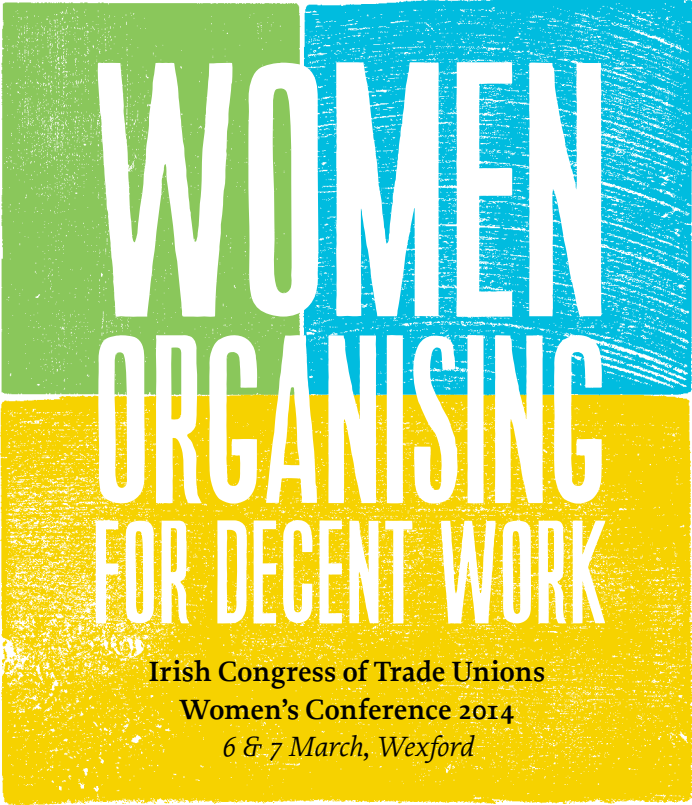


The poster features a square background divided into three horizontal bands. The top band is split vertically: the left half is green and the right half is blue. The bottom band is a solid yellow. The text 'WOMEN ORGANISING FOR DECENT WORK' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, spanning across the green, blue, and yellow sections. Below this, the event details are written in smaller black text, centered within the yellow band.

WOMEN ORGANISING FOR DECENT WORK

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Women's Conference 2014

6 & 7 March, Wexford

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Women Organising for Decent Work

Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women’s Conference 2014
White’s Hotel, Wexford, 6th & 7th March 2014

Thursday 6th March

10.00	Registration and Tea/Coffee		Session 2 Women in Unions
	Session 1 Opening Session	12.00	Motions on Women in Unions (x1) Session to be introduced by Pamela Dooley , Chairperson Northern Ireland Committee ICTU EC Report — Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs — Results of 2013 Equality Audit — Voting on Motion and Agree Sections of Reports
11.00	Welcome and Introduction Maire Mulcahy & Theresa Devenney , Joint Women’s Committee Chairs Margaret Browne , Chair of Conference Arrangements Committee Shop Steward , White’s Hotel Joe Thomas , Wexford Trades Council		
11.15	Opening Address John Douglas , Congress President	13.00	Lunch and Fringe Events — Monitoring the implementation of CEDAW — Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation
11.30	Session on Low Pay for Women to be introduced by Sally Anne Kinahan , Assistant General Secretary, ICTU		

Women Organising for Decent Work

Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women’s Conference 2014
White’s Hotel, Wexford, 6th & 7th March 2014

Friday 7th March

	Session 3 Women and Work		Session 4 Women and Society
14.30	Motions on Women and Work (x9) Guest Speaker: Professor Ailsa McKay , Professor of Economics at Glasgow Caledonian University: The Economic Case for Investing in High-Quality Childcare and Early Years Education EC Report — Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs — Voting on Motions and Agree Sections of Reports	09.30	Motions on Women and Society (x11) Guest Speaker: Grainne Healy , Chairwoman of Marriage Equality – ‘Why marriage equality matters for Ireland’ EC Report — Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs
15.45	Coffee Break	10.45	Coffee Break Voting on Motions and Agree Sections of Reports
16.00	Session 3 resumes		
17.30	End of Day 1	13.00	Close of Conference
19.00	Reception hosted by Lord Mayor of Wexford, George Lawlor , followed by Dinner at 8pm		



MOTIONS FOR CONFERENCE

“Every individual is capable of extraordinary things, but no one can accomplish anything by themselves. Working women should count, but the only way we'll make that true is if we work together.”

Karen Nussbaum

WOMEN AND WORK

1 Equality proofing and Pay and Conditions

ICTU Women’s Conference recommends to Congress that any future centralised negotiations on pay and conditions of service should:

- Equality proof all proposed measures under consideration, and
- Prioritise the elimination of the gap in earnings between newer and more established public servants.

Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland

2 Employment for Rural Women

We ask Congress to note that geographical disadvantages exist in terms of employment opportunities for women in rural Ireland and ask that Congress commits itself to addressing this social problem through seeking the provision of decent work for women in those disadvantaged areas through every possible reasonable means and at every possible opportunity.

Castlebar & District Council of Trade Unions

3 Parental Leave

Female participation at clerical administrative grades in the Civil Service now stands at 75% with women in senior positions at around 25%. This shows a clear gender imbalance that needs to be addressed. One of the factors contributing to this inequity is the restrictive nature of some of the worklife balance schemes following the implementation of the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA).

For example Section 3.15 of the HRA provides for:

Management’s discretion to alter or change an individual’s work-sharing arrangements, on the giving of due notice (3 months), is confirmed. Management reserves the right, on reasonable business grounds and with reasonable notice, to refuse access to the scheme, to require a person to vary their work-sharing arrangements, or to require a person to resume full time work.

Members have already endured cuts to pay, pensions, annual leave and have to work longer hours all of which contribute to increased pressure on families.

Therefore the ICTU Women’s Conference calls on Congress to:

- 1 Seek to have the Civil Service Worksharing Scheme available to parents, without the above restriction, until the child reaches five years of age if they request it. This will assist parents in planning the care of the child until s/he reaches school going age.
- 2 Seek to have all collective agreements equality proofed in advance of their implementation.

CPSU

4 Universal Childcare

This Conference notes that the call for universal childcare has never been more relevant. Parents across this island face some of the highest childcare costs anywhere in Europe, this affects their ability to work, train or study, as well as forcing families to make difficult financial choices.

Conference also believes that accessible, high-quality childcare has a vital role to play in tackling child poverty.

According to a recent study by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), there is a strong economic and social case for universal, early years’ provision. High-quality, early years’ provision, particularly where significant investment has been made in the workforce, delivers a net financial return to the Treasury, as well as delivering better outcomes for children, families and society.

Conference has heard with interest the conclusion of the Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry into Women and Work which has called for a timetable for a statutory right to childcare that includes children up to the age of fifteen, and disabled children.

Conference also notes the work of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in drafting the National Children’s and Young People’s Policy Framework (CYPPF), which will set out the vision, national outcomes and aims for young people for the next five years and the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy.

Conference believes that the right to childcare should be a cornerstone of future economic and social policies in both jurisdictions on this island.

In Northern Ireland, parents and care providers are facing crippling childcare costs. A recent report by Employers for Childcare in Northern Ireland indicates for a family with two children in full-time childcare the costs can be £16,432 per year; whilst the average full-time childcare place now costs £158 per week, a £2 increase on last year’s figure. Despite this, Conference notes with concern that there is still no Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Conference, therefore, call on The Executive Council of ICTU to campaign vigorously for affordable, quality childcare for all. Conference further calls on this campaign to ensure that workers within the childcare sector are properly paid and have access to career development opportunities.

Congress Women’s Committee Motion 2

5 Equality and Decent Work Campaign

This Conference notes the successful efforts by the Trade Union Movement in the 70’s and early 80’s to struggle and strive for greater equality for women in the workforce. We applaud the determination of those women representatives of that era today.

Conference further notes the introduction and expansion of family friendly working policies and initiatives over the Social Partnership era and the many gains made for women workers and those with caring and other responsibilities to enable greater participation in the workforce. However, Conference condemns the attack on those conditions by cuts in the private sector and in the public sector by means of the Haddington Road agreement in recent years.

We instruct the ICTU to place the equality agenda and the restoration of those conditions cut as a result of the Government’s austerity policy at the top of the campaign “For Decent Work and a Living Wage”.

Dublin Council of Trade Unions

6 Equality for Classroom Assistants

The role of the Classroom Assistant is valued within our education system, the appreciation shown to classroom assistants by both teaching staff and parents is a demonstration of this.

Despite this, a high number of these predominately female, part time workers are undervalued in their remuneration and pension earnings by the current pay system.

These workers provide excellent support for the education and well-being of pupils in our educational establishments. It is therefore with great concern that we bring before this conference an issue which systematically disadvantages these very workers. The method used is to divide up the job of the Classroom Assistant and place one person in three different posts – Special Educational Needs Classroom Assistant, General Assistant, and Supervisory Assistant, usually with the same child or group of children. They are paid at a different rate for each of these posts, classed as 3 separate contracts, while they are expected to bring the same level of expertise and experience to each.

This is being used by Senior Management Teams' and the Education authorities to save money and so disadvantage these workers on pay and pension. We believe that these workers are performing a single role within the classroom and this should be reflected in their contracts of employment and remuneration.

We ask conference to use all means available to stop this unfair and discriminatory practice.

GMB

7 Public Service Pensions

Conference condemns the Northern Ireland Public Service Pensions Bill, which will:

- Worsen the pensions of all public service workers, who form a bigger proportion of society in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK;
- Force public service workers to work much longer to receive an adequate pension;
- Equalise the state pension age and the normal pension age for all members of non-uniformed pension schemes, so that many public service workers will be unable to access their whole pension until they are 68.
- Damage the Northern Ireland economy by reducing public service workers’ spending power because of increased pension contributions;
- Damage the Northern Ireland economy by reducing public service pensioners’ income.

Conference considers that the Public Service Pensions Bill is likely to have the following impact on Northern Ireland teachers, the majority of whom are female:

- It will devastate the morale of the teaching profession;
- It will exacerbate the growing scandal of newly qualified teacher unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Conference also condemns the potential discriminatory nature of reformed public service pension scheme design brought about by the Public Service Pensions

Bill, in particular the feature of the Teachers’ Pension Scheme whereby teachers who leave teaching for more than five years have reduced benefits, which impacts adversely on teachers who take career breaks to raise children.

Conference further condemns the decision of the Department of Finance and Personnel to screen out an EQIA on the Bill and calls for this decision to be immediately reversed.

Conference congratulates those MLAs who have voted against the Bill or supported amendments to the Bill suggested by ICTU or individual unions.

Conference therefore pledges its support for ICTU and individual public service unions’ campaigning and lobbying against the Public Service Pensions Bill. Conference considers that this should be fully reflected in ICTU’s policy statements and publicity.

NASUWT

8 Maternity and Adoptive benefits

This Conferences notes the changes in minimum and maximum rates of Maternity Benefits and Adoptive Benefits announced in Budget 2014.

The budget provided that from 6 January 2014 the minimum and maximum rates of Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit would be standardised at €230 per week for new applicants.

The reduction in the higher rate by €32 imposes a hardship on many women and serves as yet another barrier to the full participation of women in the workplace.

Conference views this measure as retrograde and calls on the Executive Council of the ICTU to campaign for

realistic levels of maternity and adoptive benefits as part of the wider campaign for decent work.

National Union of Journalists

9. Flexible Working

ICTU Women's Conference calls on Congress to coordinate a campaign involving all affiliates to ensure a strengthening of the terms of flexible working from right to request to right to access.

UTU

WOMEN AND SOCIETY

10 Marriage Equality

Conference welcomes the Government’s plans to recognise and support lesbian and gay headed families and urges the Government to enact this legislation in 2014 as a priority. Conference further welcomes the decision to hold a referendum on equal access to civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples and will support a Yes vote.

Conference further welcomes the legislation being brought forward in England and Wales which will allow for same sex marriage. However Conference is dismayed that Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where changes to the law to legalise same sex marriage are not currently being considered. Conference calls on Congress to campaign vigorously to ensure that lesbian and gay couples have equal access to marriage.

Congress Women’s Committee Motion 1

11 Violence against Women

Conference notes that violence against women and girls in our society remains pervasive. The Police Service of NI responded to a domestic violence incident every 19 minutes of every day in the past year. In 2012–13, Women’s Aid refuges provided shelter and support to 880 women and 549 children fleeing domestic violence across Northern Ireland. Clearly the systems designed to protect women and children are not working and we need to take action on this.

On 25 November 2013 it was announced that domestic violence protection orders would be rolled out across England and Wales from March 2014. This announcement followed a successful 1 year pilot across 3 police force areas.

We are calling for these new powers to be introduced in Northern Ireland.

We call on Conference to make this issue a priority and urge Congress to:

- a) Call for the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews in Northern Ireland in line with the GB model.
- b) Call for a revision to the Domestic Violence definition to remove age limits.
- c) Call for the introduction in Northern Ireland of the Disclosure Scheme introduced in England and Wales.

CWU NI Region

12 Independence of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

“This conference calls on Congress and its affiliated unions to seek to ensure that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is a genuinely independent body; that it reports directly to the Oireachtas and not to the Government or to any individual Minister or Department and that it is properly financed and staffed to enable it to carry out its role effectively.”

IMPACT

13 Respect for Gender Identity

We call on the Minister for Social Protection to progress legislation that takes account of the human rights and dignity of trans persons and their families in line with the recommendations of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe. Trans and intersex persons of all ages should be able to access the rights contained within Recognition, and personal medical treatment history and partnership status should have no impact on the process. ICTU supports TENI’s campaign for inclusive, marriage-friendly Gender Recognition for Ireland.

Gender Identity – We hold that all people have the right to have their gender identity recognised and respected in the workplace and commit ourselves to campaign about raising awareness on gender identity in the workplace.

INMO

14 Mental Health

Conference notes the increasing focus and awareness of mental health difficulties and commends the work carried out by individual unions in this area. Conference calls on ICTU and unions to continue to support, advise and represent members with mental health difficulties and to engage in initiatives to raise awareness of the impact of mental health difficulties on women in the workplace.

INTO

15 Fair Shop Campaign

The theme of this conference, Organising for Decent Work for Women, captures the essence of Mandate’s Fair Shop campaign. This campaign stems from the need for decent jobs for retail workers, predominantly women, jobs that supports these worker’s families and communities. Jobs that give a living wage with a guaranteed pattern of hours and not the insecurities of precarious work with reduced hours and earnings. Mandate calls on conference to encourage all Trade Unions and conference delegates to support Fair Shop and help Mandate raise the bar for retail workers.”

MANDATE

16 Impact of Austerity and Gender Responsive Budgeting

The cumulative effect of the Governments’ austerity measures taken to reduce net public spending is having a disproportionate effect on women, making many women poor and less financially autonomous.

Conference is concerned at the Governments’ continued failure to apply the public sector equality duty to budget and policy setting processes at the highest level.

This failure has resulted in women bearing the brunt of the cuts to jobs, services and the welfare state.

Conference calls on the respective Governments to accept gender responsive budgeting, and by extension equality responsive budgeting, is a requirement of their statutory equality duty that must be applied not only to the formation but the execution of the Budget. We also urge the Governments to recognise the cumulative impact of austerity on women’s equality and to take immediate action to help stop the clock turning back.

NIPSA

17 Decent work for Domestic Workers

That this conference calls on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to continue to campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for Domestic Workers and to campaign for the right of all care workers, the majority of whom are women, to quality jobs

SIPTU

18 Women, Peace and Security

Conference condemns the ongoing failure of the UK Government to implement UN Security Council Resolution UNSCR 1325 in Northern Ireland. This Resolution on ‘women and peace and security’:

- reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction;
- stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security;
- urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts; and
- calls on all parties in conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.

The failure of the UK Government to implement this Resolution was recently condemned by the CEDAW Committee at its examination of the UK government in Geneva in July 2013. At that examination, the examining committee was informed by OFMDFM that UNSCR1325 was ‘not relevant’ because both the UK Government and First Minister did not agree that the NI conflict was an armed conflict within the definition of the resolution.

The Irish government, however, has acknowledged the applicability of UNSCR 1325 in the NI context. For example its National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, underscores the need to engage with appropriate Northern Ireland authorities to encourage development of policies and measures consistent with the aims of UNSCR 1325, in consultation with civil society organisations.

Conference calls on ICTU Women’s Committee to work with ICTU structures and all affiliates in a campaign and lobby of the UK Government for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Northern Ireland.

UNISON

19 Women, the Working Poor

This conference notes that new official figures show a relentless surge in the cost of living with continuous increasing energy and food costs.

Unfortunately, the average wage increases within the public sector are only one percent. This is a sector which employs on average 69.2% women, in the EU. In most workplaces within the private sector, the scenario is no pay rise at all, cuts to hours, cuts to terms and conditions and rising employee pension contributions. Many working women are struggling to make ends meet, secure decent housing and are forced to work in low paid precarious employment. In many cases the only employment they can secure is on zero hour contracts making it even more difficult, to claim benefits for themselves and their children.

This motion calls on the ICTU to lobby both governments to legislate for a living wage and one which rises on an annual basis in line with RPI.

We also call on ICTU to continue its campaign to end zero hour contracts and replace them with a frame work of decent contractual agreements between unions and employers based on decent pay and full pensions which increase with the annual rate of inflation.

UNITE the Union

20 Tackling the Gender Pay Gap

The disproportionate impact of the economic crisis on women’s incomes has brought new urgency to the need to tackle the gender pay gap.

Despite four decades of equal pay legislation, the gap remains a stubbornly persistent feature of women’s lives. Women in the Republic earn a tenth less than men and the gap is almost twice this size in Northern Ireland.

The complex reasons that give rise to the gender pay gap are well documented. Temporary, insecure, part-time employment together with poor levels of maternity pay, the low status and value given to women’s job roles and the tendency for women to be clustered at the bottom of grading structures in low paying sectors of the economy, are all major factors.

The light touch, voluntary approach favoured by governments and employers is not working. Now is the time to move beyond pay gap rhetoric towards effective, practical solutions.

We ask the ICTU and the Women’s Committee to:

- I Campaign to raise awareness of the pay gap and the impact it has on women’s incomes and equality.
- II Support the work affiliates are doing with employers to address the gender pay gap and promote good practice.
- III Hold Government and other public bodies accountable where they fail to assess the gender impact of policy, service delivery and employment decisions.
- IV Campaign to challenge the marginalisation of equality issues in the current crisis as a ‘luxury we can’t afford’.

USDAW

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS

21 Leadership Training

Conference calls on ICTU to initiate a leadership training programme, targeting in particular those members of unions, which have an underrepresentation of women at national executive level.

TUI



CONFERENCE REPORT

“What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist – the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life, and the sun and music and art.”

Rose Schneiderman



It has been a challenging time since we last came together for our Women's Conference in 2012. There, we were inspired by the words and passion of President Michael D Higgins who spoke about the important role of women within the trade union movement and wider society and urged us all to play a part in ensuring a recovery based on equality and solidarity.

Women continue the struggle worldwide. In November 2013, more than 300 women trade union delegates from 100 countries gathered in Senegal to analyse the impacts of the global jobs crisis on women, find ways to organise more women and map out trade union action to improve women's job security, pay and conditions as the global economy remains highly unstable.

A major focus of the programme was on reaching out to the most vulnerable and exploited women such as domestic or home-based workers and map out different ways of organising them around the world.

The Conference also focused on promoting women in leadership, and mentorship programmes to support younger women.

Women have been hardest hit by the crisis as their employment and income levels steadily deteriorate. The ITUC (2013) Global Poll showed that 65% of women think the economic situation in their country is bad.

The event ended with a strong commitment by the unions to organise women workers around their issues, and to campaign for unpaid care work to be recognised, valued and more equally shared.

“The Women's Organising Assembly marks a strategic moment in the critical fight to reclaim our democracies, our communities, the dignity of work and our rights as women and as workers,” said Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary. “We want to build workers' power. Women are part of this fight. The World has to count us in!”

“This 2nd World Women's Conference – Organising Assembly – is not just about opposing discrimination and injustice because it is wrong. The focus on organising working women is central to the trade union response and part of the solution for the global trade union movement,” said Diana Holland, Chair of the ITUC Women's Committee. “Gender equality is needed to strengthen unions and building workers' power.

This report is a brief account of the work of Irish Trade Unions in this regard.

We hope that you enjoy the conference and take part fully in all the discussions so that you can return to your union and workplace revitalised in the struggle.



Women in Leadership in the Trade Union movement:

It is very important that we continue to have women role models in leadership positions throughout the movement and there have been positive developments in this regard in recent years.

Both the ITUC and the ETUC are headed up by women, **Sharan Burrow** and **Bernadette Segol**, both of whom have participated Congress events during the period, including 1913 Lockout memorial events and the Congress Biennial Delegate Conference in Belfast in July 2013.

Frances O'Grady was appointed as General Secretary of the TUC in 2012 taking up her position in January 2013 and is a long established friend of the Irish trade union movement.

Pamela Dooley, UNISON, was elected as the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Committee following its Biennial Delegate Conference in April 2012.



Patricia King, Sharon Burrows, Bernadette Segol, President Michael D Higgins, David Begg and Frances O'Grady at National Commemoration of 1913.

Jacquie Reid was appointed as the Deputy General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers Union in November 2013, **Karen Sims** was appointed as NASUWT Regional Organiser in 2013. They join a number of women in leadership roles across the movement.

Patricia King is Vice President of Congress and Vice President of SIPTU, dealing with industrial policy.

Sally Anne Kinahan is Assistant General Secretary of Congress.

Sheila Nunan is General Secretary of the INTO and on the General Purposes Committee of Congress.

Patricia McKeown is the Regional Secretary of UNISON and former President of Congress.

Avril Hall-Callaghan is the General Secretary of the UTU.

Alison Millar is Deputy General Secretary of NIPSA.

Ethel Buckley (SIPTU);

Avril Hall-Callaghan (UTU);

Patricia McKeown (UNISON);

Alison Millar (NIPSA);

Maria Morgan (NIPSA);

Aileen Morrissey (MANDATE);

Phil Ni Sheaghda (INMO);

Louise O'Donnell (IMPACT);

and **Anne Speed** (UNISON)

are all on the Congress Executive Council.

“Deeply committed to social justice and human rights, Inez McCormack was held in the highest regard across the International Trade Union movement.”



Inez McCormack pictured at the unveiling of her portrait with Patricia McKeown and Pamela Dooley of UNISON.

It was with deep sadness that the trade union movement learnt of the death in January 2013 of former President of Congress and UNISON Regional Secretary **Inez McCormack**.

Deeply committed to social justice and human rights, Inez was held in the highest regard across the International Trade Union movement. Inez constantly battled on shifting sands on some of the most controversial issues such as discrimination, child sexual abuse, rape in marriage and as a

weapon of war and a woman's right to choose.

Inez enters the history books with many 'Firsts' to her name.

She was the first woman union official to be appointed by the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE); The first woman to become Chair of Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU; The first woman to become President of the modern day Congress; The first contemporary woman trade unionist to be portrayed on stage by 'A' list stars such as Meryl Streep and Catherine Deneuve.

Inez served as President of Congress from 1999 to 2001.

A role model for trade unionists around the world, Inez will be sorely missed.



Women's Committee Northern Ireland



Members of Women's Committee ROI

Congress Women's Committee:

The Women's Committee is one of the longest standing formal committees of Congress and continues to provide an opportunity for women in the movement to meet and discuss the trade union agenda through a gender lens.

The constitution of the Committee sets out the functions to be:

the co-ordination of policy or action by affiliated organisations catering for women workers on matters relating to the interests of women; the investigation of problems arising from the employment of women in industry, services and the professions; the preparation of reports on aspects of women's employment, conditions of work, remuneration etc.

The committee in the Republic was reconstituted in 2012 (Full list in Appendix B) and the following were elected Officers of the Committee.

- Maire Mulcahy (ASTI), Chairperson;
- Ann Louise Gilligan, (IFUT) Vice Chairperson;
- Margaret Browne (IBOA), Secretary.

In Northern Ireland, the Officers are:

- Theresa Devenney (ATL), Chairperson;
- Vivien Holding (CWU), Vice Chairperson;
- Teresa Graham (NASUWT) Secretary.

The major initiatives during the period were the organisation of a national women's conference in 2012 and a seminar in 2013.



President Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina Coyne with delegates to the 2013 Women's Conference.

Women's Conference

The conference was held in Belfast and themed "Bearing the Brunt, leading the response: Women and the Economic Crisis".

Nearly 200 trade union delegates and guests attended.

Congress was delighted that the Key-Note speaker to the Conference was President of Ireland **Michael D Higgins**.

Introduced by Congress Vice President, Patricia King, he stated that:

"We are at a crucial point of transition from one economic model that failed us all to another that has yet to be fully realised. We need to debate the nature and shape of that economy so that sustainability and social cohesion are given as much priority as efficiency and competitiveness. The perspective of women as citizens, in every sense of that term, must be allowed to inform that alternative version of economy and its connection with society".

He added:

"It has been my experience that the style of leadership usually pursued by women makes them particularly effective in getting the job done. There is accumulating evidence that women bring a set of communication and interpersonal skills to the workplace which, while often ignored in the past, are better suited to the team-oriented leadership of the 21st Century".

Other speakers at the conference included:

- **Patricia King**, Vice President Congress;
- **Sally Anne Kinahan**, Assistant General Secretary Congress
- **Sylvia Walby**, Professor of Sociology and UNSECO Chair in Gender Research;
- **Michelle Morris**, Equality Commission NI;
- **Dr Michelle O'Sullivan**, University of Limerick on the economic crisis and the restructuring of wage setting mechanisms for vulnerable workers in Ireland.
- Fringe meetings on Justice for Colombia; Gender Equality and Decent Work and Lagan Lassies and Life were held.

A report on actions in relation to the motions passed at the conference is contained in Appendix A.

Full details, including video of the President's address are available here: <http://www.ictu.ie/equality/gender.html>



Joint Chairs, Teresa Devenney and Carol O'Brien at Conference 2012

Seminar March 2013

The seminar in March 2013 in Liberty Hall, part of a series of trade union events to mark International Women's Day, reflected on the on the legacy of 1913 and modern challenges. Labour MEPs, Emer Costello, Nessa Childers and Phil Prendergast very kindly hosted a reception in the European Office in Dublin the evening before the seminar.

We were honoured to be addressed by Magdalen Laundry survivors who thanked the Women's Committee for their Solidarity. In addressing the seminar, the Magdalen Laundry survivors requested co-operation from the trade union movement as they seek to ensure that the forthcoming reparations process is independent, open, transparent, accessible and fair and provides justice to the women, by responding to the full extent of the human rights violations that they suffered. Full details available here: <http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2013/03/08/international-womens-day/>

Following the seminar SIPTU held an event to commemorate the founding of the Irish Women Workers' Union more than 100 years ago and its role in the 1913 Lockout. A ceramic plaque was unveiled by feminist and historian **Margaret Mac Curtain** and the union's last serving General Secretary **Padraigin Ní Mhurchu** along with IWWU member Kay Marron at Liberty Hall. **Jack O'Connor**, president of SIPTU, who sponsored the plaque, was present along with sculptor **Jackie McKenna**, who created it.

Margaret Mac Curtain said: "The significant contribution of many Irish women has frequently been sidelined in our history. The Irish Women Workers' Union is an example. Initiatives such as the one today serve to remind us all of the central role played by women generally and, in particular, the membership of the IWWU in the 1913 Lockout. The union played a key role in the events of 100 years ago, not only standing up for their own right to organise in the pursuit of better



Plaque to commemorate the founding of the Irish Women Worker's Union

pay and working conditions but also, in many cases, working tirelessly to support others in their fight.

"Women like Delia Larkin, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Louie Bennet, Helena Molony, Mary Galway, Rosie Hackett and a host of others have become part of the school curriculum because other women will not let them be forgotten. Jackie McKenna's plaque will ensure we continue to remember these and other women and establish them in the mainstream rather than the margins."

Jack O'Connor said: "The decision by three young women, members of the women workers branch of the ITGWU (which later became the Irish Women Workers' Union) to refuse to take off their union badge while at work in Jacobs Biscuits played a significant role in the decision by Dublin employers to enforce the lockout.

"It is important to commemorate their role and that of the women who came after them in the union and the wider labour movement in Ireland. Today, more than half of those in Irish trade unions are women. The struggle for decent working conditions for Irish women is far from over. But we could not have come this far without the heroic contribution of our sisters in the Irish Women Workers Union."

The Women's Committee were delighted that the Dublin City council later decided to name the new Marlborough Street bridge the Rosie Hackett Bridge.



Women's Council of the Isles

Members of the Committee participated in the Women's Council of the Isles meetings in Cardiff in 2012. Committee Secretary, Margaret Brown, addressed the meeting on the legacy of 1913.

November 2013

The Committee hosted the Council of the Isles Women's Committees in Dublin in November 2013. More than 50 women trade union leaders gathered to discuss and debate issues affecting women workers. In wide reaching presentations, representatives from the ICTU, STUC, WTUC and TUC explored issues such as the impact of austerity on women's health; family leave; violence against women and older women workers.

In presenting on the topic of Women's Health, Women's Committee members Jacquie Reid and Vice Chair Vivien Holding drew particular attention to the lack of access to abortion in Northern Ireland. They highlighted in particular, the case of a young woman who was forced to travel to England to get a termination as her baby, which had a severe foetal abnormality, had no chance of survival after delivery.

As a result of the presentation, the STUC Women's Committee put an emergency motion to their women's conference calling for the 1967 abortion act to be extended to Northern Ireland. The motion, which was carried, also called on the STUC to:

- lobby the UK Government to comply with the UN CEDAW Committee's recommendation;
- write to all Scottish MPs on this matter;
- write to the Secretary of State for Health in the UK Government, urging the removal of charges for those women who travel from Northern Ireland to access services in other parts of the UK and to liaise with

the NICTU Women's Committee on this issue; and

- send a message of support to the Marie Stopes clinic now attempting to deliver a service in Belfast."

Representatives also agreed a number of initiatives which included:

- Collaboration on joint initiatives to mark International Day of Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2014;
- Continuing to push for affordable childcare policies through lobbying of governments and policy makers as well as highlighting the issue within the trade union movement.

A joint statement from the Council of the Isles was issued which called on the British and Irish Governments to fulfil their obligations under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement:

Concluding the meeting, Women Representatives of the four trade union Congresses, The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, The Scottish TUC, the Wales TUC and the TUC collectively called on the UK Government to deliver its obligations as signatory to the Good Friday Agreement and bring forward a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

The Council meeting was deeply concerned at evidence produced by the ICTU Women's Committee in Northern Ireland on the impact of the 'roll back' on equality by the NI Executive and the refusal of the UK Government to fulfil its human rights obligations to the Peace process. Delegates heard that while there has been an international spotlight on the more than 3000 deaths reported over 40 years of the conflict little notice has been taken of the fact that more than 3000 people have taken their own lives since 1998.

Life expectancy for the most vulnerable sections of society has dropped and significant parts of the population are dying from what the World Health Organisation describes as 'a preventable disease – inequality'. During the same period women's rights in Northern Ireland continue to be eroded and in addition many of the missing rights, such as reproductive rights, advocated by the UN and other international bodies have never been implemented. The conference pledged to ensure that the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland will reappear as a priority on the agendas of the respective Congresses and consequent pressure will be brought to bear on Government and Opposition in all 5 jurisdictions.

Maire Mulcahy and Theresa Dwyer presented on the situation in the Republic regarding family leaves and reconciling work and family responsibilities and how austerity had rolled back advancements gained over many years.

All of the presentations available here: <http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2013/11/08/womens-trade-union-council-of-the-isles/>

Other areas of activity for the Women's Committee in the Republic of Ireland included:

- Feeding a gender perspective into a trade union commission submission on equality issues agreed by equality related committees North and South; the submission makes the case for continued and enhanced engagement with equality issues by the trade union movement; proposing the adoption of commitment to equality mainstreaming; and proposing enhanced ways of working to further profile the movement's commitment to equality and campaigning on issues of concern to the movement
- Expressing its sympathy to the Halappanavar family following the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar in a Galway hospital in October 2012 and stating how this desperately sad case illustrates the need to bring legal clarity' to the abortion issue and also a need for clarity for medical professionals who have to make judgement calls in such matters. The government only passed legislation to give effect to the constitutional right to an abortion in life threatening pregnancies including the risk of suicide in July 2013 with the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act. However it remains to be seen if this legislation will enable women to exercise this constitutional right in practice.
- Continued support and liaison with the Turn Off the Red light Campaign, including a submission to the review of prostitution law in the Republic of Ireland;
- Meeting with Mikael Gustafsson MEP, and Chair of Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality at the European Parliament and the drawing up of a list of Equality related issues for the Irish Government to pursue during their Presidency of the EU during first half of 2013..
- Completion of ETUC survey on the Equal Treatment Directive (Recast) here in Ireland;

- Completion of annual ETUC 8th March survey on gender mainstreaming within trade unions.
- Supporting the NWCI campaign on the taxation of maternity benefit
- Engagement with the Equality audit of affiliates
- Meeting with Violence against women groups to plan trade union participation in November events with emphasis on role of men in tackling violence against women. Secured Executive Council support for action in support of initiatives to tackle violence against women.

Women and Leadership

Over 50 women have now completed the Women and Leadership programme in Northern Ireland. To assess the success of the programme, the Women's Committee invited past students together in an informal networking session. This took place in January 2014 and the purpose was to reflect on the course and how women might be further supported within the trade union movement.

In particular participants were asked to consider whether the training has been helpful within their union and workplace. Feedback from this initiative will inform the Women's Committee and provide recommendations in relation to promoting women as leaders within the trade union movement.

In the Republic of Ireland, Trade Union Skillnet (previously Women at Work Skillnet) a training network of union organisations in Republic of Ireland (ICTU, CWU, IBOA, INMO, Mandate, SIPTU, TEEU) carries out training interventions for women activists and officials continue to be part of the remit of the Skillnet. The development of a mentoring approach has commenced and is continuing.



NIPSA member Tina Creaney at the Women and Leadership Networking event.

Members of the Women's Committee continue to represent Congress on various bodies and have input to a high level within Government on issues crucial to women.

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)

The Committee has been represented by Women's Committee Vice Chair Vivien Holding (CWU).

Domestic Violence Partnership (DVP)

Three members of the committee sit on various working groups of this body. Margaret McKee (Unison), Geraldine Alexander (NIPSA) and Taryn Trainer (Unite).

The partnership has a wide range of participants, the aim is to develop a comprehensive package of support and care for those affected by domestic violence. Further aims of the group are to develop strategies around prevention, education and better policies in the workplace, through public services and schools. Work in 2013 included running a series of seminars and workshops on Domestic Violence in the Workplace and Domestic Violence and Children.

Equality and Human Rights Sub-Group (EHRSG)

The EHRSG is a sub-committee of the NI Committee (NIC) which extends its membership to the chairs of the NIC's self-organised groups, equality officers of affiliated unions and trade unionists on the enforcement bodies. The EHRSG's function is to develop on behalf of the Northern Ireland Committee a strategy on equality and human rights, and to co-ordinate ICTU's lobbies, relations and negotiations with Governments, enforcement agencies and others on equality and human rights issues.

The EHRSG has had a series of meetings during the period covered by this report including those with the Joint Ministers with responsibility for equality, the Equality Commission NI (ECNI) and with the NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)

Most recently, the NIC has expressed its deep concern at the failure of the ECNI to pursue a formal investigation into the failure of the Minister for Social Development and his Department to carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment of the proposed changes to the welfare system, which in the view of the NIC will compound discrimination and disadvantage.

The Women's Committee is represented by the Chair, Vice Chair and by other members of the Women's Committee.

Congress Ad Hoc Welfare Reform Group

The committee is represented by the Chair and other members of the Women's Committee. The Women's Committee has played an active role in the ICTU campaign against the so-called welfare 'reform'. Linking with initiatives within the women's sector such as the Empty Purse Campaign, the Women's Committee has attended briefings, demonstrations and has also produced specific information on how changes to the welfare system will impact on women.

ICTU Global Solidarity Committee

The Committee is represented by Teresa Graham (NASUWT) and Global Solidarity is a standing item on the Women's Committee agenda.

Women's Policy Group

The Women's Policy Group is coordinated by the Women's Resource and Development Agency and brings together a wide range of representatives including trade unions, women's organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Various members of the Women's Committee attend meetings which are also attended by the ICTU Equality Officer.

The Ad Hoc Women's Budget Group

The Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group consists of individuals with economic, financial and public policy expertise. The purpose of the group is to influence and scrutinise budgets and budgetary processes to ensure that budgets and spending plans are sensitive to gender. Members of the Committee attend this group.

Human Rights Consortium

Congress is a member of the Human Rights Consortium which brings together nearly 200 NGO's, trade unions and other groups to campaign for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, in particular for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

The Human Rights Consortium meets on a monthly basis.

Equality Coalition

Congress is a member of the Equality Coalition which is a broad alliance of non-governmental organisations whose members cover all the categories listed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('s75'), as well as other equality strands. It was founded in 1996 by community and voluntary sector organisations and trade unions.

The Equality Coalition continues to provide a forum for unity between all sectors when campaigning for equality, while allowing for the diversity of its members' work and views. It has regular engagements with government and the enforcement bodies.

Both the Human Rights consortium and the Equality coalition have established relations with the Equality and Human Rights alliance in the Republic.

The Congress Equality Officer and members of the Women's Committee attend monthly meetings of both the Equality Coalition and the Human Rights Consortium and play an active role in the work of the Coalition.

European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) Women's Committee

The committees continue to be updated on the ETUC Women's Committee programme of work. The committee have a direct input to the work via the Officer Clare Moore and the alternate representative Rhonda Donaghy who sit on the ETUC Committee.



Women's Committee member Margaret Gregg (GMB) attended the STUC Women's Conference in November 2013. Margaret is pictured at the conference with Eileen Dinning, STUC WC Chair (UNISON) and Shelia Bearcroft Wales TUC (GMB) (Photo Credit: Louis Flood)

Young People in the Trade Union Movement

As a result of work undertaken on the LIFT programme, the Women's Committee in Northern Ireland have taken a particular interest in how to support and integrate young people into the trade union movement. Members of the Women's Committee have met with the ICTU Education Trade Union Group and the ICTU Youth Committee to progress this important issue.

The Women's Committee continues to engage with a wide range of organisations and has had presentations at meetings from the Women's Resource and Development Agency and OFM DFM.

Thousands of young women have engaged with trade unions through their participation in the Youth Connect schools programme, which informs them about their rights as students and workers (www.youth-connect.ie).

The Women's Committee at Congress BDC 2013



Maire Mulcahy addressing the Congress BDC, Belfast, July 2013

Maire Mulcahy presented the views of the Committee during a speech at the BDC in Belfast, July 2013. In a wide ranging address, Maire raised a number of issues including:

- Equal Pay;
- Importance of the Equality Audit;
- Welfare Reform Bill;
- Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality recommendation on the criminilisation of the purchase of sex;
- Magdalene laundries and their quest for Justice and our request for the investigation to be widened to include survivors from the Bethany Homes;
- Protection of life during Pregnancy Bill;
- Engagement with the EU.

An equality motion was also debated and unanimously adopted by delegates. The main points of the motions were:

- a to develop, within the trade union movement, impact assessments of our own actions in policy-making, at the bargaining table with employers and in our negotiations with Governments to ensure that we are genuinely contributing to the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity, with a particular emphasis on the core equality categories;
- b to call on both Governments to introduce an equality and human rights based budgeting approach to economic policy-making and planning across the island. This framework would place equality and human rights at the centre of future programmes for Government, budgets and investment strategies;

- c calling on both Governments to rethink their approaches to our Equality and Human Rights infrastructure;
- d call on the Irish Government to urgently introduce legislation to give effect to the promised statutory duty on the public sector to promote equality of opportunity.

Equality Audit 2013

Congress has carried out a second equality audit which affiliated trade unions completed during 2013.

The number of union members affiliated to Congress at the beginning of 2013 stood at 778,136. The total number of female members in 2013 is 407,868 compared to 414,131 in 2012; a difference of -6,264, or a decline of just over 2%.

The net reduction in female members represents 67% of the overall reduction in affiliated numbers.

The proportion of female members stands at 52%, down from 53% in 2011. Female membership had climbed as high as 57% of total membership in Northern Ireland in 2009 whilst fluctuating between 50–51% in the Republic over the last number of years. The most recent membership reductions have been predominantly female, compared to losses three to four years ago which were almost entirely male from the construction sector.

19 trade unions provided returns to Congress and some of the headline results of the audit are as follows:

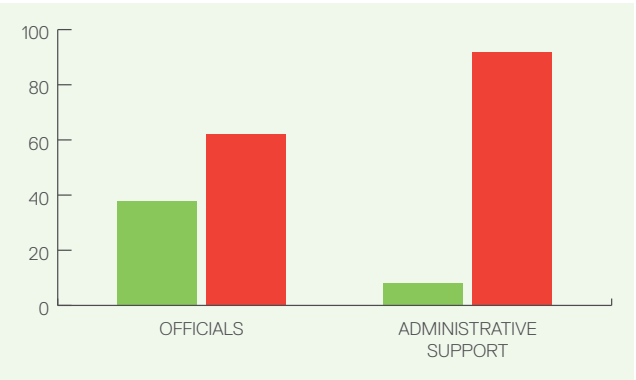
1 Statistical information on paid staff:

Staff Breakdown	FT	M	F	PT	M	F
General/Irish/Regional Secretary	17	13	4			
Deputy/Assistant General Secretary	38	31	7			
Officials	1330	629	701	16	6	10
Administrative support	680	145	535	175	13	162
TOTAL	2065	818	1247	191	19	172

2010/2014 Comparison of Union Employment (Full-Time)



Union Employment (Part-Time)



COLOUR KEY

2010 MALE 2014 MALE 2010 FEMALE 2014 FEMALE

2 Statistical Information on trade union Membership and elected Officers

Workplace/Branch/Regional Committee/Executive Council Representation

Position	Male	Female
President	12	2
Vice President	7	7
National Executive Officers/ or equivalent post	41	16
National Executive Members/ or equivalent post	199	116
Regional Committee Officers/ or equivalent post	25	14
Regional Committee Members/ or equivalent post	375	241
Branch Committee Officers/ or equivalent post	1785	1383
Branch Committee Members/ or equivalent post	1428	1008
Shop stewards/workplace reps	8902	10931
Health and Safety reps	983	720
Other Committees?	822	504
TOTAL	14579	14942

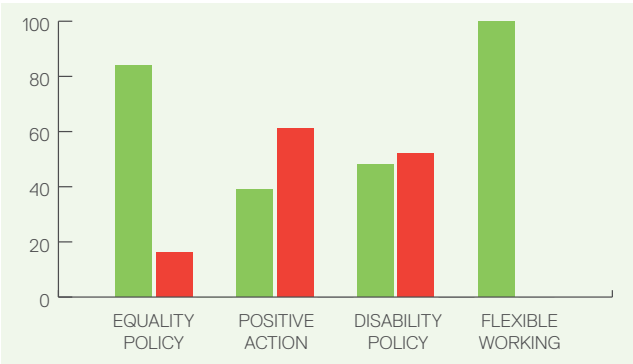
A preliminary analysis of the information gathered in the audit indicates that there is not a huge divergence between the 2010 figures of those of 2013.

The main exception to this is the category of employed staff referred to in the graphs and tables as “Officials”. This category shows a significant increase in women occupying those positions from 33% to 52%. The reason for this is not clear but could reflect the considerable investment by a number of trade unions in creating trade union organiser jobs, many of whom are women. Women also continue to be in the majority of Shop Steward Roles (55%).

While women have represented over 50% of trade union membership for some years now, the figures confirm a significant gap between the number of women and men in key leadership positions within trade unions.

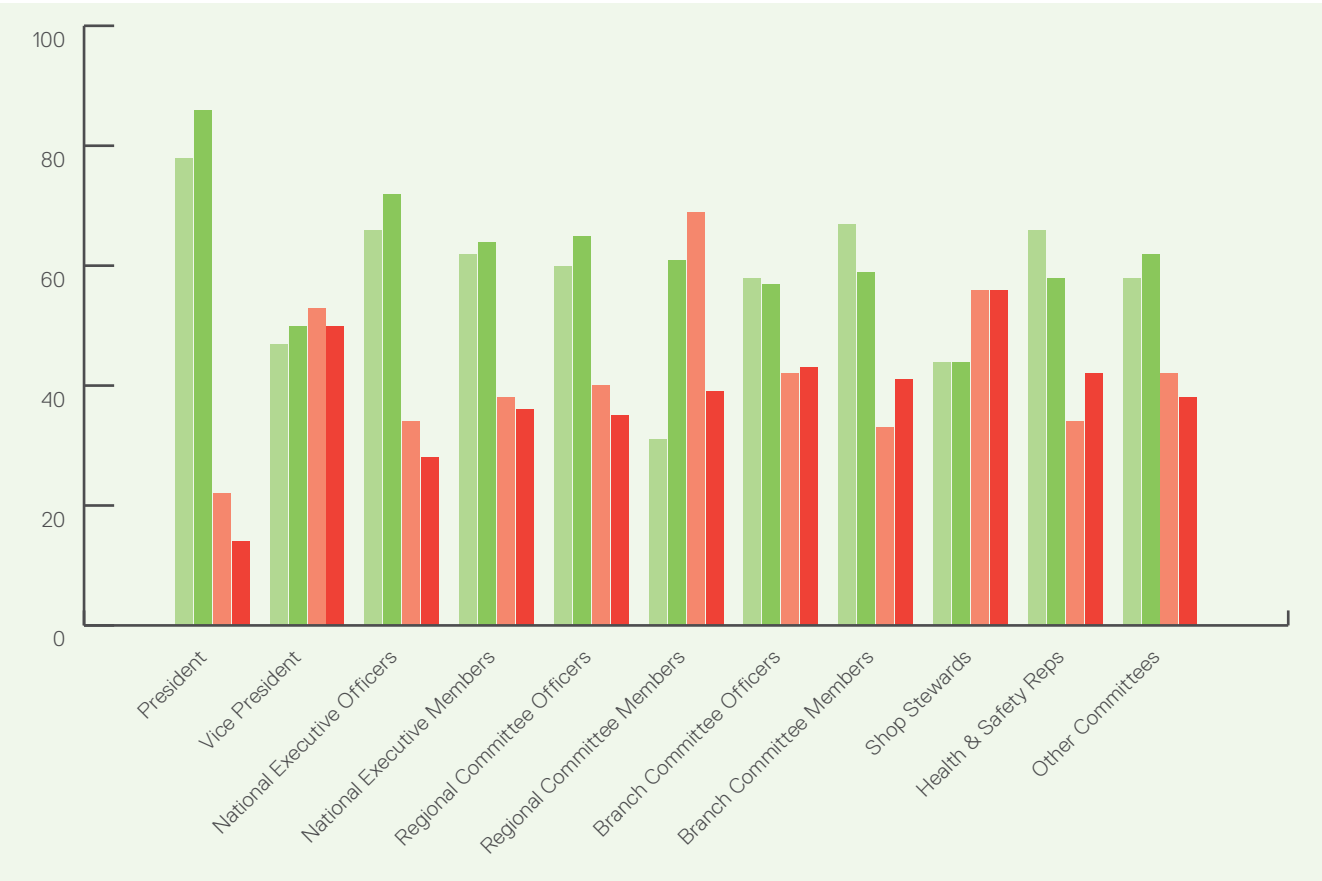
The audit also asked unions to indicate what steps they are taking, via policies, collective agreements, claims, to promote equality for staff and members across a number of grounds. Information in relation to equality policies is shown below.

Union Policies



COLOUR KEY ■ YES ■ NO

2010/2014 Comparison of Union Members and Elected Officials



The full set of data will be shared with Congress Equality related Committees who will analyse and discuss before recommending a series of actions for the approval of the Executive Council.

KEY
■ 2010 MALE ■ 2014 MALE ■ 2010 FEMALE ■ 2014 FEMALE



Sarah King, ETUC at Seminar 2013



“Decent work is about the right not only to survive, but to prosper”

Nelson Mandela

Decent Work

The concept of Decent Work emerged during the late 1990s, as the process of globalisation created a new dynamic between job creation and sustainable economic progress. In 1999, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) declared the achievement of Decent Work for all as a primary policy goal. It defined this as work carried out in conditions of “freedom, equity, security and human dignity.”

While globalisation added millions of new jobs to the international labour market, the ILO pointed out that many at work were experiencing even greater levels of insecurity. Consequently, Decent Work was “not just the creation of jobs, but also the creation of jobs of acceptable quality.” Although the concept of ‘quality jobs’ will diverge across different societies, Decent Work has evolved over the succeeding years to encapsulate certain universal values.

“Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” (ILO)

A system of social dialogue that embraces unions, employers and all key interests, is seen as pivotal to the creation and maintenance of Decent Work.

In 2006, the European Commission endorsed the Decent Work concept and said it could be measured by reference to key statistical indicators on: job quality, skills, lifelong learning, gender equality, health and safety at work, flexibility and security, inclusion and access to the labour market, social dialogue and worker participation.

Trade unions across the globe have embraced the Decent Work agenda and made it a key campaign and organisational priority. It is synonymous with the core work of trade unions and the values we promote.

While Decent Work may have emerged in a radically different era – one of global expansion and growth – it may prove to be of far greater relevance in the current age of austerity. Growth and sustainable recovery cannot be built on the back of ill-paid, insecure and precarious work. Thus, the creation of good, decent jobs can become a driver of recovery.

For trade unions in Ireland, marking the centenary of 1913 last year, the idea of Decent Work has a special resonance. One hundred years on from that formative battle, it is timely to reflect on how far we have travelled and how much remains to be done in the essential human struggle to attain a decent standard of living and create a decent society for all.

Europe is currently immersed in a titanic battle of ideas, the outcome of which will determine the future viability of the European Project itself. The secret history of last four decades has been one of subjugating the needs of society to the demands of business.

And as business has demanded greater ‘freedom’ governments have obliged by curtailing the role of the state and opening up ever greater areas of public space for the extraction of private profit.

Similarly, regulations designed to protect working people and set basic standards on wages and conditions are routinely presented as ‘burdens’ on business that damage ‘competitiveness’.

The UK’s Conservative-dominated coalition recently exempted hundreds of thousands of companies from health and safety inspections. They spoke of the need to “set businesses free.” In Northern Ireland, health and safety deregulation has also been pursued as evidenced by the proposals announced by the Health and Safety Executive NI in 2013 to reform the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). ICTU has vigorously opposed the proposed amendments arguing that they have no rationale in relation to the protection of workplace safety and that they will have a detrimental impact on vulnerable workers, including women.

From April 2013, it became easier for UK employers to sack workers, while the Spanish authorities also responded to record unemployment by weakening workers’ rights.

In Ireland, it is instructive to note that following the onset of the crisis, two high profile targets of business were the Minimum Wage and the Joint Labour Committee system, both of which regulated low paid sectors of the economy.

Simultaneously social welfare rates were cut and qualifying periods shortened in a perverse attempt to force people to take up jobs that do not exist – or to accept badly paid work. This is all the more remarkable as it is widely accepted that the absence or weakness of regulation was the primary cause of the current global crisis. By way of contrast, the ILO has highlighted the centrality of unions to economic recovery across Europe.

The ILO has argued that far from weakening standards and protections, governments would be better placed providing support for union rights and collective bargaining processes as a “key to recovery.”

The organisation cited the role of unions in battling wage inequality, increasing productivity and enhancing competitiveness. They also highlighted the effectiveness of collective bargaining as a tool to assist with economic adjustment and, ultimately, recovery.

The last global depression occurred in the aftermath of 1929 Wall Street Crash. And that crisis was ended when governments – particularly in the United States – enhanced regulation in the financial system and ensured greater security in the workplace.

Thus, the 40 hour working week was enshrined in law, through the Fair Labor Standards Act, while the Glass-Steagall Act prevented banks from engaging in speculation. It is not a simple coincidence that the ‘highly-regulated’ Nordic countries have all emerged relatively unscathed from the current European crisis. Typically, they enjoy greater levels of social protection, higher union density and stronger labour laws.

“Equality between men and women is also a fundamental right and a common principle of the European Union.”

European Union and Gender Equality

Equality between men and women is also a fundamental right and a common principle of the European Union. According to the European Commission, it is also a key element of sustainable, smart and inclusive economic growth. Their “Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2012” states:

“Greater gender equality has accounted for a significant share of the employment and economic growth in the past 50 years and its potential impact is not yet fully exploited. New research shows that levelling gender gaps upwards could enhance potential economic growth: the projected gain from full convergence in participation rates by 2020 is an increase of 12.4 % in GDP per capita by 2030: this would represent an important contribution to the EU economic recovery and an important asset for the EU in a time of downturn. Gender gaps decreased in several domains in the last five years. A closer insight shows that this decrease is not the consequence of an improvement of the situation of women but to a faster deterioration of the situation of men as compared to women, in particular in the first period of the crisis. Therefore, the EU has experienced a levelling down of gender gaps in employment, unemployment, wages and poverty in recent years. Significant challenges also remain in fields such as violence against women, reconciling work and family life and gender balance in decision-making”

It goes on to say that:

“Having a job is a necessary – but not always sufficient – condition for economic independence and decent living for working-age men and women. In 2012, the scarcity of jobs has affected the lives of many men and women – though in different ways – and has particularly affected the youth labour market. More structural factors, such as the unavailability of childcare facilities partly explain the remaining gender gap in employment, and require to be addressed under the Europe 2020 Strategy”

Austerity

Despite EU treaty commitments to equality and solidarity, the experience of the past few years calls into question any real commitment to such values. Congress told an EU Parliamentary inquiry into the operations of the mission in Eurozone programme countries (January 2014) that the Troika mission to Ireland repeatedly violated core European Union principles of solidarity and social dialogue.

Addressing the EU Parliamentary team’s hearings in Dublin, Congress Assistant General Secretary Sally Anne Kinahan said: “Solidarity and social dialogue are fundamental building blocks of the EU and are enshrined as core principles in many treaties. Yet they were repeatedly violated and ignored in the actions and operations of the Troika in Ireland.

“Solidarity was absent in the mission’s determination to ensure that the blame for the crisis and the entire burden of adjustment fell on working people – who neither caused the crisis nor benefited greatly from the false boom that preceded it,” Ms Kinahan said.

“The failure to engage in social dialogue saw a point blank refusal to countenance all but one policy prescription – grinding austerity – despite the abundance of evidence proving it to be counterproductive, to say the least.”

The ETUC and Congress has repeatedly made the case that Europe faces its gravest crisis since World War II and faces an unfolding social disaster as the European Social Model is stripped bare by austerity and mass unemployment. TUC General Secretary, Frances O’Grady told an audience at the Institute of International & European Affairs (IIEA) in Dublin in December 2013 that “the European Social Model must be reshaped for a new age and Europe rebuilt for citizens and workers, not bankers and bond market vigilantes.”

In the Republic, Congress has repeatedly made the point that the Government has taken the wrong options and made the wrong choices in Budgets and insisted that in investment programmes that should prioritise the creation of decent jobs to ensure sustainable recovery. Despite the strictures of the bailout programme, the Government also had choices as a result of the Promissory Note deal. They took the wrong options in choosing to extract €2.5 billion from the economy over 2014 and to implement cuts that do not have to be made. That brings the cumulative amount extracted since 2009 to €33.2 billion.

Congress set an out alternative course, in our Pre-Budget Submission. We showed how a smaller ‘adjustment’ of €2 billion was more likely to reach the deficit targets, while a package of new tax measures targeted at high earners would have made the cuts announced yesterday totally unnecessary. For example, a wealth tax could have raised upwards of €150 million. In addition, our plan envisaged a job creation and investment programme of €4.5 billion that would have raised the numbers at work by some 40,000. Every 10,000 people

off the live register and back in employment means a net gain to the exchequer of some €200 million. Congress estimated that the cuts in Budget 2014 could result in the loss of between 25,000–30,000 jobs, while the continued decline in Public Capital Investment, makes recovery far more difficult to achieve.

The Strategic Investment Fund is an initiative that we campaigned for, and we welcomed it. But we need to ensure any investment programme prioritises the creation of decent work and decent jobs to ensure sustainable recovery.

Campaign against Austerity and Welfare Reform

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Committee and the Women's Committee have campaigned vigorously against the Westminster Coalition Government's failed policy of austerity, cuts to public services and attacks on welfare reform.

Fiscal austerity imposed from Westminster has affected Northern Ireland more acutely than any other region of the United Kingdom, reducing incomes, employment and growth prospects. This policy is misguided not just for Northern Ireland but for the UK as whole.

Given this stark situation, many in Northern Ireland have begun to look across that water at the supposed recovery taking place within the UK economy as a positive sign for the economy here. Unfortunately this optimism is misplaced. Most indications are that any UK recovery could pass by Northern Ireland, but in any case the UK "recovery" is not the kind of recovery Northern Ireland should desire. The recovery in the UK is being driven by debt fuelled consumption and increased property speculation, two of the most egregious contributors to the property crash and subsequent recession here in Northern Ireland.

A recent research paper from the Nevin Economic Research Institute says:

The UK government's fiscal strategy was ill-advised from the beginning and is failing to achieve even its core objectives...

Northern Ireland need not and should not follow this course. The income and saving statistics for Northern Ireland coupled with the all too recent experience of a property crash make this kind of a recovery inappropriate. Instead Northern Ireland needs to follow the original plan of investment in job creation and outward looking enterprise. Northern Ireland suffers serious infrastructural deficit and particularly in the area of energy. It should begin with a programme of energy retrofitting using existing State assets to leverage finance. It should build a skills network capable of reaching out to those unemployed and young people in particular as a way of releasing potential and boosting incomes through higher value added employment. The Northern Ireland Executive should use the powers and spending it has to boost the local economy through capital spending and public procurement.

The full text of the paper can be found at www.nerinstitute.net

Impact of Welfare 'Reform' on Northern Ireland

In a report commissioned by Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and carried out by Sheffield Hallam University, researchers showed that if the proposed reforms to the welfare system are implemented, that Northern Ireland will be the worst affected region in the UK, with £750m a year (equivalent to £650 a year for every adult of working age) taken out of the local economy.

Within Northern Ireland, the District Council areas of Derry, Strabane, and Belfast will experience the most severe losses of income. In terms of the financial impact, Northern Ireland districts occupy three of the four worst affected regions across the whole of the UK, seven out of the top 20 and eleven out of the top 50.

Bearing in mind that there are only 26 local government districts in Northern Ireland, out of more than 400 in the UK, this is a disturbingly high representation.

The reforms promise to widen the economic gap between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, as well as richer and poorer parts of Northern Ireland.

The Impact of Welfare Reform on Northern Ireland report can be found at www.nicva.org

Statistics

In **Northern Ireland** the Statistics and Research Agency, (Department of Finance and Personnel), www.dfpni.gov.uk published *Women in Northern Ireland – September 2013*. The summary of that document confirms:

Employment

Until the recent economic downturn, women in Northern Ireland (NI) had been experiencing historically high levels of employment – latest figures show that there were an estimated 373,000 women employed in the period April–June 2013. Despite the recent fall in employment during the economic downturn, the number of women in employment (16+) has increased by an estimated 33% when compared with the figure for 1995.

However, the NI employment rate for those females aged 16–64, (62.0%) is 4.8 percentage points lower than the rate in Great Britain (GB) (66.7%). The decrease in the female 16–64 employment rate during the last year (0.8 percentage points) is similar to the corresponding fall in the male rate (0.4 percentage points to 70.8%). In contrast, the female employment rate in GB showed a slight increase over the year (0.9 percentage points), while their male counterparts remained unchanged.

Women in NI comprise 47.1% of those aged 16–64 currently in employment, similar to the rate of 46.8% in GB.

There are notable gender differences in employment rates and in the nature of employment between the sexes in NI. 70.8% of working age males are in employment compared with 62.0% of females. This represents a narrowing of the gap between female employment rates and those of males compared to five years ago (62.0% for females and 75.1% for males).

Earnings

(source: *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*)

The ratio between male and female full-time median hourly earnings excluding overtime has decreased to 99.7% (from 101.0% in 2011). Female full time hourly earnings were estimated at £11.4 while males were estimated at £11.4 in April 2012. Female fulltime hourly earnings as a percentage of male hourly earnings continue to be higher in NI (99.7%), compared to the UK as a whole (90.4%).

Unemployment

An estimated 17,000 women were unemployed in NI at April–June 2013 with an associated unemployment rate of 4.5%. The male unemployment rate is 9.8% and is 5.4 percentage points above the female unemployment rate. The gap between male and female unemployment rates has increased from the same period five years ago when there was a 4.3 percentage point difference.

In July 2013, 18,500 females in Northern Ireland were claiming unemployment related benefits – this represents a decrease of 800 during the last year. However, the number of female claimants continues to be considerably smaller than the number of male claimants (44,000). *[Source: Claimant Count]*

Economic Activity

In Northern Ireland, a total of 390,000 women were economically active in April–June 2013 – a decrease of 6,000 during the last year. The female working age economic activity rate here of 64.9% was 7.0 percentage points lower than that in GB (71.9%). At 64.9% the working age economic activity rate for females was 13.8 percentage points lower than that for NI males (78.7%). The difference in economic activity rate between males and females is less than that of five years ago when the difference was 15.4 percentage points.

Childcare provision

(source: Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety)

In 2012 there were 55,914 day-care places for children aged under twelve in Northern Ireland. This was 19% higher than the level recorded in 2002.

Educational Standards

(source: Department of Learning)

In 2011/12 girls left school with higher levels of academic qualifications than boys. 82% of girls left school with at least 5 GCSE grades A*–C compared with 71% of boys. Similarly. 64% of girls left school with two or more A-levels compared to 47% of boys.

Politics and Public Life

(source: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister)

Women tend to be under represented in politics and public life. Approximately one in five MLA's in Northern Ireland are women and only 23.5% of councillors in local government districts are women.

Northern Ireland has 4 elected female MPs, and 2 female MEPs.

Women in Business

(source: Invest NI)

In 2011 the female level of entrepreneurial activity in Northern Ireland was 5.6% compared to 10.7% for males.

In the Republic of Ireland, figures are not as readily available. The National Employment Survey which for a period in the 2000's provided the figures for monitoring the gender pay gap was discontinued by the CSO in 2009. The CSO Earnings, Hours and Employment Costs Survey (EHECS) which is now the primary Irish statistical source on earnings does not include information on the gender of employees. Therefore there are no recent national figures on key indicators of gender equality, including the gender pay gap. However Eurostat does produce statistics on the gender pay gap – with 2012 the latest year available from that source, indicating a 14.4% gender pay gap.

Also, according to the report Measuring Ireland's Progress 2012, published by the CSO in January 2014, the **female employment rate** increased from 55.4% in 2003 to 60.6% in 2007 before falling to 55.2% in 2012 and increasing slightly to 55.9% in 2013. In 2012, Ireland's employment rate was the fifth lowest in the EU, and its unemployment rate was the fifth highest rate in the EU.

The latest **Quarterly National Household Survey** (Quarter 3 2013) showed that the number of persons employed increased by 3.2% (+58,000) over the year to Q3 2013. This compares with an annual increase in employment of 1.8% in the previous quarter and a decrease of 0.2% in the year to Q3 2012. This is the fourth quarter in succession where employment has grown on an annual basis.

Full-time employment increased by 53,500 or 3.8% in the year to Q3 2013 while part-time employment increased by 4,500 or 1.0% over the year. The annual increase of 58,000 (+3.2%) in employment was represented by an increase of 42,100 (+4.3%) in male employment and an increase of 15,900 (+1.9%) in female employment over the year.



Sally Anne Kinahan, Congress Assistant General Secretary

Finally, the Nevin Economic Research Institute has an **income by gender indicator** in their Quarterly Economic Facts publication. The “Average and Median Income over time by Gender is defined as: “Average and median individual equivalised disposable income (after taxes and transfers) disaggregated by gender. This indicator uses data from the CSO's Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) to examine the gender distribution of income in Ireland since 2006. Throughout the period male and female incomes follow a similar trend. However, male incomes consistently exceed female incomes by between 1.5–6% per annum. Incomes peaked in 2008 and have since declined by 12% on average (by 11.8% for males and 12.2% for females) reflecting decreases in earnings, reduced welfare payments and increases in income taxation levels.

NERI also have some interesting data on **pay and earnings** in their latest QEO (December 2013). Section 4 on pay shows how three factors that have an important effect on workers hourly earnings:

Age, gender, and education. Wages initially tend to increase with age, as workers gain more experience, and the effect then tends to taper off. Those under 30 are the lowest paid, with average pay peaking for those in their 50s. This holds for both male and female workers.

As can also be seen, the gender pay gap increases with age. Women tend to be paid less than men. However, up to the age of 30 hourly pay is relatively similar, but it is after this age that the gap opens. This can be linked to women playing a larger role in child care (the average age of mothers having their first child is just over 30 years). However, the effect on weekly income is compounded by the fact that women also tend to work less hours than men.

Childcare – a barrier to employment

In the Republic of Ireland, childcare costs are one of the highest in Europe. A recent report into the cost of childcare, carried out by the Donegal County Childcare Committee found that the prohibitively expensive cost of childcare was a barrier to employment, with 26% of parents claiming they were prevented from returning to work or training because of childcare arrangements. That figure jumped to 56% in lower income groups, while Ireland has the second highest childcare costs in the OECD as a percentage of average wages. The report found that typical full-time childcare costs range from €730 to €1,100 per month, with a two-child family likely to spend €16,500 annually. This is of course because we rely on a market-based system whereas in other countries childcare, like education in general, is a public good provided at below-market rates.

In Northern Ireland, parents and care providers also face crippling childcare costs. A recent report by Employers for Childcare in Northern Ireland indicates for a family with two children in full-time childcare the costs can be as much as £16,432 per year; whilst the average full-time childcare place now costs £158 per week, a £2 increase on last year's figure. Despite this, Congress is dismayed that there is still no strategic Childcare plan for Northern Ireland.

Developments in other parts of the UK, including in Scotland, are being watched closely and the Centre for Economic Empowerment has recently tendered for a piece of research on the imperative for Free Universal Childcare in Northern Ireland.

Joint Labour Committees

In the Republic of Ireland, a July 2011 ruling of the High Court had an on-going negative impact on the pay and conditions of workers in the sectors of the economy covered by JLCs. Women make up 63% of people covered by JLCs.

In the judgement in *John Grace Fried Chicken Ltd and Others v The Catering Joint Labour Committee, The Labour Court, Ireland and the Attorney General* (July 2011), the High Court declared some sections of the Industrial Relations Act 1946 and the 1990 Act to be unconstitutional. Essentially the Court found that the legislation did not provide sufficient direction to the Labour Court on the procedures for making an Employment Regulation Order. The effect of the judgement is that while all JLCs remained in existence their Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) became unenforceable and ceased to apply.

As a result, the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) could not enforce the minimum pay and conditions of employment prescribed in EROs, in force at the time of the High Court decision. Where prosecutions for non-compliance with an ERO had been commenced these were withdrawn and no further prosecutions could be initiated in relation to compliance with EROs in place prior to July 11, 2011. An examination of the District Court records show that literally hundreds of cases were struck out.

This placed severe downward pressure on existing wages and conditions because of the removal of the legally-enforceable floor on anything other than statutory requirements. Left unchanged it will in time result in continued downward movement in pay and conditions, invariably driving these sectors down to the level of the Minimum Wage.

As a result, Employers operating in sectors covered by Joint Labour Committees were now legally obliged to pay only the minimum wage of €8.65 per hour, in relation to new employees engaged since that decision. Existing employees contracts must be paid in accordance with the previous ERO system and these terms can only varied with their consent.

However there are numerous examples of employers 'offering' new contracts on 'a take it or leave' it basis, or through more indirect routes such as reducing the hours of work for existing staff and replacing these with new recruits paid national minimum wage rates and with contracts stripped of other JLC entitlements, such as sick pay, overtime and Sunday pay.

Submissions from SIPTU, Mandate, Unite and Congress clearly demonstrated examples where employers have also cut the pay of existing staff and have not honoured existing terms of conditions.

The Labour Inspectorate has direct experience of enforcement and their case report for breaches of the Joint Labour Committees during the January to July 2011 period – the six months immediately prior to the Employment Regulation Orders becoming unenforceable – show some 33,576 workers were owed €741,929 in unpaid wages. High levels of non-compliance underline the need for effective enforcement including increased fines and other penalties for persistent offenders.

No New Jobs or Price Reductions

Contrary to the claims of employer representative groups there is no evidence of increased job creation since the Employment Regulation Orders were placed in abeyance.

Nor have the promised price benefits to the consumer materialised, apart from sporadic 'special offers'.

Overall, the most vulnerable workers have experienced a worsening in pay and conditions of employment and genuine local business people who have tried to maintain decent terms and conditions have been undercut by more unscrupulous employers, in a case of bad jobs driving out the good.

Cost of Labour Low in Joint Labour Committees (JLC) Sectors

In the sectors covered by Joint Labour Committees, the cost of labour generally represents less than a third of the costs to an employer. Even in the labour intensive 'accommodation and food & beverage services' sector, only 31.6% of the 'basic price' is due to worker compensation (which includes wages and social insurance).

The 'basic price' is the price received by producers – not that which is paid by consumers. Therefore, once taxes are included, the share of employee compensation in the final price will be below 31.6%.

In addition, labour costs in these sectors are below international norms.

JLCs Support Decent Work

Workers in the JLC sectors do not benefit from collective bargaining and without the Joint Labour Committee they have no say in their pay, terms and conditions. Unlike most other developed countries Ireland does not have in place statutory support for the right to collective bargaining.

The JLC sectors are, in the main, service industries and they continue to be affected by the conditions and factors that gave rise to the need for Joint labour Committee mechanisms in the first instance, such as:

- Low levels of Trade Union density;
- In the absence of a JLC system, worker will not be covered by Collective Bargaining, nor will they have an opportunity to engage in Collective Bargaining and will be disadvantaged as a result;
- Workers are more likely or vulnerable to the risk of exploitation.

In summary, JLCs provide the only mechanism by which the interests of workers in these sectors can be protected and advanced.

JLC Review

On January 25, 2013 – following from the July 2011 High Court Ruling – the Labour Court gave notice of its intention to review the Joint Labour Committees in line with the provisions of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012.

Congress established a coordinating group comprising John Douglas (Mandate), Patricia King (SIPTU), Gerry Light (Mandate), John King (SIPTU) and Brendan Byrne (Unite) and Esther Lynch, Congress Legislation & Legal Affairs Officer.

The group met on numerous occasions during January and February and met on two occasions with Janet Hughes, as part of her considerations on behalf of the Labour Court. The Labour Court requested that submissions be made in relation to each JLC separately having regard for the criteria set out in the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012 and specifically the criteria set out in section 11.

The Congress Group adopted this approach and SIPTU, Mandate and Unite prepared and made submissions dealing with the specific scope etc. of the relevant JLC with the individual submissions supported by Congress. The submissions made a strong case for:

Five Joint Labour Committees

- 1 Agricultural Workers JLC
- 2 Retail Grocery and Allied trades JLC
- 3 Law Clerks
- 4 Hairdressing
- 5 Hospitality JLC

And Two New Registered Employment Agreements

- 1 Security Industry
- 2 Contract Cleaning

In January 2013, Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton signed Orders to effect recommendations of the Labour Court Review of the Joint Labour Committee system. The JLCs, once they are formed by trade union and employer representatives under the auspices of Kieran Mulvey, the Chief Executive Officer of the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), will set basic levels of pay, above the minimum wage, for tens of thousands of low paid workers.

SIPTU Vice-President, Patricia King, said: "This is a good day for low paid workers. It follows the intensive lobbying, and engagement with the Government, by the trade union movement. We now expect that the CEO of the LRC will be requested to invite the parties to make their nominations to the JLCs.

"We would expect the employers in the six relevant sectors including hospitality and catering, retail, contract cleaning, security and agriculture to take a full and productive part in the process."

MANDATE General Secretary, John Douglas said: "The JLC system operates mostly in low-paid sectors and where workers have little ability to protect or improve their conditions of employment.

"The re-establishment of the JLC's will ensure that thousands of low-paid vulnerable workers will be protected and will ensure that the concept of decent work is put back on the agenda. MANDATE is calling on all of the relevant employers to engage positively with the process as a matter of urgency," he said.

Registered Employment Agreements

In 2013 the a Supreme Court ruling (McGowan) had a similar effect on tens of thousands of workers who as a result of the ruling which declared that REAs constituted under the Industrial Relations Act 1946 as unconstitutional, would be denied their effective right to collective bargaining which is an essential element of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Congress and the TEEU have since made application to the European Court of Human Rights to challenge this development.

Organising for decent work



Michelle O'Sullivan, University of Limerick; Wellington Chibebe, ITUC; Sally Anne Kinahan, Congress; Micheal Collins, NERI; Karen Nussbaum, Working America.

Women have been to the fore in increasing the focus of the trade union movement on the island towards organising. In January 2013, Over a hundred trade unionists gathered in the new CWU conference centre in Dublin to attend "Making the Case for Decent Work".

Among the presentations were:

- Wellington Chibebe, assistant General Secretary of the ITUC outlined the history and content of the ILO framework for Decent Work;
- Michelle O'Sullivan presented on low pay and the importance of trade union membership and wage setting mechanisms as a means of protection;
- Micheal Collins from the Nevin Economic Research Centre presented on income distribution and the Living Wage;
- Kevin Callinan, Deputy General Secretary of IMPACT, presented on internships and unpaid work;
- Karen Nussbaum, Director of Working America, presented on their model of organising in the USA and how it might be applied here;
- Brian Forbes presented on Fair Shops including a short video;
- Lucia Fay of SIPTU presented on Fair Deal for Cleaners – video of campaign here;
- Ethel Buckley presented on Fair Hotels;
- David Begg closing remarks.

In October 2013 Congress hosted an “Organising for Decent Work” seminar attended by trade union organisers from across the island to facilitate consideration of the challenges, successes and critical issues impacting on effective organising on the island of Ireland, and focussing the deliberations to produce qualitative information to contribute to a strategic discussion by union leaders on organising”.. Some 90 union representatives attended the seminar on the 18 October 2018 at the CWU Conference Centre. The day was structured with participants situated in small groups considering key questions on union organising and with a number of catalyst speakers giving inputs to focus and stimulate discussion.

Among the key conclusions of the day were:

- Organising is a key core strategic task for the trade union movement – not an add-on or something that is done merely in response to declining numbers
- There needs to be an agreed and common definition/ understanding of what organising is about
- Movement needs to establish workplace structures that meet workers’ needs and for follow-up capacity building with newly organised workers
- Direct contact with unorganised workers is essential in successful organising
- Co-operation between unions is essential
- Outreach work to the wider community is important in terms of laying the foundations for organising

The seminar also considered what changes do we need to make to be more effective in the future, and what infrastructure and supports would assist locally and at the level of Congress? A number of key themes emerged strongly from the discussion groups throughout the seminar:

- Organising is strategic work for the trade union movement and needs to be reflected in significant change to the culture, structures, policies and practice of the movement.
- A dedicated Congress Organising structure needs to be put in place to provide support to Organisers and to help pool resources more effectively.
- Organising is resource intensive and will require more resources than is currently being applied to it as well as the more effective use of the resources already available to the movement.
- Ongoing capacity building, training and education are a key requirement not just for organisers but for other union staff, existing members and newly organised workers.
- Effective campaigning, advocacy and two-way communications are critical to successful organising – this may need the putting in place of a shared team to provide support to Organisers.
- Access to research and intelligence to inform strategy and tactics is very important.
- Change to the law on collective bargaining will be important, although it does not represent any sort of a panacea.
- Coherence across the movement on the pay, terms and conditions of organising staff should be considered.

A follow-up meeting of the Organising Group considered the outcomes from the day and further developed the feedback into concrete recommendations for the General Purposes Committee and Executive Council of Congress.

Equality Training and Education

In response to the many challenges faced by our members in the workplace much consideration has been given to trade union provision of education and training and in particular, ensuring that equality issues are mainstreamed. Congress and affiliates have been developing a plan for the implementation of the ‘Interim Report on ‘Workers’ College’ (January 2013). That report sets out the role and feasibility of a College that would provide education and training to union members and generally, that would reflect the interests and values of the trade union movement, including equality. Amongst the training initiatives during the period were:

Women and Leadership

Congress continues to provide the highly acclaimed Women and Leadership course. This ten day programme is accredited at level two and three through the NI Open College Network and covers a range of subjects including:

- Power in Society
- Women and Power/Women and Leadership
- Networking/Building Support/Lobbying and Campaigning
- Women in Unions/Decision Making
- Communication Skills
- Dealing with Conflict
- Women and Public Life
- Barriers to Equality
- Role Models and Mentoring
- Presentations/Action Plans/Evaluation

Equality Law Seminar Series

Congress is pleased that the popular Equality Law seminar series continues to be offered with support from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The seminars run approximately four times a year and topics have included:

An Introduction to Equality Law, Disability Discrimination and Age Discrimination in the workplace. Staff from the Equality Commission have also provided specific sessions for the Equality Diploma, particularly around equality legislation in Northern Ireland.

Equality Diploma

Congress introduced a new course in October 2013. The Equality Diploma is a year-long course offered on a one day a week release basis. Conducted at level three, the course covers a range of topics split into three modules:

Equality issues at work

This module focuses on three main topics: different equality themes; union and workplace policies and practices; and using trade union values to build the case for equality.

Equality and the law

This module focuses on two main topics: UK equality legislation and UK institutions and procedures for equality.

Working for equality

This module focuses on three main topics: equality theory and practice; equality tools; and using union equality structures and strategies.

Mental Health

Looking after your mental health in partnership with SeeChange

Equality Cases

Taking an Equality case to the Equality Tribunal, with the Tribunal staff and the Equality Authority.

Responses to Consultations

During this period, Staff responded to a number of consultations including:

- Childcare Strategies, North and South;
- Consultation on the Limited Circumstances for a Lawful Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland;
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill (Further Provisions and Support for Victims);
- Review of prostitution laws
- Violence against Women
- Review of Apprenticeships and Youth Training;
- Review of the Regulations on Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences NI.

Responses to these consultations are available from the Congress websites – www.ictuni.org or www.ictu.ie or by contacting the Congress Equality Officers.

Health and Safety – a gender perspective.

The Northern Ireland Committee works closely with the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) to present an annual Health and Safety representatives award.

Over the last twelve years, the award has been presented to the Safety Representative who, in the views of the judges, has made an outstanding contribution to workplace safety.

In 2013 Congress was delighted that the award was presented to a women for the first time and a highly commended certificate also went to a woman.

The 2013 winner was Carmen Biagioni, a UNISON Health and Safety Representative working in the Belfast Trust. In winning the award, HSENI Chairperson George Lucas remarked that ‘Carmen exemplifies the best practices of health and safety representatives. She has worked on a variety of health and safety issues, including research on chairs used by dentists and dental nurses following periods of absence by staff with musculoskeletal disorders’.



Winner of the 2013 Health and Safety representative of the Year, Carmen Biagioni with UNISON's Pamela Dooley and HSENI Chairperson George Lucas.

The Highly Commended Certificated was presented to UNITE Safety Representative Karen Taylor who works for the Ulster Teachers Union.

Gender Equality Strategy and the Gender Equality Panel

Responsibility for the Gender Equality Strategy in Northern Ireland rests with the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFM DFM). The current strategy runs until 2015. The Gender Equality Panel (GAP) was established to oversee the progress of the Gender Equality Strategy and comprises representatives from trade unions, women's groups, men's groups and equality and human rights groups.

It is chaired by OFM DFM.

ICTU was represented on the GAP by former Equality Officer Pauline Buchanan (until December 2012) and latterly by Equality Officer Clare Moore (since May 2013) and Women's Committee member Taryn Trainor.

OFM DFM is currently carrying out a review of the Strategy.

National Women's Strategy (NWS)

In the Republic, Congress is represented on the NWS Monitoring Committee by Maire Mulcahy and David Joyce. Only one meeting was held during the period – in July 2012. We participated in the Mid-Term Review of the National Women's Strategy in 2012 and our submission is available here: www.ictu.ie/equality/gender/nationalwomenss.html

Congress also participated on the National Women's Strategy Sub-Committee to advance Objective 14 of the National Women's Strategy "To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland". A Report along with a series of recommendations on how to increase the representation of women has been finalised and will be submitted to Government for approval and publication in Spring 2014. The process of updating the NWS Annual Report, the NWS Interim

Report is also underway and Congress looks forward to its publication and further engagement with the Gender Equality and the Department of Justice and Equality.

Congress actively participated in the Irish Presidency Gender Equality Conference in April 2013. The conference brought together national experts on gender equality and employment, with academics, representatives of the Commission and the European Parliament, together with NGOs to examine "Women's Economic Engagement and the Europe 2020 Agenda". The conference was also addressed by ETUC Women's Committee President, Karin Enodd. A copy of the final report or it can be accessed on www.genderequality.ie – a website launched at the conference.

Earlier, Congress and the Women's Committee had drawn up an equality related agenda for the attention of Ireland during the EU Presidency which included a number of workplace related issues, including:

- Draft Directive on equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- Improving gender balance among non-executive directors;
- Draft directive on maternity leave;
- European 2013 semester process;
- Ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers.

Congress has acknowledged the role of Ireland, and Minister Kathleen Lynch in particular, played during the Presidency in seeking to unblock improvement of maternity rights at EU level. These efforts were unfortunately not successful.

Other Congress initiatives included:

Briefing on Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act with input from Brian Merriman of the Equality Authority. Following this, we wrote and submitted the Congress submission on the proposed amendment of same – www.ictu.ie/equality/2013/11/14/submission-on-section-37-of-the-employment-equalit/.

- Secured Executive Council support for trade unions to support the nomination of the INTO LGBT Teachers group for a Gay and Lesbian Award (GALA) – the first trade union group to be nominated for such an award. They were shortlisted for the award in January 2014
- Participation in the ETUC Migration working group meetings including a roundtable discussion with Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom on EU related matters. Discussions also included planning for the first ETUC Conference on trade union services for migrant workers held in Brussels in December 2013. SIPTU and the NICICTU Migrant Support Service participated actively in this event and will be active partners in the ETUC project, “A4I European network of assistance for integration of migrant workers and their families” in which Congress is a partner.
- Presented on what needs to be done to achieve decent work in the garment industry in Bangladesh at a Comhlamh Public Debate in November.
- Continue to develop Equality sections of website to ensure it is up to date and relevant for affiliates. Ongoing participation in discussions re developing Congress social media strategy.
- Secured meeting with the Department of Justice and Equality (along with National Women’s Council and Start Strong) regarding Family Leave Bill in December.

- Attended Equality Authority Equality Mainstreaming Conference in Dublin Castle and spoke on a panel to draw lessons from the work presented during the event.

Strategic Implementation Committee;

The Strategic Implementation Committee for Congress Equality Initiatives, chaired by Annette Dolan, seeks to coordinate the work of other equality related Committees in Congress. During the period, the Committee coordinated the input from other Republic based equality committees to the Trade Union Commission. The submission made the case for continued and enhanced engagement with equality issues by the trade union movement; proposing the adoption of a commitment to equality mainstreaming; and proposing enhanced ways of working to further profile the movement’s commitment to equality and campaigning on issues of concern to the movement.

Other issues addressed by the Committee included:

- The proposed merger of Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission;
- Marriage Equality and a submission to the Constitutional Convention;
- Parental Leave developments
- Seeking changes/abolition of Section 37.1 of Employment Equality Act
- Planning the second Equality Audit of affiliate trade unions;
- Planning the production of a tool to assist unions to Equality Proof their Collective Bargaining activities.

Engagement on External Organisations

Equality Authority/Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Congress continued its engagement with the Equality Authority during the period.

Annette Dolan and David Joyce were the Congress nominees to the board, which finished its term in July 2012. Following a recruitment process put in place through the Public Appointments Commission, in April 2013, Minister Shatter announced the appointment of 14 members designate of the new Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. No Chief Commissioner has been appointed. There is no trade union representation on the new Commission.

Congress opposed the merger but the Minister is going ahead. While the report of the working group to advise the Minister stated that “maintaining the links that the Equality Authority has built up with employer and employee bodies is important”, it then goes on to say “that Commissioners should be selected for their experience, expertise or qualifications in the field of human rights and equality, and to secure diversity in the membership, but not as formal representatives of specific organisations or interest groups”.

This moves away from the current legislation providing for nominations by employer and employee bodies to the Equality Authority and is a departure from the spirit of the equal treatment directives that require the member states ‘in accordance with their national traditions and practice’ to take adequate measures to promote dialogue between the social partners with a view to fostering equal treatment. This is also reflected in the heads of Bill published in 2012. At time of writing we are still awaiting publication of the full Bill.

In September 2013, Congress participated in an Equality and Rights Alliance seminar with members of the Commission to explore the potential of a merged Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, what is needed to realise this potential, and the issues that it should be addressing. The seminar also examined how people experiencing inequality, discrimination and human rights abuses and their organisations might best work with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and went on to build an agenda for consideration by the IHREC. The Commission has since written to Congress seeking a meeting to share views on the future of IHREC and how we can best work together.

The Equal Opportunity at the level of the enterprise framework Committee remains the forum for gaining resources to assist trade unions in building their equality capacity. Congress and affiliate trade unions have benefitted from participation in this forum, including grants to assist us in developing an online equality training module and a major partnership project by MANDATE/IBOA and CWU. Congress is concerned that this important work could be downgraded in the merger process.

Congress was granted money in 2011 from the office for the promotion of integration of migrants in the Department of Justice and Equality, via the Equality Authority, to help build the capacity of trade unions to play a positive role in supporting workplace diversity. We launched a ‘Challenge Fund’ for trade unions to undertake specific actions in support of workplace diversity which resulted in a number of projects including:

- SIPTU project to support workplace equality in an ethnically diverse contract cleaning sector. The project helped in generating the active participation of migrant workers in SIPTU’s Fair Deal for Cleaners Campaign.

- The TEEU successfully launched a Guide: "Equality and Diversity – a Guide for TEEU Workplace Representatives". The launch was performed by Ms Kathleen Lynch, TD, Minister of State, Department of Health and Department of Justice, Equality and Defence with responsibility for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People, who spoke about the importance of such practical tools for combating discrimination in workplaces.
- The PSEU undertook a survey to indicate the extent to which Civil Service Departments have undertaken training programmes dealing with anti-racism and intercultural issues.
- UNITE project to promote Dignity & Respect at Work among members employed in a meat company.

Congress also assisted the Equality Authority in judging over 100 applications for funding for equality projects as part of their innovation fund and spoke at the launch of the Equality Authority leaflets on equality and mental health as part of the EA's work with See Change.

We successfully bid with BelongTo (A LGBT Youth Organisation) for funding for a project to replicate their "Stand Up" campaign in workplaces;

"Congress and the Women's Committee have also engaged with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the reform of workplace redress structures"

Workplace Relations Commission/ Equality Tribunal

Congress and the Women's Committee have also engaged with the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation on the reform of the workplace and employment rights and redress structures – including the Equality Tribunal. A number of our concerns were taken on board including:

- A proposal to introduce a fee of €50 for those wishing to lodge complaints was scrapped. It is proposed, however, that a fee will apply "in relation to appeals to the Labour Court by parties who failed to attend first instance adjudication without good cause".
- It is proposed that the Equality Tribunal inquisitorial type model will apply "in so far as possible", to the hearing of cases.
- It is proposed to build on the mediation model that has been developed by the Equality Tribunal, as a tool for early resolution of cases.

Minister Bruton has also stated that the equal status function will be moved to the Work Relations Commission as part of the reform process and that appeals of equal status cases will go to the Circuit Court as pertains currently.

European Institute for Gender Equality

David Joyce continues to represent the ETUC as an alternate member to the Experts Forum of the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE). Congress facilitated a meeting with reps from EIGE and the Congress Women's Committee in 2012. Congress spoke on the business case for gender equality at the Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) meeting with Social Partners representatives in Brussels in March 2012.

Domestic Workers

Following the historical adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention in June 2011, Congress called on the Government to take a global lead on workers' rights by becoming the first to ratify a new landmark treaty that gives protection to domestic workers. The treaty has been widely welcomed around the world and is a benchmark to ensure that workers in informal and precarious jobs have effective access to decent work.

The Convention gives the millions of domestic workers around the world the same rights as other workers. Until now, most domestic workers belonged to what is called the informal economy. Once ratified, this Convention has the potential to take millions of workers out of the shadow economy and formalise their employment. The Convention, first and foremost, recognises the right of domestic workers to organise in unions, which is still forbidden in many countries. This change should allow them to negotiate and improve their working conditions.

Congress participated in international trade union seminar on Decent Work for Domestic Workers 25/26 June 2012 in Dublin. We continue to liaise with the Domestic Workers Action Group of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and have also created a page on our website: www.ictu.ie/equality/domesticworkers1.html

Congress was part of a national campaign urging the Irish Government to ratify the Convention, culminating in the handing in of a petition to Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, in December 2012. After some delay, the Irish Government finally indicated that it intended to ratify the Convention in April 2013. Minister Joan Burton told delegates at the International Labour Organisation's 9th European and Central Regional meeting in Oslo that the Government would move to formally ratify the ILO's Convention on Domestic Work and try to ensure



From Left: Myra Galido, Maire Mulcahy, Chair of Women's Committee, Olajoke Aikolu, Sandra Dzumbira, all of Domestic Workers Action Group

ratification across the European Union. Subsequently, Minister Richard Bruton announced at the International Labour Conference in Geneva, June 2013 that Ireland will be an "early ratifier". We are still awaiting ratification at time of writing.

Decent Work and Development Cooperation

Congress joined with trade unions around the world to make the case for the inclusion of a specific Decent Work goal as part of any international development framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Irish Government was uniquely placed in a very important position in the run up to the UN General Assembly in September 2013 – holding the EU Presidency in the first half of 2013 and having been appointed as Co-Facilitators for the preparatory process of the Special Event held by the UN to follow up efforts made towards achieving the MDGs. You can read more about this here: www.ictu.ie/globalsolidarity/newsevents/keyissues/2013/05/09/development-cooperation-news/



Society North and South continues to feel the pressures of a tumultuous period since the collapse of the economy and banking system saw the arrival of the “Troika” and the implementation of disastrous cuts to public services and proposed reforms to the welfare system. Subsequent austerity budgets both North and South have compounded the situation.

North and South, Congress has been to the fore in calling for a “Better Fairer Way” to deal with the crisis. More than 100,000 people took part in demonstrations across the country in February 2013 in protest at the country’s continued bank debt burden. The protests took place in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Sligo.

Congress General Secretary David Begg told protestors at a rally in Dublin’s Merrion Square that bank debt problem had not been solved by the recent deal. He vowed Congress would continue its bank debt campaign until the link between private bank debt and national debt was clearly broken.

“If you read some papers yesterday you would think we had achieved economic salvation and our problems were over. Nothing could be further from the truth. And we have over 100,000 thousand people on the streets of Ireland today who feel the same way.

“New deal, same problem: 1.8 million people cannot possibly pay of a bank debt burden of €64 billion – especially a debt they played no part in running up. There is nothing fair about this deal.

“We saved the European banking system in 2008, an act of extraordinary solidarity with Europe – now we want some solidarity in return,” Mr Begg said.

He pointed out that Ireland had already paid some €41 billion for the banking crisis, more than Germany, the UK, Spain or Portugal.

“So far, every Irish person has paid €9000, while the average across the EU is €192. That is neither fair nor just.” he said.

The rally also heard personal testimonies from people affected by the crisis.

Peace Progress and Equality

In January 2014, the Northern Ireland Committee led a demand for action and called for Peace, Progress and Equality.



NIPSA members at the rally for Peace Progress and Equality

Presented with political stalemate, violence on the streets and growing inequality, Assistant General Secretary Peter Bunting told a rally in Belfast:

“The message we are sending is that we, the people, demand that action be taken to end political stalemate; to end all violence and to end inter-communal strife. We need to build a new political momentum in which our politicians work together in the best interests of all the people, addressing a series of vital issues which are crucial for the social and economic wellbeing of Northern Ireland.”

Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee Pamela Dooley said:

“There is a consistent roll back on the commitments to equality and human rights in our peace agreement. There is deadlock on how we deal with our difficult past. Roll back and deadlock are creating for all of us a very difficult future.

In the trade union movement we predicted that a worldwide financial and economic crisis would herald the rise of many evils in society including increased prejudice growing sectarianism and hate crime. This unfortunately is the evidence of history and we can see this around the planet.

The truth is that many of our people are being diverted from the real issues confronting this society. Inequality social, economic and health inequalities are pulling many of the most disadvantaged further down.”

Some of the initiatives we have been involved in towards the creation of a more equal society at large included:

CEDAW

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW Committee consists of 23 experts on women’s rights from around the world. Countries who have become party to the treaty (States parties) are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights of the Convention are implemented. During its sessions the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

In July 2013 the United Nation’s Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) examined progress made by the UK Government in elimination discrimination against women.

Often referred to as a Bill of Rights for Women, the CEDAW Convention outlines a comprehensive set of rights for women covering civil, political, economic, social and cultural issues. By signing up to the Convention, state parties commit to ending all forms of discrimination against women.

In relation to the examination of the UK Government, ICTU worked closely with the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) and other organisations such as the Committee for the Administration of Justice (CAJ) to ensure that the voices of Northern Ireland women were heard through shadow reports. The Women's Committee received regular reports through the Committee representative on the NIWEP Board and through the Equality Coalition.

The following extract is taken from a NIWEP document, the full text can be found on the NIWEP website www.niwep.org

In 2013, the CEDAW Committee was much less complimentary about progress made in the UK than it had been in 2008... The Government was asked to account for the deficiencies in the equality protections in NI, the exclusion from the Historical Abuse Inquiry of women entered into the Magdalene Laundries, the low representation of women in the post conflict process and institutions in NI and the failure of the UK Government to implement United Nations Resolution 1325. As expected, the Committee questioned the Government about its lack of response to previous Committee recommendations regarding reform of antiabortion law in NI. When the UK was last examined in 2008 the issue of BME and Traveller women featured strongly in the examination of the UK Government and in the Committee's Concluding Observations and this was also the case in 2013.

The strong focus throughout the examination on the adequacy of equality legislation arose from concerns about the replacement of the Gender Duty in Britain with the 2010 Equality Act and on-going concern about the effectiveness of Equality Impact Assessments.

Shadow reports from NI had provided evidence of the problems with EQIA including the experience with regard to the EQIA for the welfare reform proposals. The Committee was also clearly convinced of arguments put forward by NGOs and the Equality Commission for NI in relation to the Sex Discrimination Order (NI) 1976 not prohibiting unlawful discrimination by public authorities on the grounds of sex in the exercise of their public functions. This was reflected in their questions and in a Concluding Observation (para 18) stating that women in NI should not have weaker protection in equality law than women elsewhere in the UK.

The full text of the concluding observations can be found on www.ictu.ie/equality

Ireland acceded to the CEDAW Convention in 1985. The Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality oversees the preparation of Ireland's periodic reports to CEDAW. The most recent documents available are Irelands Combined Fourth and Fifth Reports under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 2003 and the concluding Comments of the CEDAW Committee on Irelands Examination 2005.

A fringe event at this conference will examine how we are fulfilling our responsibilities under CEDAW in both jurisdictions.

UN Resolution 1325

In December 2013, Congress gave evidence to a hearing into the UN Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security coordinated by the NI Women's European Platform.

The Westminster Associate Parliamentary Group (APG) on Women, Peace and Security is the committee tasked to monitor the UK's National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 and subsequent Resolutions on women, peace and security. The Westminster APG initiated the idea of Inquiry into UNSCR1325 in Northern Ireland to investigate how the voices and opinions of women are being included in the new decision making structures and peace-building measures in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland APG on 1325 Women, Peace and Security initiated the hearing in 2013 on behalf of the Westminster APG and NIWEP facilitated the organisation of the event.

A selected panel to take oral evidence from witnesses from a range of organisations and bodies Baroness Ruth Lister, Margaret Owen and Paula Bradley MLA. Following the evidence, a report which combines the findings of the oral inquiry and of the written evidence originally submitted to the Westminster APG will be produced. The report findings of the oral Inquiry will be presented to the Westminster APG following the Inquiry.

“we continue to press for the rights ... of the most disadvantaged women in our society.”

Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee Pamela Dooley and Executive Committee and NIC member Patricia McKeown represented ICTU at the enquiry. Speaking to the panel, Pamela Dooley said:

“The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is the single umbrella organization for trade unions on the island of Ireland. It is unique in Europe in that it is the only trade union Congress covering two jurisdictions. We are therefore familiar with a range of complex constitutional issues arising in the development of public policy and the making of legislation. It is regrettable that this constitutional complexity is being used by the UK government to avoid application of UNSCR 1325 to women in Northern Ireland. The impact of the conflict on women in Northern Ireland, their role in holding families and communities together, their role in peace building and their role in challenging sex discrimination and the absence of many fundamental women's rights and human rights is a matter of record and one on which you will hear much evidence today... we are in regular dialogue with Government in Northern Ireland. We responded in detail to the OFM DFM inadequate Gender Equality Strategy and we continue to press for the rights, in particular of the most disadvantaged women in our society.

In our view, while there have been some positive developments at some levels, on the whole our Government has side stepped its responsibility on implementing Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act on its failure to produce a Poverty Strategy. It refuses to support a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and its inadequate Gender Equality strategy ignores core issues such as women's reproductive rights.

While Government in Northern Ireland struggles to find any real basis for agreement on the action plans necessary to eliminate gender discrimination, no such struggle is apparent with the UK Government. It has the power to introduce a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland with a clear emphasis on Women's Rights. It has the power to include UN Resolution 1325 in its Country Plan but refuses to do so".

UNCSW

In March 2013, Trade Unions around the world welcomed the adoption of Agreed Conclusions at this year's Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW). However, trade unions and others civil society partners stay vigilant as the adoption of the Conclusions was a hard fought battle due to conservative countries who tried to damage women's basic rights. The ITUC also wrote to the Vatican during the discussions calling on it to halt its campaign to stop the United Nations adopting stronger standards on violence against women. Earlier Congress had written to the Irish Government to seek their support in refusing any weakening of the draft agreed conclusions.

Human Trafficking and Violence against Women

This issue continues to be a priority for the Women's Committee. In Northern Ireland it has had a particular spotlight given the passage through the NI Assembly of the Private Members Bill on Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims).

Given the Congress support for the Turn off the Red Light Campaign and taking direction from the motion passed at the 2010 conference, Congress wrote to the Justice Committee to support the Bill. In responding, Congress also endorsed the NI Women's Aid Federation (WAFNI) response to the Bill which said:

Human trafficking is a form of slavery, involving the exploitation of women, men and children for the purposes of prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, or domestic servitude.

The purpose of the Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill is to tackle human trafficking and exploitation more effectively in Northern Ireland. It does so in a number of ways, including strengthening protection for people in a "position of vulnerability" who may "have no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved", and by criminalising the purchase of sex in Northern Ireland under Clause 6 of the Bill.

Whilst supporting the Bill, Congress also noted that support systems must be put in place to enable women and children to get routes out of sexual exploitation:

We strongly urge that further support measures are necessary to support women in prostitution to ensure their safety, health and well-being and to encourage them to seek help without fear of criminalisation, marginalisation or deportation, as well as the creation for clear routes out of prostitution for those that wish to exit. The Swedish or Nordic model is based on simultaneous criminalisation of buyers and decriminalisation of those in prostitution and this support-based model is essential to the success of Clause 6. Excerpt from NI Women's Aid Federation Position Paper.

Congress also drew to the Justice Committee's attention that more than 53 MEPs and over 200 Civil Society organisations came together to issue the Brussels Call: Together for a Europe Free from Prostitution. By supporting the Brussels' Call, MEPs made it clear that prostitution is a form of violence against women and a violation of human dignity. They addressed 6 key recommendations to EU Member States: the suppression of repressive measures against prostituted persons; the criminalisation of all forms of procuring; the development of real alternatives and exit programmes for those in prostitution; the prohibition of the purchase of a sexual act; the implementation of policies of prevention, education, to promote equality and positive sexuality; the development of prevention policies in the countries of origin of prostituted persons.

A delegation from Congress including the Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee and Women's Committee member Pamela Dooley, the Assistant General Secretary Peter Bunting and Equality Officer Clare Moore gave evidence to the Justice Committee on the Human Trafficking Bill in January 2014.

Speaking to the Committee, they said:

In setting on record our support for the Bill, we are pleased to be joining many other civil society organisations including the Women's Resource and Development Agency, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, of which ICTU is a member.

We understand that one of the most contested parts of the Bill has been clause six which calls for the criminalisation of the purchaser of sex whilst protecting the seller. We have also heard the contention that the two issues – trafficking and prostitution – cannot be conflated or dealt with adequately in this one Bill.

However Congress believes that demand for prostitution feeds trafficking, the two issues are inextricably linked. In order to tackle trafficking therefore, the demand for bought sex must also be tackled.

In the Republic of Ireland, Congress continues to be an active partner in the Turn off the Red Light campaign. The major initiatives during the period were:

On EU Anti Trafficking Day, Irish trade unions have lent their support to the Turn Off the Red Light campaign, to jointly call on Irish politicians to take swift action to end sex trafficking and exploitation. We continue to believe the best way to end the human rights abuses which are taking place in every county in Ireland is to target demand by making it illegal to pay for sex. We reject the notion that the traffickers, pimps and other criminals operating a sex 'trade' here will ever respect the rights of workers. Any suggestion that pimps will overnight become model employers flies in the face of reality and the experience in other countries. We fully supported the efforts of the Turn Off the Red Light campaign and on EU Anti-Trafficking Day proudly stood side by side with the survivors of sex trafficking, their support groups and all others fighting to bring about change.

Congress encouraged members to contact their local politicians and encourage them to take swift action to shut down a trade which has become the scourge of Europe. Among those supporting the event were: Ethel Buckley, SIPTU; Pat King, ASTI GS; Gerry Breslin, President ASTI; Sally Maguire, V Pres ASTI; Treasa Ni Mhurchu, President ESBOA; Jessie Doherty (IBOA President), Ian McArdle (CWU) and Tom Geraghty (PSEU GS).

Congress also added its voice to those seeking a change in the law to end exploitation and sex trafficking by making it illegal to pay for sex. Our full submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence is available online. The INMO was also invited to participate in Committee hearings on the issue and we were very pleased when the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality recommended the criminalisation of the purchase of sex in 2013. We will continue to work to ensure this recommendation becomes law.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Congress participated in a number of initiatives to mark this day on 25 November, expressing active support for the 16 Days Against Violence Against Women Campaign.

Congress today (25 November – UN Day for the elimination of violence against Women) expressed its active support for the 16 Days Against Violence Against Women Campaign.

Last week our Executive Council took the decision to play an active role in the campaign.

“Domestic violence may happen behind closed doors but it has far reaching consequences”

Among the initiatives taken were the launch of a survey to find out more about how domestic violence affects working life and the role that employers, colleagues, and union reps can play in supporting those experiencing domestic abuse. Domestic violence may happen behind closed doors but it has far reaching consequences and is known to have an impact on the working lives of those living with an abusive partner. The survey was launched with our colleagues in the TUC, STUC and WTUC and asks anyone who has either experienced domestic violence themselves or has a friend or colleague who has experienced domestic violence to respond. Although the results of the survey are still to be analysed, preliminary findings indicate that they will be extremely useful in informing policy in this area.

Men of the movement also added their voices to the campaign by participating in the launch by the Men's Development Network of this year's White Ribbon Campaign. ASTI have also been actively supporting the campaign. Congress General Secretary, David Begg, adds his voice to the White Ribbon Campaign.



Siptu President, Jack O'Connor; David Joyce, Congress; Alan O'Neill, Men's Development Network; Diarmaid De Paor, ASTI; and Liam Doran, INMO.



UNITE members at Thermo King Galway in support of 16 Days Campaign

Unite members at Thermo King in Galway donned white ribbons as part of the 16 day campaign. Coleman Conneely is the Unite convenor at Thermo King and he said that “Solidarity is fundamental to trade unionism – solidarity not just with our fellow workers, but with all those whose human rights are being attacked, whether at home in Ireland or around the world. Violence against women – in the workplace, on the streets or in the home – is a crucial human rights issue. That is why Unite members here in Thermo King were proud to demonstrate their solidarity with women victims of violence”.

Congress is also a supporter of Safe Ireland's Man Up campaign.

It is also worth reminding ourselves about the 2012 revision of the Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work.

With the launch of a public consultation from the DHSSPSNI and the Department of Justice on *Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse*, Congress organized a seminar for all affiliates in February 2014 to inform the response to the consultation. Officials from both Departments attended the briefing session as did representatives from Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation and other NGOs.

Finally, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization – made of representatives of governments, workers' and employers' organisations – has not yet given the green light to tripartite negotiations for an international legal instrument focusing on gender-based violence at the workplace. Although several members of the ILO – including the workers' group – have indicated their support for such a Convention, there are still voices against it, among them the employer representatives at the ILO.

“There are very few countries which have labour-law provisions to prevent, address and redress gender-based violence at the workplace. An ILO Convention is absolutely necessary to close this gap and boost protection for women and girls generally against violence,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

Women face particular situations at the workplace including gender-based physical and psychological violence and sexual harassment. These problems are too often silenced by fear of getting sacked or just because “it is not done” to speak up on these issues. An ILO Convention would be an important step to improve women's working conditions worldwide and to save the millions of dollars spent every year on health care, lower productivity and sick leave because of violence against women.

Unions in many countries are campaigning to stop violence against women, including in sectors where most workers are male – one of many examples being in the construction industry in Australia.

The Congress guidelines are available here: www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/ictu_vaw_guidelines.pdf

Family Leaves

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence Mr Alan Shatter, T.D., in March 2013 signed regulations extending parental leave from 14 weeks to 18 weeks. The changes gave effect to EU Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 which implements a revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by the European Social Partners. The main changes are:

- an increase from 3 to 4 months
- the extra month being non-transferable between parents. (It is hoped that this non-transferable period will encourage men to take parental leave and encourage a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women).
- the right to request flexible working arrangements upon return from leave.

Congress International Women's Day statement for 2013 referred to the transposition. We also issued joint statement with Start Strong and the National Women's Council. Since then, all three organisations have engaged with the Department in the context of the proposed Family Leaves Bill to pursue changes in our scheme of family leaves that promote equality rather than reinforce inequality. We have acknowledged that under the Irish Presidency there were positive developments, including the significant attempts to advance the proposed Maternity Directive; and the transposition of the Parental Leave Directive. There is also now wider discussion and support on the need for paternity leave.

We believe that the development of a Family Leave Bill provides an opportunity to bring together the significant legislation which has developed in Ireland and to identify gaps to support parents to take leave that would better enable reconciliation of work and family life.

We believe small changes could make a positive difference to the lives of working parents and their children and to the organisations for whom they work.

Justice for the Magdalenes and Bethany survivors

Congress Women's Committee expressed support for the Justice for Magdalen demands and in February 2013 supported a Candle Lit Vigil in Solidarity with Magdalene Survivors and their Families. Justice was finally seen to be done when the Government made a full apology to the Magdalene survivors, backed up by credible redress package of measures that can never in reality make up for the suffering experienced by the women. Their incarceration and forced, unpaid labour, and the failure to inspect the laundries to ensure compliance with even basic workers' rights is a stain on the nation. We made the point that any credible package should include lump sum compensation, pensions, healthcare and counselling, housing services and advice, as sought by the Justice for Magdalene group. We have welcomed the Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme subsequently introduced. However, almost a year since the Taoiseach made his emotional apology to survivors of the Magdalene Laundries, the women continue to suffer poverty, ill-health and trauma after decades of State-sponsored abuse. No legislation has yet been tabled to provide for the restorative justice scheme recommended by Mr Justice John Quirke last May (2013).

We have also supported calls by the Bethany survivor group for a similar scheme of redress and expressed our deep anger at the Government decision in July 2013 not to provide a redress scheme for the survivors of the Bethany Home. Such a decision in our view is unjust and must be revisited in light of the incontrovertible evidence that the State failed to protect children from neglect and abuse there.

Childcare

Congress and the Women's Committee continue to call for universal quality childcare. Parents across this island face some of the highest childcare costs anywhere in Europe. This affects their ability to work, train or study, as well as forcing families to make difficult financial choices.

The affordability issue is dealt with in Section 2 of this report. Costs compare with much lower costs in countries such as Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and France. Many other countries also invest in Childcare at a higher level than we do in Ireland, and for very good reasons. The Nevin Economic Research Centre has pointed to the benefits of such investment, which are more pronounced for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These include:

- improved literacy and numeracy
- longer education participation
- better labour market outcomes, including allowing women to return to work more quickly
- better life outcomes
- reduced societal costs from crime etc
- benefits to children's parents
- additional future tax revenues

It is crucial that while dealing with the affordability issue the importance of high quality is not neglected. Affordability and quality must go hand. Congress notes the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy, which in October 2013 published its advice to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Expert Advisory Group called for an entitlement to free preschool for all children from their 3rd birthday until such time as they enter school, but stressed that measures to raise quality standards must be introduced first. We also note the work of the

Department of Children and Youth Affairs in drafting the National Children's and Young People's Policy Framework (CYPPF), which will set out the vision, national outcomes and aims for young people for the next five years and participated in a consultation event in late 2013.

We believe that the right to childcare should be a cornerstone of future economic and social policies in both jurisdictions on this island and will continue to campaign for affordable, quality childcare for all. A key element of quality is to ensure that workers within the childcare sector are properly paid and have access to career development opportunities.

Trade Unions urge a Yes Vote for Children's Rights



Jack O'Connor, General President of SIPTU; John Douglas, General Secretary MANDATE; Kevin Callinan, Deputy General Secretary of IMPACT; David Joyce, Congress; and Anne Faye, President of INTO urge trade union members to vote YES for Children's Rights in November 2012 (Pic: Maxwells)

Congress and many trade union affiliates played an active role in the successful November 2012 referendum on Children's rights. We made the case that the amendment would lead to a better child protection and family law system and help ensure that the courts make more 'child-centred' decisions. Congress Equality Officer David Joyce said that there were five key reasons to

vote yes. "For the first time, the Constitution would take a child-centred approach to the protection of all children and allow the State to better support struggling families, rather than wait for a situation to reach crisis point. If passed, it will allow up to 2,000 children currently in

long-term State care the opportunity to be adopted and given a second chance in a stable and permanent family. In addition, it will base child protection, care, adoption, guardianship, and custody and access decisions on what is in the best interests of the child. It will also ensure that judges listen to the views of children when making decisions in child protection, care, adoption, guardianship, custody and access cases.

In our view, it set out how we as a country view and value children and helps foster a culture that actively protects and safeguards them.

“Congress ... played an active role in the successful November 2012 referendum on Children's rights .”



INTO President, Anne Fay and Equality Officer, Deirdre O' Connor at Dublin Pride 2012

Submission on same sex marriage to the Constitutional Convention



Women's Committee Chair Theresa Devenney at the Give Poots the Boot protest, October 2013

Congress made its submission in favour of marriage equality to the Constitutional Convention in June 2013. The Convention recommended to the Government that a referendum be held on the issue. The Cabinet subsequently accepted the recommendation of the Constitutional

Convention and will hold a referendum on civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples in 2015. Congress is in discussions with Marriage Equality as to how we might best work together in preparing trade union advocates for the campaign.

In October 2013, the Congress Youth Committee together with the Belfast Feminist Network and Alliance for Choice organised a protest outside the constituency office of Minister for Health Edwin Poots.

Supported by the Women's Committee, the protest was called in response to the Minister's stance on a number of issues including the:

- Ban on gay blood donation;
- Adoption Rights for same sex and unmarried couples;
- A woman's right to choose;
- Closures of accident and emergency departments and cuts to health services.

The Congress Women's and LGBT committees have actively campaigned for the introduction of the promised Sexual Orientation Strategy for Northern Ireland. Despite commitments from the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers that a strategy would be consulted on by the end of 2013, at the time of writing this report there is still no definite timetable.

Together with the Northern Ireland Committee, Congress Equality Committees will continue to push for implementation of a strong Sexual Orientation Strategy.



Here NI's Orlaith Hendron at the Peace Progress and Equality rally, January 2014.



Women's Committee 2012–2014

Maire Mulcahy

ASTI

Mary Ohle

ASTI

Rhonda Donaghey

Bray Council of Trade Unions

Aileen Atcheson

Clonmel Trades Council

Joan Byrne

CPSU

Theresa Dwyer

CPSU

Carol Scheffer

CWU

Paula Geraghty

Dublin Council of Trade Unions

Betty Tyrrell Collard

Dublin Council of Trade Unions

Maria Bennett

ESU

Anne Carroll

ESU

Carmel Heneghan

Galway Council of Trade Unions

Angela Ryan

GSU

Margaret Browne

IBOA

Marian Geoghegan

IBOA

Ann Louise Gilligan

IFUT

Rose Malone

IFUT

Margaret Coughlan

IMPACT

Tara Robertson

IMPACT

Mary Barrett

INMO

Sheila Dickson

INMO

Eithne Ní Chloscaidh

INTO

Deirdre O'Connor

INTO

Joan Gaffney

MANDATE

Mandy Kane

MANDATE

Karen Wall

MANDATE

Melissa Brennan

PSEU

Rhona McEleney

PSEU

Suzanna Griffin

SIPTU

Helen Murphy

SIPTU

Annette Dolan

TUI

Roisin Farrelly

TUI

Mary Brannigan

UNITE

Carol O'Brien

UNITE

Northern Ireland Women's Committee 2012–2014

Alanagh Rea

NIPSA

Anne Millis

ATL

Audrey Stewart

UTU

Dana Bruno

GMB

Fiona Doherty

SIPTU

Gaye Partridge

UNITE

Gayle Matthews

PCS

Geraldine McGowan

INTO

Geraldine Alexander

NIPSA

Jacqui Reid

UTU

Julie Williams-Nash

NUJ

Karen Burch

PCS

Karen Sims

NASUWT

Kathleen Thompson

GMB

Pauline Collins

UCU

Margaret Gregg

GMB

Margaret McKee

UNISON

Moir Morton

UCU

Naomi Connor

Belfast & District Trades Council

Pamela Dooley

UNISON

Pauline Collins

UCU

Sally Rock

SIPTU

Taryn Trainor

UNITE

Teresa Graham

NASUWT

Theresa Devenney

ATL

Vivien Holding

CWU

ANNEX A:
Report on Motions Passed at Congress Women’s Conference 2012

Women in TU Leadership Roles	— Congress has been running a ten day Women and Leadership course for some years. It is accredited by OCN at level 2. Following on from this course, the NIC ICTU Women’s Committee was keen to see what support can be given to women who have completed the course and what further progression might be developed for them. To this end, past students were invited to an informal networking session where they were able to feedback how the course has helped them in various aspects of their lives, including within their union and also discuss how they might be further supported. The learning from this will be used to inform further training and the Women’s Committee will be giving consideration to initiatives which will support women within the trade union movement. — Trade Union Skillnet work on developing Mentoring approach on-going.
Women’s Representation within unions	— Result of Equality Audit 2013 to be presented at 2014 Women’s Conference
Integration of migrant Women workers	— NIC ICTU holds a post of Migrant Workers Support Officer. This post provides advice and guidance for migrant workers in respect of employment issues. The Migrant Workers Support Officer also represents ICTU on a government working group which advises on employment issues for migrant workers. — There are also a range of education initiatives including diversity training for union representatives. — Congress continues to campaign for ratification of ILO Convention on rights of Domestic Workers. — Congress ran a successful 'Challenge Fund' for trade unions to undertake specific actions in support of workplace diversity. SIPTU, TEEU and UNITE all ran projects regarding integration of migrants into trade unions.

Supporting work of the Women’s Committee	— The Women’s Committees North and South continue to campaign against austerity measures and to highlight the detrimental effect that these have on women and children, in particular. The Women’s Committee in Northern Ireland has worked closely with the women’s sector, designing & distributing a leaflet on “Cuts to Women” as part of the “Empty Purse Campaign”. The Committee has also played a full role in other NIC ICTU sub committees and groups including the Equality and Human Rights Sub Group and the Welfare Reform group. As part of the on-going scrutiny of the work of the committee, we have: — Reviewed the Women’s Committee Constitution — Encouraged unions to nominate to the Committee and reminded unions to turn up at meetings — Promoted the Women in Leadership training course and promoted women as role models; — Met with a range of community organisations including the Women’s TEC – and the Women’s Resource and Development Agency to discuss how to reach women in the community. — The Women’s Committee had a substantial input into the Trade Union Commission process.
Human Rights & Equality impact assessment	— Work of Commission ongoing / submission makes case for such an impact assessment for all of our activities
Equality & the TU Commission	— Submission to Commission coordinated by Committees and made to Commission

Restoring Pay Parity	— This issue was pursued by Trade Union representatives during the course of the HRA discussions. Under the terms of the Haddington Road Agreement, graduate Teachers were placed on revised salary scales which came into effect on 1 July 2013. The revised salary scales show increases in salary for these graduates and an equalisation at the top of the salary scales for those who graduated from colleges in 2011 and 2012. — Congress will endeavour to have such anomalies addressed as part of the negotiations for any public service agreement following the expiry of the Haddington Road agreement.
Women & Mental Health	— A 2 day Mental Health first aid course was held for the Women’s Committee — Conference held on mental health which included a section on Women & Mental Health — Congress ran a day long training course on mental health with See Change
Campaign to restore the JLC system	— Covered comprehensively in Section 2 of the report
Welfare Reform Bill	— The Welfare Reforms will impact most severely on NI and if the reforms go through, approximately £750 million will be lost from the local economy. — In pursuit of a campaign against welfare reform, the Women’s Committee has ensured that a gendered perspective is fed into the Northern Ireland Committee and other sub groups. — Participate in the NIC Welfare Reform Campaign group — Respond to policy issues as appropriate — Link with women’s sector as appropriate .

Gender sensitive response to crisis	— In pursuit of strengthening partnerships, relationships and networks, the Congress Women’s Committees work closely with sister Women’s Committees from the TUC, STUC and WTUC fully participating in the Women’s Council of the Isles which brings together women trade union leaders. The Women’s Committees also extend their networks ensuring that relationships are established and development with a range of women’s, human rights and equality organisations. — Attendance at Conference of the Isles. Presentation by Vivien Holding and Jacquie Reid on the effect of austerity on women’s health and wellbeing — The Women’s Committee has played a full role in the NIC ICTU campaign against austerity and welfare reform, attending demonstrations and linking with the women’s sector and in particular campaigns such as ‘the empty purse’ campaign — Leaves presentation at 2013 Council of the Isles — The theme of 2013 Women’s Seminar was a Gender Sensitive response to Crisis.
Strategy for women’s employment	— Pressure on government to develop and implement a strategy for women’s employment — Ensure that this issue is on the agenda at meetings between NIC ICTU and First and Deputy First Ministers. — Raise this issue through the Women’s Manifesto – midterm meetings with political parties and through meeting with MLAs. — Participate fully in the Gender Advisory Panel which oversees the gender strategy – OFM DFM. — Participate in other forums including the ad hoc women’s policy group and the gender budgeting group.

Sex Trafficking	— Hate Crime Conference held on 13/11/12 — Congress added its voice to those seeking a change in the law to end exploitation and sex trafficking by making it illegal to pay for sex. — Respond to the call for submissions to the Bill on Human Trafficking and Exploitation going through the NI Assembly. In line with Congress policy, ICTU has supported this Bill which calls for the criminalisation of the purchasers of sex whilst at the same time ensuring that the sellers of sex are not criminalised. The Bill also provides further support for victims of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour and domestic slavery calling on the relevant Departments to set out statutory support provisions. A delegation from the Northern Ireland Committee and ICTU Secretariat provided evidence to the Justice Committee on the ICTU submission. Full content of the evidence statement can be obtained from www.ictuni.org — EU Anti Trafficking Day, Irish trade unions lent their support to the Turn Off the Red Light campaign, to jointly call on Irish politicians to take swift action to end sex trafficking and exploitation.
Investment in Education	— Congress prebudget submissions made case for need for investment in education, including early childhood care.
Austerity having detrimental impact on Women's health	— ICTU to engage in a campaign involving all affiliated unions to shame our governments into providing effective Health provision for women and put a stop to this continued attack on women's basic rights to Health. — Develop H&S pack for women. — Keep profile at GAP meetings. — Vivien Holding & Jacqui Reid presentation to CoI on 7/8 November (see above). As a result of this presentation, the STUC passed an emergency motion at the STUC Women's Conference on access to abortion in Northern Ireland. — Support for Violence against Women campaigns. — Action for X support in ROI.
Pension benefits for women workers	— Unprecedented step (June 2013) of IBEC, ICTU, IAPF and the Society of Actuaries in Ireland calling on the Minister for Social Protection to take immediate action to reform the wind-up and restructuring rules as a matter of urgency, to deliver greater fairness in the distribution of assets while continuing to protect retired people on modest pensions.