensuring Safe Workplaces
- Working from Home
- Dealing with Stress
- Bullying and Intimidating Behaviour in the Workplace
- Negotiation and Communication Skills
- Handling Grievance and disciplines
- Disability Champions
- Pay and Bargaining
- Equality Law
- Tackling Prejudice in the Workplace
- Digital Organising
- Equality Reps in the Workplace
- Confidence in the Workplace
- Climate Crisis and the Workplace
- Dealing with Redundancies
- Mental Health and the workplace
- Learning and Organising
- Taking a Case to Tribunals
- Menopause and the workplace
- Campaigning
- Hybrid Working

Further details can be found at www.ictuni.org/education

Webinars and Seminars: NIC-ICTU also run a variety of unaccredited seminars on various employment related issues. Some of seminars are delivered in partnership with affiliate unions, the Nevin Economic Institute, Belfast City of Sanctuary, the Labour Relations Agency, and the Equality Commission.

The topics include:

- Bullying and harassment in the Workplace
- Multi-ethnic workplaces
- European developments on Employment Law
- Agency Workers Directive
- Dignity at Work
- Flexible Working
- Mental Health in the Workplace
- Disability Law in the Workplace
- Legislative Reform
- Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace
- Leadership in the Workplace
- Agency Workers Directive
- Health and Safety
- Challenging Racism
- Pregnancy and Maternity rights
- Menopause and the Workplace
- Family Friendly workplaces
- Managing Conflict at Work

Further details can be found at www.ictuni.org/seminars-webinars

Union Learning Fund

Under an agreement with the Department for the Economy, NIC-ICTU continues to have full responsibility for the administrative and financial management of the Union Learning Fund (ULF). In January 2023, applications were sought for a new three year project plan. The following twelve project applications to the ULF were successful:

UNION	Project Title
AEGIS	Learn with Aegis NI
BFAWU	Retraining & Upskilling for Sustainable Employment
EQUITY	Working on Film & TV in Ireland
FBU	Promoting Lifelong Learning in the Fire Service
FDA	Early Career Leaders - Professional Development in the NI Civil Service
FSU	FSU Future Skills
INTO	Upskilling & Retraining Teachers
NIPSA	NIPSA Union Learn 2023/2026
UNISON	K102/OET/IELTS & Supporting Teaching and Learning
UNITE Construction	Building for the Future
UNITE	United in Learning
USDAW	Developing a Learning & Skills Strategy for a Sustainable Future

During the 2023-2025 reporting period, ULF projects engaged with and supported more than 8,500 workers. Outcomes achieved included:

1. 500 workplace learners completed Essential Skills courses in Numeracy, Literacy, or IT.
2. 2,800 workplace learners completed and achieved upskilling qualifications.
3. 150 migrant workers completed OET, IELTS training or ESOL qualifications.
4. 3,600 workplace learners completed Continued Professional Development (CPD) courses.
5. 400 workplace learners completed introductory IT courses.
6. Projects supported 1,100 workers with CV writing and interview skills.

Supporting Union Learning Representatives (ULRs):

From 2023 to present, 55 ULRs have completed the Union Learning Representatives training course through the NIC ICTU Education Program. To support these newly trained ULRs in their role NIC-ICTU produced a new ULR Handbook: *Union Learning Representatives, Your Rights, Your Opportunities*.



Union Learning Representatives handbook.

Union Learning Conference: In March 2023, the annual Union Learning Conference was held in The Mac, Belfast. More than 50 ULRs attended and heard from key speakers addressing the theme, 'New Opportunities for Union Learning'. As part of a joint initiative, Maggie Bates of The Open University in Ireland (The OU) and NIC-ICTU launched a free online learning hub aimed at providing valuable education resources to workers and their families.

Addressing the conference, John D'Arcy, Director of The Open University in Ireland, said:

"We are delighted to partner with NIC-ICTU to offer free online learning opportunities to workers across Northern Ireland. Education and skills are key to improving people's lives and increasing their employment opportunities. With the online learning hub, we aim to provide accessible, high-quality learning resources to workers across Northern Ireland, regardless of their background or experience."

In March 2024, the Union Learning Conference was held for the first time in the North West at the Ebrington Hotel, Derry. Over 80 ULRs attended and guests included MLAs, Padraig Delargy and Sinead McLaughlin, who serve on the NI Assembly Economy Committee. The speakers from the Department for the Economy, North West Regional College, The Open University, Derry City & Strabane District Council and the Nevin Economic Research Institute addressed the theme, *Skills for a Transforming Economy*.



Speakers at 2024 Union Learn Conference in Derry.

Partnership with The Open University: Designed in partnership with The Open University, the NIC-ICTU Learning Hub features free and flexible distance learning content aimed at enhancing employability and upskilling. The Hub offers a wide range of courses, articles, and videos covering various subjects, including IT and digital skills, employability, health and social care, as well as essential skills in English and mathematics. The courses are designed to be flexible, enabling learners to study at their own pace and fit their learning around their work and family commitments.

In June 2024, The Open University hosted a Trade Union Showcase event at the OU Belfast Office. This event saw active participation from ULF Project Managers and ULRs from various trade unions. It highlighted the successful work achieved thus far on several projects, including the Unison K102 project, the FSU Access Project, ULR training, and the NIC-ICTU Learning Hub. The showcase concluded with a group task that allowed attendees to exchange ideas and explore further opportunities for collaboration.





Alliance for Lifelong Learning at Stormont.

Alliance for Lifelong Learning: The Alliance for Lifelong Learning (ALL) was created to support and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, across Northern Ireland. The strategic aim of the Alliance is to facilitate the development of a 'Lifelong Learning Strategy' and action plan, as outlined in the NI Skills Strategy: Skills for a 10x Economy. The Alliance organisations include The Open University, FALNI, OCN NI, CO3 and ANOTAS.

In September 2024, NIC-ICTU joined the Alliance and met with Economy Minister, Conor Murphy to discuss enabling workplace based lifelong learning through the Union Learning Fund and its benefits to the workforce and economy.

V. Public Engagement, Campaigns & Communications

Campaigns

Better in a Trade Union (BIATU) PR Campaign

Background: The roll out of the *Better in a Trade Union* (BIATU) PR campaign followed on from the decision of the Biennial Delegate Conference in July 2023 to ratify the *Trade Union Renewal* report which covered a number of key targets identified by the Executive Committee.

Prior to BDC a preliminary research project carried out by Language and Alice PR, had identified the potential for a PR campaign to raise public awareness of trade unions and to support unionisation in the workplace in the context of the EU Directive on Minimum Pay and the work of the High-Level Group on Collective Bargaining.

Delivering BIAU Campaign: Language and Alice PR began work shortly after BDC 2023 on what would become the first Congress/inter-union generic mass media PR campaign funded by affiliates with a total budget of just under €330,000. A project steering group, drawn from the new Executive Committee led by Vice President Katie Morgan and assisted by an expert sub-group of communications and organising officials drawn from affiliate unions was charged with overseeing the design and roll-out of the campaign. Former Fórsa General Secretary

for Organisation and Development, Eoin Ronayne managed the process as part a secondment to Congress to engage affiliates on the various elements of the *Trade Union Renewal* report.

The BIATU campaign ran in two segments, the first in January/February 2024 and the second, *Trade Union Week* which coincided with May Day 2024. The target audience was identified as the general public, in particular workers in the under-45 age cohort, which the research indicated as having a low awareness of what trade unions are, how trade unions work and how individuals benefit from membership and active participation.

The design team developed the campaign and its messaging using the research outcomes of the UCD *Union Voice In Ireland* survey, the earlier Amarach research paper and the Ireland Thinks poll on attitudes to collective bargaining, along with attitudinal outcomes from focus groups of members and non-members. These focus groups were engaged again at the end of the campaign to measure its impact.

Collaboration: Throughout all stages of the design and roll out of the campaign the Executive Committee's project steering group and expert sub-groups were consulted and engaged with for approval and advice as required.

Better in a trade union campaign, 2024 & 2025



Through this collaborative process the BIATU campaign evolved to include in-person events, branded materials, traditional news media engagement, paid for local radio, social media and digital video advertising as well as expansive use of a purpose built BIATU website and social media pages as well as the use of BIATU social media material by affiliates on their own sites and pages. A customisable campaign communications toolkit was also developed for affiliates to use. Following the successful roll out of the campaign in January/February work commenced on the second segment for roll out in late April in preparation for the climax of the campaign, the first all-island *Trade Union Week* which followed May Day. Individual unions, their branches and workplace sections hosted a wide range of activities across the island to highlight the scale of union organisation to non-union members and to provide an opportunity for rank-and-file members to take part in union organised local events.

At the core of the campaign were the words and voices of eight trade union members identified and proposed by number of affiliates from locations across the island. They shared their experience of membership and what it has meant for them, their families and their colleagues. These interviews provided the material for all campaign advertising in video, social media and print for the duration of the campaign and their significant part in the campaign is fully acknowledged

Reach: The first segment of the campaign in Jan-Feb was designed to raise awareness among the general public of the benefits of trade unions and union membership. In addition to the impact of outdoor ads, data

analysis from the digital and social channels shows the BIATU campaign ads were seen or heard 3.4 million times by 1.8 million adults across the island. These channels recorded over 27,000 people visiting the campaign specific website unions.ie for further information.

The second more targeted and less expansive segment in April-May was designed to increase interest and appetite for joining a trade union. Data from the digital and social channels shows BIATU campaign ads were seen or heard by 1.7 million adults across the island. These channels recorded over 21,000 people visiting unions.ie for further information.

Across the campaign it is estimated that a combined readership/listenership reach of 16.7 million was secured through national and local/regional coverage in traditional broadcast radio/print and online pieces.

Social media accounts were established for BIATU on Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook and X with Instagram being the priority platform for the target audience. A total of 316 posts, with supporting visual content, were uploaded providing a 'content bank' which could be repurposed and built upon by affiliates. Data from Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and X shows BIATU campaign posts were seen over 145,000 times by over 83,000 adults. Social media users engaged with campaign posts 6,499 times indicating that an interested, active audience exists for BIATU content.

Post Campaign polling: A follow-on Red C polling exercise carried out at the end of May provided a benchmark

for longer term, economical tracking of union membership and motivations. The comparative polling exercise pre and post campaign showed a moderate increase in trade union membership while also showing a moderate decline in 'previous members' and those who 'would like to join' which may suggest a movement from those categories into actual union membership over the period. The poll showed increased support for collective bargaining among union members.

Options for the future: A comprehensive report was considered by the Executive Committee in September 2024. It detailed the extent and experiences of the campaign and outlined options for the future. It was noted that a range of unique media assets had been created by the campaign that would be of significant benefit to Congress and for use by affiliates on an ongoing basis. It was agreed as an interim measure that further development of the BIATU campaign and its related activities would form part of the brief for the new Communications and Media officer.

Housing

Congress continues to seek to facilitate campaigning and new thinking to Ireland's endemic housing crisis. A crisis that has dominated the political narrative for a decade. Regrettably, the new government and previous governments' approach to the housing crisis has been more focused on supply rather than affordability. In the last decade, house prices have grown by about 160% with wages a mere fraction of that. A whole new generation of Irish workers, many in good well-paid jobs have been locked out



Housing Ireland, October 2023.

of housing by ridiculously high house prices and exorbitant rents. Housing, with the nature of the funding, is not a sector where if you outstrip demand with supply, prices will fall. They clearly do not.

In October 2023, Congress launched our new housing policy position paper: *How we deliver the homes that people need* at a conference in the CWU. The conference had a number of sessions. The first heard from Lorcan Sirr and Aidan Regan on how we are building homes and the politics of housing. Toby Lloyd gave a UK perspective on whether the private market alone can address the crisis. The second session looked at tangible measures at to how we must actually tackle the crisis with a spotlight on the success of the Vienna model from Michaela Kauser, a look at the Congress demand for a new semi-state body to drive housing

from Paul Goldrick Kelly and a focus on the rental sector by Ann Maire O'Reilly. Owen Reidy launched the policy paper and Vice President Phil Ni Sheaghdha and Executive Council member Ethel Buckley chaired the two sessions, with concluding remarks from our President, Justin McCamhill.

The last government set up a Housing Commission with clear terms of reference to address the housing failure. The body sat for two years, held over two hundred meetings and received evidence from a range of experts. Patricia King, our previous General Secretary was a member of the Commission. The Commission issued its findings in 2024 and stated that we needed "a radical reset of housing policy." We welcomed the Commission's report. It brought together a diverse group of experts, social partners, industry personnel and others. The fact that a level of consensus was possible is significant. While not everyone will agree with every recommendation in the report there is clearly enough in it for all to agree on. We have argued that the report should form a consensus like the approach to Slaintecare. However, it seems instead of embracing the report and welcoming its recommendations the government are begrudgingly engaging with the report having stood down the Commission too early. Potentially an opportunity missed.

The incredibly sad death of our colleague and campaigns officer Macdara Doyle occurred in August 2024 after a short illness. Macdara had built credible and enduring relations with many across politics and in the housing sector. He, along with others had led to way with the *Raise the Roof*

campaign. Paul Gavan was appointed as Madara's successor and is currently undertaking a review with our affiliates and stakeholders as to how we advance the housing issue as the situation is not getting any better.

We continue to seek to advance the Congress housing policy at all forums, be they seminars, LEEF subcommittee meetings and engagements with other stakeholders. We have made it clear that house prices need to drop (in a controlled, gradual and consistent manner) for the current and future generations of young workers across all sectors to have any aspiration to buy a home and live a good and secure life.

Tackling racism and the far-right

The majority of the activity in this regard is reported under our *Stronger Together Anti-Racist Trade Unions & Workplaces Project*, p.87.

Preceding the commencement of work, in the days following the knife attack on three young children and their care assistant on Parnell Square and riots in November 2023, Congress organised a vigil outside the GPO on O'Connell Street. There was a huge turnout and workers and union leaders rallied under union banners to show solidarity with those injured or caught up in the violence.

The next week, huge banners adorned Head Office and other union buildings to send 'a powerful message of love and care to the communities in and around Parnell Square after the violence and disturbances in the city centre. Together we are stronger, we have each other's back, that our communities are welcoming, and staying united has never been more important'.

Anti-racism solidarity vigils, 2023 & 2024



On the anniversary of the riots, Congress hosted a Rally for Unity and Hope with Le Chéile in O'Connell Street. A wide range of speakers and music marked a call to action for all who believe in an Ireland built on respect, compassion, and hope.

Just Transition

Republic of Ireland: After a huge collective effort from a variety of groups, including Congress led by our late colleague, Macdara Doyle, a Just Transition Commission was established as an independent advisory body in 2024. The ministerial appointed members of the Commission, includes independent experts and one member each from the five pillars of social dialogue, (Agriculture, Community and Voluntary, Employer, Environment pillar and the Trade Union pillar). Ryan McKinney from Fórsa represents Congress. The Commission met for the first time on 11 December 2024.

Congress, though the Just Transition Alliance, had called for the establishment of the Commission to ensure the impact of implementing the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, and the commitment to “pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy” did not leave workers and communities behind.

The Commission's terms of reference commit it to providing Government with impartial, strategic, and evidence-based advice to inform policy planning related to a just transition across sectors and to support the Government and wider societal stakeholders in managing this

transition. Since being established, the Commission has focused on developing a work programme through engagement with a range of stakeholders, including the National Dialogue on Climate Action. The Commission has a vital role in ensuring that those most impacted or vulnerable to the transition are engaged with, supported, and that their perspective remains at the forefront of climate policy development and implementation. A key area for affiliates is the potential impacts of the Just Transition on Ireland's workforce and risk of exacerbating existing inequalities, so it is positive to note the Commission's work programme includes research in identifying these impacts.

Northern Ireland: Dooley Harte (Craigavon TC) chairs a working group on Just Transition, following a motion on climate action from the 2022 NIC-ICTU BDC brought by Belfast & District Trades Council. The group is focused on the 2022 NI Climate Act which establishes a Just Transition Commission for NI which will have stakeholders including from trade unions.

Since the restoration of devolution, this working group has been in briefings with DAERA officials working on establishing the NI Just Transition Commission and is being advised by trade union representatives on similar bodies in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

Congress has developed strong allies among climate activists and has in recent years assisted with the logistics and some funding for Climate marches each year as part of worldwide COP demonstrations.



Registration desk, Natalie Higgins (Congress) with delegates.

Conferences & Seminars

2023 (May - Dec)

- (June 2023) Housing Emergency seminar.



- (August 2023) Joint Global Solidarity Committees summer school.
- (October 2023) Housing Ireland seminar: How to deliver the homes that people need.
- (December 2023) 25th Anniversary of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement seminar.

2024

- (February 2024) Briefing on work positive: managing psycho social risk in the workplace.
- (March 2024) Joint Retired Workers'

Committees conference.

- (March 2024) Joint Women's Committees conference.
- (April 2024) Trade Unions against Discrimination / ETUC Council for Learning seminar.
- (April 2024) Workers Memorial Day 2024.



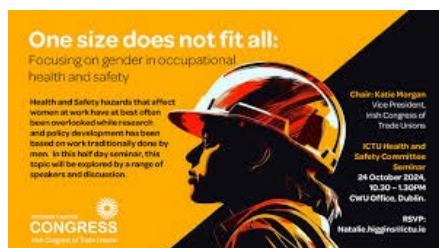
- (May 2024) BDS workshop.
- (June 2024) The Future of Collective Bargaining seminar.



- (August 2024) Joint Global Solidarity Committees summer school.
- (October 2024) Health and Safety seminar.
- (December 2024) International Day for People with Disabilities/ Launch of a neurodiversity guide.

2025 (Dec - May)

- (January 2025) Women's Council of the Isles.
- (March 2025) Health and Safety seminar: One size does not fit all.



- (March 2025) Joint Women's Committee conference.
- (April 2025) Joint Retired Workers conference.
- (April 2025) Workers Memorial Day 2025.
- (May 2025) Private Sector Committee/ May Day seminar: The minimum wage 25 years on.



Communications

Congress has continued to build on its strong presence in the media at local and national levels.

Press Statements & Media Engagement

2023 (May-Dec)

- (May 2023) Opinion article: The Irish Trade Union Movement's Place is in Europe



- (May 2023) Statement on May Day: The far-right do not represent working people, trade unions do
- (May 2023) Statement calling for increase in the minimum wage
- (May 2023) Statement condemning attacks on asylum seekers
- (June 2023) Statement of solidarity on world refugee day
- (June 2023) Statement of solidarity with LGBT in Uganda
- (June 2023) Statement on high-level Congress delegation fact-finding mission to Israel/Palestine
- (July 2023) Blog on Stop the Stigma campaign
- (July 2023) Blog on 50th anniversary of end the marriage bar in the civil service
- (August 2023) Opinion article: Raising the social wage for workers



- (September 2023) Statement on care referendum
- (October 2023) Statement following October 7th attack on Israel
- (October 2023) Podcast: Budget 2024
- (October 2023) Statement on Congress's response to Budget 2024
- (October 2023) Blog on history of income tax
- (October 2023) Blog on Council of the Isles meeting
- (October 2023) Statement on launch of the Stop the Stigma campaign

- (October 2023) Statement with Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine
- (November 2023) Statement calling for a ceasefire
- (November 2023) Statement on strengthening the social safety net for workers
- (November 2023) Statement on publication of pension auto-enrolment bill



- (November 2023) Statement condemning Dublin riots
- (November 2023) Statement welcoming introduction of paid domestic violence leave
- (November 2023) Statement on Congress solidary rally with victims of Parnell Square attack
- (November 2023) Statement on RTÉ job cuts
- (December 2023) Statement on wording of care referendum
- (December 2023) Opinion article: Who should pay the bills if the State pension age stays at 66



2024

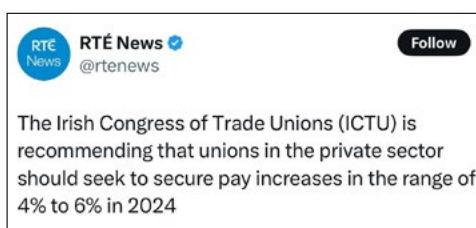
- (January 2024) Podcast: Workers rights and business costs
- (January 2024) Statement on 'Love, Organise, Resist' message
- (January 2024) Statement of support for march for Palestine
- (January 2024) Statement welcoming International Court of Justice ruling on Israel
- (February 2024) Statement on guidance for pay bargaining in 2024
- (February 2024) Blog on corporate sustainability due diligence directive
- (February 2024) Statement of solidarity with Myanmar
- (February 2024) Statement of support for Ireland For All rally
- (February 2024) Statement calling for a Yes Yes vote in care referendum
- (March 2024) Statement welcoming new right to request flexible and remote working
- (March 2024) Statement on international day against racism
- (March 2024) Statement on international women's day
- (March 2024) Statement on publication of report: Challenging myths and improve working conditions in a strong economy
- (March 2024) Statement on ratification of public services pay agreement
- (April 2024) Podcast: Tackling the Far Right
- (April 2024) Opinion article: Government must not sacrifice wage growth when addressing cost pressures
- (April 2024) Statement on Congress/ ETUC Trade Unions Against Discrimination Seminar



- (April 2024) Statement on Workers' Memorial Day
- (April 2024) Statement on Raise the Roof Dáil rally
- (April 2024) Statement on appointment of new Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- (May 2024) Statement welcoming recognition of state of Palestine
- (May 2024) Statement on Dáil debate on pay-related unemployment benefit
- (May 2024) Statement on Congress/ Ireland Thinks public opinion poll on affordable housing
- (May 2024) Statement welcoming publication of the Housing Commission report
- (May 2024) Statement on May Day: workers cannot be denied right to collective bargaining any longer



- (June 2024) Blog on 50th anniversary of equal pay legislation
- (June 2024) Statement condemning Government U-turn on increased employer social insurance contributions



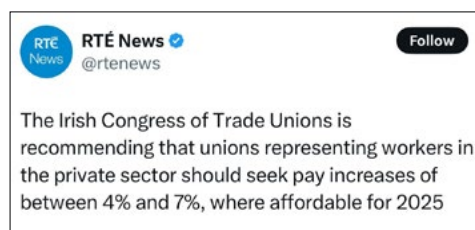
- (June 2024) Statement on EU Adequate Minimum Wages Directive being trade unions' No.1 priority
- (June 2024) Statement urging Irish leadership on sanctioning Israel
- (June 2024) Statement welcoming Low Pay Commission recommendation to abolish sub-minimum youth rates
- (July 2024) Blog on trade union movement garden party hosted by President Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin
- (July 2024) Statement welcoming passing of legislation on pay-related unemployment benefit
- (July 2024) Statement welcoming start-date for pension auto-enrolment



- (July 2024) Statement on launch on clean air site campaign
- (August 2024) Blog on global solidarity summer school
- (September 2024) Statement, with FES, for launch of survey of trade unions officials on access to workers
- (September 2024) Statement on Congress anti-racism conference
- (September 2024) Statement on countering racism in the workplace report
- (September 2024) Statement on Gaza children to get medical treatment in Ireland
- (September 2024) Podcast: Budget 2025
- (October 2024) Statement on Congress's response to Budget 2025
- (October 2024) Opinion article: Budget 2025 flagged tax cuts make little sense
- (October 2024) Statement calling for living wage by 2026 to be delivered
- (October 2024) Statement urging Government to pass the Occupied Territories Bill
- (October 2024) Statement condemning the targeting of health workers in Gaza



- (November 2024) Statement, with ETUC, on transposition of Adequate Minimum Wages Directive
- (November 2024) Statement calling for support for Rally for Unity and Hope
- (November 2024) Statement demanding an end to violence against women and girls in work and society
- (December 2024) Statement on guidance for pay bargaining in 2025
- (December 2024) Statement welcoming increase in minimum wage
- (December 2024) Opinion article: The big changes happening to your contributory state pension



2025 (Jan-April)

- (January 2025) Statement, with ETUC and TUC, on EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement
- (February 2025) Opinion article: Has the bank holiday had its day, or do we get too few?
- (February 2025) Statement, with ETUC, on EU poll on public attitudes to AI
- (February 2025) Statement on Bill to end forced retirement under age 66 in private sector
- (March 2025) Statement, with ETUC and TUC, on EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement
- (March 2025) Blog marking international women's day
- (March 2025) Statement on Youth Committee meeting with MEPs on traineeship directive
- (March 2025) Statement welcoming start of new pay-related unemployment benefit
- (April 2025) Statement calling for trade unions to be part of response plan to US tariffs threat to jobs





- (April 2025) Statement on government decision to break its sick pay promise



- (April 2025) Statement from Executive Council on government row-back on workers' rights
- (April 2025) Statement on delay in commencing pensions auto-enrolment.



Policy Papers & Submissions 2023 (April-Dec)



Private Sector Committee pay guidance 2024 & 2025.

- (April 2023) Submission to Department of Social Protection for Labour Market Advisory Council's mid-term review of Government's Pathways to Work Strategy 2021-2025.
- (April 2023) Submission to Department of Transport on its Statement of Strategy 2023-2025.
- (April 2023) Submission to Department of Agriculture on its Statement of Strategy 2023-2026.
- (May 2023) Report (with SIPTU) on implementation of EU Digitalisation Framework Agreement over 2022-2023.
- (May 2023) Submission (with FSU) to Department of Finance on the bank levy.
- (May 2023) Submission to Department of Tourism on its Statement of Strategy 2023-2025.
- (May 2023) Submission to Department of Social Protection on retired workers' budget priorities.
- (June 2023) Submission to Oireachtas Enterprise, Trade and Employment Committee on pre-legislative scrutiny of collective redundancies following insolvency bill 2023.
- (June 2023) Opening Statement to Oireachtas Enterprise, Trade and Employment Committee on AI in the workplace.
- (July 2023) Submission to the Low Pay Commission on sub-minimum youth rates of the national minimum wage.
- (July 2023) Submission to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on its second National Plan on Business and Human Rights.
- (July 2023) Submission to Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on pay rates for Domestic Violence Leave.
- (August 2023) Submission (with the NERI) to Government on Budget 2024 *Making Work Pay*.
- (August 2023) Submission to Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and of Rural and Community Development on a National Hub Strategy for remote working.
- (August 2023) Submission to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on its review of the occupations lists for employment permits
- (August 2023) Submission to Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on transposition of Pay Transparency Directive.
- (September 2023) *Housing Ireland: How to deliver the homes that*

people need.

- (September 2023) Submission to Oireachtas Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight on Budget 2024.
- (September 2023) Submission to ILO on vocational rehabilitation and employment (disabled persons) Convention 1983 No.159.
- (October 2023) Submission to the National Transport Authority on its proposal to directly award a public bus services contract direct to Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann in 2024.
- (October 2023) Submission to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on proposed regulation on prohibiting products made with forced labour.
- (November 2023) Submission to Oireachtas Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment on proposal for a new EU Late Payment Regulation.
- (November 2023) Submission to Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the Migrant Integration Strategy.
- (December 2023) Report to the European Trade Union Institute on the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive in Ireland.

2024

- (January 2024) Submission to Department of Rural and Community Affairs on its Social Enterprise Policy 2024-2027.
- (January 2024) Opening statement to Oireachtas Enterprise, Trade and Employment Committee on the regulatory and legislative changes required for the transposition of

the Adequate Minimum Wage Directive.

- (January 2024) *The Social Wage: pay-related benefit for unemployed workers.*
- (February 2024) *Congress guidance for private sector unions on pay bargaining in 2024.*
- (February 2024) *Congress Global Solidarity Committee briefing on the Julian Assange case.*
- (February 2024) Opening statement to Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee on pre-legislative scrutiny of Defence (Amendment) Bill.
- (March 2024) Submission to Department of the Taoiseach on the European Semester and Ireland's National Reform Programme 2024.
- (March 2024) *Congress manifesto for European elections 2024.*
- (March 2024) Report (led by the NERI) *Challenging myths and improving working conditions in a strong economy.*
- (March 2024) Submission to Department of Enterprise Trade and Development on the National Report on the Practical Implementation of the EU-OSH Directives.
- (April 2024) Submission to Department of Tourism on a New Tourism Policy Framework 2024.
- (April 2024) Submission to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on its Statement of Strategy 2025-2027.
- (April 2024) Submission to Department of Social Protection on its Green Paper on disability reform.
- (April, August and December 2024) Three reports to the European Trade Union Institute on

the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive in Ireland.

- (May 2024) Submission to Department of the Taoiseach on Ireland's National Risk Assessment 2024.
- (May 2024) Submission to the Low Pay Commission on the appropriate hourly rate of the minimum wage for 2025.
- (May 2024) Submission to Skillnet Ireland on its organisational governance.
- (July 2024) Submission (with the NERI) to Government on Budget 2025 *Building a Better Economic Future*.
- (July 2024) Submission to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on capacity-building for engaging in collective bargaining.
- (July 2024) Submission to Uisce Éireann on its draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050.
- (July 2024) Submission to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on racial discrimination in Northern Ireland.
- (July 2024) Submission to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on national implementation of the EU AI Act.
- (September 2024) *Congress general election manifesto*.
- (November 2024) *A Brighter Future: A Congress perspective on energy policy*.
- (November 2024) *Congress neurodiversity guide: supporting members at work and within our unions*.
- (December 2024) *Congress guidance for private sector unions on pay bargaining in 2025*.
- (December 2024) Input to the Irish Council of Civil Liberties submission to European Commission for its *2025 Rule of Law Report: Ireland*.

2025 (Jan-April)

- (January 2025) Submission to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on its review of the proposed roadmap for increasing minimum annual remuneration thresholds for employment permits.
- (February 2025) Submission to European Commission on the first draft of guidance on the safe management of asbestos at work.
- (February 2025) Submission to Department of Social Protection on its Statement of Strategy 2025-2028.
- (March 2025) Report to the European Trade Union Institute on Ireland's minimum wages and collective bargaining regime.
- (April 2025) Submission to the Low Pay Commission on the appropriate hourly rate of the minimum wage for 2026.
- (April 2025) Submission to the Health and Safety Authority on its Statement of Strategy 2025-2027.

VI. European Union & International

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

With the very welcome appointment of the former SIPTU deputy general secretary, Gerry McCormack as the Congress European officer we are seeking to build our presence in EU affairs. The ETUC Executive Committee member is the General Secretary, Owen Reidy and Gerry McCormack is the sub/observer. The ETUC Executive Committee meets 4 times a year and seeks to address issues affecting over 60 million workers across the EU and the wider European continent. The Executive Committee, following on from the work of some of the ETUC sub committees seeks to agree statements and positions which form the bargaining position of the ETUC when seeking to have a policy position adopted by the Commission or a new EU directive.

In the last Commission mandate, the ETUC made considerable progress on a range of legislative areas resulting in directives that require member states to transpose into national law within two to three years. Given the European parliamentary election outcome whereby we have seen a shift rightward and given the various national elections results in a number of member states we do not expect any major progressive legislation during this Commission's term, but it is crucial that the ETUC seeks to try and speak with one voice where possible

to leverage the interests of workers in very uncertain times.

Congress and NERI secretariat along with some affiliates participate in a number of ETUC sub committees which feed into the work of the Executive Committee including areas such as the economy, the labour market, climate, wages and collective bargaining and social protection to name a few.

EU Study Visit



Congress delegation at European Commission.

In November 2023, 25 senior trade union officials from Congress and affiliated unions visited the European Commission, Parliament and Irish Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels, for a series of high-level briefings over two days. The delegation led by our President Justin McCamphill met with EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit before meeting with the co-rapporteurs on the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, Dennis Radtke (EEP, Germany) and Agnes Jongerius (S&D, the Netherlands). The group also met EU Commissioner Mairead McGuinness, a number of Irish MEPs and Ireland's Deputy Permanent

Representative to the EU, Barbara Cullinane. The programme also included presentations by heads of units. The topics covered ranged from social dialogue in the EU to the European skills agenda and public procurement rules.



Congress delegation with Commissioner Nicolas Schmit

Congress wish to record our gratitude to the Head and Deputy Head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland, Barbara Nolan and Jonathan Claridge for facilitating the visit

Congress European Office

In February 2024, Congress established a new European Office. Gerry McCormack was appointed as the Congress official with responsibility for the office. Its main purpose is to provide a dedicated resource that will ensure that Congress is up to speed on policies emanating from the EU that will impact Irish workers. The establishment of the office also recognised the need for Irish trade union movement to increase its visibility around and interaction with EU institutions

In October 2024, a seminar was held to explore how the office could be effective. The seminar heard from a range of expert speakers and arising from this a number of key initiatives were identified, including:

- Establishing a European Co-ordination Committee, on an all-island basis, made up of affiliated unions and relevant Congress staff.
- Create a database of trade union representatives on European Works Councils, participating in various social dialogue structures across the EU.
- Provide some level of coordination across those representing unions at European level.

The new office and committee will have a key role in keeping unions abreast of developments at European level and will play a vital role in lobbying and campaigning, particularly of MEPs.



Inaugural meeting of Congress European Committee.

In its first year, the European Office played a central role in the European Parliament election campaign.

European Parliament elections manifesto

From late 2023 to early 2024, Congress worked with the ETUC on its manifesto for the June 2024 European Parliament elections. Congress subsequently adapted and developed the ETUC manifesto for Congress's European manifesto, which was launched in early 2024. This incorporated recommendations contained in a number of motions from the BDC 2023, including calls for the ambitious transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, the need for EU policy to

promote quality jobs, and a just digital transformation based on human-centred digitalisation and effective regulation of AI with the 'human in control' principle incorporated into EU law. Congress engaged directly with political parties and MEP candidates on the manifesto at national level and through a number of trades councils.



Manifesto for the European Elections.

European Semester Process

Congress took part in the 2023/2024 and the 2024/2025 'European Semester' processes of policy coordination among EU member states. This seeks to achieve policy objectives relating mainly to economic and fiscal policy agreed by member states through an annual European Commission 'country report' and subsequent 'country specific recommendations' (CSRs) that each Government is supposed to implement, including by involving the social partners where relevant. Congress's works closely with the NERI and the European

Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in this process. The European Commission is generally more willing to engage with trade unions than the Government is in the process. Congress made substantive submissions to the Government in both years but there was no meaningful follow-up by Government. In January 2025, Congress's nominee to the European Economic and Social Committee was instrumental in deepening National Economic and Social Council's engagement in the process.

European Social Dialogue

Congress has participated in the European Social Dialogue Committee over this period. This brings together national social partners' representatives to discuss labour market, employment and social issues and to reach, if possible, joint approaches and joint agreements for subsequent implementation at member state level. Congress contributed, alongside IBEC for parts, of a report on the implementation of the 2020 Digitalisation Framework Agreement, and to the development of the European Pact for Social Dialogue, subsequently launched in March 2025.

EU Funding Programmes' Monitoring Committees

Congress has participated in various EU funding programmes' monitoring committees for EU programmes being implemented over the 2021-2027 programme period. These must be established under the EU regulations establishing these programmes and must include social partners. Congress takes part in the Department of Public Expenditure's overall monitoring committee for all programmes in Ireland and

those for the European Social Fund+, the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training Programme, and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Following direct Congress engagement with the European Commission, the Department of Agriculture finally agreed in 2024 to accept Congress representation on the monitoring committee for the Common Agricultural Policy. Congress has focused in particular on Ireland's non-implementation of provisions of the 2021 ESF+ rules requiring all member states to support the capacity-building of the social partners and of civil society organisations.

Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD

Congress continued its engagement with the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC). TUAC has consultative status with the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). 58 national confederations representing 50 million workers in 30 OECD countries are affiliated. In particular, Congress engaged with TUAC on the OECD's annual *Employment Outlook* report (published each June), on an OECD/EU study of Ireland's active labour market policies (March 2024) and, alongside the NERI, on the OECD's *Economic Survey Ireland 2025* report (February 2025). Affiliated unions are also active on TUAC's sectoral committees.

Global Solidarity

Palestine

An Irish Congress of Trade Unions delegation, led by then President Kevin Callinan, visited Israel and Palestine in June 2023. He was accompanied by Vice-President Phil Ní Sheaghda, by Executive Council member and former President Patricia McKeown, and Assistant General Secretary, Gerry Murphy. The five-day schedule consisted of meetings with Palestinian government representatives, trade union leaders, and NGOs in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. The delegation conducted site visits to hospitals and other health and educational facilities including at the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem. They also had courtesy meetings with staff of the Representative Office of Ireland in Palestine. The delegation was unable to visit Gaza and a trip to Nablus was cancelled due to the level of settler violence taking place in the region. The group also made a small presentation to the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem in memory of the late northern secretary of TUPP, Eamonn McMahon.

Subsequently, the world changed drastically after the horrific 7 October attack on Israel by Hamas. Congress condemned the violence on all sides and the taking of hostages - a clear violation of international law. We also noted that the almost six decades of hostile Israeli military rule is threatened and actual of violence. We reiterated our support for the campaign of peaceful resistance - Boycott Divestment and Sanction call - from civil society in Palestine.

Palestine solidarity



Unions call for 'moment of reflection'
for peace in Palestine

Workers
pause &
reflect

Wednesday
4th June, 1.05pm

June 4th marks UN Day of
Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

Much of the work in the period has been carried out in partnership with Trade Union Friends of Palestine. We also worked with affiliates, wider civil society including the Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine. Unions have been to the fore of marches across the island and have spoken at many of them, including our President Justin McCamphill and former President, Patricia McKeown at the monthly Dublin rallies.

We welcomed the International Court of Justice ruling that Israel has a prima facie case of genocide to be answered and the order on the request for provisional measures in the South Africa v. Israel case. We also urged the Irish Government to join the case – something it has now agreed and done.

We welcomed the recognition by Ireland of the state of Palestine, while noting that this needs to be followed by real steps to hold Israel to account for its war crimes against the Palestinian people. These include the enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill and the Illegal Israeli Settlements Divestment Bill in the Oireachtas. We are founding members of the Pass the Occupied Territories Bill campaign and have written to Government on numerous occasions as well as engaged with Senator Frances Black and the campaign organisations.

We have supported UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, against defunding. Our General Secretary has also called for a halt to indiscriminate targeting by the IDF of healthcare workers, hospital facilities, and those trying to provide life-saving care in a war zone.

We have written to the Governor of the Central Bank urging them to halt the selling of Israeli bonds, thereby directly funding Israel's war effort.

We have welcomed the fact that Ireland is now accepting children from Gaza for paediatric care.

We have organised sessions promoting BDS among affiliates and trades councils and promoted the TEVA campaign organised by TUIP. We have also begun to disseminate the BDS training materials developed by TUIP and urged affiliates to use them in their own training activities.

Our General Secretary spoke at the INTO January 2025 Palestine Children's Conference held in Liberty Hall outlining some of the next steps for Palestine solidarity.

We supported Labour's Bill to allow for "conscientious objection by workers in the movement of weaponry, munitions, troops destined for war zones or any activities that might support the execution of war crimes or genocide".

We have participated in a SOLIDAR Palestine Event in November 2024 at the European Parliament and supported the participation of the PGFTU (our Palestinian counterpart) in this meeting.

We have met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories to discuss our work. And have maintained contact with the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Jilan Abdalmajid, PhD who has spoken at many trade union events during the period.

We have continued to seek to build the resolve of the European and Global

trade union movement in Palestine Solidarity support through working in the ETUC and the ITUC and our participation in the ILO.

We have continued our support for and participation in the annual Holocaust memorial event & joined a range of organisations expressing outrage at the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA)'s definition by the Irish Government. This is a contentious definition which operates to falsely brand certain criticisms of Israel's policies towards Palestinians as antisemitic.

Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFPP)

The work of TUFPP was supported by Eamon McMahon since its foundation in 2005, Eamon's contribution to TUFPP was memorialised in a book edited by Peter Collins launched in September 2024 and was also honoured at the Biennial Conference in Kilkenny 2023 and at the May Day celebrations in Belfast. The affiliates' membership of TUFPP continues to grow and the work is supported by the multi-union steering group which meets regularly.

As well as feeding into all of the work described earlier in this report, TUFPP has been busy building a workplace ambassador base inside unions, organising workplace action, pickets, vigils, meetings to promote worker and community boycotts of Israeli products. They co-sponsored many of the demonstrations with Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Jews for Palestine Ireland and the Palestinian Community itself. On International Workers Memorial Day 2024 unions came together to

plant olive trees in memory of the murdered Palestinians.

TUFPP continues to actively participate in the European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine. At the 2023 ETUC Congress in Berlin, ETUN held the first fringe event on Palestine.

In addition, TUFPP supported unions to adapt motions in favour of apartheid free zones, lobbying for ethical procurement in the public sector and supporting workers who refuse handle Israeli goods.

The trade union work on pensions has been very successful with two major pension schemes disposing of around £81,000,000 of Israeli Government Bonds. One is the Universities Superannuation Scheme, the largest private pension scheme in the UK. The other is the local NILGOSC scheme covering a range of public sector workers in Northern Ireland.

Trade Union Friends of Palestine in the Republic of Ireland supported the Teva consumer boycott campaign and were part of the steering committee of the significant INTO conference on the rights of Palestinian children and is also affiliated to the Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine. Members have also made a number of collections at conferences, organised gigs and other fundraisers and most recently were part of the group that staged an occupation of the Central Bank, protesting at the sale of Israeli Bonds. They also worked with the Cork Trades Council to erect a banner on Connolly Hall in Cork calling for the enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill. A general meeting was held in March seeking to build the work of TUFPP in the Republic of Ireland.

Columbia

Colombia remains an extremely dangerous place for trade unionists and for civil rights defenders and activists. Since the last BDC, there have been several assassinations and attacks. In addition, in January 2025, fighting involving the Colombian National Army, the ELN, and former FARC dissidents in the Catatumbo region resulted in at least 103 people killed with many others injured, kidnapped or displaced. With a general election due in March 2026, President Petro's government is struggling to deliver on its programme. In response to the blocking of labour reform in the legislature, Petro turned to the people, announcing his intention to hold a referendum on the measures.

Justice for Colombia (JfC) Director, Hasan Dodwell, stepped down from the role in March 2026 to pursue a professional career in the health services. His replacement is Dr Victor Figueroa Clark has previously worked for JfC before spending ten years or so with the International Transport Federation. Our global solidarity committee is looking forward to working with Victor, who took up the role in May, and to developing a strategy for JfC to grow and to deepen its influence even more. Congress is represented on the board of JfC by Kevin Callinan (Forsa) and Patricia Mc Keown (UNISON).

International Labour Conference

Congress continues to be represented in the Workers Group at the ILO by our Equality Officer, David Joyce and Deirdre O'Connor (INTO and Executive Council member). They participated in a number of discussions including the 2023 resolution on Belarus,

a Recommendation on Quality Apprenticeships, a General Conference Discussion on Just Transition highlighting the central role to be played by trade unions in driving industrial change, participation in the Standard-Setting Committee on Biological Hazards, and decent work and the care economy discussion. Each year, David Joyce delivers an address to the plenary of the conference and in 2024, Deirdre also addressed the plenary in a special session on Palestine.

Other international related work included:

Congress continued to be an active member of the Irish Coalition on Business and Human Rights, ensuring a trade union perspective on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and its subsequent weakening as part of the EU omnibus package.

Congress also made a submission to Ireland's second national action plan on business and human rights and participated in the first advisory committee to Ireland's National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational corporations in DETE. We also attended the official launch of the UN Global Compact Network in Ireland. And, made a submission to DETE on proposed EU regulation banning import of goods that use forced labour.

Congress also wrote to Minister Coveney regarding the crucially important right to strike case at the ICJ.

The work of the Global Solidarity Committee is reported under the Work of Committees p.120.



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Section Three
Appendices

Winning Our Future in Uncertain Times
Biennial Delegate Conference

Appendix I. Accounts

Accounts for year ended 31 December 2024:

Statement of Comprehensive Income

	2024	2023	2022
	€	€	€
INCOME			
Affiliation Fees Income	2,362,330	2,316,209	2,302,427
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	893,906	900,000	852,523
Grant and Project Income	151,509	16,869	40,132
Activities Income	220,983	226,173	181,295
Conference Income	29,312	62,398	46,043
Other Income	-	-	3,206
Membership Recruitment Project	207,348	125,517	-
	3,865,388	3,647,166	3,425,627
EXPENDITURE			
Staff Costs	2,138,675	2,002,777	2,004,123
Ex-gratia Pensions	45,515	55,826	84,215
Affiliation Fees Costs	230,681	224,347	160,637
Education and Training Costs	160,373	164,078	141,701
Activities Costs	174,901	97,601	132,222
Research, Consulting & Recruitment Project	389,008	279,394	44,152
Conferences and Meetings	30,305	138,926	49,590
Publications, Printing and Stationery	17,234	12,952	10,502
Grants and Subscriptions	25,924	17,235	9,419
Repairs and Renewals	97,898	73,297	91,007
Leasing of Office Equipment	18,425	18,622	17,778
Motor, Travelling and Subsistence	76,009	76,012	38,036
Insurance	19,775	18,722	20,249
Rent, Rates and Service Charges	123,459	112,298	103,289
Postage and Telephone	11,537	32,323	27,312
Light and Heat	57,869	70,988	61,621
Cleaning and Sundry Items	52,792	42,850	37,059
Legal and Professional fees	29,828	55,725	41,098
Bank Interest and Charges	1,623	1,323	7,379
Loss/(Gain) on Foreign Exchange	(40,321)	(9,626)	7,096
Loss/(Gain) on Disposal of Fixed Asset	1,040	-	(1,568)
Depreciation	64,465	84,770	73,487
Amortisation of Deferred Premises Funding	(33,255)	(33,255)	(33,255)
	3,693,760	3,552,663	3,127,152
Operating Surplus for the Year	171,628	94,503	298,475

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2024

	2024	2023	2022
	€	€	€
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible Assets	1,749,100	1,787,455	1,805,240
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,117,464	2,538,346	2,506,936
Debtors and Prepayments	506,114	495,077	598,149
Stock of Stationery	2,517	2,517	2,517
	3,626,095	3,035,940	3,107,602
CREDITORS: (amounts falling due within one year)			
Creditors and Accrued Expenses	(1,865,008)	(1,450,656)	(1,601,351)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	1,761,087	1,585,284	1,506,251
CREDITORS: (amounts falling due after more than one year)			
Deferred Premises funding	(764,867)	(798,122)	(831,377)
NET ASSETS	2,745,320	2,574,617	2,480,114
RESERVES			
General Reserve	1,880,217	1,709,514	1,615,011
Campaign Fund	865,103	865,103	865,103
	2,745,320	2,574,617	2,480,114

Appendix II. Executive Council, GPC & NIC-ICTU

Executive Council

The Executive Council held 20 ordinary meetings between July 2023 and April 2025.

The attendance at these meetings were as follows:

Name	Number of meetings attended
Justin McCamphill, President	19
Phil Ní Sheaghdha, Vice President	19
Katie Morgan, Vice President	17
Joe Cunningham, Treasurer	13
John Boyle, INTO	20
Ethel Buckley, SIPTU	14
Kevin Callinan, Fórsa	14
Kieran Christie, ASTI	18
Ashley Connolly, Fórsa	15
Karl Dalton, POA	14
Eamonn Donnelly, Fórsa	15
Séamus Dooley, NUJ	16
Susan Fitzgerald, Unite	13
Tom Fitzgerald, Unite	15
Mary Fogarty, INMO	13
Carmel Gates, NIPSA	14
Michael Gillespie, TUI	19
Frank Jones, IFUT	19
Paddy Kavanagh, Connect	15
John King, SIPTU	19
Erin Massey, CWU UK	9
Edward Matthews, INMO	18
Gerry McCormack, SIPTU*	5
Séan McDonagh, CWU	15

Patricia McKeown, UNISON	14
Brian Nolan, Connect	16
Fíonnuala Ní Bhrógáin, CWU	16
Lorraine O'Brien, Mandate	14
John O'Connell, FSU	16
Deirdre O'Connor, INTO	16
Sally Rees, NASUWT	15
Ciaran Rohan, AHCPS **	11
Anne Speed, UNISON	20
Daire Toner, NIPSA	7
Jacque White, UTU	10
Betty Tyrrell-Collard, Trades Council Representative	18
Michael Kerrigan, Fórsa (Youth Observer)***	11
Tom Gillen, SIPTU (Retired Workers Observer)***	15

* Gerry McCormack, SIPTU resigned from the Executive Council in February 2024 to take up the position of European Officer with Congress.

** Ciaran Rohan, AHCPS was co-opted in February 2024 following the resignation of Gerry McCormack.

*** Michael Kerrigan, Fórsa (Youth Observer) and Tom Gillen, SIPTU (Retired Workers Observer) attended the Executive Council from October 2023.

General Purposes Committee (GPC)

The General Purposes Committee held 18 ordinary meetings between October 2023 and April 2025.

The attendance at these meetings were as follows:

Name	Number of meetings attended
Justin McCamphill, President	17
Phil Ní Sheaghdha, Vice President	18
Katie Morgan, Vice President	14
Joe Cunningham, Treasurer	14
John Boyle, INTO	17
Kevin Callinan, Fórsa	12
Paddy Kavanagh, Connect**	11
Gerry McCormack, SIPTU*	3
John O'Connell, FSU	16
Fionnuala Ní Bhrógáin, CWU	15

* Gerry McCormack, SIPTU resigned from the GPC in February 2024 to take up the position of European Officer with Congress.

** Paddy Kavanagh was co-opted in February 2024 following the resignation of Gerry McCormack.

Northern Ireland Committee (NIC-ICTU)

The Northern Ireland Committee's Biennial Conference took place on 13-14 November 2024 and the following were elected as members of the Committee:

A Perry (GMB), C Gates (NIPSA), D Walker (GMB), E Massey (CWU), G Matthews (PCS), G Horgan (TC), J White (UTU), J Quinn (FBU), J Clayton (UNISON), J McCamphill (NASUWT), L English (USDAW), M Galloway (RWC), M McTaggart (INTO), N McNally (UCU), P McKeown (UNISON), S Fitzgerald (UNITE), T Killen (NIPSA), T Trainor (UNITE).

Appendix III.

Affiliated Membership

There are 46 unions, seven associate members and 17 trades councils affiliated to Congress.

Unions affiliated to Congress

Membership figures for year ended 31 December 2024:

- ROI = Republic of Ireland

NI = Northern Ireland

HO = Head Office

GS = General Secretary

D NI = Director NI

PO = Political Officer

RO = Regional Organiser

W ROI = Women Republic of Ireland

W NI = Women Northern Ireland
- AGS = Assistant General Secretary

RS = Regional Secretary

NO = National Officer/Official

NS = Northern Secretary

NIO = Northern Ireland Official

SO = Senior Organiser

Union		Members		General Secretary/Address
Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants	ROI	4010	GS	Ciaran Rohan Flemings Hall, 12 Flemings Place, Dublin 4, D04 A028 Telephone: 01-6686077 Email: info@ahcps.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	4010		
	W ROI	2145		
Association of Irish Traditional Musicians	ROI	166	GS	Siobhán Ní Chonaráin 32 Cearnóg Belgrave Square, Monkstown, Co. Dublin Telephone: 01-2800295 Email: siobhan@comhaltas.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	166		
	W ROI	87		
Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland	ROI	20212	GS	Kieran Christie ASTI, Thomas McDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8 Telephone: 01 - 6040160 Email: info@asti.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	20212		
	W ROI	14106		

Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union	ROI	0	GS	Sarah Wooley Stanborough House, Great North Road, Stanborough, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL87TA Telephone: 0044707260150/259450 Email: sarah.wooley@bfawu.org
	NI	465		
	Total	465		
	W NI	128		
Building and Allied Trades Union	ROI	2814	GS	Brendan O'Sullivan Arus Hibernia, 13 Blessington Street Dublin 7 Telephone: 01- 8301911 Email: union@batu.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	2814		
	W ROI	1		
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	ROI	0	GS	Claire Sullivan 3rd Floor South Chancery Exchange 10 Furnival Street London EC4A1AB Telephone: 0044 2073066666 Email: bowenl@csp.org.uk
	NI	1698		
	Total	1698		
	W NI	1698		
Communications Workers' Union	ROI	13501	GS	Seán McDonagh William Norton House, 575 North Circular Road, Dublin 1, D01TR53 Telephone: 01-8663000 Email: info@cwu.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	13501		
	W ROI	2835		

Communication Workers Union (UK)	ROI	0	GS	Dave Ward CWU, 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1RX Telephone: 0044 2089717251 Email: dward@cwu.org
	NI	4554		
	Total	4554		
	W NI	819		
			RS	Erin Massey CWU Regional Centre, 3rd Floor Unite Blds. 26 - 34 Antrim Road Belfast, BT15 2AA Telephone: 00442890321771 Email: northernirelandregion@cwu.org
Connect Trade Union	ROI	37000	GS	Paddy Kavanagh Head Office, 6 Gardiner Row, Dublin 1 Telephone: 01 8747047 Email: info@connectunion.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	37000		
	W ROI	200		
Energy Services Union (of Ireland)	ROI	1247	GS	Karan O'Loughlin 43 East James's Place, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2 D02 XE08 Telephone: 01-6767444 Email: sarahjane@esu.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	1247		
	W ROI	729		
EQUITY	ROI	0	GS	Paul W Fleming Guild House, Upper St. Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EG Telephone: 00442073796000 Email: info@equity.org.uk
	NI	705		
	Total	705		
	W NI	359		
			NI	Marina Hampton Email: cllrmhampton@equity-councillors.org.uk

Financial Services Union	ROI	6851	GS	John O'Connell 1 Stephen Street Upper, Dublin 8, D08 DR9P Telephone: 01-475 5908 Email: info@fsunion.org
	NI	1800		
	Total	8651		
	W ROI	4337		
Fire Brigades' Union	W NI	1158	GS	Steve Wright Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT2 7AE Telephone: 0044 7736818115 Email: office@fbu.org.uk
	ROI	0		
	NI	1531		
	Total	1531		
	W NI	126	NI	Jim Quinn 14 Bachelors Walk, Lisburn, Co. Antrim BT28 1XJ Telephone: 02892664622 Email: jim.quinn@fbu.org.uk
	ROI	0		
	NI	347		
	Total	347		
First Division Civil Servants (FDA)	W NI	181	GS	David Penman Centenary House, 93-95 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL Telephone 0044 2074015555 Email: dave@fda.org.uk
	ROI	0		
	NI	347		
	Total	347		
FÓRSA	W NI	181	NO	Robert Murtagh Email: robert@fda.org.uk
	ROI	89401		
	NI	0		
	Total	89401		
	W ROI	61601	GS	Kevin Callinan General Secretary Nerney's Court, Dublin 1, D01 R2C5 Telephone: 01 8171500 Email: kcallinan@forsa.ie
	ROI	89401		
	NI	0		
	Total	89401		

GMB	ROI	59	GS	Gary Smith Mary Turner House, 22 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD Telephone: 00442073916700
	NI	9094		
	Total	9153		
	W ROI	20		
	W NI	4612	SOI	Denise Walker Bill Smith House, Columbus Quay, Riverside Drive, Liverpool, L3 4GB Telephone: 00441517270077 Email: denise.walker@gmb.org. uk
Guinness Staff Union	ROI	263		
	NI	0		
	Total	263		
	W ROI	93		
Irish Federation of University Teachers	ROI	3040	GS	Jason Palmer GSU, The Guinness Enterprise Centre, Taylors Lane, Dublin 8 Email: jason.palmer@guin- nessstaffunion.com jason@siptu.e
	NI	0		
	Total	3040		
	W ROI	1526		
Irish Medical Organisation	ROI	5896	GS	Frank Jones 11 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, D02 P962 Telephone: 01- 661 0910 Email: generalsecretary@ifut.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	5896		
	W ROI	3652		
			GS	Susan Clyne Chief Executive Officer 10 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2, D02 Y322 Telephone: 01- 676 7273 Email: sclyne@imo.ie

Irish National Teachers' Organisation	ROI	45847	GS	John Boyle 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 D01 ET35 Telephone: 01 8047700 Email: info@into.ie
	NI	7216		
	Total	53063	NS	Mark McTaggart 23-24 College Gardens Belfast BT9 6BS Telephone: 02890381455 Email: mmctaggart@into.ie
	W ROI	39009		
	W NI	5700		
Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation	ROI	45000	GS	Phil Ní Sheaghdha The Whitworth Building, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7, D07NP8H Telephone: 01- 6640600 Email: inmo@inmo.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	45000		
	W ROI	42178		
MANDATE	ROI	20257	GS	Lorraine O'Brien O'Lehane House, 9 Cavendish Row, Dublin 1, D01RT96 Telephone: 01-8746321 Email: mandate@mandate.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	20257		
	W ROI	14242		
Medical Laboratory Scientists Association	ROI	2162	GS	Terry Casey 4th Floor, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1, D01 E5Y3 Telephone: 01 - 8586472 Email: tcasey@siptu.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	2162		
	W ROI	1757		
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)	ROI	0	GS	Paul Whiteman 93-95 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL Telephone: 00447595067061 Email: magnus.gorham@naht.org.uk
	NI	858		
	Total	858		
	W NI	548		

National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers	ROI NI Total	0 12853 12853	GS	Matt Wrack Hillscourt Education Centre Rose Hill, Rednal Birmingham B45 8RS Telephone: 0044 214536266 Email: nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk
	W NI	9031	NO	Justin McCamphill Ben Madigan House, Edgewater Office Park, Edgewater Road, Belfast BT 3 9JQ Telephone: 0044 289 0784480 Email: rc-nireland@mail.nasuwt.org.uk
National Union of Journalists	ROI NI Total	2264 736 3000	GS	Laura Davison Headland House, 72 Acton Street London WC1X 9NB Telephone: 00442078433700 Email: info@nuj.org.uk
	W ROI W NI	662 372	AGS	Seamus Dooley 2nd Floor, Spencer House, Spencer Row, Off Store Street, Dublin 1, D01 R978 Telephone: 01- 8170340 Email: info@nuj.ie

National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)	ROI	1	GS	Eddie Dempsey
	NI	145	PO	James Croy
	Total	146		Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD
	W ROI	1		Telephone: 00442073874771
	W NI	23		Email: j.croy@rmt.org.uk
			RO	Steve Shaw
				North West & Eire Region
				2 Temple Square, Liverpool, L2 5BB
				Telephone: 0044151236391
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance	ROI	0	GS	Carmel Gates
	NI	47006		Harkin House, 54-56 Wellington Park, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT9 6DP
	Total	47006		Telephone: 004428906611831
	W NI	47006		Email: info@nipssa.org.uk
Operative Plasterers and Allied Trades Society of Ireland	ROI	891	GS	Barry Murphy
	NI	0		55/56 Middle Abbey Street, North City, Dublin 1, D01 X002
	Total	891		Email: bmurphy@plasterersunion.com
	W ROI	0		
The Pharmacists Defence Association (PDA)	ROI	0	GS	Mark Pitt
	NI	896		Old Fire Station
	Total	896		69 Albion Street
	W NI	630		Birmingham B1 3EA
				Telephone: 0044 7905911867
				Email: paul.day@pda-union.org
Prison Officers' Association	ROI	3412	GS	Karl Dalton
	NI	0		18 Merrion Square Dublin 2, D02E126
	Total	3412		Telephone: 016625495
	W ROI	620		Email: admin@poa.ie

Prison Officers' Association UK	ROI	0	GS	Steve Gillan Cronin House, 245 Church Street, Edmonton, London N99HW Telephone: 0044 2088845683 Email: general@poauk.org.uk
	NI	1026		
	Total	1026		
	W NI	315		
Prospect	ROI	12	GS	Mike Clancy 100 Rochester Row, London SW19 1JP Telephone: 00442079026682
	NI	2381		
	Total	2393		
	W ROI	1		
	W NI	733	NI	Prospect Northern Ireland/ Republic of Ireland c/o ICTU NIC, 45-47 Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 2FG Telephone: 0482890246331 Email: ni@prospect.org.uk
Public and Commercial Services	ROI	0	GS	Fran Heathcote 160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN Telephone: 0044 7701398036 Email: fran@pcs.org.uk
	NI	1676		
	Total	1676		
	W NI	0		
Royal College of Midwives	ROI	0	GS	Gill Walton Unit 4 College House, City Link Business Park, Belfast BT12 4HQ Telephone: 004403003030444
	NI	1409		
	Total	1409		
	W NI	1408		
			D NI	Karen Murray Unit 4 College House, Citylink Business Park, Belfast BT12 4HQ Telephone: 00447341109293 Email: karen.murray@rcm.org.uk Annemarie.oneill@rcm.org.uk

Services Industrial Professional Technical Union	ROI	178000	GS	Joe Cunningham Liberty Hall, Dublin 1 Telephone: 01- 8586300 Email: gensec@siptu.ie
	NI	7000		
	Total	185000		
	W ROI	69200		
	W NI	2800		
Society of Radiographers	ROI	23	GS	Richard Evans 207 Providence Square Mill Street London SE1 2EW Telephone: 0044 7852 912816 Email: info@sor.org
	NI	1237		
	Total	1260		
	W ROI	19		
	W NI	1067		
Teachers' Union of Ireland	ROI	20351	GS	Michael Gillespie 73 Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6, D06YP89 Telephone: 01 - 4922588 Email: tui@tui.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	20351		
	W ROI	13218		
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association	ROI	406	GS	Maryam Eslamdoust 2nd Floor, 17 Devonshire Square, London EC2M 4SQ Telephone: 0044 7971395413 Email: geradac@tssa.org.uk TSSA, Nerney's Court, Off Temple Street, Dublin Telephone: 01-8745662 Email: enquiries@tssa.ie
	NI	379		
	Total	785		
	W ROI	144		
	W NI	121		
Ulster Teachers' Union	ROI	0	GS	Jacquie White 94 Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5HP Telephone: 0044 28 9066 2216 Email: office@utu.edu
	NI	5561		
	Total	5561		
	W NI	4718		

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers	ROI NI Total W NI	0 14238 14238 7701	GS	Paddy Lillis Voyager Building 2 Furness Quay Salford Quays, Manchester M503XZ Telephone: 0044 16 1249 2446 Email : paddy.lillis@usdaw.org.uk
UNISON	ROI NI Total W NI	0 50000 50000 39720	GS RS	Christina McAnea Unison Centre, 130 Euston Road London NW1 2AY Telephone: 0044 7545 662218 Email: c.mcanea@unison.co.uk Patricia McKeown Galway House , 165 York Street Belfast , BT15 1AL Telephone: 0044 28 9027 0190 Email: p.mckeown@unison.co.uk
UNITE	ROI NI Total W ROI W NI	19024 36199 55223 6242 9642	GS	Susan Fitzgerald Regional Secretary 26-34 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 2AA Telephone: 0044 28 9023 2381 Email: susan.fitzgerald@ unitetheunion.org UNITE House 55/56 Middle Abbey Street Dublin 1 D01 X002 Telephone: 01 8734577

University & College Union	ROI	0	GS	Jo Grady Carlow Street, London NW1 7LH Telephone: 0044 20 7756 2528 Email: jgrady@ucu.org.uk
	NI	2950		
	Total	2950		
	WNI	1618		
Veterinary Ireland	ROI	1116	GS	Katharine Clarke Suite 1, Shaftesbury House Edgewater Road Belfast BT3 9JQ Telephone: 0044 28 9037 2870 Email: kclarke@ucu.org.uk
	NI	0		
	Total	1116		
	W ROI	325		
Veterinary Officers' Association	ROI	380	GS	Finbarr Murphy 13, The Courtyard Kilcarbery Park Nangor Road Dublin 22, D22 XH05 Telephone: 01 457 7976 Email: hq@vetireland.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	380		
	W ROI	180		
Veterinary Officers' Association	ROI	380	GS	Pat McGrath Fleming's Hall 12 Fleming's Place Dublin 4 Email: seamus.fagan @agriculture.gov.ie
	NI	0		
	Total	380		
	W ROI	180		

Unions with associate status affiliated to Congress

Membership figures in respect of 31 December 2024

Union		Members		General Secretary/Address
Aegis The Union	ROI	0	HO	Brian Linn General Secretary Aegon South Gyle Edinburgh Park Edinburgh EH12 9SE Telephone: 0044 7718 122850 Email: brian.linn@aegistheunion.co.uk
	NI	54		
	Total	54		
	WNI	33		
British Dietetic Association	ROI	81	HO	Andy Burman 3rd Floor Interchange Place 151-165 Edmund Street Birmingham 133 2TA Telephone: 0044 12 1200 8080 Email: tusecretary@bda.uk.com
	NI	433		
	Total	514		
	W ROI	75		
	W NI	411		
Community	ROI	0	HO	Roy Rickhuss General Secretary Community 465c Caledonian Road Lower Holloway London, N7 9GX Telephone: 0044 20 7420 4000 Email: rppu@community-tu.org
	NI	150		
	Total	150		
	WNI	60		
Hospital Consultants and Specialist Association	ROI	0	HO	Dr Paul Donaldson 1 Kingsclere Road Overton Basingstoke Hants, RG25 3JA Telephone: 0044 12 5659 6218 Email: conspec@hcsa.com
	NI	92		
	Total	92		
	W NI	23		

Permanent Defence Force (PDFORRA)	ROI NI Total W ROI	5523 0 5523 Not available	HO	Gerard Guinan General Secretary John Lucey House Collins Square Benburb Street Dublin 7 Telephone: 016712430 Email: hq@pdforra.ie
RACO	ROI NI Total W ROI	1159 0 1159 140	HO	Lt Conor King Unit 12 4075 Kingswood Road City West Business Campus Dublin 24 D24 WE54 Telephone: 014133324 Email: info@raco.ie
Royal College of Podiatry	ROI NI Total W ROI W NI	79 526 605 60 403	HO	Jane Pritchard Chief Executive Officer and General Secretary 2nd Floor, Quartz House 207 Providence Square Mill Street, London SE1 2EW Telephone: 0044 20 7234 8631 Email: jane.pritchard@rcpod.org.uk

Trades Councils affiliated to Congress

- Ballymena & Antrim Trades Council
- Belfast and District Trades Council
- Bray & District Council of Trade Unions
- Castlebar & District Trades Council
- Cork Council of Trade Unions
- Craigavon & District Council of Trade Unions
- Derry Trades Union Council
- Dublin Council of Trade Unions
- Fermanagh Trades Union Council
- Galway Council of Trade Unions
- Kildare Council of Trade Unions
- Kilkenny Council of Trade Unions
- Meath Council of Trade Unions
- Mid-Ulster Trades Union Council
- North Down & Ards Council of Trade Unions
- Waterford Council of Trade Unions
- Wexford Council of Trade Unions

Union Membership

The number of union members affiliated to Congress as at 31 December 2024 stood at 737,566 compared to 719,985 in December 2020, this is an increase of 17,581 over the five year period. Membership in Northern Ireland has grown by 14,862 which is close to 7.5% while membership in the Republic of Ireland has increased by a more modest 2,719.

The total number of female union members is now over 400,000 which is some 55% of the overall membership. There has been strong growth in the number of female union members in Northern Ireland particularly in the last two years.

Table summary of total membership 31 December 2020 - 2024

Year	ROI	NI	Total
2020	521,004	198,981	719,985
2021	515,757	198,086	713,843
2022	517,307	199,663	716,970
2023	521,940	210,047	731,987
2024	523,723	213,843	737,566
Change	2,719	14,862	17,581
Change %	0.52%	7.47%	2.44%

Bar chart summary of total membership 31 December 2020 - 2024

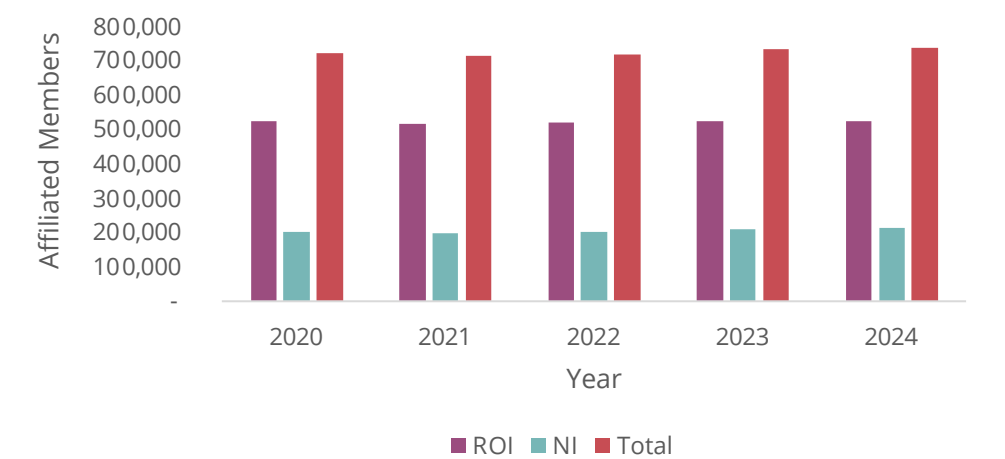
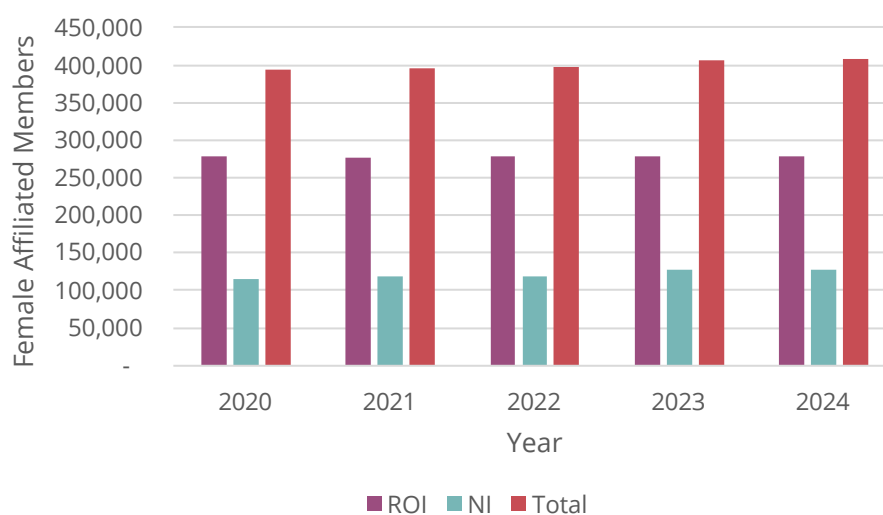


Table summary of female membership 31 December 2020 - 2024

Year	ROI	NI	Total
2020	278,545	114,701	393,246
2021	277,137	118,425	395,562
2022	278,341	118,579	396,920
2023	277,783	128,126	405,909
2024	279,189	128,202	407,391
Change	644	13,501	14,145
Change %	0.23%	11.77%	3.6%

Bar chart summary of female membership 31 December 2020 - 2024



Public/ Private Sector membership, 31 December 2024 & 2022

Public / Private	2024		2022	
	Members	%	Members	%
Total Membership	737,566		716,970	
Total Private Sector	298,147	40.42%	315,135	43.95%
Total Public Sector	439,419	59.58%	401,835	56.05%
Total ROI	523,723		517,307	
ROI Private Sector	230,393	43.99%	250,695	48.46%
ROI Public Sector	293,330	56.01%	266,612	51.54%
Total NI	213,843		199,663	
NI Private Sector	67,754	31.68%	64,440	32.27%
NI Public Sector	146,089	68.32%	135,223	67.73%

Public/ Private Sector female membership, 31 December 2024 & 2022

Public / Private Female	2024		2022	
	Members	%	Members	%
Total Female	407,391		396,920	
Total Female Private Sector	111,481	27.36%	120,296	30.31%
Total Female Public Sector	295,910	72.64%	276,624	69.69%
Total Female as % Total Membership	55.23%		55.36%	
Total ROI Female	279,189		278,341	
ROI Private Sector Female	86,348	30.93%	94,916	34.10%
ROI Public Sector Female	192,841	69.07%	183,425	65.90%
Total NI Female		128,202		118,579
NI Private Sector Female	25,133	19.60%	25,380	21.40%
NI Public Sector Female	103,069	80.40%	93,199	78.60%

Congress Centres Network

Steven's Resource Centre

1st Floor Block A, Irishtown Central
Athlone, Co Westmeath
Ph: 090-6473001

Athy Resource Centre

The Manse, Woodstock Street
Athy, Co Kildare
Ph: 059-8638523

Belfast Resource Centre

45-47 Donegall Street Belfast, BT1 2FG
Ph: 028 9096 1111

The Fingal Centre

5 Cardiffsbridge Road Finglas, Dublin 11
Ph: 01-8845228

Noreside Resource Centre

3 St Canices Court, Dean Street,
Kilkenny
Ph: 056-7762146

Employment Development & Information Centre, Longford

11a, 2 Mastertech Business Park
Athlone Road, Longford
Ph: 043-3347515

Mullingar Congress Information & Development Centre

Unit B, Harbour Court
Friars Mill Road
Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Ph: 044-9345060

Appendix IV. Congress Staff

Head Office

31-32 Parnell Square
Dublin D01 YR92
T: 01 8897777

Head Office Secretariat

General Secretary, Owen Reidy

Campaigning and Advocacy Officer,
Paul Gavan

Communications and Digital Media
Officer, Tom Sheppard

Equality, Developmental, & Global
Solidarity Officer, David Joyce

European Officer, Gerry McCormack

Senior Industrial Officer with responsi-
bility for Trade Union Renewal,
Liam Berney

Social Policy & Legislative Officer,
Laura Bambrick

Social Policy & Legislative Officer,
Ger Gibbons

Programme Manager | Senior
Administrator, Deirdre Mannion

Finance Consultant, Liam Daly

Anti-Racist Workplaces Project Coordi-
nator, David Carroll

Administrative Staff

Executive Assistant General Secretary's
Office, Natalie Higgins

Administrator Finance Office,
Pauline Corr

Administrator Reception,
Vivien McDonnell

Administrator Reception,
Trish Ellis

Northern Ireland Office

45-47 Donegall Street
Belfast BT1 2FG
T: 028 9024 7940

Northern Ireland Office Secretariat

Assistant General Secretary,
Gerry Murphy

Administrative Union Learning &
Development Officer,
Julie Gorman

Equality & Social Affairs Officer,
Clare Moore

Finance & Programme Manager,
Gillian Allen

Union Services Officer, Kevin Doherty

Union Services Officer, Communica-
tions & Policy, John O'Farrell

Administrative Assistant,
Tony Gallagher

Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI)

Dublin Office Secretariat

Co-Director, Tom McDonnell

Economist, Paul Goldrick-Kelly

Economist, Ciarán Nugent

Economist, Chris Smart

Event Manager/Administrator,
Louisa O'Brien

Belfast Office Secretariat

Co-Director, Paul MacFlynn

Senior Economist, Lisa Wilson

Congress Secretariat Changes

Left Congress

Date

Macdara Doyle, RIP August 2024

Conor Kavanagh October 2024

Joined Congress

Date

David Carroll December 2023

Gerry McCormack February 2024

Paul Gavan March 2025

Tom Sheppard April 2025

The Executive Council wishes to extend best wishes to those who have left or joined Congress since BDC 2023.

Appendix V. Membership of Congress Committees & External Bodies

Congress Committees

Appeals Board

A Connolly (Fórsa), M Hamilton (IFUT), D O'Connor (INTO), C Rohan (AHCPS), D Thompson (UNITE).

Arts & Culture Committee

D Kettles (UNITE), A Lemon (EQUITY), A Moffatt (PROSPECT), A O'Beirn (BTC), S Rees (NASUWT), S Shanahan (DTC).

BIATU Campaign Working Group

B Aston (Fórsa), B Bennett (NUJ), E Buckley (SIPTU), P Cole (SIPTU), S De Paor (INMO), H Deasy (Fórsa), K Donoghue (Fórsa), B Dunne (INMO), M Fogarty (INMO), C Gallagher (INTO), D Geary (INTO), C Griffin (TUI), M Hamilton (IFUT), C Kelly (TUI), A Klemm (UNITE), A Lemon (EQUITY), P Mackel (UCU), E Mathews (INMO), I McArdle (CWU), B McDowell (FSU), E Mooney (NAHT), K Morgan (Fórsa), G Murphy (FSU), F Ni Bhrógáin (CWU), L O'Brien (MANDATE), D O'Connor (INTO), D O'Connor (SIPTU), K O'Sullivan (Fórsa), N Shanahan (Fórsa), R Sharkey (NASUWT), S Slevin (SIPTU), T Sullivan (CSP), G Tuffey (ASTI).

Community Sector Committee

M Breahony (INMO), B Carr (SIPTU), A Connolly (Fórsa), H Cousins (Fórsa), S Cregan (SIPTU), K Figgis (SIPTU), D Ginley (SIPTU), A Murphy (INMO), B O'Brien (SIPTU), P O'Brien (SIPTU), L O'Hara (Fórsa), C Porter (INMO), S Smith (Fórsa).

Community & Voluntary Sector

H Crickard (UNISON), S Harvey (NIPSA), M Maguire (UNITE), J McCusker (UNISON), N McNally (SIPTU), A McVicker (UNISON), K O'Dowd (GMB), K O'Dowd (GMB), T Trainor (UNITE).

Construction Industry Committee

T Faulkner (CONNECT), J McCabe (UNITE), A McGuinness (SIPTU), B Murphy (OPATSI), B Nolan (CONNECT), B O'Sullivan (BATU), J Regan (SIPTU), A Smith (BATU), C Whelan (BATU).

Disability Committee (Northern Ireland)

D Boggs (NASUWT), F Brown (B&D TC), P Brennan (SIPTU), L Collins (NIPSA), R Graham (B&D TC), S Lambe (NASUWT), P MacKenzie (UNISON), E McMonagle (GMB), N Rea (NIPSA), M Smith (SIPTU), A Smyth (UNITE), A Sweetlove (UNISON).

Disability Committee (Republic of Ireland)

E Brady (ASTI), M Branigan (UNITE), M Clarke (IFUT), M Coughlan (DCTU), D De Paor (ASTI), M Diskmann (BCTU), R Donnelly (SIPTU), E Egan (INMO), C Kavanagh (Fórsa), P Kearns (MANDATE), A Kelly (INMO), M Madden (Fórsa), S Murphy (INTO), U Ni Riain (DCTU), S Lahart (TUI), N O'Hanlon (ESU), F O'Regan (INTO), S Pitman (INMO), P Power (SIPTU), C Scheffer (CWU), J Quinn (MANDATE), M Quinn (SIPTU), V Savage (Fórsa), M Spelman

(GCTU), J Thomas (WCTU), M Walsh (Fórsa).

Education Trade Union Group

K Doherty (GMB), K Ellison (UNITE), G Gault (NAHT), H Greer (NAHT), M Keenan (UNITE), S McCord (UTU), H McKinstry (UNISON), T McMichael (UNITE), H McSherry (NIPSA), E Mooney (NAHT), M Murphy Higgins (NASUWT), M O'Shea (INTO), A Patterson (NASUWT), N Shiel (NIPSA), A Speed (UNISON), J White (UTU), J Wyglendacz (UTU).

Energy & Natural Resources Sectoral Group

R Browne (ESB GOU), J Dullaghan (UNITE), D Erangey (CONNECT), A Kelly (ESU), D Lane (SIPTU), P Mooney (UNITE), E Murphy (SIPTU), W Noone (SIPTU), J O'Dowd (UNITE), K O'Loughlin (ESU), E Thompson (UNITE).

Equality & Human Rights Committee

P McKeown (UNISON), J Patrick Clayton (UNISON).

Anti-Far-Right Campaigns Group

S Beggs (EQUITY), A Kenny (KCTU), R Carrothers (Fórsa), S Curtin (TUI), S Dooley (NUJ), S Devilly, C Gallagher (INTO), K Fleck (BTC), D Geary (INTO), M Hannon, J Horner (SIPTU), G Matthews (PCS), R McCord (UNITE), B McDowell (FSU), C McKenna (SIPTU), P Mullolland (NIPSA), F Ní Bhrógáin (CWU), Y O'Callaghan (SIPTU), G O'Machail (CTU), A Pike (Fórsa), C Porter (INMO), E Ronayne (Fórsa), A Speed (UNISON), H Taylor (NUJ), K Taylor (IFUT).

Anti-Far-Right Policy Advisory Group

S Dooley (NUJ), R McCord (UNITE), Y O'Callaghan (SIPTU), E Ronayne (Fórsa), A Speed (UNISON), H Taylor (NUJ).

Global Solidarity Committee

N Adams (INMO), I Boersma (NIPSA), J Bowen (CCTU), L Collins (NIPSA), S Corrigan (INTO), M Coughlan (Fórsa), M Curtin (NUJ), M Diskmann (BCTU), M Dowling (KCTU), P Hardiman (GCTU), A Kenny (KCTU), B Dunne (INMO), C Donoghue (UNITE), E Fox (MANDATE), M Gillespie (CTU), D Gibney (MANDATE), D C Godkin (UNITE), D Harte (CTC), P Mackel (BCTU), H MacCormac (NAHT), M Leydon (ASTI), E Mathews (INMO), J McCabe (UNITE), C McCarthy (UNISON), J McCrohan (Fórsa), F McGuckin (NASUWT), N McGuirk (Fórsa), K Miskella (WCTU), B Morgan (NASUWT), N Moran (GCTU), C Mullaly (NAHT), S Neill (UNISON), P Ní Sheaghdha (INMO), M O'Brien (SIPTU), Y O'Callaghan (SIPTU), M O'Connor (ESU), T O'Connor (TUI), J O'Driscoll (INTO), K O'Hara (ESU), K O'Malley (Fórsa), R O'Sandair (NIPSA), A Piggott (ASTI), J Reynolds (IFUT), J Robinson (UNITE), J Roche (TUI), A Seely (SIPTU), T Simpson (DCTU), M Smyth (Fórsa), P Torsney (CWU), M Tully (INMO), M Wall (WCTU).

Health and Safety Committee (Northern Ireland)

C Arkinson (NIPSA), R Beggs (NASUWT), C Biagioni (UNISON), B Lewthwaite (PROSPECT), C Martin (UNISON), A McDonnell (B&D TC), M McKee (NIPSA), B Morgan (NASUWT), P Turner (B&D TC), R Young (UNITE).

Health and Safety Committee (Republic of Ireland)

F Barry (UNITE), M Brehony (INMO), R Byrnes (TUI), L Coffey (Fórsa), N Cooper (INTO), S Cronin (SIPTU), D Daly (Fórsa), J Doran (CONNECT), K Eccles (INMO), M Fogarty (INMO), J Fuery (MANDATE), K Grimes (OPATSI), K Halpenny (ESU), R Jordan (INTO), S Joyce (WCTU), P Kenny (CWU), O Henry (FSU), L Howard (UNITE), J Hubbard (KTC), D Hughes (INMO), J Irwin (TUI), D MacDonald (ASTI), J McCarthy (SIPTU), C McDonald (ASTI), A McGuinness (SIPTU), I McGuinness (NUJ), M Meegan, K Morgan (Fórsa), M Morrison (POA), T Murphy (ESU), B O'Leary (MLSA), N O'Mahony (Fórsa), D Robinson (Fórsa), M Quinn (SIPTU), P Ray (SIPTU), K Ryan (POA), A Smith (BATU).

Health Services Committee (Northern Ireland)

J Bremmer (HCSA), J Briers (MIP), S Brophy (GMB), J Clayton (UNISON), N Cunningham (UNITE), S Fevre (BDA), S Keir (BDA), K Kelly (NIPSA), T Killen (NIPSA), S Lythgoe (HSCA), C McCarthy (UNISON), B McCreight (HSCA), M McKenna (UNISON), K Murray (RCM), K O'Dowd (GMB), U O'Farrell (PDA), G Pirie (RCPOD), C Regan (SOR), C Ronald (CSP), B Stevenson (UNITE), T Sullivan (CSP), D Yapicioz (UNISON), J Weir (UNISON), A Wilson (RCM).

Industrial Relations Committee

E Buckley (SIPTU), J Boyle (INTO), K Callinan (Fórsa), A Connolly (Fórsa), J Cunningham (SIPTU), K Dalton (POA), S Dooley (NUJ), A Donnelly (Fórsa), T Fitzgerald (UNITE), M Fogarty (INMO), F Jones (IFUT), J King (SIPTU), M Gillespie (TUI), E Mathews (INMO), S McDonagh (CWU), K Morgan (Fórsa),

F Ní Bhrógáin (CWU), P Ní Sheaghda (INMO), B Nolan (CONNECT), L O'Brien (MANDATE), D O'Connor (INTO), J O'Connell (FSU), C Rohan (AHCPS).

Legal Strategy Committee

A Dolan (TUI), G Light (MANDATE), E Matthews (INMO), L Monaghan (INMO), G Murphy (FSU), D O'Connor (INTO), R Ryan (SIPTU).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Committee (Northern Ireland)

S Lambe (NASUWT), A Lynas (NASUWT), D Roberts (UNISON)

Northern Ireland Committee

J P Clayton (UNISON), L English (USDW), S Fitzgerald (UNITE), M Galloway (RWC), C Gates (NIPSA), G Horgan (TC), T Killen (NIPSA), P Mackel (UCU), E Massey (CWU), G Matthews (PCS), J McCamphill (NASUWT), P McKeown (UNISON), N McNally (SIPTU), M McTaggart (INTO), A Perry (GMB), J Quinn (FBU), T Trainor (UNITE), D Walker (GMB), J White (UTU).

North South Committee

J Boyle (INTO), K Callinan (Fórsa), J P Clayton (UNISON), S Fitzgerald (UNITE), C Gates (NIPSA), F Jones (IFUT), P Mackel (UCU), J McCamphill (NASUWT), G McCormack (SIPTU), P McKeown (UNISON), K Morgan (Fórsa), P Ní Sheaghdha (INMO), J O'Connell (FSU), S Rees (NASUWT), A Speed (UNISON), T Trainor (UNITE), D Walker (GMB).

Private Sector Committee (Republic of Ireland)

B Barrett (FSU), K Callinan (Fórsa), L Connell (Fórsa), R Creaney (Fórsa), S Dooley (NUJ), G Ennis (SIPTU), B Field (Fórsa), T Fitzgerald (UNITE), J Furey (MANDATE), E Gargan (Fórsa), A Kane (SIPTU), P Kavanagh (CONNECT), E Mathews (INMO), I McArdle (CWU), N McGowan (SIPTU), K Morgan (Fórsa), G Murphy (FSU), F Ní Bhrógáin (CWU), B Nolan (CONNECT), L O'Brien (MANDATE), J O'Connell (FSU), K O'Loughlin (ESU), J Palmer (GSU), P Rogers (CONNECT).

Private Sector Committee (Northern Ireland)

G Brash (Unite), J Burns (FSU), L English (USDAW), S Fitzgerald (UNITE), L Graham (BFAWU), G Kelly (TSSA), E Massey (CWU), N McNally (SIPTU), A Moffatt (PROSPECT), N Mullen (BFAWU), A Lemon (EQUITY), A Perry (GMB), D Walker (GMB).

Public Services Committee

J Boyle (INTO), K Callinan (Fórsa), T Casey (MLSA), K Christie (ASTI), S Clyne (IMO), K Dalton (POA), T Fitzgerald (UNITE), M Gillespie (TUI), G Guinan (PDFORRA), F Jones (IFUT), P Kavanagh (CONNECT), C King (RACO), J King (SIPTU), B Murphy (OPATSI), F Murphy

(VI), P Ní Sheaghdha (INMO), B O'Sullivan (BATU), C Rohan (AHCPs).

Retired Workers Committee (Northern Ireland)

A Boorman (UNISON), T Cluskey (NIPSA), S Dodds (NIPSA), M Galloway (PCS), T Gillen (SIPTU), M Gregg (GMB), F Hughes (PCS), J Hughes (FBU), L Huston (CWU), J Ley (NUJ), D Loughlin (UNITE), J Martin (CWU UK), E Paynter (NASUWT), H Rafferty (UNITE), L Scott (UTU), A Thompson (UNISON).

Retired Workers Committee (Republic of Ireland)

W Bagnall (KCTU), M Bridgeman (Fórsa), M Casey (UNITE), P Costello (CWU), N A Croke (KCTU), J Dunne (WCTU), B Fitzpatrick (AHCPs), F Farrell (UNITE), G Foley (Fórsa), T Gillen (SIPTU), D Griffin (UNITE), J Guinan (CWU), T Hickey (IFUT), M Humphries (TUI), D Keane (TUI), P Lamon (SIPTU), M MacGuinness (INMO), H Murphy (SIPTU), D O'Boyle (ASTI), J O'Brien (INTO), G O'Donoghue (ASTI), N Prendiville (NUJ), T Roche (WCTU), D Ronan (INMO), A Walsh (ACHPS), J Walsh (SIPTU), J Whelan (UNITE).

Standing Orders Committee

J Gaffney (MANDATE), S Heading (CONNECT), C Kelly (TUI), D Yapicioz (UNISON).

Women's Committee (Northern Ireland)

C Arkinson (NIPSA), T Creaney (NIPSA), C Darcan (PCS), S Dillon (SIPTU), F Doherty (SIPTU), M Hampton (EQUITY), M Murphy-Higgins (NASUWT), G Matthews (PCS), D McCusker (UNISON), E McGahan (GMB), A McVicker (B&D TC), L Meek (B&D TC), L

Murdock (USDAW), C Nelson (EQUITY), K O'Dowd (GMB), U O'Farrell (PDA), G Partridge (UNITE), S Rees (NASUWT), N Robinson (USDAW), T Trainor (UNITE), J White (UTU), D Yapicioz (UNISON).

Women's Committee (Republic of Ireland)

M Branigan (UNITE), M Brennan (Fórsa), A Coffey (INTO), B T-Collard (DCTU), M L Combre (FSU), C Corcoran (ESU), M Coughlan (Fórsa), M Curtin (NUJ), A Donlon (SIPTU), C Farrar (NUJ), S Farrell (MANDATE), J Flood (Fórsa), E Fitzgerald (INMO), J Gaffeny (MANDATE), C Godkin (UNITE), A Healy (ASTI), M McCafferty (INTO), K McGowan (INMO), T Moloney (DCTU), E Moore (CWU), M Moynihan (BCTU), T Murphy (ESU), M Lafferty (INMO), F Lee (IFUT), M Leydon (ASTI), H Linehan (Fórsa), A Mulcahy (TUI), B Neville (WCTU), T O'Neill (Fórsa), M O'Sullivan (SIPTU), T Ravenhill (CWU), D Reynolds (GCTU), C Scheffer (CWU), L Scully (SIPTU), J Taylor (Fórsa), A Tibby (SIPTU).

Youth Committee (Northern Ireland)

H Gregg (CWU), D Mulholland (NIPSA), A O'Dornan (NASUWT), R Poland (INTO), L Savage (CWU), R Sharkey (NASUWT), J Vaughan (PROSPECT).

Youth Committee (Republic of Ireland)

A Carberry (SIPTU), T Clarke (INTO), F Creagh (ASTI), R Fennelly (Fórsa), J Joy (Fórsa), M Kerrigan (Fórsa), J Lawler (ESU), E Maguire (TUI), A Mannion (MANDATE), E Mitchell (SIPTU), L Noone (TUI), R O'Connell (INMO), J O'Donnell (MANDATE), D O'Toole (ASTI), M Richardson (SIPTU).

External Bodies

Industrial Relations

- Better Balance for Better Business Advisory Group
- Company Law Review Group
- Construction Workers Benevolent Fund
- Construction Workers Health Trust
- Construction Workers Pension Scheme
- Construction Workers Sick Pay Scheme
- Courts Services Board
- Expert Group on Future Skills
- Labour Court
- LEEF Plenary Group
- LEEF Subgroup Aviation
- LEEF Subgroup Childcare
- LEEF Subgroup Employment Rights
- LEEF Subgroup Pensions
- LEEF Subgroup Housing
- LEEF Subgroup Apprenticeship
- LEEF Subgroup Health
- LEEF Subgroup Pensions
- Legal Practitioner Disciplinary Tribunal
- Low Pay Commission
- National Apprenticeship Alliance
- Private Security Authority
- Uisce Éireann/The Public Water Authority
- Working Group on Employment Status
- Workplace Relations Commission
- NI Industrial Court
- Labour Relations Agency
- LRA Engagement Forum
- Industrial & Fair Employment Tribunals

- Public Sector Pensions Working Group
- NIC-ICTU affiliates are represented on various public sector pay bodies

Economic Affairs

- County and City Development Boards
- Harbour Boards
- Local Government Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's)
- National Competitiveness Council
- National Economic & Social Council
- Department of Social Protection Technical Advisory Council
- Administration and Registration Board Construction Industry Register Ireland
- NI Economic Advisory Engagement Forum

Education and Training

- Education & Training Boards (some)
- DFHERIS Advisory Committee for Vocational Education and Training (ACVT)
- Governing Bodies of Institutes of Technology
- Governing Body of NCI
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- Skillnet Ireland
- Teaching Council
- Skills Council NI
- Education Authority Consultative Forum
- Alliance for Lifelong Learning
- Forum for Adult Learning NI
- Belfast Labour Market Partnership

Safety, Health & Welfare

- EU – OSHA (European Agency for Health & Safety at Work)
- Health and Safety Authority
- National Irish Safety Organisation

Social Affairs

- Advisory Committee to the National Action Plan against Racism
- Advisory Group to Ireland's Point (NCP) for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (DETE)
- DFA Standing Committee on Human Rights
- DFA Business and Human Rights Implementation Group
- Employment sub group of National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
- Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) 2021-2027 Monitoring Committee
- IHREC Worker Employer Advisory Committee
- Labour Market Advisory Council and its sub-committee on the evaluation of public employment schemes
- National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy Committee
- Social Welfare Tribunal
- Technical Advisory Group on Social Welfare
- Public Health Agency
- Patient Client Council
- Expert Reference Group Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy
- Health Partnership Forum
- Health Reconfiguration/Transformation Groups

Other Bodies

- Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Social Security Systems
- Advisory Committee on Freedom of Movement of Workers
- Advisory Group on a Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy
- Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce
- Board of IPA
- Coalition 2030
- Construction Workers Benevolent Fund & Construction Workers Health Trust
- Construction Workers Pensions Scheme
- Expert Group of the Nursing Profession
- Irish Coalition on Business and Human Rights
- National Safeguarding Committee
- Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC)
- Retail Consultation Forum
- Retirement Planning Council of Ireland
- Shannon Group PLC
- Equality Coalition
- Belfast City of Sanctuary

International Bodies

- Advisory Committee on Vocational Training
- Advisory Committee on Migrant Workers Social Welfare
- CEDEFOP Government Board
- EU Domestic Advisory Group on the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement
- PeacePlus
- Centre for Cross-Border Studies Ad Hoc Windsor Framework Group
- European Economic and Social

Committee (EESC)

- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
- European Movement
- ETUC Executive
- ETUC Standing Committees
- EU Social Dialogue Committee
- EU Expert Group on Transposition of Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages
- EU Advisory Committee on Freedom of Movement of Workers
- EUROFOUND
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) Working Group
- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Council – Substitute Member
- The European Social Fund (ESF)
- Trade Union Advisory Council to the OECD (TUAC)

Appendix VI. Action on Motions to BDC 2023

1. Special education in Northern Ireland (NASUWT)

The funding and delivery of SEN and other education services were core concerns of the NIC-ICTU Education Trade Union Group. Since July 2023, all education unions, representing both teaching and support staff engaged in strike action, or action short of strike, in pursuit of pay parity with similar workers in GB, as well as properly funded special education services. Following the restoration of devolution in early 2024, these matters have been raised with the Education minister, official and MLAs in the NI Assembly.

2. Education funding in Northern Ireland (UTU)

As well as the industrial action noted above, education affiliates worked through their bargaining structures as well as the NIC-ICTU Education Trade Union Group, lobbying political parties in Stormont at its Education scrutiny committee and before the UK General Election. These issues were also at the center of media debate in the context of the coordinated industrial action being undertaken by every union with members in the sector.

3. Northern Ireland needs a women's health strategy (CSP)

The Department for Health announced the development of a Women's Health Action plan in 2024. The Women's Committee continues to monitor progress informed by the relevant affiliated trade unions to ensure that a comprehensive Women's Health strategy is delivered.

4. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (Executive Council)

NIC-ICTU and its affiliates engaged in coordinated campaigning for the restoration of the NI Assembly and Executive and for an adequate funding mechanism from HM Treasury based on the real needs of the people of Northern Ireland, outlined in the paper 'Smart Money: Better Options for NI's Public Finances', launched in September 2023. This paper and its detailed arguments were adapted by most NI political parties. Congress continues to press for the completion of the B/GFA, a comprehensive Bill of Rights and a robust NI Employment Bill.

5. 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement (UNISON)

As mentioned, Congress and allies across civil society such as the Equality Coalition have pressed the restored NI Executive's ministers and political parties, as well as NIO ministers, to honor the letter and spirit of the B/GFA. Congress demanded and participated in policy mechanisms based on the principles of co-production and co-design. These matters have also been raised at North-South and EU levels, through engagement in the Shared Island Unit and various EU funding and policy bodies.

6. The New Economic Model (Executive Council)

Congress worked with colleagues in NERI and others to develop a comprehensive policy paper on a New Economic model ready for BDC 2025. We believe this is particularly timely given the global changes and the potential global trade war. The model will be framed around 4 principles. A productive economy, more good jobs, economic security and economic sustainability. The Executive has been appraised all the way through this process.

7. Profiteering in cost of living crisis (SIPTU)

Congress with colleagues on the Low Pay Commission and the Private Sector Committee to seek to boost wages in the private sector with a recommendation of claims of between 4% and 7%. We have also sought to challenge the employer narrative on the high cost of doing business.

8. The future of banking (Financial Services Union)

Congress has liaised with the FSU on this issue and have included this call in our Budget submission to Finance and DPER.

9. Delivering a stronger trade union movement through a programme of renewal and growth (Fórsa)

The BIATU all island campaign was a ground-breaking and new initiative which leveraged and utilised external expert support highlight the benefits of unions for workers, society and the economy north and south. We also saw the introduction of union week in the Congress calendar whereby unions worked collaboratively on growing their membership in the workplace. We have appointed Paul Gavan as Campaigns and Advocacy Officer in a permanent position who will be responsible for working with and developing our trades councils and relooking at the One Initiatives. While work was commissioned on the idea and concept of a Media Unit (similar to the concept of NERI) affiliates were not agreeable at this time to fund such an initiative. The concept of Trade Union Renewal is now a standing item on the GPC and Executive Council agenda.

10. Local trade union organisation (Wexford Council of Trade Unions)

Congress continued to provide significant support to the work of Trade Councils. A person from the Congress secretariat is assigned to support the work of Trade Councils in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Trade Councils continue to provide members to represent Congress in Local Government structures such as Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) and Congress has campaigned for the provision of on-going training for these representatives. Congress continues to encourage Trades Councils to examine the relevance of the One Cork and One Galway projects to their own work.

11. Equity for entertainers (EQUITY)

Congress actively encouraged all affiliates to ensure the payment of appropriate rates of pay to performers working at events organised by them. Congress further sought to ensure the same policy in events that Congress participated in.

12. Poaching of union members (CONNECT)

The appropriate actions required to progress this motion continue to be actively considered by the Executive Council.

13. Participation of retired workers (Fermanagh Council of Trade Union)

The general secretary, assistant general secretary, president and officers from Fermanagh Council of Trade Unions and both Retired Workers' Committees had an in-person meeting and exchange of written correspondence on BDC 2019 Motion 33 and the participation of retired members in the decision making of Congress. The outcome was endorsed by the Executive Council.

14. Collective Bargaining (Executive Council)

Congress has been engaging with the government both at LEEF and also with the DETE on the implementation of the Doherty Report and the transposition of the AMWD. The DETE have advised that the AG Office has concerns regarding the constitutionality of some elements of the Doherty report, we do not accept this and the have been tardy in implementing the AMWD. A technical group has been engaging on the public consultation regarding the action plan. Our NIC has been lobbying and on the promotion of the Good Jobs Employment bill for NI and is making progress.

15. Equality (Executive Council)

The equality section of the report covers all of the issues identified in this motion. The marginalisation of Travellers and Roma is specifically addressed in the employment guide published by IHREC and an initiative of the Worker Employer Advisory Committee. The promised revision of equality legislation was not completed before the dissolution of the last Dáil, however, the previous Government published the General Scheme of the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024 in January 2025. It does not appear in the current programme for Government, so its progress is unclear.

16. Right to organise campaign (CWU)

See text in Motion 14 and note that we have supported the Respect at Work campaign and its objectives.

17. Developing a collective strategy to defeat union-busting (Unite the Union)

The objectives of the motion continued to be progressed in the work of Congress in seeking the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive in the Republic of Ireland and the proposed Fair Employment Bill in Northern Ireland.

18. Fair pay for young workers (Belfast & District Trades Councils)

Congress has worked with our Low Pay Commission nominees and has campaigned both at the LEEF employment rights sub-committee and through the media for the abolition of the sub-minimum rates of the minimum wage for young workers. The Commission has recommended such rates be abolished, and we continue to lobby government to act on this recommendation.

19. Apprenticeships and minimum wage (CONNECT)

Congress has actively lobbied Government in the Republic of Ireland to remove the exemption of apprentices from the National Minimum Wage Act. Congress has raised this issue at LEEF and at the LEEF sub-committee on apprenticeships.

20. Citizens' Assembly on workers' right to engage in collective bargaining (Kildare Trades Council)

Congress has liaised with the Kildare Trades Council on this matter and have advised that we have sought to utilise whatever leverage and resource we have on the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive.

21. Health & Safety (Executive Council)

The Health and Safety Committee has continued with a full programme since the last BDC. This has included a focus on supporting safety reps working with the HSA to support and resource the role. The HSA has had two major revisions of the Safety Rep handbook as well as a major safety reps conference at which the H&S Chair spoke. In addition, the Committee has continued to promote the issue of psycho-social risk and lobbied for an EU Directive as well as promoting the Work Positive Toolkit. Congress piloted Work Positive within its own employees and this continues to be promoted to members of the Executive Council.

22. Trade union training release (Mandate)

Proper legislative rights for workplace representatives is a key demand from Congress in the action plan and the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wage Directive. We have drafted legislation for this effect.

23. Artificial Intelligence (NUJ)

Congress's manifesto for the June 2024 European Parliament elections called for a just, human-centred, digital transformation as well as the effective regulation of artificial intelligence, with the 'human in control' principle incorporated into EU law. Congress continues to campaign for legislation applying across the island on algorithmic systems at work and, taking account of the rapid speed of change in this field, to develop a comprehensive policy on AI in the workplace, including with the European Trade Union Confederation.

24. Automation and skills (USDAW)

Congress's pre-budget submissions for Budgets 2024 and 2025 recommended increased investment in skills, particularly for the green and digital transitions and other future economic transitions, and the introduction of a statutory entitlement to paid training leave. Congress has advocated these positions at the Government's Labour Market Advisory Council, particularly with respect to workers and groups underrepresented in skills programmes. The OECD's 2023 review of Ireland's skills strategy did take up our recommendation to add trade union representation to the National Skills Council, and the Government implemented this recommendation in 2024.

25. Support for creative industries (Prospect)

Work to implement the actions detailed in this motion is ongoing.

26. Failure to tackle seafarer exploitation in the Irish Sea (RMT)

The objectives of the motion continued to be progressed in the work of Congress in seeking the transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive in the Republic of Ireland and the proposed Fair Employment Bill in Northern Ireland.

27. Protect workers' rights and promote equality (UNISON)

Congress has lobbied for better than adequate workers' rights for workers in the EU and those in Northern Ireland, on various EU bodies and with officials and politicians in Dublin, London, Brussels and Belfast. In particular, Congress in Dublin has pursued the full transposition into Irish law of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, while seeking many of the same collective bargaining and other rights to be written into statute in the NI Assembly under the 'Good Jobs' Employment Bill.

28. Remove burden of unfair BIK increases on workers (GSU)

The Finance Act 2019 introduced an environmental rationale for the calculation of Benefit-in-Kind (BIK) on employer-provided cars. The new rates took effect from 1 January 2023. The Government says that the new structure, with CO2-based discounts and surcharges, is designed to incentivise employers to provide employees with low-emission cars. The Congress pre-budget submissions for Budget 2024 Making Work Pay and Budget 2025 Building a Better Economic Future stressed that all green taxes be ringfenced to fund the just transition and to protect low income households. Congress continues to make the case with Government for a fairer Benefit-in-Kind system that incentivises employers to provide employees with low-emission cars and that ensures real progress on emissions reductions.

29. Work life balance (Galway Council of Trade Unions)

Employees have the right to refer complaints and seek redress through the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) for non-compliance with the Act. That is, if they believe their employer has failed to follow the correct process in making a decision. Section 29 of the Act 2022 further provides for a review of the operation of the new right to request after one year and no later than two years of it coming into force. That is, no later than March 2026.

30. Safe staffing and skill mix (INMO)

This issue has been the subject of plenary LEEF meetings chaired by An Taoiseach and we continue to support our affiliates on this matter which is a combination of both industrial action and political lobbying.

31. Public service pensions (INTO)

Congress has sought to raise awareness of the importance of occupational pensions particularly in the context of our work in ensuring a fair and sustainable introduction of Auto-enrolment in the Republic of Ireland.

32. Rising cost of living and living standards on a fixed-income (Executive Council)

There was a significant relaxing of the qualifying rules for the €924 Fuel Allowance for over 70s in 2024 and over 66s in 2025. As a result, thousands of retired workers with a modest occupational pension now qualify, including, for the first time, public servants paying Class D PRSI. Fuel Allowance recipients are also eligible for free energy efficiency improvements up to €30,000 on their family home, with over 66s being the main beneficiaries. In sharp contrast, a move to end winter fuel payments for all pensioners in England and Wales was extended to Northern Ireland. Delegates voted unanimously for a unified campaign to lobby elected representatives to reverse the cut at the 2024 NIC-ICTU conference.

In response to a Pensions Commission's recommendation, the government introduced a smoothed earnings method to calculating a benchmarked/indexed rate of State Pension payments as an input to the annual budget process from September 2023. The ROI Retired Workers' Committee continue to support the SIPTU retired workers' section in their pension promise campaign. The UK Labour government has committed to keep the triple lock until the end of the current Parliament.

33. Delivering better maternity services (RCM)

This matter was pursued through the NIC-ICTU Health Committee, and in particular the Royal College of Midwives, who worked closely with the review of maternity services completed in October 2024. The report, by Prof Mary Renfrew, details 32 recommendations for action and is accompanied by a five-year programme for change. Its implementation will be closely monitored by Health affiliates.

34. Pension entitlements (ASTI)

This issue is raised by Congress at the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) subgroup on pensions which is chaired by the Minister for Social Protection. However, overall policy responsibility in relation to public service occupational pension schemes payable to retired public servants is the responsibility of the Minister for Public Expenditure. Congress will continue to raise this issue.

35. Recruitment, retention and reclamation in the education sector (TUI)

Congress continues to pursue the objectives of this motion through the work of our Education Sector Committees in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

36. School-based mental health support for primary school children (Bray & District Council of Trade Unions)

INTO have been looking for school based mental health services for children and in Budget 2023 an announcement was made that a pilot project would be put in place. This was launched in November 2023. Budget 2024 announced a further €5m to continue the pilot for the 24/25 school year.

37. Health service (NIPSA)

The NHS has been in a funding crisis for at least 10 years and Congress proposals for better central funding for the NI Executive have taken into account the real health needs of the NI population. Safe staffing and better pay to attract and retain health workers were at the core of several days of strike action by health workers from all affiliates, before a fairer pay deal and improved financial settlement was offered after the return of devolution. Despite many of the issues relating to years in underfunding persisting, there remains strong commitment of NIC-ICTU and wider society to a universal health service for everybody which is free at the point of use.

38. DECON (decontamination) Campaign (FBU)

The decontamination campaign is ongoing and the FBU continues to lobby the relevant Government Ministers, political parties and Departments.

39. Gender equality in medicine (IMO)

This motion is being pursued by the IMO along with the health services sectoral group in Congress.

40. Acute bed capacity (IMO)

Congress continues to pursue the objectives of this motion through the work of its Health Sector Committee and at the LEEF Sub- Group on Health.

41. Fair pay now (Pharmacists' Defence Association)

The PDA plays a full role in the work of the NIC-ICTU Health Committee and its Regional Official outlined matters specific to members when part of a delegation giving evidence to the NI Assembly Health Committee in 2024.

42. Housing (Executive Council)

Congress has developed and published and have promoted a Congress Housing policy paper which promotes the sentiments of this motion and we have held seminars and events to seek to popularise same. We use the LEEF Housing subcommittee as a forum to also promote this position. With the appointment of a new Campaigns and Advocacy Officer we are engaging with affiliates and stakeholders to evaluate and consider the future of the Raise the Roof campaign.

43. Workers unity (NIPSA)

Congress has been central to the clear and coordinated civil society response to the far-right and others who stoke division among working people. Congress used the platform of media interest during the wave of strike action across every sector, to additionally outline policy proposals on the economy, on workers' rights, on building a more inclusive society and access for workers and their unions to be represented on civic and public bodies to promote the values of equality, diversity and solidarity.

44. Refugees and asylum seekers - Fair treatment (PCS)

Our Stronger Together Anti-Racism Workplaces & Trade Unions Project has worked to promote awareness of racism and to challenge the inequalities facing migrant populations, in particular asylum seekers and refugees. The project aims to clarify and correct the myths and stereotypes perpetuated by the far-right in relation to these groups and works to enhance inclusive responses from within the trade union movement. Working in collaboration with trade unions, civil society groups, NGOs and most crucially, with migrant populations themselves, the project offers practical assistance to trade unions to ensure a zero tolerance to racism is upheld across the workplaces of Ireland.

45. The rise of the far-right (IFUT)

This motion was pursued as part of the work of the Congress Anti-Racism project. Educational resources and training, seminars and participation and organising of demonstrations/rallies were all part of the activities. Congress also worked closely with the Hope and Courage Alliance.

46. Campaigning against apartheid in Palestine (Executive Council)

Our activity on Palestine is outlined in detail in the report to BDC 2025 and includes ongoing participation in the Ireland against apartheid campaign for Palestine.

47. War and peace in Ukraine (Dublin Council of Trade Unions)

Congress has worked through our membership of the ETUC to advance the sentiments of this motion.

48. Irish Neutrality (Cork Council of Trade Unions)

Congress has continued to promote the position of Irish neutrality when discussed at various forums.

49. Emergency Motion No 1 - RTE crisis

The objectives of this motion were pursued by the RTE Trade Union Group with the assistance of the Congress Secretariat.

50. Emergency Motion No.2 - Tara Mines

The objectives of this motion were pursued by the Unions representing members in Tara Mines with the assistance of the Congress Secretariat.





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