



Women in Trade Unions - **shaping the future of work**

29/30 September 2022
Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle.

Joint Women's Conference



Thursday 29th September

10.00am Registration and coffee

Session 1 - Opening Session

11.00am Welcome and introduction

Geraldine Alexander & Margaret Coughlan, Joint Women's Committee Chairs

Chair of Conference Arrangements Committee

Civic Welcome

11.15 General Secretary's address

Patricia King,
ICTU General Secretary

Session 2 - Women and Work

12.00pm Motions on Women and Work together with appropriate sections of report to conference.

1.00pm Lunch and Fringe Events

Lunch available for all delegates. Sandwiches and tea and coffee all available in Fringe rooms – see page 41 for fringe meetings.

1. **Seeking Refuge:** the experience of women seeking asylum and how trade unions can provide solidarity
2. **Safe at home, safe at work:** how trade unions and employers are supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse

3. **We Did It!** How trade unions negotiated a sectoral agreement for childcare workers

Session 3 Women and Work

14.30pm Motions on Women and Work

15.30pm Guest Speaker – The Future of Work, special report from NERI

Paul MacFlynn and Lisa Wilson

16.00pm Coffee break

16.15pm Session 3 resumes

17.30pm End of Day 1

19.30pm Conference dinner followed by disco.

Friday 30 September

Session 4 Women and Society

09.30am Motions on Women and Society and appropriate sections of report to Women's Conference

Guest Speaker

Ivana Bacik – Chair of the Oireachtas Gender Equality Committee

10.45am Coffee Break

11.00am Voting on motions and appropriate sections of report

13.00pm Close of Conference

I am delighted to extend a very warm welcome to the 2022 Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women's Conference: *Women in the Trade Union Movement, Shaping the World of Work*.

I am also delighted that after two and a half years since the last Women's Conference, that we can meet each other once again and discuss and debate in person the important motions which will come before you.

The period covered by this report has seen momentous world events which have affected every one of us in many different ways. The COVID-19 pandemic presented the trade union movement with unprecedented challenges, from securing workers livelihoods to ensuring that workplaces were safe for the essential workers who kept our society moving. We also had to respond quickly to new ways of working which saw many thousands of workers relocated from offices to their homes, almost overnight. Whilst working from home may have brought benefits to some workers for many more, primarily women, it meant that they no longer had a place of safety away from domestic abuse and violence.

I believe that the trade union movement met these challenges, raising vital issues with Government and policy makers and making a real difference to people's lives. I would like to commend the ICTU Women's Committee and all of you for your role in protecting workers and highlighting issues which particularly impacted on women workers.

Whilst we hope that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is now behind us, there remains much work to do. The war in Ukraine together



ICTU General Secretary Patricia King

with a difficult economic recovery at a time when the cost of living is sky rocketing will mean that the trade union movement must respond robustly to protect working people and their families.

At the same time, it is important to remain positive. The theme of your conference is timely and I believe that there are huge opportunities to shape the world of work for the better. Working together we can make a difference to women workers across this island as well as take action to support women trade unionists internationally who are struggling to achieve peace and basic human rights.

I want to finish by commending the Women's Committee of ICTU North and South for their work in promoting gender equality in work, in trade unions and in society and wish you well for this important conference.

Patricia King
ICTU General Secretary

1. Shaping the Future of Work

ICTU Women's Committee - Northern Ireland

This conference commends the work of the ICTU Women's Committee and ICTU affiliates in influencing policy and mobilising women workers to shape the future of work.

However, much more remains to be done.

Women continue to earn less than men and continue to shoulder the large share of caring responsibilities. Women are also disproportionately affected by sexual harassment in the workplace with an ICTU survey showing that of over 600 responses from trade union members who had experienced sexual harassment, some 73% were women. The survey also revealed that a shocking 3 out of 4 respondents did not report the harassment to their employer.

This conference notes the policy report produced by NIC ICTU *Childcare in Northern Ireland: Care, Cost and Gender Equality* and endorses the recommendation for fair wages for childcare workers and a system of publicly provided childcare which works for parents and children.

This conference further recognises the importance of flexible working rights for all workers and particularly for working carers.

Conference calls on the ICTU Executive Council to work with the Women's Committee to:

- Campaign for the introduction of statutory paid carers leave for all workers;
- Campaign for the development and implementation of robust Gender Pay Gap Reporting regulations, as envisaged by schedule 19 of the NI Employment Act 2016;
- Campaign for a positive duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment;
- Work with the relevant Government Departments to ensure full compliance with ILO Convention 190 on the prevention of harassment and violence in the world of work;
- Campaign for the development of a childcare strategy which makes provision for publicly funded, accessible and flexible childcare across Northern Ireland and which provides for a sectoral agreement for setting pay and terms and conditions for childcare workers;
- Campaign for the widening of current flexible working legislation to cover all workers as a day one right. The campaign should also include the requirement for all jobs to be advertised flexibly as a default with employers required to set out the exceptional circumstances justifying if a job cannot accommodate any form of flexibility.

2. Childcare – an essential public service

ICTU Women's Committee

Conference commends the work done by Congress and affiliates in the whole area of Early Years Care and Education. In particular, the recent €172 million increase in government funding in Budget 2022 which made possible the negotiation by SIPTU of a historic first pay deal for the 97% female workforce, a major step on the road to professional pay and conditions.

These rates of pay will be legally binding. That means no one can be paid lower, but workers can be paid more and by continuing to build a stronger union we can continue our journey towards professional pay and conditions year after year.

Improving pay will also help address the staffing crisis. Services are struggling to recruit and retain staff and this is undermining their sustainability.

Conference welcomes the new additional funding stream for the sector, Core Funding, and its associated conditionality, enabling a shift away from the marketisation of service delivery and towards a partnership model, with responsibilities and benefits for both the State and providers. This will support quality of provision, improved pay and conditions for staff, management of parental fees and sustainability of services and ensure that the state can ensure that public investment is spent to deliver the type of transformational change needed in the sector.

Despite these improvements, and the freeze on fees associated with the new core funding (still considerably below the UNICEF recommended benchmark of investing at least 1 per cent of GDP), it is clear that the increases over the past decade have not been sufficient to reduce the financial burden on parents using early years services, now struggling to .

Conference believes the time is now ripe for consideration of the introduction of a full, free, universal and public childcare system funded through progressive taxation.

In all other rich EU countries, childcare is considered an essential public service. In Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, access to full-time care is guaranteed to all children aged one year or younger. A similar right exists in Germany, but publicly-funded centres closing at lunch-time is common making full-time employment difficult for mothers. In Austria, Belgium, and France, childcare is available for the year or two before children start primary school. In Ireland, where private for-profit businesses provide the majority of childcare facilities, there is no legal right to a childcare place.

Conference welcomes the 2021 “Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare” that has underpinned these changes. This report also contains important recommendation “to examine whether some element of public provision should be introduced alongside private provision”, an important step towards the Congress preference of a public universal scheme for early years education & care.

Conference believes that the market has failed and that the State must recognise childcare as an essential public service for which they are primarily responsible for delivering and resourcing. It is the European way. It is the only way to guarantee quality, accessible and affordable childcare for families and decent pay and conditions for workers.

Conference calls on Congress and all affiliates to advocate for such change and to ensure that the Future of Work is one that values those working in care and ensures that no women are prevented from working due to lack of early years care and education.

3. Converting Women Workers' Positive Attitudes Towards Trade Unions into Union Membership

SIPTU

Conference notes that academic research published earlier this year revealed that women workers in Ireland show a greater likelihood of being more well disposed towards union representation than male workers. Research showed that when asked if a vote to establish a union was held in their organisation, half of non-union women workers said they would vote yes to establish a union and a further almost 20% said they were yet undecided. Conference further notes that young women, and young people generally, are particularly well disposed towards establishing a union in their employment.

Conference calls on the Executive Council, working in conjunction with the Women's Committees, to maximise the potential to convert positive attitudes towards unions into union

membership by publicising the union premium on pay and working conditions for women workers and by highlighting with examples the numerous benefits of union membership for women.

Conference further calls on the Executive Council to ensure that women workers who join and organise a trade union are protected from anti-union employer behaviour including harassment, intimidation and victimisation.

4. The Cost of Living Crisis and the Impact on Women and Families

UNISON

Women are the 'shock absorbers of poverty'. They tend to have the main responsibility for the purchase and preparation of food for their children and families, and for the management of budgets in poor households.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, people in Northern Ireland are facing a devastating cost-of-living crisis.

Over a decade of austerity policies, cuts to social security benefits and low wage rises (which are effectively real term pay cuts) have left many people in poverty and continue to cause increased hardship for the working poor. While the richest households saved money during the pandemic, the poorest have fallen further into debt, with no cushion to cope with rising prices.

Working people are having to choose to eat or to heat and, with fuel and energy costs set to raise again, this will have a devastating impact on women and families. This has been exasperated by the current Cost-of-Living Crisis.

Single parents, most of whom are women, have been hit particularly badly by the cost of living crisis with a third in financial difficulty, and 11% in problem debt. To add to the ongoing crisis, working mothers in Northern Ireland also struggle to access affordable childcare.

Conference calls on the ICTU Women's Committee to campaign on the following issues:

- an increase in all benefits to keep pace with inflation;
- the abolition of the benefits cap and the two-child limit;
- increases in earnings replacement benefits including ESA, Jobseekers' Allowance, Income Support, Carers Allowance, Maternity Allowance, Statutory Maternity Pay and Statutory Sick Pay; - an increase in Child Benefit
- public-sector pay rises that reflect inflation rates
- a fully funded childcare strategy for Northern Ireland including affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare including 30 hours of free childcare for parents and a workforce with decent pay and terms and conditions.

5. Family Friendly Policies

MANDATE

Conference notes the dearth across many sectors of meaningful family friendly and/or work-life balance employment policies. This is mainly due to the absence of robust appropriate legislation aimed at ensuring that no disadvantage occurs where there is a requirement to look after a sick child or loved one. Whilst it is recognised that Force Majeure is a statutory right it is limited and only provides for emergency situations. In many circumstances these carer duties fall disproportionately on women therefore conference calls on the NEC to campaign for the introduction of appropriate legislative change along with an awareness building campaign amongst its affiliates to include the introduction of relevant policies within future employment specific industrial relations strategies.

6. A Woman's place...

GMB

Where exactly is a woman's place? A woman's place is in any workplace doing any job she wants to do. And more importantly, a woman's place is at the heart of her Union.

This conference notes with concern that women are still underrepresented in many areas of work considered to be 'Men's Work.' This includes manufacturing, Fire and Rescue services, professional driving and many more.

This conference resolves to break down the barriers that prevent women from considering careers in these areas by initiating a campaign that looks

- To fully understand what barriers or impediments there are to women entering these workplaces or roles.
- Seeks to explore and eradicate the barriers to women applying for or even considering the roles
- Works with industry to remedy the barriers, improve policies and tackle sexism
- To promote the experience of successful women in these areas.

Conference seeks to encourage women into all aspects of working life and through that to improve the representation of women in all levels of the trade union movement.

We demand a society where women are fully and equally involved in all aspects of work, politics and trade unions

7. Menstrual Health Policy

FÓRSA

A recent survey by Fórsa have shown that just 1% of employees have the protection of a menstrual health policy in their workplace. Over 96% of the 1,800 survey respondents favoured the introduction of a menstrual-friendly policy in their workplace. This research clearly showed that women would welcome measures like access to flexible work arrangements, improved training for supervisors and line managers, action to address deep-seated stigma, and practical improvements in toilet facilities, office fabrics, and temperature control for those who experience hot flushes or other menopausal symptoms.

The research found that over 70% of those who worked at home during the pandemic found that remote working improved their experience of menstruation. Better access to measures to alleviate issues with menstruation and menopause was cited as the main reason, while avoiding commuting when experiencing cramps, nausea and hot flushes was also positive

This Conference notes the stigma that continues to exist around these issues.

This Conference agrees that flexible working arrangements can form part of period and menopause-friendly policies.

This Conference agrees ICTU & its affiliates must do more to ensure that employers address issues around menstrual health and menopause and will consider the best way to progress this.

8. New World of Work

Galway Council of Trade Unions

"In the New World of Work including hybrid working arrangements, the division between home and workplace has blurred and home working isn't necessarily a choice when employers have downsized in-house office arrangements and adapted home working as part of their business practice.

But home/home office isn't necessarily a safe place for women enduring intimate partner violence and domestic abuse as research during the pandemic lockdowns showed spikes in domestic violence levels as more women worked from home and hadn't the safety valve of "going to work".

In this New World of Work ICTU at a strategic level with government and employer bodies and individual unions at sectoral and individual employment levels need to campaign for workplace domestic violence policies where employers acknowledge that domestic violence happens and impacts the workplace, and that employers will detail proactive measures to accommodate those experiencing it.

ICTU and affiliated unions can also help increase awareness of the issues by investing in domestic abuse awareness training and resources.

9. Gender Based Violence

UNITE

Conference notes the reported increase in gender based violence. It also welcomes the commitment from the ROI government for a dedicated Minister and agency to address the challenges of gender based violence. However, unless government departments are properly funded and resourced we cannot properly protect or support people experiencing the trauma of an unsafe society or home. The charitable sector has for too long provided these services on shoe string budgets causing unacceptable waiting lists and lack of adequate hostel provision for women in all parts of Ireland.

Conference notes that children should be provided with more education in relation to healthy relationships, and consent, recognizing Domestic & Sexual Abuse and knowing where to go for help.

Conference calls on ICTU women's committees to campaign and lobby for:

- Government to fund mandatory DV & Sexual violence and healthy relationships training in schools
- More cross-border engagement with agency's working with victims and children
- Long term commitment by governments to fund services that effectively prevent and support victims of gender-based violence
- Governments to start providing multi-annual funding for services.

10. Gender Based Abuse on Social Media Platforms

NUJ

This conference notes the high level of gender-based abuse on social media platforms.

Women in public positions, including elected representatives, media workers and trade union activists and leaders, are among those who are most frequently the targets of online abuse.

The activities of trolls using the cloak of anonymity can serve as a deterrent to engagement in the public realm and can have a damaging impact on the mental wellbeing of victims.

Conference believes that big tech companies must take greater steps to ensure that social media platforms are not used to promote hate speech, including misogyny and racism.

Conference calls on the incoming committee to develop a training programme aimed at assisting women to deal with online abuse.

11. Domestic Violence and Abuse

UTU

Domestic Violence and Abuse has long been a scourge on Northern Irish society, with statistics showing that the impact of the pandemic has served only to exacerbate the issue.

Congress acknowledges fully the severe negative impact caused by Domestic Violence and Abuse on the adult survivors in our society but also recognises that responsibility must be taken to address this issue in terms of the effect it has on our children and young people, both now and into the future.

Congress welcomes the introduction of Operation Encompass but recognises that this is a reactive measure.

It is in the interests of our children and young people to support this initiative with a robust and preventative approach.

Congress, therefore, calls upon the ICTU to campaign for:

(i) Minimum agreed age-appropriate content for Relationships and Sexuality Education which addresses the issues of domestic abuse and healthy relationships.

(ii) Specialist training and support for teachers that enables and equips them to deliver a 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.

12. Shaping Safe Workplaces

EQUITY

Equity condemns the attacks and harassment suffered by its members whilst they are engaged in work at entertainment venues. Such work can include leaving venues late at night and sometimes alone, parking and loading out in insecure locations with expensive and / or cumbersome equipment and a lack of personal security leading our members to feel vulnerable.

It is the principal duty of hirers and employers, under the HASWA (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974), to secure the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people at their workplace. Equity Council has been charged by its members to identify, develop and promote good practice in the industry around the duty of care of venue owners and managers. Matters under consideration are that venues will be reminded of their obligations to provide a safe workplace by making available, for example:

- (1) A safe parking space at the venue, as close to the get-in point as is viable, being provided whenever possible.
- (2) A representative of the venue to meet and greet the artiste and accompany them whilst unloading and then loading up their vehicle at the end of the engagement.
- (3) If alternative parking must be provided away from the venue, then a representative should meet them where they have parked and safely accompany them to and from the venue.

- (4) Consideration being given to the journey home or to digs, especially when during unsocial hours, and to those artistes who travel to the venue by public transport. Equity calls on the ICTU Women's Committee to join Equity in condemning the attacks and harassment suffered by its members whilst they are engaged in work at venues, and to support its campaign to improve good practice by promoting the same principles for all workers who work in insecure locations.

13. Ashling Murphy - Femicide - 'She only went for a run'

CWU UK

Here in Ireland everyone reeled at the tragic murder of Ashling Murphy the young teacher whose beautiful life was senselessly taken away whilst out jogging in broad daylight one sunny afternoon back in January, her beautiful smiling face radiated through every home across the Island of Ireland and the UK.

In the province of Northern Ireland, the statistics show that, more women are murdered in Northern Ireland as a result of domestic violence than in any other part of western Europe per head of capita,

Only Romania matches their grim toll in the whole of Europe of 0.43 killings per 100,000 inhabitants, which is three times that of England and Wales.

Statistics from Femicide in Ireland

- 249 women have died violently between 1996-2022*.
- 18 children have died alongside their mothers.
- 158 women have been killed in their own homes (63%).

Conference instructs the ICTU to work with all Domestic abuse organisations, politicians, education boards etc, to raise awareness and education, not only for potential victims but in society as a whole, starting with schools and university's to help eradicate the perception, that its somehow okay to abuse and control, not only physically but mentally. We are seeing on upward trend with behavioural traits of coerciveness, gas lighting, financial abuse etc, which can ultimately and unfortunately lead to physical violence and the loss of life for so many of our women and children.

"SHE ONLY WENT FOR A RUN"

We must do all we can to prevent this happening to our sister's, daughters and mothers.

14. Protecting Women and Girls in Schools

NASUWT

Congress welcomes the passing of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and specifically the provisions in relation to up-skirting and down blousing.

Congress commends all those who campaigned to ensure that Northern Ireland has the strongest legislation in relation to up-skirting and down-blousing in these islands. Congress extends a special thank you to the victims of this crime whose brave testimony has helped to ensure that this activity is recognised in law as a specific criminal offence.

Congress affirms that schools should be places of safety and must be supported in tackling the problem of sexual harassment or violence towards either pupils or staff.

Congress therefore calls upon the ICTU to conduct research on the prevalence of sexism and sexual harassment in schools and to campaign for:

- i. A Departmental circular to provide statutory guidance to schools on how to handle the issue of up-skirting and the sending/receiving of unsolicited pornographic messages, including clear messaging that the police should be informed when a crime is suspected.
- ii. Minimum agreed age-appropriate content for Relationships and Sexuality Education which addresses the issues of consent, image based sexual abuse, tackling rape myths, boundaries, acceptable behaviours, and healthy relationships.
- iii. Specialist training and CPD for teachers that educates and empowers them to deliver a robust and fit for purpose Relationship and Sexuality Education curriculum.
- iv. Training of all school staff and governors on the continuum of sexual harassment and

violence to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour and how to address it within the school context. Such training should underpin a whole school approach to safeguarding that supports teachers and support staff in challenging attitudes and dispositions that normalise a culture of sexual harassment and abuse.

- v. The development and implementation of whole school policies to tackle sexual abuse and harassment in schools, including the use of digital technology and social media, that protects all members of the school community.
- vi. Provision and access to specialist services for victims of sexual harassment and violence in school that is trauma centred and victim led.

15. Tackling Sexual Harassment

USDAW

In recent years the scale and extent of sexual harassment in the workplace has been thrown into sharp focus.

At least 40% of women have experienced workplace harassment. The ICTU's own research in 2019 found that over half of those surveyed had experienced sexual harassment at work and confirmed the gendered nature of sexual harassment.

The findings echo those of Usdaw's own survey which found the majority of women in Usdaw – 7 out of 10 – have experienced sexual harassment at some point in their working lives. This rises to 9 out of 10 young women.

The retail workforce is a highly feminised workforce characterised by high levels of low pay and low hours contracts and strong vertical occupational segregation. This together with the 'customer is always right' philosophy and the low status society affords to retail jobs create the perfect conditions in which, without effective trade union organisation, sexual harassment can thrive.

It is widely recognised that sexual harassment is not just about the behaviour of a few individuals but is about the culture of workplaces where everyday behaviours create offensive, intimidating or hostile environments for workers, predominantly women. The majority of women who are exposed to harassment at work don't raise this either with their employer or with their union. This is primarily a rational response given the likelihood of their not being believed, their complaint being mishandled and the high risk of isolation, victimisation and negative personal and career consequences

Trade Unions have a vital role to play in encouraging women to report harassment; ensuring appropriate action is taken and preventing harassment from arising in the first place by changing and influencing workplace cultures and negotiating robust workplace policies and procedures.

We ask the ICTU in consultation with the Womens Committee to:

- i. Support the work affiliates are doing with employers to address sexual harassment, negotiate standalone policies and promote good practice.
- ii. Encourage unions to examine their own internal policies and procedures to ensure

they are equipped to prevent and respond to sexual harassment within their organisations.

- iii. Support the work being done in unions to organise and reach out to women
- iv. Press for the enforcement of the preventative duty in the Equality Employment Acts and the speedy implementation of a preventative duty into the Equality Act accompanied by a Statutory Code of Practice.

16. LGBT+ Inclusion

INTO

This conference:

- a. commits to protecting equal employment opportunities, participation and treatment, particularly with regard to recruitment and promotion, of all workers regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- b. commends the proactive steps taken by many trade unions to create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for LGBT+ members and wholly condemns any homophobic, biphobic and transphobic attitudes that may be expressed, including implicitly, in workplaces.
- c. calls on all trade union affiliates to:
 - i. ensure that all Republic of Ireland trade union members are made aware of the changes to Section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act via the Equality Miscellaneous Provisions Act (2015) and what this means in practice for them and that all members in Northern Ireland

are made aware of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (1998, 2003) and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and what they mean in practice for them.

- ii. ensure that updated guidance in LGBT+ inclusion is included in all trade union training;
- iii. ensure all trade unions provide information to their membership on:
 1. information on LGBT+ terminology and identities;
 2. examples of best practice with regard to proactive inclusion of LGBT+ members;
- iv. provide clear leadership through the union with regards to correct and appropriate use of gender pronouns by:
 1. ensuring all union documents use gender inclusive language (he/she/they);
 2. asking for the gender of members only when necessary;
 3. allowing for a wide range of responses when this information is required (male/female/non-binary/transgender male/transgender female etc);
 4. encouraging cisgender members to share their gender pronouns (e.g. as part of introductions or in their email signature) to create a safe space for transgender and non-binary colleagues to do likewise.

17. Gender Equality in Medicine

IMO

Significant gender inequalities exist within medicine in particular, the inability to plan for and balance work and family commitments, impacts on career choices and family planning choices, career progression and consequent negative impact on female earnings in medicine.. Given the increasing numbers of women entering and practising medicine and the positive benefits this brings to healthcare, the meeting calls on the Department of Health and the HSE to:

- a. Ensure any obstacles that deter women reaching their full career goals are removed.
- b. Provide that all contractual terms and conditions should take account of part time working and job sharing in addition to enhanced family friendly policies
- c. Provision of onsite childcare facilities in line with the working hours expected of doctors

18. Promoting Women in ICT

Communications Workers' Union

Conference notes that there are significant challenges to encouraging women into ICT roles, despite the demand in Ireland for high-level ICT skills.

Notwithstanding years of equality legislation, women are still the predominant family carer and while a high proportion of women have third level qualifications, they are underrepresented in the ICT sector.

This disparity of women in ICT, cannot continue, with significant openings each year in a stable, progressive field of employment.

It is also worthy of note that women may experience difficulties when it comes to digital upskilling due to family arrangements or a perceived lack of confidence to compete in a fast-paced technological environment.

While some organisations have a long-term digital upskilling programmes of those that do very few have a focus on gender.

Most recently, CWU was involved in a European Social Partner project with UNI Global Union and ETNO (European Telecommunications Network Operator's Association) in the Telecoms sector to research this issue further. We jointly reviewed sectoral best practices that focus on digital upskilling based on gender and the aging workforce that can be embedded within the sector.

We can also start at the basics and encourage young girls and women to consider a future in ICT and ensure that the relevant supports are in the industry such as comprehensive work life-balance arrangements and gender based digital upskilling.

In line with our theme this year "Shaping the Future of Work", Conference calls Congress and the Women's Committee to seek to have a review carried out on the role of Women in ICT in Ireland with national best practices identified to retain and progress women in this sector.

19. Gender Pay Information

ASTI

This conference calls on Government Departments to take responsibility for supplying all information required under the *Gender Pay Information Act 2021 in respect of those employees and organisations* for which it has responsibility and for whom it is the paymaster.

20. The Gender Dimension to Precarious Employment in Higher Education

IFUT

This Conference calls on Congress to highlight the gender dimension to precarious employment in Higher Education.

Many studies have shown that women are disproportionately affected by the negative impact of precarious and casual employment as researchers, tutors, lecturers, and in other crucial roles in Higher Education.

This Conference calls on Congress to lobby government and employers to urgently address the reliance on short-term and precariously employed staff.

Keeping working women on casual and precarious contracts is not only immoral but it is bad for quality education and teaching.

21. Work/Life Balance

TUI

ICTU Women's Conference notes that there is presently no permanent mechanism for teachers to transfer to another school within the post primary sector without losing their permanent/CID status, even though they hold the necessary qualifications and expertise to teach jobs being advertised in their subject areas closer to home or in their desired location to live.

This has a huge effect on the life/work balance of our members, especially women, who often have to travel, in some case through several counties to go to their place of work. Often these women put having families on hold while they try to re-establish themselves in an area closer to home with no guarantee of a permanent position.

ICTU Women's Conference calls upon ICTU to bring this issue to the Department of Education and other Employers in the post-primary education sector to establish a mechanism whereby teachers seeking voluntary redeployment could apply to a national redeployment scheme. While the DES has a scheme presently, it is limited to certain counties and only between 4-7% of those applying are granted redeployment.

This means that 93-96% of those applying are unsuccessful. The establishment of a national scheme, open to the whole country, as opposed to a few counties, is essential for the well-being of teachers who travel for hours daily to and from work. The European Parliament policy directive on The Work Life Balance 2019

promotes such initiatives, as does Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022. Furthermore, the introduction of such a scheme would also reduce teachers' carbon footprint, which is in line with Irish and European Parliament positions on climate targets.

22. MENOPAUSE

NIPSA

The menopause is central to women's lived experiences, but it has always been surrounded by stigma. Recent years have seen that stigma begin to be challenged, through ardent campaigning and awareness raising by the trade union movement.

In May 2018, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions conducted an online survey in Northern Ireland to explore how the issue of the menopause effected people in work. The survey ran for a four-week period and attracted 2,471 responses, the largest response to an ICTU survey conducted in Northern Ireland.

What emerged from the survey results was not only that women face real challenges in the workplace as a result of menopausal symptoms but also that there was little or no support available to them.

The survey results also highlighted that women need adequate legal protection in workplaces where a lack of support is seeing them leave jobs in their thousands. Also in an environment of stigma and taboo, women are under-informed on the menopause and not approaching their GPs, so Government needs to start a nationwide public health campaign and create a route into primary care services.

Conference therefore calls on ICTU to put pressure on the Government to:

- Consult on reforming equality law to protect menopausal women; so that women can bring dual discrimination cases based on age and sex, or creating a standalone menopause provision.
- Require employers to have action plans on the menopause and the guidance setting out how to create a plan should make clear that taking well-evidenced, low-cost actions to support women with menopause is key to closing the gap.
- Make flexible work the default. All jobs should be required to be advertised with any possible flexible work options so that menopausal women can access this important accommodation to their symptoms, and if employers feel that a role cannot accommodate any form of flexibility, they should be required to transparently set out the exceptional circumstances that justify this.
- Fund a nationwide public information campaign on the menopause. This should dispel myths that menopause is just about hot flushes, dispel the stigma, and provide women with the information that there is help available for their symptoms.
- Develop a standardised clinical pathway for menopausal women. This could involve an invitation sent at an appropriate age for all women to discuss potential menopausal symptoms and treatment with their GP, or an appropriate nurse or pharmacist.
- Ensure GPs and relevant healthcare professionals are trained on the menopause.

23. Securing Decent Work for Nursing Personnel and Domestic Workers

INMO

Conference notes the proceedings of the International Labour Conference Committee on Application of Standards in June 2022 which considered among other things securing decent work for nursing personnel as key actors in the care economy.

In that context, Conference calls for action on the following issues related to this female dominated profession:

- The need to urgently address the nursing shortage facing this island and across the world, by increasing investment in the national healthcare systems and the nursing workforce and to further improve the working conditions of nurses to attract and retain them.
- Improve access routes to publicly delivered education opportunities and ensure that college places are increased to meet future workforce needs in the context of demographic changes, and the need to balance reliance on migrant workers who form such an important part of this workforce while recognising the ethical challenges that poses for countries of origin and our duty to recognise this,
- Improvements to the working conditions of nursing personnel to ensure that their terms and conditions are protected and advanced in relation to –

- hours of work,
- proper pay
- overtime compensation,
- periods of daily and weekly rest,
- paid annual leave, and
- the strengthening of collective bargaining arrangements.
- Recognition of the fundamental importance of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

24. Gender Pay Gap

FSU

Conference notes and welcomes the report launched by FSU entitled *'The Gender Pay Gap Won't Close Itself'* and ICTU's *"Guidance for Unions on Closing the Gender Pay Gap"*.

Economic inequality is a serious issue for women who already suffer discrimination, lack of support, and significantly fewer opportunities to grow into leadership roles. Gender inequality is prevalent throughout society with the gender pay gap in Ireland currently running at 11.3%.

Conference agrees that the gender pay gap can best be resolved through a willingness of employers to engage with trade unions and agree a comprehensive set of actions that puts the issue at the centre of its business plan. Gender pay gap reporting can be an important lever for unions to bring the gender pay gap and equal pay onto collective bargaining agendas.

Conference recognises that the gender pay gap is a complex issue, and a range of measures will be required to eliminate the gap.

Conference recognises the work being done by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in the Republic of Ireland on requiring companies with over 250 employees to report its gender pay gap, but unions should also promote pay reporting in all companies regardless of size.

Conference understands that the requirement for gender pay gap reporting in Northern Ireland is set out in section 19 of the Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. Conference calls for the prioritisation and enactment of this long-awaited Bill.

Conference further calls on the Government in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to initiate and support a comprehensive gender pay gap strategy and resourced action plan which addresses the fundamental issues associated with the gender pay gap. Any plan should be cognisant of:

- Ensuring employers make pay ranges open and transparent for workers to see.
- Ensuring all employments publish their annual gender pay gap.
- Ensuring employers agree annual reduction targets through actions agreed with trade unions.
- Ensuring decent part time and flexible working arrangements are encouraged for staff at all levels in the organisation.

25. Bereavement Leave & Miscarriage.

Bray Trades Council

Conference calls on ICTU and all affiliates to engage with employers and campaign vigorously for the introduction of minimum of ten days bereavement leave for all women who experience spontaneous miscarriage or are required to terminate a pregnancy for medical reasons before the 24th week of pregnancy.



Conference Report

April 2020 – September 2022

Congress continued to pursue the broad gender equality agenda North and South under the guidance of the Women's Committees who continued to work jointly on areas of common interest, as well as pursuing initiatives within the two jurisdictions on the island.

The Officers for the Joint Committee were

Women's Committee ROI

The Women's Committee officers for the period were:

- **Margaret Coughlan** (Fórsa) Chair;
- **Alison Regan** (SIPTU) Vice Chair, replaced by **Ann Ryan** (SIPTU) after BDC 2021;
- **Melissa Brennan** (Fórsa) Secretary, replaced by **Moira Leydon** (ASTI) after BDC 2021.



ICTU Women's Committee Joint Chair, Margaret Coughlan



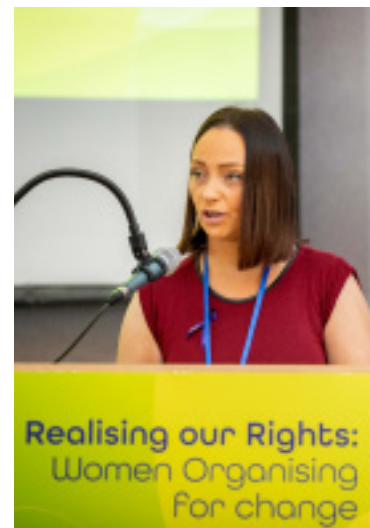
Geraldine Alexander, Joint Chair, ICTU Women's Committee

Women's Committee in Northern Ireland

The Officers during the period were

- **Geraldine Alexander**, NIPSA, Chairperson
- **Danielle McCusker**, UNISON, Vice Chair
- **Eileen Gorman**, FSU, Secretary.

Under the Direction of the Officers, each of the Committees both separately and together pursued an agenda which included ensuring that women's voices were heard in the issues raised by COVID, highlighting issues facing women workers such as lack of affordable childcare on return to work and publicising the rise of intimate partner violence during national lockdowns when many women were stuck at home with perpetrators of violence and abuse.



Danielle McCusker, UNISON



Conference Arrangements, Melissa Brennan (Fórsa) and Eileen Gorman (FSU).

Joint Women's Committee Work included:

The Women's Committee also worked together to organise the National Women's Conference in March 2020 in Whites Hotel, Wexford, just before the island wide lockdowns. Entitled 'Realising our Rights: Women Organising for Change', the conference heard from the ICTU General Secretary as well as a range of guest speakers. The large part of the agenda was taken up with debating motions covering topics including violence and harassment in the world of work, childcare, balancing caring responsibilities with work, parental leave frameworks and tackling insecure work.

Women and Leadership

Building on motions to the ICTU Women's Conference, Congress held a Women and Leadership course in early 2020, just before the first lockdown. Women from across the island gathered together in Congress House in Dublin to work with facilitator Isobel Butler to explore themes of leadership in the trade union movement and in society. Participants also heard from a range of trade union leaders about their experiences – speakers included ICTU General Secretary Patricia King, former ICTU President Sheila Nunan, ICTU Vice President Alison Millar, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Ethel Buckley and Fórsa President Anne

The lockdown put plans for a second face to face course on hold however working with Isobel, an online version of the course was launched in Autumn 2020. Whilst it could not replicate the face to face experience, it nevertheless had excellent participation and good feedback.

Participants noted that the course was

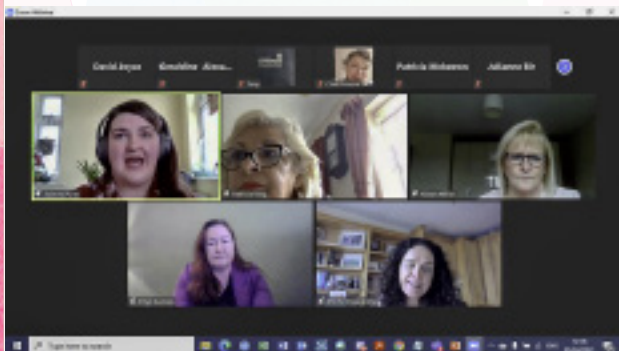
"Well facilitated with lots of practical activities that got people talking in the room. Covered a lot leadership theory but in a very meaningful way"

"I found the course extremely helpful, it drew attention to different types of leadership models, what makes a good/bad leader, also made the participants think, talk, respond and report."

Finally, in July 2022 we were able to organise another in person course and hope to run more in coming months.



Delegates on the Women and Leadership course March 2020



International Women's Day

The Women's Committee decided to build on the theme of leadership and organize a webinar to mark International Women's Day 2021. The webinar focused on two aspects of the theme: Leadership, Women and Change – in work and in society and Women and Leadership within the trade union movement – a reflection.

Speakers included ICTU General Secretary Patricia King, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Women's Caucus and Green Party leader Clare Bailey, Chair of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus Fiona O'Loughlin as well as contributions from a range of affiliates.



UNITE delegation Women's Conference 2020



Fórsa delegation at 2020 Conference

In 2022, General Secretary Patricia King spoke at the National Women's Council of Ireland rally held in Dublin which was supported by many affiliates. We also held an event on the trade union role in tackling violence against women which focussed on ILO Convention 190 and the ratification campaign and various affiliate initiatives in this area.

Women's Council of the Isles

In 2021, the STUC women's committee organized a virtual event featuring a panel discussion with the General Secretaries and Executive Council members from each of the countries as well as presentations from the Women's Committees and invited guests. Topics covered included Domestic Abuse Leave; Abortion provision in Northern Ireland and the rise of problem gambling for women.

We are really looking forward to the 2022 event in person in Glasgow in October themed around sexual harassment.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Despite not being able to meet, we were instrumental in organising a Women's Council of the Isles Joint Statement to mark 25 November 2020, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Signed by each of the General Secretaries from ICTU, TUC, WTUC

and STUC, the statement noted that domestic abuse is always a workplace issue and trade unions know that work is often a place of safety for women experiencing domestic abuse. During the lockdowns many women were stuck at home with the perpetrator of violence, unable to escape to, what for many women, is the safety of their workplace. We called on our Governments to immediately ratify ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. Article 18 of the accompanying recommendation specifies measures which should be taken to mitigate the impacts of domestic violence at work including leave for the victims of domestic violence, flexible work arrangements and the inclusion of domestic violence in workplace risk assessments.

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. It was instrumental in vocalising the need for a gender dimension in any covid recovery plans and has also led on work including on gender-based violence, tackling pay inequality as well as ongoing work on the gender pay transparency directive. The ETUC Women's Committee has launched a new project on tackling gender based violence and harassment and Congress will be represented on the steering group.

ROI Women's Committee

The Committee continued to meet on a regular basis and to work closely with our colleagues in Northern Ireland. The COVID 19 crisis meant we had to quickly adapt to meeting online and all of us soon became experts in the various platforms,

recognizing the importance of continuing to meet and support each other. Our topics of course included the gendered impact of the crisis, including: flexible working and working from home; the issue of women returning from maternity leave being excluded from the Wage Subsidy Scheme; threats to the EU gender equality strategy; increased risks for women in prostitution; women and girls in Afghanistan; leadership initiative, the menopause and violence against women. On the latter Sarah Benson, Director of Women's Aid, spoke with us highlighting the increased incidence during Covid19 and the need for sustained investment in the specialist domestic violence sector. We subsequently organised a webinar with Minister Roderic O'Gorman regarding the introduction of paid domestic violence leave and supported Congress in making a submission on the proposed legislation. We were very proud of our members from CWU and FSU negotiating workplace agreements on paid domestic violence leave in their sectors and shared these with officials in DCEDIY who are currently working on the legislation. Cognisant of the need for workplace policies to accompany any legislative developments, we are building on the work of affiliates to develop a model workplace policy on how workplaces can support victims of domestic violence.

We also issued a statement on the ownership of the national maternity hospital, stressing the need to avoid a situation where the ownership and control of the new maternity hospital will impede its complete clinical independence. Women's healthcare must remain the priority and the hospital must provide all healthcare services available under Irish law. The Executive Council fully supported the position of the Women's Committee, also they subsequently noted progress made in terms of concerns regarding references

to ethos and related concerns regarding the availability of services, and consequently they reiterated the need for urgent progress to move this project forward in a manner which prioritises clinical autonomy and as such safeguards women's health.

The Committee co-hosted a webinar on the ratification campaign for ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work, including participation by Marie Clarke Walker (Canadian Labour Congress and Chair of the Workers Group during the negotiation of the instrument at the ILO) and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. We continue to campaign for the ratification of the Convention.

We continue to be represented on the National Strategy for Women and Girls strategy group by our Chair, Margaret Coghlan and fed in a trade union statement in relation to the gendered impact of the crisis, including the under-funding of crucial public services; the gap between the value that frontline and service workers bring to society and the low wages—and lack of respect—many earn in return.

We continue to liaise with our sisters in the ETUC Women's Committee and fed into the trade union response to the EC Consultation on gender pay transparency. We also participated in work to ensure that the Commission did not drop commitments to a gender equality strategy which led to an overturning of plans to put women workers to the back of the queue for pay justice in the recovery. The Commission confirmed that the European Commission Work Programme contains commitments to binding pay transparency measures and a European Gender Equality Strategy and has since introduced a draft Directive on Pay Transparency.

The period also saw the work of the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality completed and we kept a close eye on this historic initiative and fed into the Congress input to the Assembly. We were delighted that many of our concerns were reflected in the recommendations of the Assembly and are closely following the work of the Gender Equality Committee in the Oireachtas charged with planning how they will be implemented.

We also fed into the Congress Submission on the sexual offences act sent to the Department of Justice and Equality as well as a range of other related Congress submissions. We continue to advise Congress on its broad equality agenda and on all of the work carried out on her behalf outlined below.

Congress Equality Work ROI

Congress broad equality work involved regular consultation and liaison with officials in the Department of Justice and Equality and subsequently the Department of Children, Equality Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). Congress work on gender related issues was carried out in consultation with the Women's Committee and affiliate trade unions and included:

We continued our participation in National Strategy for Women and Girls meetings chaired by Minister O'Gorman. It has been agreed to extend the lifetime of the strategy to allow time to complete the actions delayed due to Covid-19 and to give adequate time to consider what should be included in its successor, to be in place by end 2021. Congress will continue to pursue implementation of outstanding issues.

Congress has engaged with Minister O’Gorman and officials in DCEDIY during the period in order to advance our broad equality agenda including:

Early Childhood Education and Care

Through our participation in the Early Years LEEF and the Early Years Stakeholder Forum, we continued to advocate for more public investment in ECEC as a means to tackle low pay, affordability and quality. The creation on the employer side of Childcare Services Ireland provided an opportunity for engagement with employers in the sector and Congress played a facilitative role in ensuring that SIPTU and Ibec began discussions on the creation of a JLC for the sector – a commitment in the programme for Government. This work has progressed considerably since with a draft establishment order for the JLC published in April 2021. An Employment Regulation Order (ERO) came into effect on 15th September – the first ever such deal in the sector.

Congress submitted views to DCEDIY consultation on a new funding model and the workforce development plan and participated actively in stakeholder consultation meetings on a new funding model for members of the Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Forum. Our input in all of these engagements has been based on Ireland, despite significant Government investment in recent years, spends just 0.2% of GDP on ECEC compared to a European Union average of 0.7% of GDP.

This insufficient level of funding has resulted in low pay, high staff turnover and the increasing cost of service delivery which are under-

mining the provision of accessible, affordable high-quality services. Recruitment and retention is one of the biggest issues facing Early Years services. A SIPTU Big Start survey showed that 68% of managers and owners find it ‘extremely difficult’ to recruit staff with low pay identified as the biggest issue. A majority of qualified Early Years Educators earn below the Living Wage of €12.90 per hour. This has resulted in high staff turnover rates which are undermining quality for children and the sustainability of services. The new Core Funding scheme also came into effect on 15th September to support the ERO.

Furthermore, Ireland has the most expensive ECEC fees in the European Union while ECEC professionals are some of the lowest paid in the economy. Our call to Government was therefore to introduce a new public model for Early Years with increased government investment, and the state assuming the responsibility for funding salaries and support the cost of service delivery. This would substantially reduce costs for both providers and parents.

This work on a new funding model was completed in time for consideration and decisions in advance of Budget 2022. In Budget 2022 government allocated €69 million (€172 full year) for the introduction of a new ‘Core Funding’ scheme. This funding will support an historic first pay deal for the Early Years sector that will improve pay and recognise graduates. We are calling on government to build on Core Funding in Budget 2023 to support high quality, affordable and accessible service where Early Years Professionals are recognised and rewarded.

Gender Pay Gap

As we know, legislative measures to tackle the Gender Pay and Pensions Gap were published in 2019 but didn't complete the legislative process before change of Government. Congress successfully advocated for the Bill to be reintroduced and the Gender Pay Gap Information Act is now in force. Employers with 250 employees or more were obliged to choose a 'snapshot' date of their employees in June 2022 and to report on the hourly gender pay gap for those employees on the same date in December 2022.

We engaged with the Department on draft regulations for the process including on the issue of the requirement to publish a statement setting out, "in the employers' opinion", the reasons for the gender pay gap in their company and what measures are being taken or proposed to be taken by the employer to eliminate or reduce that pay gap. This is clearly not sufficient - Employers must discuss the gap with workers and their representatives and agree on a joint approach to tackling any gaps identified in an effective manner.

Congress also participated in ETUC discussions and actions on the Eu pay transparency proposal published in March 2021. The Minister has indicated that provisions of the Directive will be reviewed in the context of the provisions of our own legislation and existing employment obligations and entitlements. The Commission proposals currently will only apply to companies with more than 250 employees and the Minister has confirmed to Congress that this will not impact the current plans to extend the requirements in the Gender Pay Gap Information Act to companies with 50 or more employees.

Congress convened a working group on the gender pay gap convened in light of the two processes towards legislation on pay transparency. A successful funding application was submitted to IHREC for a capacity building programme for unions on interrogating gender pay gap audits and developing a set of common proposals for the collective bargaining agenda. Consultant Jane Pillinger was contracted to work with us on providing training for affiliates and in the production of a toolkit for unions on gender pay gap audits. The toolkit was launched by Minister O'Gorman this month and is now available on our website. We hope that it will prove a useful resource for unions participating in the process in their sectors.

We also continue to liaise with the ETUC in relation to the European proposal and wrote to Irish MEPs to amplify the trade union position on the proposal; Meetings were also held with MEP's Ciaran Cuffe and Frances Fitzgerald on the matter and the trade union suggested amendments discussed in advance of a key vote in European Parliament Plenary in April 2022. The European Parliament plenary voted in favour of the mandate to start trilogues on the Gender Pay Transparency Directive which are now in process.

Transposition of the Work Life Balance Directive

Congress has been advocating for the Irish government to transpose the Directive as rapidly and comprehensively as possible including an inclusive consultation process. The Directive includes commitments to introduce paternity leave and carer's leave – areas largely covered by Irish law, but also includes an individual right to 4 months of parental leave,

from which 2 months are non-transferable between the parents and are paid, and flexible working arrangements - the right for parents to request these arrangements has been extended to include working carers as well as working parents of children up to eight years old.

We have also welcomed improvements in our provision of paid “parents leave” to the current 7 weeks’ leave during the first 2 years of a child’s life, or in the case of adoption, within 2 years of the placement of the child with the family. This will increase to 9 weeks under the Directive. The EU WLB Directive was to be transposed by summer 2022 but the Department tells us that they ran out of time to get it before the Houses of the Oireachtas last session but intend to publish and introduce it as early as possible in the autumn. We have also raised the fact that research widely shows that compensation is key for the uptake of family-related leaves, especially for lower income families and men and the low level of payment needs to be addressed.

While the Bill never emerged, we did welcome the April 2022 publication of the General Scheme of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill designed to provide a floor of rights to working parents and carers as required by the EU Work Life Balance Directive as well as a number of other progressive measures. There are additional rights for workers in the general scheme, including:

- The extension of breastfeeding/lactation breaks for employees who are breastfeeding from six months to two years (**Head 10**) – something trade unions have been campaigning on for many years;

- The five days unpaid leave for medical care purposes per calendar year (**Head 4**). We believe such leave should be paid; and
- The inclusive amendments to the Family Leave and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1995, Maternity Protection Act 1994 and the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 (**Heads 11 – 14 and Head 16**).

We met with Minister O’Gorman on the scheme and also submitted views to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

While we are particularly pleased that the proposed legislation (Head 3) will provide parents and carers with a right to request flexible working arrangements, it is a disappointment that the Government has not chosen to be more ambitious than what the directive prescribes in this regard and proposed a right for all workers to request flexible working.

Congress has been to the fore in calling for a statutory right to request all types of flexible working arrangements including remote work, flexi-time, part-time, job shares, split shifts, compressed hours etc. This is already an established worker right in the UK and in most other EU countries. The Conservative Government in Great Britain is currently consulting on making flexible working the default unless employers have good reasons not to and has stated that ‘a world class approach to flexible working is a key part of the Government’s ambition to build back better, ensuring that our flexible labour market is primed for the opportunities and challenges of the post Covid-19 economy.’

There is widespread recognition of the role that flexible working can play in ensuring certain groups, including women, disabled workers and older are able to access and stay in work. Making flexible working available in all but the most exceptional of circumstances is essential for promoting greater gender equality. It is our view that limiting this right to these two groups risks the expected shift to more flexible working becoming highly feminised, which would also have negative consequences for women's career progression.

We raised this in our evidence to the Citizen's Assembly and are delighted they made the introduction of a statutory right to reasonable access to flexible working one of their recommendations.

There are also a number of issues in Head 3 which require clarification, including:

Head 3 Sections 6A (1) and (2) refer to the change in working arrangements and or hours and patterns applying "for a set period of time". This term is not defined elsewhere in the scheme or Parental Leave Act. We do note that the Directive states that "the duration of such flexible working arrangements may be subject to a reasonable limitation". However, parents and carers will need reassurance that any working arrangements agreed with an employer will not be subject to onerous time-limits or require renegotiation after short intervals.

Section (9) sets out the grounds for postponing the commencement of a flexible working request, including the highly problematic, catch-all ground of "any other relevant matters."

The scheme also provides an employer in Section 6A (6) (c) with a right to refuse a request and an obligation to set out the grounds for refusal. However, the scheme is silent on what the grounds for refusal are. While it is clear that the Directive does not prescribe the listing of such reasons, the Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2022 is currently at pre-legislative scrutiny stage in the Oireachtas and does list reasons an employer can refuse requests for remote working. Congress is seeking reassurance that there will be coherence in the rights for workers provided under the two pieces of legislation.

Section 6 A (4) provides for a service requirement of "six months continuous employment" before an employee can commence a flexible working arrangement under the Act. Congress views this an unnecessary clause and a minimalist interpretation of the Directive. However, if it is to remain it is essential to include provision for Article 9 paragraph 4 of the Directive which states that: "In the case of successive fixed-term contracts within the meaning of Directive 1999/70/EC with the same employer, the sum of those contracts shall be taken into account for the purpose of calculating the qualifying period." Without this provision, hundreds of thousands of workers employed on term-time contracts and in seasonal jobs will be without coverage for 6 months each year. One example to illustrate the importance of this point are early years professionals working in ECCE (pre-school) services on 38-week contracts forced to sign-on social welfare during the summer. We believe this is an oversight and is open to abuse and would an amendment the Bill by deleting 'continuous' from the service qualification under subsection 6 A (4) or alternatively, include-

'in the case of successive fixed-term contracts with the same employer, the sum of those contracts shall be considered for the purpose of calculating the qualifying period.'

This simple fix will go a long way to improve the effectiveness of this landmark legislation.

Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV)

We continue to grapple with the shameful reality that far too many people (predominantly women) face violence, harassment and abuse in their lives, something that unfortunately increased during public health restrictions due to the pandemic. We continue our work to address DSGBV across a range of activities, including:

Planning of event in November 2021 as part of the 16 days international campaign against DSGBV;

Speaking at launch of National Women's Council of Ireland's "Beyond Exploitation"- Ireland's civil society campaign for equality and freedom from sexual exploitation;

Speaking on a panel at launch of UCD research "Confronting the Harm - the health impact of prostitution on women's health;

Speaking on a panel with the Gardai and others to support White Ribbon day – men tackling gender-based violence;

Participated in Áras event to mark international women's day and contributed on domestic violence and the workplace and also attended the He for She garden party at the Aras;

Attendance at a lecture by well known male campaigner on tackling men's violence against women, Jackson Katz – Committee is keen to ensure that men in the movement match women's leadership on this issue and ensure that male leaders make it clear that any form of DSGBV is unacceptable in our movement and to drive institutional change in that regard;

Meeting with Department of Justice and consultants in relation to the 3rd National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence and releasing a statement marking its launch and noting that **"Zero Tolerance"** marks a key milestone in the struggle to ensure women's equality – something that will not be achieved until we end male violence against women.

In recognition of the impact that domestic violence has on working lives, Trade unions have come up with solutions to support and protect victims and survivors of domestic violence through negotiating workplace policies in this area. Combined with the promised introduction of paid domestic violence leave these can play an important role in ensuring the workplace is a more supportive environment for those experiencing domestic violence.

Following a Bill brought forward by Louise O'Reilly T.D., Sinn Féin, Minister O'Gorman announced in December 2020 that he had secured Government agreement to establish a statutory entitlement to paid domestic violence leave, a longstanding demand of the trade union movement. Congress hosted a webinar with the Minister and national and international speakers to examine how this might be done and submitted detailed views during a consultation process. Domestic violence has a significant impact –

directly and indirectly – on work attendance and productivity. A 2014 Congress survey found that domestic violence doesn't just shatter the home lives of victims and families; it also impacts hugely on the workplace affecting the health, safety and performance of victims and work colleagues.

Women living with or escaping from domestic abuse may have a number of urgent and important matters to attend related to the abuse they experience. These include: medical visits, attending and preparing for a number of criminal and civil legal proceedings, counseling for themselves or their children, looking for a new home, relocating, changing children's school, and visiting specialist domestic violence services.

Workplaces can be an important source of support to a worker who is struggling with a difficult situation. Clear workplace policies and a range of supports, including paid leave and safety planning, can help employers fulfil their workplace safety obligations and manage risk.

We believe this promised legislation is an opportunity to progress the December 2020 Government agreement to establish a statutory entitlement to paid domestic violence leave here - a concept that has attracted cross party support.

The Department have informed us that it is their intention to finally introduce this entitlement as Committee Stage amendments to the Work Life Balance Bill. We are facilitating an informal working group on developing a model workplace policy on supporting victims of domestic violence in workplaces to accompany the legislation.

As you know, Congress was a participant in the negotiation in 2019 of ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work and its accompanying Recommendation 206 which gives further, more detailed guidance on how the Convention should be implemented at national level. There is a welcome reference to these important instruments in the implementation plan for the strategy and Congress believes that ratification of the Convention will be an important step in refocusing all of our efforts to ensure our workplaces have a zero-tolerance approach to violence and harassment and have urged the Minister for Enterprise, Trade, and Employment to ensure this happens before the end of 2022.

We have campaigned on a number of fronts to ensure ratification, including:

- Attending two-year anniversary event for ILO Convention 190 where a training kit was launched;
- Summer 2021 joint press release with Action Aid and Men's Development Network on ratification of ILO Convention 190 campaign; and
- Joint letter to TDs regarding ratification of ILO Convention 190 as part of the 16 days campaign to tackle gender-based violence;

Congress will continue to play its role both nationally and internationally to support the achievement of the goal of Zero Tolerance of Domestic, Gender, and Sexual based violence. The Department recently published a consultation document regarding the ratification of the Convention and Congress did a submission stating that there was no legal impediment to ratification.

Review of Equality Legislation

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to “examine the introduction of a new ground of discrimination based on socio-economic disadvantaged status to the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts” a long-standing demand of Congress. The Minister has stated that his Department has commissioned a study on the ground, how it might be defined and that he is awaiting that report before proceeding. Congress will continue to pursue this objective through the subsequent consultation. (The broad idea is that someone could avail of equality legislation if they believed they were discriminated against on the grounds of family background, where they’re from, educational background or their economic situation).

Subsequently, in June 2021, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced a Review of the Equality Acts. Congress convened a working group from affiliates to inform the Congress submission which was sent in at the end of 2021. It’s a wide-ranging document covering an array of issues including, possible new grounds, amending the gender ground to ensure that someone discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity is able to avail of this legislation and a review of current definitions, including in relation to disability.

Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality

Congress did a wide-ranging submission to the Citizen’s Assembly and participated in a couple of sessions related to workplace themes to further advocate for more gender equal workplaces. Our engagement was welcomed by the assembly Chair, Catherine Day, and the recommendations

of the Assembly echoed many of the calls from trade unions in our campaigns to remove barriers to pay parity and gender equality in the workplace. Significantly, this included adoption of our recommendation that workers be given a legal right to collective bargaining, and for acknowledging it as vital for improving wages and working conditions. Congress has been working to ensure the implementation of this and other useful recommendations in relation to low pay, the living wage, the gender pay gap and family leaves.

In that regard, we sent a submission sent to the Oireachtas Committee on gender Equality on the recommendations of the Citizen’s Assembly in April this year.

IHREC

We continued our active participation in the IHREC Worker Employer Advisory Group meetings covering a wide range of equality and human rights workplace issues. Among the topics on our agenda was a consultation on an IHREC/ESRI exercise on the development of Decent Work National Indicators (subsequently published in 2021), a reasonable accommodation conference, and a Joint webinar with IHREC “Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and Equality: The Potential of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty for Trade Unions” – held with nearly 100 people in attendance. Among the 2022 plans for WEAC is a November conference **Achieving Gender Equality in the Workplace - The Role of Care Policy and Practice** which aims to contribute to achieving gender equality in the workplace. It will focus in particular on the relationship between care responsibilities, care policy and the achievement of gender equality in the workplace.

Two new statutory Codes of Practice have been developed by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to help eliminate pay inequality and tackle workplace harassment and sexual harassment. They set out the procedures and steps to ensure that employees receive equal pay for like work in Ireland's workplaces, and are not subjected to harassment or sexual harassment in employment. The new Codes are legally admissible in evidence in proceedings before the courts, the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

Other related work included:

Participation in expert panel for Children's Rights Alliance annual score card of the Government's performance in relation to children's rights commitments in the Programme for Government;

Discussions with NSAI regarding standard setting process for gender equality in organisations;

Feeding into Irish Hospice Foundation draft guide for employers on Responding to Suicide in the Workplace called Breaking the Silence and spoke at launch;

Also fed into and participated in Irish Hospice Foundation development of 4 eLearning courses for managers and staff on supporting people who are grieving. These provide timely resources for managers and employees particularly with the return to the workplace after Covid 19. These eLearning Courses are:

1. Coping with Grief for Managers;
2. Coping with Grief for Staff;
3. Developing a Bereavement Policy for HR Professionals;

4. Responding to Suicide for CEOs, HR and Senior Managers.

We spoke at launch of these in March.

Congress also participated in an "Equality on a Shared Island" event hosted by Department of the Taoiseach in 2021.

Activity in Northern Ireland

The NIC ICTU Women's Committee adapted quickly to the particular challenges during the COVID pandemic. Under the Chair of Geraldine Alexander, the Committee held regular meetings during the period which proved lively, motivating and a crucial exchange of information and solidarity during lockdowns and working from home.

The Committee, through members and their unions, has continued to provide support to many campaigns including abortion provision, tackling period poverty, addressing issues of domestic abuse in the workplace and supporting positive action around a range of workplace issues including the menopause.

Abortion

Despite the introduction of long fought for legislation reforming archaic abortion law in Northern Ireland, many months on, the reality for women seeking abortions has little changed.

The *Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulation 2020* came into force on the 31st March 2020. For the first time the regulations made provision for a legal framework for abortion provision in Northern Ireland. However, despite this, there is still no commissioned nor properly resourced service available consistent across the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT).



Naomi Conor, Alliance for Choice

Congress continues to press for a comprehensive commissioned service to enable women to realise their full reproductive rights and has worked extensively through committees, including the NIC ICTU Women's Committee and Health Committee, to support a range of affiliated unions as well as allies in [Alliance for Choice](#) in their work.

Other legislative changes

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly were held in May 2022 and the Assembly was dissolved at the end of March 2022. It is regrettable that a Northern Ireland Executive has still not been formed and ICTU has made strong calls to get Stormont back to work. Prior to the dissolution, there were some positive developments with a number of progressive Private Members Bill becoming law. Many members of the Women's Committee were involved in both influencing the content of these Bills and also in ensuring that they had the support of sufficient MLAs to get through the legislative process.

Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act

No one should lose their job or pay because of domestic abuse. In this Assembly mandate,



former Green Party MLA Rachel Woods introduced a Private Members Bill to introduce paid domestic abuse leave. Congress fully engaged with Rachel and her team throughout the drafting of the Bill and we welcomed the final format as it was introduced to the NI Assembly.

The PMB was debated on the last sitting day of the Assembly and was carried, Royal Assent has also been granted. The drawing up of the regulations rests with the Department for the Economy; in his statement to the Assembly during the debate of the Bill, Minister for the Economy Gordon Lyons welcomed the Bill and committed to carrying out the necessary work involved in drafting the regulations in a timely manner.

The Department for the Economy has still to confirm the commencement date of the legislation and Congress and members of the Women's Committee continue to meet with Officials from the Department to discuss the content of the regulations and urge a speedy timescale.

Northern Ireland is the first UK jurisdiction to pass legislation of this kind that will enable victims of domestic abuse to avail of statutory entitlements without having to consider sick leave, or utilising holidays. It is hoped that the introduction of the legislation will also open up dialogue between employers, trade unions and employees, to facilitate a supportive working environment for employees experiencing domestic abuse.

The Act entitles victims of domestic abuse to no less than 10 days' paid leave in each leave year for the purposes of dealing with issues related

to domestic abuse. Issues relating to domestic abuse are noted as including:

- a. Obtaining legal advice, or pursuing legal proceedings.
- b. Finding alternative accommodation.
- c. Accessing healthcare.
- d. Obtaining welfare support.
- e. Protecting family members.

UK ratifies ILO Convention 190 – finally

On the 7th March 2022, the UK Government ratified the International Labour Organization¹ Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. This binding treaty and its accompanying recommendation outlines measures and actions that which should be taken by Government, employers and trade unions. The convention sets out responsibilities on Governments to recognise the effects of domestic violence and, so far as is reasonably practicable, mitigate its impact in the world of work.

The ratification came after intensive joint lobbying from ICTU and the TUC of the Westminster Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. The ICTU Women's Committee and the Equality Officer is actively engaging with Departments to give full effect to this important international instrument.

¹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency bringing together Governments, employers and trade unions to advance social and economic justice through international labour standards.

Period Products (Free Provision) Act



The Period Products (Free Provision) Bill was brought forward by SDLP MLA Pat Catney and received royal assent in May 2022.

The Period Products (Free Provision) Bill has three broad policy objectives:

- a. To place a duty on the Executive Office to ensure that period products are available free of charge on a universal basis in appropriate locations.
- b. To require the Executive Office to specify by way of regulations public service bodies who have a duty to ensure period products are widely obtainable free of charge in their premises.
- c. To place a number of duties on departments and other specified public service bodies in respect of their obligations under this Bill and to place a duty on Departments to issue guidance on the exercise of the functions conferred on specified public service bodies.

A number of affiliates and members of the Women's Committee actively engaged in the Period Dignity campaign, leading calls for free period product provision over a number of years.

Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill

The [Abortion Services \(Safe Access Zones\) Bill](#) also passed its final stage in the Northern Ireland Assembly before the dissolution prior to the elections.

The Bill provides for the Department of Health to establish safe access zones for premises providing abortion services. It also creates a criminal offence to do an act or make a recording in a safe access zone with the intent of, or reckless effect of directly or indirectly influencing, preventing or impeding access, or causing harassment, alarm or distress to a person attending a protected premises.

Progress on this Bill has stalled however as the Attorney General for Northern Ireland is using their powers of referral to bring a challenge to the Supreme Court, arguing that the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill is beyond the legislative competency of the Northern Ireland Assembly as it breaches the European Convention on Human Rights, as incorporated by the Human Rights Act 1998.

The NIC ICTU Women's Committee fully supports the Bill and commends Clare Bailey, former MLA and Green Party Leader in leading on this important issue.

Feminist Recovery Plan

Congress is represented on key policy group the Women's Policy Group. A major focus of the WPG was the production of an in-depth analysis of the effects of the pandemic on women. The [Feminist Recovery Plan](#) was produced in the summer of 2020 and ran to over a hundred pages long covering health, education, public life, violence against women among other topics. ICTU took the lead in writing the chapters on women and work which noted:

Women in Northern Ireland continue to be more likely to be in insecure and part-time employ-

ment, and whilst the overall gender pay gap is the lowest in the UK, women still earn on average around 9.6% less than men. Having dependent children significantly amplifies this difference and women responsible for dependent children are more likely to be in insecure, part time work.

Policy failures around family leave frameworks fail all workers but impact disproportionately on women while the lack of affordable childcare, structured to facilitate women returning and staying in work, is still a very significant issue. Furthermore, women continue to experience significant sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and discrimination against mothers and pregnant women.

Recommendations to policy makers included

- *Develop a women's employment strategy which identifies the labour market issues facing women and an associated cross departmental action plan to tackle these.*
- *Introduce Gender Pay Gap legislation which is fit for purpose for Northern Ireland. Ensure that this is accompanied by an associated strategy, action plan and accountability measures which should be properly resourced.*
- *Introduce gender transparency measures to tackle inequality in men's and women's pay and pensions.*
- *Review flexible working legislation and make this available as a day one right for all workers.*
- *Make parental leave available as a day one right, introduce 10 days of paid parental leave.*
- *Reserve a period of paid parental leave for fathers – use it or lose it.*



Owen Reidy pictured with TUC GS Frances O'Grady, ICTU worked in close cooperation with other TU centres throughout the pandemic to ensure a robust defence of workers health, safety and livelihoods.

- Introduce a duty on employers to proactively tackle sexual harassment at work to include mandatory training for all employees including managers and HR personnel.
- The Northern Ireland Executive should recognise and promote the importance of collective bargaining and trade unions as a driver for better pay and terms and conditions as well as higher productivity.

The Feminist Recovery Plan was updated and relaunched in July 2021 with more evidence on the negative impact of COVID on women and gender equality.

Childcare and the pandemic

As outlined in NIC ICTU's policy paper [Child-care in Northern Ireland: Care, Cost and Gender Equality](#), Northern Ireland's system of childcare is woefully inadequate. Expensive and not structured to facilitate participation in the labour market, particularly of women, the issue of childcare rose to even more prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic. NERI's Lisa Wilson highlighted the huge issues in a piece of [research](#) which found that scant consideration had been given to the issue of childcare when the economy was reopening during the summer months in 2020.

This was raised with the First and Deputy First Ministers in a letter which noted:

The Northern Ireland Executive has responded to the COVID-19 emergency with a programme of significant financial support for many sectors and this is welcome. However, without considering the issue of childcare, a return to work for many people will not be possible. We would therefore suggest that the Northern Ireland Executive urgently needs to consider significant public subsidy in childcare to facilitate parents to return to work whilst ensuring that their children are receiving quality care.

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 (ICTU), Taryn Trainor, (UNITE) and John Patrick Clayton, (UNISON).

At time of preparing this report, the Co design groups working on each of the strategies had committed significant time and energy to preparing robust documents. It is hoped that the eventual draft strategies presented for public consultation will reflect this work.

Gender Pay Gap Reporting regulations

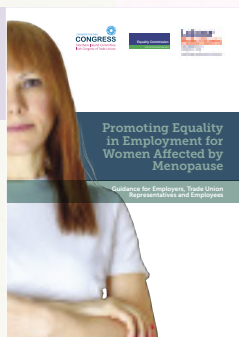
Despite a commitment to the introduction of Gender Pay Gap reporting regulations in the Employment Act 2016, we still await the implementation. The Minister for the Department for Communities has indicated that the regu-

lations will be forthcoming but there is still no definite timetable or indication as to what they will cover. ICTU continues to press for robust regulations, as envisaged by Schedule 19 of the Employment Act and this call has been included in the recommendations from the Co Design Group for the Gender Equality Strategy.

Workplace Guidance

Joint Guidance on the Menopause in the Workplace

ICTU, together with the Labour Relations Agency and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, collaborated on joint Guidance aimed at employers and trade unions on managing menopause in the workplace. The Guidance has been promoted through a number of media appearances, webinars and through social media. The webinars have been extremely popular and as well as promoting the Joint Guidance, also offered the opportunity to showcase the work which is being undertaken by unions and employers to promote best practice in this area.



Joint Guidance on Domestic and Sexual Violence in the Workplace

ICTU has collaborated with the LRA to produce Joint Guidance for employers and trade unions on best practice in relation to the issues associated with domestic and sexual violence. This important publication has proven to be extremely timely given the passage of

the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill which provides for up to 10 days safe leave for those who are or have experienced domestic violence.

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. In the coming months, ICTU will work with the LRA to produce joint guidance and will use the findings from the ICTU survey on sexual harassment as a source document.

Up-skirting and Down-blousing now recognized as criminal offences

Women's Committee member Maxine Murphy Higgins (NASUWT) represented the Committee in a Women's Policy group Evidence session to the Justice Committee during the scrutiny phase of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill. NASUWT members were the subject of these horrific sexual offences and NASUWT has been to the forefront of campaigning to have the so called up-skirting and down-blousing recognised as crimes. This Act rightly recognises them as criminal offences.



Maxine Murphy Higgins,
NASUWT

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 Violence against Women and Girls strategy, something which the trade union movement has been calling for over many years.

Congress responded to the VAWG call for views and expects to be represented on the Co Design group when it is formed in late 2022. The Women's Committee, together with Congress Secretariat has met with Officials from TEO a number of times to highlight the need to include the workplace in the eventual strategy and to press for legislative reform where necessary.

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.

Members of the Congress Women's Committee and the Congress Secretariat play an active role on a number of coalition groups including the Equality Coalition, the Human Rights Consortium and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform.



Industrial Action and campaigns

Members of the Women's Committee have been involved in notable industrial disputes during the period including the fight, led by UNITE, to keep the Regina Coeli women's hostel in Belfast open.

Other affiliated unions also took part in industrial action and campaigns during the period covered by the report and members of the Women's Committee have been active in these actions and have sent solidarity to all union members taking action in pursuit of fair pay and conditions of work..



UNITE members campaigning to save Regina Coeli hostel

Fringe Workshops

**Thursday 29 September
1.00-2.15pm**

Tea, coffee and sandwiches will be available in all of the fringe rooms.

1. Seeking Refuge - the Annesley Lounge

In this workshop, speakers will explore issues for migrant women and women seeking asylum across the island of Ireland and discuss how trade unions can act in solidarity.

Speakers: Siphon Sibanda & Caroline Munyi

2. Safe at Home, Safe at Work - the Brunel Lounge

Trade Unions have been to the forefront in developments to ensure that those experiencing domestic abuse and violence receive the support they need from their employers. In this workshop, speakers will discuss developments in legislation, new guidance as well as best practice examples of workplace policies

Speakers: Helen Smyth, Labour Relations Agency, Mandy La Combre, Financial Services Union

3. We Did It ! - Main Conference Hall

How Early Years Workers Won Their First Pay Deal

Until recent years the Early Years sector in the Republic was almost entirely non-union. SIPTU launched the Big Start Campaign with the objective of unionising the workforce and improving pay and working conditions through sectoral collective bargaining.

This fringe event will hear from the Early Years activists and full-time union organisers who organised the industry and negotiated the first pay deal which came into effect earlier this month. 70% of the 27,000 workers in the sector received a pay increase.

The meeting will outline successful organising tactics and lessons learned on the unionisation of a new industry.



IrishCongressofTradeUnions

Standing Orders Women's Conference

1. Biennial Women's Conference

- 1.1 The Congress Women's Conference shall meet biennially. The place and date shall be decided by the Executive Council.
- 1.2 The Chairperson's for the session of the Conference shall be nominated by the Women's Committees.
- 1.3 A Conference Arrangements Committee of up to six persons, nominated by the Women's Committees, shall be responsible for the arrangement of the business of the Conference and generally take charge of the meeting place.

2. Representation

- 2.1 Only bona fide members or fulltime officials who are members of an affiliated trade union may be appointed as delegates to the Conference.
- 2.2 Trade unions with up to 50 women members may appoint one delegate to the Conference and unions with 51 to 500 women members, two delegates.
- 2.3 Trade unions with over 500 women members may appoint the following number of delegates:

500 - 1,500	3 delegates
1,501 - 2,500	4 delegates
2,501 - 5,000	5 delegates
5,000 - 7,500	6 delegates
7,501 - 10,000	7 delegates
10,001 - 15,000	9 delegates
15,001 - 20,000	11 delegates
20,001 - 25,000	13 delegates
25,001 - 30,000	15 delegates

And two delegates for each additional 5,000 women members over 30,000

Local Councils of Trade Unions may appoint delegates (who must be members of affiliated trade unions) to the Conference in accordance with the following scale.

Up to 6,500 affiliated membership - 1 delegates

Over 6,500 affiliated membership - 2 delegates

3. Motions

- 3.1 Affiliated organisations may submit **one motion** for the Conference agenda. Motions must be signed by the authorised official of the organisation and forwarded to Congress not later than the date specified by the Executive Council.
- 3.2 The Women's Committees may submit one motion each for the Conference agenda.
- 3.3 Motions must relate to issues of particular concern to women and must be within the scope of the Objects of Congress as set out in the Constitution. **Motions should cover issues/strategies which have not been dealt with previously, or which develop current policy.** The Executive Council shall determine, in consultation with the Officers of the Women's Committees, whether motions submitted are in order and its decision shall be final.

4. Business of Conference

- 4.1 The business of the Conference shall be determined by the Executive Council following consultations with the Women's Committees but shall include the following items:
 - a. Report from Executive Council on Congress action on Equality issues and related matters
 - b. Reports from Women's Committees
 - c. Motions from affiliated organisations
 - d. Information / strategy papers on specific themes will be prepared and circulated to affiliates prior to Conference. The presentation and discussion of such papers will encourage open and less formal debate.
 - e. Unions will be invited to comment in advance of Conference on the information / strategy papers. These comments will be circulated to Conference.
- 4.2 The Conference Arrangements Committee may make recommendations to the Conference for the ordering of discussion and facilitating the completion of the business of the Conference.

5. Method of Voting

Voting at the Conference shall be confined to delegates and shall be by a show of hands, each delegate having one vote. Four delegates shall be appointed as Tellers.

6. Limitation of Speeches

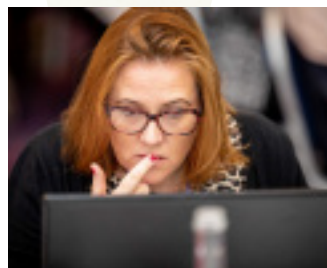
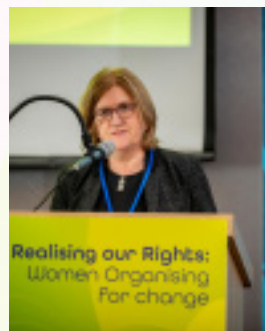
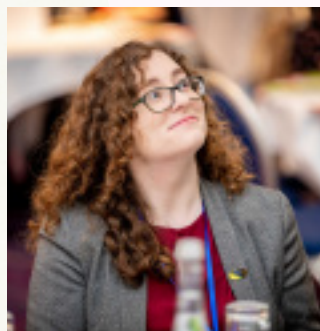
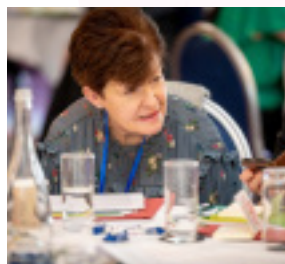
Subject to the discretion of the Chairperson, the proposer of a motion shall be allowed four minutes and other speakers three minutes. No speaker shall speak more than once on the same question, except the mover of a motion replying to the discussion.

7. Executive Council

Executive Council members and Congress Officials are entitled to attend and speak at the Conference.

8. Other Matters

- 8.1 Affiliates and delegates to the Women's Conference are reminded of the requirement to seek the permission of the Conference Arrangements Committee in advance of the distribution of any material to delegates during the course of the Women's Conference.
- 8.2 Matters not covered by these Standing Orders shall in principle be dealt with in accordance with the Standing Orders of Congress.





Notes

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