

FØRSA

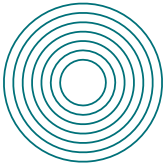
2022-
2024

Biennial Report



Contents

Foreword.....	9
Introduction.....	10
Organisation.....	11
▪ Finance and administration.....	11
▪ Strategic Change.....	11
▪ Membership.....	12
▪ Skills Academy.....	13
▪ Communications.....	14
▪ Campaigns Unit.....	15
▪ Data protection.....	16
▪ Equality Committee.....	16
▪ International.....	17
Pay and related.....	18
▪ Public service pay.....	18
▪ Extension of Building Momentum.....	18
▪ Negotiating a new public service agreement.....	19
▪ Union priorities.....	20
▪ Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.....	21
▪ Local bargaining.....	22
▪ Pensions.....	23
▪ Travel and subsistence.....	24
▪ Community and voluntary sector pay.....	24
▪ Statutory sick leave.....	24
▪ Improving workers' rights.....	25
▪ Social dialogue.....	25
▪ Gender pay gap.....	26
Working conditions.....	27
▪ Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022).....	27
▪ Domestic Violence leave.....	27
▪ Childcare.....	27



Contents

Divisions

Civil Service	28
Divisional strategy	28
▪ Access to the state industrial relations (WRC/Labour Court).....	28
▪ Department of Education	29
▪ Department of Further Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS).....	29
▪ State Examinations Commission (SEC).....	29
▪ National Council for Special Education (NCSE).....	30
▪ National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).....	30
▪ Inspectorate	31
▪ National Shared Services Office (NSSO).....	31
▪ Department of Social Protection (DSP).....	32
▪ Functional management structures.....	32
▪ National Intreo Contact Centre (NICC).....	32
▪ Longford Contact Centre.....	32
▪ Ukrainian refugee and cost-of-living crisis.....	32
▪ Digital self-service	32
▪ Grade appropriate work	33
▪ Community Welfare Services (CWS).....	33
▪ EOI/HEOI claim.....	33
▪ Computer Operator shift changes.....	33
▪ Public Employment Services (PES)	33
▪ Blended working.....	33
▪ Appeals Office	34
▪ Medical Assessors.....	34
▪ Acknowledgement.....	34
Education Division	35
▪ Leadership and organisation.....	35
▪ Gaining traction.....	35
Divisional industrial strategy	35
▪ Implementing the new pay agreement for school secretaries.....	35



Contents

▪ A pay campaign for school caretakers	36
▪ National review of the role of the SNA/negotiating a new contract	36
▪ Negotiating end of 32-hour contracts for SNAs	36
▪ Abolishing the '72-hour' and June working obligations for SNAs	36
▪ Negotiating a new funding and governance structure for School Completion Programmes.....	36
▪ Implementing a new job evaluation scheme in higher education	37
▪ Agency labour in Education and Training Boards	37
▪ A fair grading structure for ETBs.....	37
Other developments.....	37
▪ SNA allocation model	37
▪ Personal assistants in further and higher education	38
Health and Welfare.....	39
▪ Sláintecare - Health Regions	39
▪ Recruitment - Clerical Admin & Managerial Grades	39
▪ Pay Restoration - Community & Voluntary Sector (Section 39, 10, 56 & 40).....	40
▪ National Joint Council (NJC)	41
▪ Pandemic Special Recognition Payment	41
▪ Special leave with pay - Long Covid	41
▪ Job evaluation scheme	42
▪ Domestic Abuse Policy & Paid Leave	42
▪ Menstrual/menopause workplace polices	42
▪ National Investigation Unit.....	42
▪ Robotic Process Automation	42
HSCP, Pharmacy and statutory regulation	42
▪ Community Healthcare Network Model (CHN)	42
▪ Career Pathway Review (CPR) dispute	43
▪ Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT).....	43
▪ Hospital Pharmacy	44
▪ Hospital Pharmacy Technicians	44
▪ Audiology	44
▪ Clinical Biochemists.....	44
▪ Clinical Engineering	44



Contents

▪ Clinical Measurement Physiologists	44
▪ Counsellors in Addiction Service.....	45
▪ National Counselling Service.....	45
▪ Dietitians.....	45
▪ Psychology	45
▪ Peer Support Workers (mental health)	45
▪ Orthoptics	45
▪ CORU/Statutory regulation	45
▪ Engagement with key stakeholders	45
▪ National Professional Committees (NPCs).....	45
TUSLA, HSE, Social Work and Social Care Work NPCs	46
▪ Tusla restructuring	46
▪ On Call - Children's Residential Services	46
▪ Job evaluation dispute - Tusla	46
▪ Career Pathway Review - Tusla.....	46
▪ Social Care Workers - CORU registration.....	46
▪ Educational Welfare Officers - Tusla	47
▪ National Emergency Out of Hours Service (NOHS) - Tusla.....	47
Social work	47
▪ Career Pathway for social workers in primary care	47
▪ Adult Safeguarding (HSE)	47
Corporate services	47
▪ E Health & Disruptive Technology	47
▪ IFMS	48
▪ Finance	48
▪ Environmental Health Officers (EHO).....	48
▪ Internal audit	48
▪ Healthcare audit.....	48
▪ Civil registration.....	49
▪ Dental services.....	49
▪ National Ambulance Service.....	49



Contents

Local Government and Local Services..... 50

- Divisional Council.....50
- Divisional strategy.....50
- EPSU50
- The future of Local Government services.....50
- Remunicipalisation of domestic waste services.....51
- Workplace attitudes survey52
- Veterinary Services52
- Civil Defence Officers.....53
- Professional committees53
- Fire services53
- Water53
- Job evaluation56
- Blended working.....57
- PRSI classification57
- Libraries and the far-right.....57
- Confined recruitment58
- Flexitime.....58
- Libraries59
- Water59
- IT/ICT.....59
- Grade claims.....59
- Other grades.....60

Municipal Employees'..... 61

- Divisional strategy.....61
- EPSU61
- Local Authority National Council (LANC).....61
- Future of Local Government services.....61
- Outsourcing61
- Remunicipalisation of domestic waste services.....62
- Water63
- The future of Local Government.....66



Contents

Industrial relations and related	66
▪ Dublin Fire Brigade	66
▪ Technological University Dublin (TUD).....	66
▪ Dublin City Council (DCC)	66
▪ North City Operations Depot.....	66
▪ Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	67
▪ City of Dublin ETB.....	67
▪ South Dublin County Council.....	67
▪ Housing.....	67
▪ Housing caretakers	67
▪ PRSI	67
▪ Libraries	67
Services and Enterprises	68
Pay, terms and conditions	68
▪ Aviation.....	68
▪ Dublin Airport Authority	68
▪ Shannon Airport Authority	68
▪ Irish Aviation Authority/AirNav Ireland	68
▪ CHC - Techcrew.....	68
▪ Cabin crew.....	68
▪ Aer Lingus.....	68
▪ Ryanair	69
▪ Emerald Airlines	69
▪ Pilots.....	69
▪ Aer Lingus.....	69
▪ Ryanair	70
▪ CHC/Bristow	70
▪ Emerald Airlines	70
Non-commercial state agencies	70
▪ An Bord Pleanála.....	70
▪ Coimisiún na Meán (formerly Broadcasting Authority of Ireland).....	71
▪ Commission for the Regulation of Utilities	71



Contents

▪ Fáilte Ireland	71
▪ Health and Safety Authority	71
▪ The Housing Agency	71
▪ Marine Institute	71
▪ Sea Fisheries Protection Agency	71
▪ Road Safety Authority	71
▪ Special EU Programmes Body	71
▪ Teagasc.....	71
Commercial state agencies	72
▪ An Post.....	72
▪ Coillte	72
▪ Drogheda Port Company.....	72
▪ Institute of Public Administration	72
Other employments	72
▪ Community employment supervisors	72
▪ Eir	73
▪ Irish Water/Uisce Éireann	73
▪ Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA)	73
▪ Local employment services	73
▪ P&O Maritime	73
▪ Pobal.....	73
▪ Vodafone.....	73
Appendices	74
▪ Appendix 1: Extracts from accounts	74
▪ Appendix II: Salary scales: Civil Service, Education, Health, Local Government	82
▪ Appendix III: Travel and subsistence	82
▪ Appendix IV: NEC officers	82
▪ Appendix V: Industrial and organising staff	82

Foreword

This report reflects the activity of Fórsa at an interesting juncture in contemporary Irish history. The population of the island has surpassed seven million for the first time since the middle of the 19th century, and there has never been as many people at work in the republic, where the workforce currently stands at 2.7 million.

These are numbers that reflect a healthy economy but continue to present major challenges for the country. Nowhere is this more visible than in the current state of housing. Meeting the demand for housing will be a crucial test not just of the current government, but the government that is due to be elected within the next 12 months.

Fórsa is an organisation that learns from the past but prepares for the future, and the union is conscious of the very serious social and economic risks associated if a generation of young and future workers are essentially locked out of the housing market.

One of those risks is the ongoing exploitation of community concerns about immigration by groups and individuals with a divisive and antagonising agenda.

The reality, as experienced by Fórsa members in the health and welfare sector, is that nurses from 117 different countries have brought their expertise to our healthcare system. Without these, and other migrant workers, we can only wonder how quickly the provision of healthcare in this country would crumble.

As a trade union, we must continue to ensure that workers are protected from discrimination and integrated into communities and new spaces with open arms. Equally, we must hold employers to account on their obligations to provide workplaces that are free from hate speech and in which their staff feel safe.

This raises the question too about the size of our public service, which is relatively small compared to other European countries. Fórsa's work with TASC (Think-tank for action on social change) is aimed

at applying lessons from the recent global pandemic and applying them to create a bigger state which can better meet the needs of our citizens.

Preparations by union reps, branches and officials are now underway to finalise detailed arrangements for the local bargaining provisions of the new Public Service Pay Agreement, to which Fórsa members gave overwhelming support in the ballot in February and March this year.

During the recent pay talks, unions pursued the local bargaining mechanism to make sure we had the flexibility to address some long-standing issues among specific groups of employees. In addition to the cost-of-living measures in the deal, and the commitment to repeal FEMPI, we have achieved, at last, agreement to normalise public service industrial relations for the first time since the financial crash of 2008.

As we gather in Killarney for our conference this week - to settle the direction our union will take over the next two years - it's worth our while focusing on our collective potential to be a positive and dynamic influence on a country that is grappling with the multiple social challenges of economic success.



Kevin Callinan
General Secretary

Introduction

The Fórsa biennial report 2020-2022 was finalised and distributed to branches and executives in May 2022. The report covered union events and activities and was adopted at the national conference in May 2022. This report covers the period between May 2022 and 2024, which includes the negotiation and extension of the Building Momentum pay agreement, and the negotiation and ratification of its successor, the [Public Service Agreement 2024 - 2026](#).



Clerical Branch PSO Sligo #betterinaunion

Organisation

Finance and administration

This report covers the financial years 2022 and 2023. During this period the union consolidated its internal financial management processes while working with its external auditors, Mazars, who were appointed to take over the role from Grant Thornton in 2021, following a tender process by the union's trustees.

A detailed financial report was circulated to branches in advance of the national conference, setting out key financial data from the audited financial statements approved by the NEC for 2022-23 (see summary at Appendix 7). These statements include consolidated branch income and expenditure and balance sheet data, satisfying a regulatory requirement to reflect this information in the statutory AR21 statement, lodged annually before 1st June each year. The integration of branch financial data into the annual audit process was a significant challenge, not only for the union's finance team but for the branch treasurers.

The recommencement of business following the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions resulted in more normalised operating expenses in both years. This change in expenditure was carefully monitored by the Finance & Risk Committee. The NEC approved budgets and reviewed and approved income and expenditure.

The period saw a gradual process of branch rationalisation, particularly within the Civil Service division. Revenue Clerical officer branches were merged into one larger branch. Several smaller branches, and some inactive branches, have come together while work is ongoing with elected representatives to reactivate some dormant branches, and to amalgamate smaller grade-based branches to deliver better representation and organisation for their memberships.

The NEC-approved branch rules template is used to ensure all grades and section of new branches are proportionally represented in any new structure proposed for ratification by the NEC. At the same time, progress was made on streamlining branch

funding. Approximately 27 clerical branches remain on the legacy 5% funding. This number is expected to reduce with the planned branch amalgamations.

The maximum annual subscription for the default 0.8% rate of salary was €399.34 (salary maximum of €49,918) in 2022. This increased in 2023 to €425.30 (salary maximum of €53,162.50) reflecting increases due under the Building Momentum agreement. Two legacy rates continue to operate outside of this maximum subscription ceiling¹.

Risk reporting has improved with the creation of a risk register. The risk register is reviewed regularly at the Finance & Risk committee meetings.

The Solas Membership system has been rolled out to branches that use a Fórsa Rep email address. Training is ongoing. As branches access the system, information is updated and cleansed. It will be an asset from which the union hopes to leverage improvements in membership recruitment and retention.

Strategic Change

A number of projects are managed currently by the Strategic Change team and the following report summarises the progress since the last conference.

Strategic plan

A strategy for the implementation of the plan and the evaluation of progress has been guiding the work of the team for the past two years, with oversight from the Policy Implementation Board.

An area of key importance was the implementation of Core objective no.1: Organising to create a stronger more powerful union which has 22 sub-actions committing the union to developing and applying a national organising strategy at every level of the union.

1 The 1% Civil Service clerical officers and related grades rate (includes payment for the legacy benefits scheme for that grade) and the 0.62% subscription rate for Executive Officers and HEOs in membership prior to the amalgamation in 2018.

With expert guidance from Dr Jane McAlevey bespoke training was developed for all staff with a focus on building high participation and power in workplaces.

Branch Supports, Development and Membership Engagement Project

This project has been streamlining and standardising the materials and tools available to branches so that branches are able to devote more time to engaging directly with members.

Branches from each division were surveyed and workshopped, while materials were produced including a Workplace Reps Charter, AGM Guide, Branch Toolkit and Branch Capacity document. Branches from each division have been participating in a pilot of the materials in anticipation of launching them to the wider union.

Solas CRM project

This membership system project has now successfully progressed to Phase 2. The project team have steered the implementation of Phase 1, which required working closely with our tech partners to progress development work, testing and implementation, and resolutions of initial system faults. Additional functionality, requested following user feedback was scoped out, developed and implemented.

In parallel with continuing system development and testing the project team have produced and delivered bespoke training, with training materials, for staff and branches and piloted these as the first tranche of branches were given access to the new system. Further to this, the project team collaborated with colleagues in other teams to agree security protocols and identify business processes for review or refinement.

With Phase 1 completed we are now able to analyse data in ways which were previously beyond reach, helping us make more strategic decisions.

Membership

Last year (2023) was the highest recruiting year in the past decade with five Fórsa divisions recording overall growth. Since 2022, the Membership Unit has processed almost 20,000 new joiner applications, twice as many as were processed in the same period in the two years prior to the 2022 conference.

In the same period, the membership team has updated member details associated with more than 35,000 member records. Fórsa holds email addresses against 96% of member records, an increase of almost 10% (from 87%) since 2021.

The team has trained and accredited more than 100 lay-activist users of the Solas membership system. The branches associated with these trained and accredited expert activists organise more than two-thirds of Fórsa members.

The team has facilitated the operational campaigns associated with six significant industrial mobilisations (ballots) across the Health and Welfare, Local Government and Local Services divisions, in addition to national union ballots.

Most recently, the team collaborated with divisional staff to achieve high levels of member participation in our national public service pay agreement ballot. Participation in the 2024 ballot surpassed 67% (52,729 votes cast). More than a quarter of branches involved in the national ballot achieved 80% participation or higher (53 branches) and 183 (90%) branches achieved 60% participation or higher.

The Membership Unit is working on improving access to member benefits, including delivering auto-enrolment to Fórsa's Salary Protection scheme. The team is also committed to improving member benefits for retired Fórsa members.

High levels of member participation in union life depends on our workplace organisation and density. The Membership Unit can assist branches with organising and recruitment and invites activists to get in touch to develop plans to build power across our great union.

Skills Academy

Fórsa’s director of Membership Training & Development is Fiona Dunne.

Since 2022 the engagement of branches and workplace representatives with Skills Academy has increased exponentially. While the last 18 months has seen some procedural changes and the introduction of new learning opportunities, these changes have been warmly welcomed by our representatives and we continue to develop strong relationships with our branch and training officer network.

As training is a constantly evolving area, we will continue to listen to our branches to ensure our offerings are beneficial to our representatives’ effectiveness and align with the achievement of our strategic objectives to become a stronger and more influential trade union.

Almost 1,000 members registered for our core training programmes of which there was a 62% attendance rate, something which we would like to push up to at least 80% during the next term.

Divisional participation rates mirrored the size of each division as set out here.

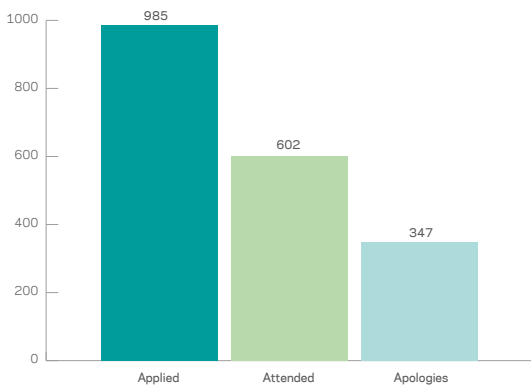
The new Lunch and Learn series, covered topics as diverse as Talking about your union; Menopause; Digital Trade Unionism and CV & Interview preparation (still holding the record of highest registrations at 480) and counted 1,453 registrations to March 2024.

Opening the Fórsa Induction (formerly known as Fórsa101) to ALL members and delivering it 22 times annually, resulted in applications exceeding 500 and we are working hard to offer this information session to all new members within two months of joining.

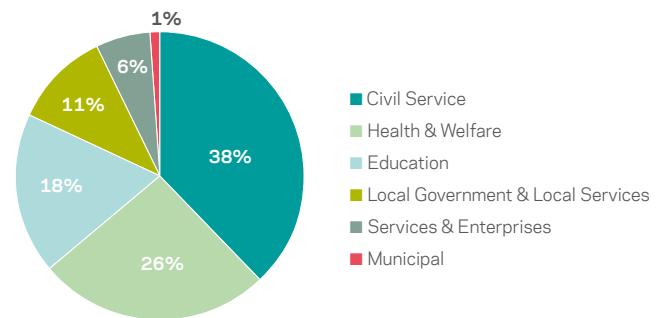
Our new Level 1 Workplace Representatives Training (formerly known as Foundational) introduced during 2023 saw 128 new workplace representatives apply. Other highlights from the period are set out below.

For a more detailed explanation of our courses and programmes, please contact the Fórsa Skills Academy [here](#).

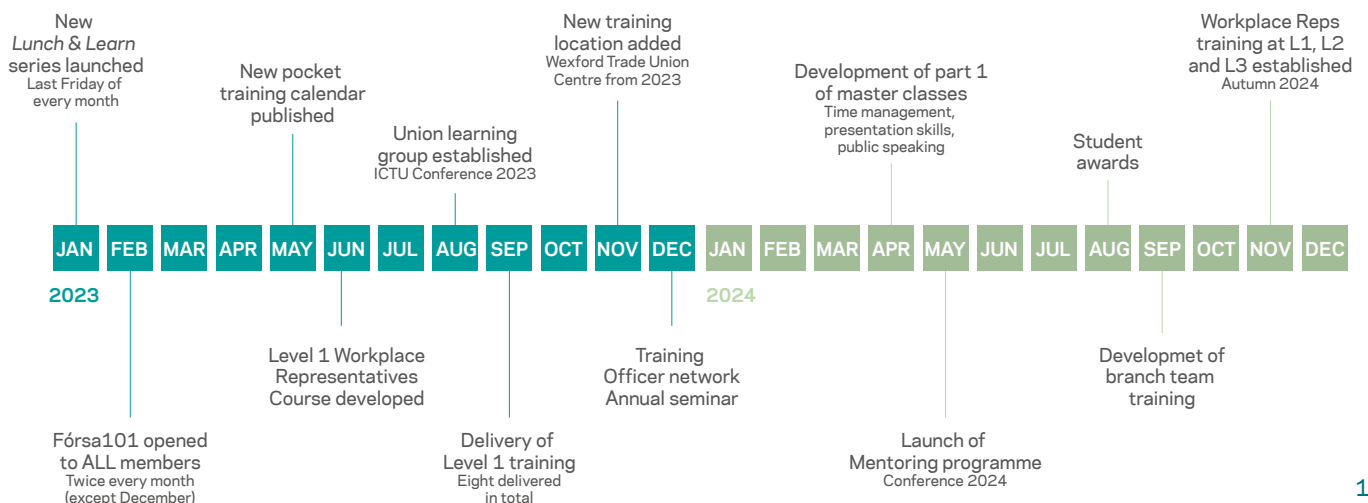
Participation from September 2022 to May 2024



Participation by Division



2023 and 2024 highlights



Communications

Fórsa's communications incorporates three discrete areas of activity overseen by three directors reporting to the union's general secretary. These are digital (Kate O'Sullivan), membership communications (Hannah Deasy) and media relations (Niall Shanahan). Working cooperatively to ensure consistency and quality of union communications, the work of each director is integrated to maximise the effectiveness of the union's reach to internal and external audiences, and are coordinated with the work of the campaigns unit, and divisional and functional teams.

Digital

In 2022 and 2023, the Fórsa website had over 3.3 million visits. After work on the foundations on the website and using Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) techniques, Fórsa trade union is now the top trade union for search topics online such as 'join a trade union', 'benefits of joining a trade union', and 'public sector pay' among many others.

The homepage and Join Online main pages were also redesigned, with a focus on recruitment as well as providing the information our members need. Due to SEO alongside industrial relations, Join Online became one of our top five pages compared to being in the top twenty pages before. New website 'hubs' were also designed, so we can host a wide range of materials in one place for ballots, industrial action, conferences, and campaigns.

On social media, we've moved to a focus on platforms where our members and potential members spend most of their time. We also began creating content specific to the algorithms and usage of each platform. This has seen a significant improvement in our reach of members and new audiences. We're now fully present and growing on Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Threads. We also run paid social media ads for recruitment and events on Meta (Facebook and Instagram) and LinkedIn.

With the Membership team, Member Comms, and Divisions, we rolled out digital mobilisation techniques during ballots. This involved creating emails aimed at increasing voting that borrowed from marketing techniques, to make our

communications more accessible and direct. We also created content to support members and branches to get other members to vote and non-members to join, available by email as well as on the website hubs.

Membership communication

The aim of membership communications is both to enhance the clarity with which Fórsa communicates with members, and to elevate members' voices within union communications. Fortnightly sectoral bulletins are issued to members across all divisions by the Communications Unit. These form the core outreach to members, keeping them up to date on union developments, workplace issues, and relevant national stories.

Readership of these bulletins is consistently very high, with each division hitting an open rate above 50% for each edition. Average newsletter open rates are between 15 and 20%. Such a high average demonstrates a high degree of trust in union news content among Fórsa members.

In addition, all union promotional materials, activities and events are coordinated through membership communications to ensure coherency, consistency and the highest standards of professionalism.

In 2023, divisional conferences were a priority focus for the team, as well as supporting divisions with ballots and industrial relations, through the production of information tools such as 'Frequently Asked Questions', leaflets, and emails to members.

To empower branches, activists, and members, Fórsa has started to develop 'toolkits' that include templates, posters, leaflets, and guides. To date, an AGM toolkit and Public Sector Pay Agreement Ballot toolkit have been created and have proved popular among members.

Video is becoming an increasingly important part of the union's communications work. Producing high quality videos allows Fórsa to communicate effectively to a mass audience, using storytelling to demonstrate the collective power of Fórsa's members.

Media relations

The union continues to develop its position in national media as an authoritative voice on industrial relations, public services, collective bargaining and a wide range of social issues.

Between 2022 and 2024 the union led on extensive media coverage on a wide range of issues, including public service pay talks, the community and voluntary dispute in health, the HSE recruitment freeze, local authorities job evaluation dispute and developments in the aviation sector.

Fórsa is regarded as a trusted source and welcome contributor by national and local media outlets, with daily engagement and regular coverage in national media and a growing presence in regional print and broadcast media.

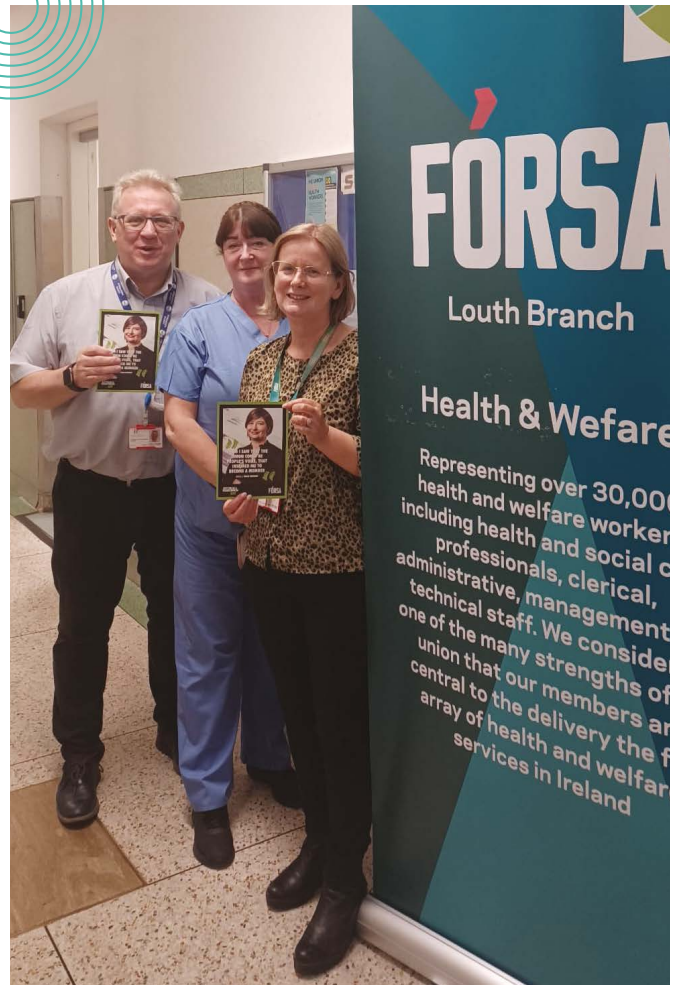
Aligning with Fórsa’s strategic plan, the union plans to continue the development of boosting local media relations activity, working with branches regionally to create media content and establish local representative voices in the media, to grow its presence in media opinion pages and radio panel discussions, and to increase the national media presence of senior and elected officials of the union.

Campaigns Unit

In 2024, Grace Williams assumed acting responsibility as Fórsa’s Director of Campaigns while Kevin Donoghue is on career break, and is supported by the work of policy and research officer Aisling Cusack.

Among the projects currently in development, supplemental research to the TASC 2022 report is currently underway, examining the physical operating capacity of the public service and civil service in Ireland, compared to other European countries similar in population size.

In 2023, the campaigns unit drafted an application for funding under the shared island programme. The application was successful, and a joint Fórsa/ Unison health conference took place in January 2024.



Louth Branch.

A report on the remunicipalisation of waste services in Dublin City Council was commissioned in 2022 and published in April 2023 (see the Local Government and Local Services and also the Municipal division sections of this document), exploring the current set of waste services in Dublin City, and made recommendations on how to improve waste service provision.

The *Stop the Stigma* campaign commenced in 2023 after survey results from Fórsa membership in May of 2022 revealed that over 95% of respondents were in favour of implementing menopause and menstruation friendly workplace policies to better manage the often-severe symptoms associated with periods and menopause.

Fórsa has since developed its own workplace policy template and is and is working with the Financial Services Union (FSU) on a digital awareness campaign which functions as an information, research, and recruitment tool.

Better in a Trade Union

The *Better In a Trade Union* campaign is an ambitious all-island initiative which aims to ensure that all working people are aware of the benefits of being members of a trade union.

Created by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the campaign features real trade union members and working people talking about the benefits of trade union membership, in their own words. The campaign seeks to profile the diverse nature of trade unions in Ireland, and their members.

Fórsa has been involved in the campaign throughout its development and implementation. Fórsa members Isabella De Luca and Chris Crowley were featured in video and print ads, and promotional activities.

Initially launched in February 2024 with events in Dublin and Belfast, the campaign then ran throughout March and April before culminating with Trade Union Week, a celebration of workers and May Day, which took place from 29th April to 5th May 2024.

Trade Union Week provided an opportunity to recruit new members and encourage participation and activism amongst current members. Kicking off the festivities with a bang, Bohemian Football Club lined out in a jersey emblazoned with the Better in a Trade Union tagline when they played Dundalk FC in Oriel Park on Friday 26th April.

Over 60 Fórsa branches around the country hosted events during Trade Union Week in May 2024, from joint coffee mornings with SIPTU and the INMO, to historical lectures, table quizzes and a panel discussion organised by Fórsa's Youth Network.

Co-branded Fórsa and Better in a Trade Union materials were developed and delivered to branches hosting events. Our members organised events in hospitals, schools, offices, and colleges. These events celebrated the on the ground organising done in workplaces by members and the strength of Fórsa members.

Data protection

Data protection training continued for staff and activists, including the preparation of a data protection training booklet for the union's Training Skills Academy.

Several data protection risk assessments (DPIAs) were carried out. Work continues putting policies and procedures in place to ensure that Fórsa meets its obligations under data protection legislation and that the data records held are safe, secure and used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The cyber security group meets regularly and a group to consider AI (artificial intelligence) is being established. Several data subjects access requests and a small number of the 'right of erasure' were received and processed over the period in review. A data protection section of the [Fórsa website](#) has been established with training videos and data protection guides.

Equality Committee

Following the union's biennial conference, the Equality Committee hosted a seminar on 9th November 2022. The seminar was well attended by branches and Fórsa launched the results of a survey on domestic violence supports. The survey clearly calls on all employers to provide more to support victims of domestic abuse. The union presented these findings to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, who attended the Fórsa seminar.

The introduction of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022) included a new workers' right to paid leave for victims of domestic violence. However, the new law only provides for five statutory days of domestic violence. The union will continue to campaign until 10 days is achieved, a measure supported by Women's Aid and international research.

The November 2022 seminar also took the opportunity to review the development of trade union support to the LGBTQIA+ community, and Fórsa will host a fringe event at this year's conference, at which we hope to relaunch a Fórsa committee.

Over the last two years Fórsa has led the trade union movement and worked with colleagues to launch the "Stop the Stigma" campaign. Fórsa representatives met with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to discuss the union's campaign survey, and

expressed his intention to commission research in a bid to “make the workplace a better place for those who are experiencing menopause or experiencing significant menstrual symptoms.” The minister has also publicly credited Fórsa for its work in this area.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the work of member activist Ms. Margaret Coughlan who chairs the ICTU women’s committee, and which is well represented by members from Fórsa.

International

Affiliations

Fórsa is affiliated to, and plays an active role in, the following international trade union federations: Public Services International (PSI), the European Federation of Public Service Trade Unions (EPSU), the International Transport Federation (ITF), the European Transport Federation (ETF), and Uni Global Union.

Fórsa is also one of the active international trade union affiliates of the Justice for Colombia (JfC) campaign. JfC was set up in 2002 by the trade union movement to support Colombian civil society in its struggle for human rights, labour rights, peace, and social justice.

Fórsa plays a leading role in Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUF). Established by ICTU in 2007, the group works within the trade union movement to educate members and highlight the injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people, to promote further policy motions to help address Israeli human rights abuses, and to mobilise solidarity activity.

Fórsa in action

Fórsa’s Developing World Fund provides ongoing support to education, development, and human rights projects across the globe. Funded by 3% of every member’s union subscription, the Fórsa Developing World Fund gives over €600,000 a year to projects around the world, allowing the union to make ongoing contributions to human rights and development, as well as responding to humanitarian emergencies.

Since 2022, organisations including Self Help Africa, Concern Worldwide, Turkey/Syria ITUC Emergency Appeal, Vita Ireland, Justice for Columbia, the Irish Red Cross, UNICEF, PSI International projects and Tír nan Óg Childrens Foundation have been supported through this fund. In the period 2022 and 2023 Fórsa supported international solidarity projects with over €1.3 million in funding.

Fórsa Gaza appeal

Fórsa has donated €100,000 to UNICEF’s Gaza Crisis Emergency Fund, with proceeds helping to provide humanitarian relief to the Palestinian people following Israel’s ongoing war and continued bombardment of Gaza.

The donation was made following a meeting of the union’s National Executive Committee (NEC) in November 2023 as part of the urgent humanitarian appeal. In addition, branches and members raised a further €32,000 for the UNICEF appeal. UNICEF Executive Director Peter Power has said that these funds will allow the organisation’s global logistics supply chain to scale up operations on the ground in support of the team inside Gaza.

With Fórsa’s support, UNICEF has been able to transport significant humanitarian assistance to Egypt for onward delivery through the Rafah border crossing. UNICEF’s efforts, including eleven airlifts, have been among the first deliveries to pass through Rafah, reaching those in need with unprecedented speed. The funding has also contributed to UNICEF providing clean and safe water, hygiene dignity, tents and bedding, medicines, and food to the people of Gaza.

Since November 2023, Fórsa has participated in weekly demonstrations across the country, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The union continues to monitor the devastating humanitarian impact of the war on the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Pay and related

Public service pay

Extension of Building Momentum

Addressing the PDForra conference in October 2021, Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said maintaining living standards against a background of rising living costs would be the priority in pay negotiations for a successor agreement to Building Momentum. He said if the return of inflation was sustained over time, there would be a renewed focus on the cost of living in negotiations.

Fórsa continued its focus on cost-of-living pressures at its biennial delegate conference in May 2022. Inflation, by this time, had exceeded what had been projected when the Building Momentum agreement was negotiated in late 2020.

With the agreement also due to expire at the end of 2022, Fórsa said talks on a successor agreement would need to prioritise the restoration and improvement of living standards in the context of high inflation.

Kevin Callinan maintained his call for decisive Government action to protect living standards, and to ensure the public service could compete in a tight labour market: “We need to act now to stabilise the current public service agreement, which is essential to certainty in public service delivery, industrial relations, and public finances.”

As talks on the review of Building Momentum got underway in June 2022, the initial efforts indicated a significant distance between unions, represented by the ICTU Public Services Committee (PSC) and Government representatives.

By late June, the process had stalled. The PSC, chaired by Kevin Callinan, said the Government’s initial pay offer – an additional increase of just 2.5% for the (2021-2022) period, when inflation was expected to be at least 9% over that period – could not credibly be put to ballot while low and middle-income workers struggled with soaring prices. Unions told the WRC that an improved offer was necessary to make further talks on public service pay worthwhile.

The then Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar, said the Government wanted to reengage in the WRC-brokered talks, and that it was prepared to make a further offer. However, no further developments took place until mid-August, when unions announced they were preparing industrial action ballots in a coordinated campaign for improved pay terms in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

The pay talks process resumed at the WRC after a ten-week hiatus, during which the Government said it was reflecting on its position. Unions indicated they would engage positively in the process and were prepared to be flexible. Kevin Callinan restated his position that a significantly improved pay offer from the Government side was essential to any progress.

Progress was swift. By the beginning of September, Fórsa’s elected national executive (NEC) met to consider the details of new WRC pay proposals, engaging in a constructive debate that strongly acknowledged the financial realities facing working people across the economy, as well as their fears for the future.

The NEC subsequently recommended the WRC-proposed public service pay package – an extension of the Building Momentum Public Service Agreement – in a ballot of union members.

The main provisions of the deal were:

- Increases of 3% with effect (backdated) from 2nd February 2022
- An increase of 2% from 1st March 2023
- An increase of 1.5% or €750 (whichever is the greater) from 1st October 2023.

These measures were in addition to 1% or €500, whichever is greater, which fell due in October 2022 under the Building Momentum agreement.

The minimum payment of €750 a year from October 2022 meant the package was of greater value to workers on lower incomes. The payment was worth 8% to a worker earning €25,000 a year and 7% to a person on €37,500 a year.

While neither side achieved all it sought in the negotiations, the revised package was a significant improvement on the pay terms of the Building Momentum agreement, and worth more to those who needed it most. Kevin Callinan commented that Government pledges to supplement pay measures with other cost-of-living supports in Budget 2023 would influence the outcome of the vote.

At the September 2022 meeting of the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF), unions made a strong case for the need for very substantial assistance to help all workers, including public servants, cope with the cost-of-living crisis. These representations were later acknowledged, by Transport Minister Eamon Ryan, as a significant influence on the Government’s budgetary approach.

Budget 2023 included a series of short-term measures to help people with the cost of living, including electricity credits, increased social welfare payments and a series of once-off payments.

Fórsa members backed the extension of Building Momentum in an electronic ballot by a significant margin (91.3%) on a strong turnout (67%). Kevin Callinan said the result was a strong statement of support for the pay deal, worth 6.5% in addition to existing Building Momentum pay adjustments, with better increases for lower paid workers.

Fórsa’s endorsement of the package meant the union supported ratification of the pay measures at a meeting of the ICTU Public Services Committee (PSC) on 7th October 2022. The revised pay deal would expire at the end of 2023, which meant that pay talks on a successor would need to take place before the end of that year.

Negotiating a new public service agreement

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan, in an address to INTO conference delegates in April 2023, said that unions would concentrate on key cost-of-living issues during pay talks on a successor to Building Momentum, including the need to “make good the shortfall in pay against inflation” during the remaining term of the pay agreement, acknowledging that the review didn’t fully compensate for the rate of inflation, which averaged 8% over 2022.

With the extension of Building Momentum due to expire at the end of 2023, talks on a successor agreement were expected to take place in the latter half of the year.

Other union considerations included the effect of the cessation of Government cost-of-living measures and supports, and anticipated cost-of-living projections over the period of any agreement.

Unions said any consequential shortfall would have to be made good in wage bargaining across the economy, noting that the European Central Bank (ECB) had identified excessive company profits as a bigger driver of inflation than wage demand.



Limerick Health & Welfare Branch at St Joseph’s Hospital.

Kevin Callinan noted that while many commentators were quick to try to dampen wage demands with warnings of a “wage-price spiral”, working people could see through those arguments, particularly when they continued to experience “obvious price-gouging.” He said there could be no sustainable case for wage moderation in any sector while inflation continued to be driven by excessive company profits.

A survey of Fórsa members – commissioned by Fórsa and conducted by Amárach research in the second half of April 2023 – revealed very strong support for the union to pursue inflation-matching pay increases, based on completed responses from more than 20,000 members nationwide.

More than 80% of respondents said it was ‘very important’ that pay negotiations secure increases that match inflation, and this response was especially high (90%) among younger workers. A clear majority were in favour of Fórsa organising a ballot for industrial action if negotiated increases were below the rate of inflation. The survey recorded a higher level of support for an industrial action ballot among younger Fórsa members.

Responding to the survey results, Kevin Callinan acknowledged that inflation continued to be very challenging for working people with food inflation remaining “stubbornly high,” and that the survey response provided a clear mandate for Fórsa.

Addressing the ICTU biennial conference in July 2023, Kevin Callinan said unions could not tolerate a situation where workers continued to bear a disproportionate share of the inflationary burden at a time of burgeoning corporate profits. He said Government and corporations possessed the resources to prevent the effective decline of worker incomes.

In September, as Budget 2024 approached and pay talks expected to get underway, inflation figures revealed that rising mortgage interest rates was a key factor in fuelling inflation and effectively eroding wages.

While Government parties speculated on the prospect of tax cuts in the budget, unions observed that any such measures would not make much of an impression on household incomes, and that inflation would quickly wipe out their value.

Kevin Callinan commented that mooted tax cuts would be particularly ineffective if the warnings about a possible fall in corporation tax receipts

were to be realised, meaning any cuts in income tax or USC would turn out to be temporary.

Responding to Budget 2024, Kevin noted: “Overall, the consensus is that the considerable budgetary adjustment was spread widely without making the kind of transformative impact that could have been possible. And some elements, such as the tax break for landlords, were simply regressive.

“At the conclusion of his speech Minister Paschal Donohoe alluded to the upcoming public service pay talks expressing the hope that the various measures announced in the budget would be reflected in union demands.

“He didn’t refer to the significant shortfall in wages against inflation over the 2021 to 2023 period or to the fact that in his budget speech last year he began by raising his department’s estimates for 2023 inflation from 3% to 7.1%.

“It is likely to turn out to be nearer the higher figure (the annual average rate of inflation in 2023 was +6.3%). Importantly, he didn’t acknowledge that many of the budgetary measures are temporary in nature while the increase in the overall level of prices almost certainly is not.”

Union priorities

In late September, the ICTU’s Public Services Committee (PSC) set out its priorities for the anticipated round of public service pay talks, setting its sights on securing appropriate pay measures in response to continuing cost-of-living pressures on working families.

The PSC also focused on stabilising public pay agreements, following an inconclusive process of engagement on Building Momentum’s commitment to address outstanding issues affecting several public service grades, groups and categories. This, unions said, was essential if a successor to Building Momentum was to commence with a solid foundation.

Another priority of the PSC was to normalise public service industrial relations – and to move on from a process of industrial relations shaped by the response to the 2009 financial crisis – by gaining appropriate access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court, and to ensure the final dismantling of remaining pieces of FEMPI legislation.

Unions also prioritised the pursuit of measures to ensure the 'futureproofing' of quality public services and public service employment. With the population of the State having just exceeded five million people, unions said it was vital to ensure the State could continue to build and maintain quality public services designed to respond to people's needs.

An invitation to pay talks was eventually issued to unions in mid-November. The 19 unions affiliated to the PSC agreed that a multi-year agreement would only be possible if the Government made a commitment to repealing the remaining elements of FEMPI. Kevin Callinan noted the comments, made by the Minister for Public Expenditure in his invitation, that an agreement had the potential to provide certainty and stability in a 'normalised industrial relations environment.'

Kevin said normalising industrial relations would mean dismantling the remaining elements of FEMPI, which continued to excessively centralise control in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which was stopping ordinary industrial relations progressing, even in the event of agreement between employers and unions.

He added that a multi-year agreement could only be achieved in this context, and that any new deal must provide scope for local bargaining: "Multi-annual deals provide a high degree of cost certainty, and stability, for the government. While we're willing to consider such a deal, we made it clear months ago that any deal would need to contain sufficient flexibility to address issues affecting specific groups of workers," he said.

With a short window of opportunity to negotiate, and Public Expenditure Minister Paschal Donohoe claiming to be unaware of any practical impact that FEMPI was having on the conduct of normal industrial relations in the public service, the PSC said it would concentrate on trying to reach agreement on short-term pay measures to address cost-of-living and labour market pressures.

By mid-December, Fórsa and other unions expressed concern about the slow pace of talks, despite nine separate engagements over three weeks. Despite the slow pace of talks, unions had nevertheless secured a commitment on the repeal of FEMPI, in the context of a multi-year pay deal.

Kevin Callinan commented that the commitment on FEMPI represented an opportunity for unions to operate in an environment no longer bound by

emergency measures, but that the intent of any draft legislation to deliver this needed to be clear.

Pay talks adjourned on 20th December, and the Building Momentum agreement expired on 31st December, without a successor agreement in place.

Public Service Agreement 2024-2026

Talks resumed on 9th January 2024. Unions reported progress on several key non-pay issues before the focus of talks shifted to pay. Despite initial optimism that the talks might progress quickly, unions were alarmed at the Government's opening offer, which it described as 'derisory.'

A revised offer was still viewed by union negotiators as lacking credibility, as it would have provided little more than an average of just €5 per week, before deductions, in the wages of low-income public service workers in the first year, with no payments scheduled prior to June 2024.

Unions expressed concern that the Government's initial pay offering illustrated its lack of preparedness to complete a sustainable multi-year pay deal. The talks adjourned to allow time for reflection on the Government side.

In a note to Fórsa members Kevin Callinan said: "Public sector workers show up for our country and our citizens every day. They deserve to be treated with respect and an offer like this is neither fair, nor credible."

"The Government has effectively undermined its own approach to negotiating a multi-year public service pay agreement. There have been months of delays, and they have allowed Building Momentum to lapse, which puts us in an unprecedented position."

In the same week the officers of the PSC met with affiliate and non-affiliated unions and associations. At these meetings ballot wording was approved so that unions were ready to ballot members for industrial action should it become necessary.

Talks resumed on 25th January and continued for almost 22 hours at the WRC. On Friday 26th January, the officers of the PSC briefed the 19 affiliate unions on the terms of the new public sector pay agreement, advising that the pay terms of the new agreement, valued at 10.25% over 2.5 years, represented the "absolute maximum achievable" through negotiations, and the outcome of a challenging negotiations process.

The new agreement is set to run from 1st January 2024 to 30th June 2026. The balloting period for the unions extended until 25th March 2024, to provide adequate time for all unions to consider the terms of the new agreement and to ballot their members.

Union negotiators said the new pay provisions would, as unions had sought, deliver more for lower paid workers, providing pay improvements worth up to 17.3% for lower paid workers, while improvements in the pay adjustments due in 2024 - valued at 4.25% for the year - would mean that public service workers would receive more money in the first year than originally envisaged in the Government's initial pay offer, providing a noticeable difference in pay at a time when workers were still feeling the impact of three consecutive years of inflation.

Local bargaining

The agreement also provides for the implementation of several outstanding Labour Court recommendations, as well as provisions for local bargaining, allowing trade unions to negotiate up to an additional 3% of pay costs, inclusive of allowances, for particular grades, groups or categories of employee.

Detailed arrangements for local bargaining are to be agreed by the 30th of June 2024, with local negotiations to take place between July 2024 and June 2025, and agreements secured, to the greatest extent possible, through direct negotiations.

The deal provides for the following pay terms over the duration of the agreement:

2024

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 2.25% or €1,125, whichever is greater, from 1st January 2024
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st June 2024
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on 1st October 2024.

2025

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 2% or €1,000, whichever is greater, on 1st March 2025
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st August 2025
- The first phase of local bargaining, equivalent to 1% of payroll cost, on 1st September 2025

2026

- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on 1st February 2026
- A general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% on 1st June 2026.

The union's National Executive Committee (NEC) unanimously recommended acceptance of the terms of the deal in the ballot, and arrangements were made for a series of online and in-person information meetings, about the new agreement, for members. Fórsa commenced a ballot on the new public sector pay deal in February 2024.

Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said union members ultimately decide whether to back the new agreement through the national ballot: "Fórsa is a member-led organisation and, in all matters of policy, it is the members who have the last word.

"The union's executive backed the terms of the deal, and its recommendation is based on the understanding that the pay terms represent the absolute maximum achievable through negotiations at this time, and that it is the outcome of a challenging negotiations process," he said.

The Fórsa ballot concluded on 15th March 2024, with members backing the new public service pay deal in a ballot which saw more than 52,729 members voting on the new pay terms. In total, 94% of members voted in favour of the deal, in a turnout of 67.3%.

On Monday 25th March, the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) announced it had ratified the new public

service pay agreement following the aggregation of ballots by the 19 affiliated unions, most of whom had returned ballots of their members with sizable majorities in favour of the new pay agreement.

PSC chair and Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said the new agreement marks the end of an era of industrial relations conducted under the terms of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation, which was introduced during the financial crash in 2009.

He added: “Unions had sought the full and final unwinding of the legislation in these negotiations to re-establish normal industrial relations. This agreement also provides specific provisions for local bargaining. In both respects we’ve established a unique pay agreement, while ensuring the maximisation of benefits for public servants in the early phase.”

The full text of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 is available to download [here](#).

Pensions

During negotiations on the latest agreement, union negotiators secured a commitment that the pay increases would be applied to public service pensions for the duration of the agreement. In the main, this means that pension payments will be adjusted in line with pay adjustments for serving staff.

Pensions are adjusted in line with inflation (the Consumer Price Index, or CPI) in the case of the single public service pension scheme, which applies to all civil and public servants who entered public service employment on or after 1st January 2013. This means that the pensions of members of this scheme are not affected by pay movements, including those in the proposed agreement.

The principle of pay parity under pre-existing pension schemes has been agreed for the lifetime on the new Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. The lump sums of people who retired on or after 1st January 2024 should also be revised by reference to the adjustments of basic pay as appropriate.



Kildare Health Branch.

Travel and subsistence

Revised rates for work-related travel and subsistence took effect from 1st September 2022. They include changes to the standard domestic subsistence rates, overnight and day subsistence rates. Full details are available on the [Fórsa](#) and [Revenue](#) websites.

A further update to Domestic Subsistence Allowances was introduced with effect from 14th of December 2023. Full details are available [here](#).

Community and voluntary sector pay

Fórsa's campaign for pay parity for members working in Section 39, 56 and Section 10 organisations continued throughout 2023, in cooperation with INMO and SIPTU colleagues.

In January 2023, Fórsa's National Executive Committee took the decision to ballot for indefinite industrial action in a number of employments, with the union ready to foot the wage costs of striking staff. Unions served fresh pay claims on a number of employer organisations.

The parties engaged in WRC-facilitated talks between April and July 2023. However, a proposal in July – for a five per cent increase from January 2024, and a commitment to have further talks about future pay arrangements following any successor to the Building Momentum agreement (due to expire at the end of 2023) – fell short of what could be considered acceptable, and the talks broke down.

Unions had sought full terms of the Building Momentum agreement (9.5%) and a process that would ultimately seek to restore the link to public service pay in the future, citing this as the means to overcome the significant recruitment and retention challenge within the community and voluntary sector services affected by this dispute.

A ballot for industrial action took place in August and September, with overwhelming support from union members to take strike action in pursuit of pay equality. The union served notice on employers. Indefinite strike action was set to commence on 17th October. Preparations got underway, supported by a comprehensive media strategy.

On the eve of strike action, unions were invited to attend the WRC. Following lengthy talks unions secured an interim agreement. Strike action was suspended to allow for consultation on the new set of WRC proposals, which were put to a ballot of members.

The proposals meant members will receive the following pay adjustments:

- An increase of 3% backdated to 1st April 2023
- An increase of 2% from 1st November 2023
- An increase of 3% from 1st March 2024

A ballot, concluded in November 2023, won strong backing and the union immediately sought a timeline for payments from the funding bodies. Some payments were made prior to Christmas 2023, with most funding made available in January 2024.

The union regards this campaign as ongoing, and outstanding issues remain, including 1.5% from the terms of Building Momentum. Following the conclusion of public service pay talks in January, and dependent on the terms agreed, Fórsa will seek further engagement throughout 2024 to achieve pay equality for members in the community and voluntary sectors.

Statutory sick leave

The Commencement Order for the Sick Leave Act 2022 was signed in November 2022, creating a new entitlement to paid sick leave from an employer and which came into effect on 1st January 2023. The legislation followed a campaign by the ICTU for legislation to make sick pay mandatory, which won cross-party support and widespread public support.

Previously, no legal right existed to be paid while someone is on sick leave from work, meaning that half of the workforce, over one million workers, were not covered for paid sick leave in their terms and conditions.

Most Fórsa members are already covered by the public service sick pay scheme, while the new scheme will see many Fórsa members working in the private sector afforded greater protection.

From 1st January 2023, workers have a right to:

- Paid sick leave for up to three sick days per year, increasing to five days in 2024, seven days in 2025 and 10 days in 2026
- A rate of payment for statutory sick leave of 70% of normal wages to be paid by employers (up to a maximum €110 per day)
- Take a complaint to the WRC where they are not provided with a company sick pay scheme.

To be entitled to paid sick leave under the new scheme, an employee must be working for an employer for at least 13 weeks and will also need to be certified by a GP as unfit to work.

The legislation sets out the minimum standard that an employer must provide but does not prevent employers having superior sick pay schemes of their own to attract and retain staff, or on foot of an agreement with a trade union.

Improving workers' rights

The Irish economy currently has a record number of workers (2.7m). The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) continues its call for improvements to working conditions in Ireland, underpinned by the No Going Back strategy (2020) Congress's forthcoming New Economic Model document in 2025.

In March 2024, Congress published its *Challenging myths and improving working conditions in a strong economy* document as employer groups sought to push back on reforms to the National Minimum Wage, statutory sick leave and pension auto-enrolment plans.

The Congress document challenges some of the arguments put forward by some business groups, which are regarded by unions as largely weak and occasionally false.

Many of the recent government reforms, such as new statutory sick leave entitlements, merely bring the Irish workplace into line with European peers, while some sectors pushing back hard against reforms, such as hospitality and retail, have experienced real employment growth between 2023 and 2024.

The extent of business failures continues to be exaggerated by employer groups, while employers in Ireland pay about half of what their peers in other wealthy European countries pay in terms of taxes on labour.

Congress argues that part of the solution to sector specific challenges are within reach, including the "transformative potential" of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive, which the government must transpose into law before mid-November this year. This directive requires the state to promote collective bargaining and to facilitate the right to exercise collective bargaining.

Social dialogue

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions continues to engage at the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF). ICTU is led in the LEEF engagements by Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan as ICTU president until July 2023, and has continued as a trade union nominee since then. The LEEF meets approximately four times a year and brings together senior Government, trade union and employer representatives to discuss economic, employment and labour market issues.

As cost-of-living pressures mounted in 2022, unions made a strong case at the September 2022 LEEF meeting for the need for very substantial assistance to help all workers, including public servants, cope with the cost-of-living crisis. Unions highlighted the real risk of energy poverty for workers, including those who rely on social welfare benefits.

Employer representatives at the LEEF also supported very significant government intervention to assist households and businesses, and called for a huge fiscal response utilising buoyant exchequer finances. Unions noted that the Government was moving toward a similar viewpoint, indicating its intention to introduce a further range of 'cost-of-living' measures, which were introduced in Budget 2023 last September.

Fórsa continues to advocate for the State to strengthen its support for social dialogue between Government, unions, employers, communities and civil society organisations, in order to meet the range of challenges facing the country, including the housing crisis, climate response, childcare and education.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap (GPG) is the difference between the average hourly wages of women and men. A gender pay gap will exist if the majority of lower-paid jobs in an organisation are carried out by women and the higher-paid roles are carried out by men.

The Eurostat data for 2019 put the gender pay gap in Ireland at 11.3%, with an EU average of 13%. Gender pay gap reporting is one of several mechanisms for achieving equal pay. It ensures that there is transparency in pay and bonus systems.

Fórsa has campaigned with ICTU, and independently, for effective legislation on gender pay gap reporting, and welcomed the Government's introduction in 2022 of the obligation on employers with more than 250 staff to report on their gender pay gap. The union also called for a rapid expansion of the number of companies covered.

The Gender Pay Gap Information Act was implemented in 2022 and sets out employers' obligations on gender pay gap reporting. In October 2023, it was reported that Ireland's gender pay gap (GPG) is 9.6%, according to the CSO's Structure of Earnings Survey 2022 (Industrial Relations News issue 37 - 19/10/2023).

For more see the ICTU document [Guide to Gender Pay Gap audits](#).



St Joseph's School Tallaght.

Working conditions

Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022)

The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022) was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 29th March 2023. The Government's draft legislation, published in June 2022, attracted huge criticism from Fórsa and other unions, as well as labour law experts and others.

The revised legislation followed extensive work by the cross-union 'Make Remote Work!' campaigning group. Congress welcomed the Government delivering on its commitment to a new workers' right to request remote work.

The Bill introduces a new workers' right to paid leave for victims of domestic violence and new rights for workers requesting remote work, both of which ICTU and affiliated unions campaigned for. The legislation includes improvements to support working parents and carers balance paid work with family care.

Domestic Violence leave

Fórsa's conference in May 2022 unanimously backed a conference motion for statutory leave for victims of domestic violence. The conference motion committed the union to actively campaign for an effective statutory entitlement.

As the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022), which included provision for domestic violence leave, made its way through the legislative process, Fórsa supported the call by Womens' Aid to include ten days of fully paid leave. This is widely considered to be best practice.

However, the legislation only provides for five days of domestic violence leave. Fórsa wrote directly to the Minister in February 2023, urging him to consider positions on this expressed by several senators at the Seanad Committee Stage debate in January. Fórsa has committed to working with other trade unions to collectively bargain to secure 10 days paid leave for workers who need to avail of domestic violence leave.

Childcare

Responding to the Budget in September 2022, Fórsa said the future of the Irish workplace is being shaped by how working families with young children are forced to weigh the cost of childcare against entering or returning to the workplace.

The union acknowledged that the 25% cut in childcare costs announced in the Budget 2023 would help many families but said many would still be left with "near impossible" choices about the offset of childcare costs against work.

The existing deficit in childcare, a problem which the State has lagged on for several decades, needs more than a temporary crisis intervention. It demands a permanent and radical solution, such as a fully publicly funded universal system.

Failure to tackle childcare comprehensively means a significant block remains to many parents, usually mothers, hoping to enter the workforce or to return to work after having children.

Civil Service

Divisional strategy

The Civil Service divisional conference in May 2023 adopted the divisional strategy 2023 to 2025. The strategy complements the Fórsa strategic plan 2021-2025 and contains three key themes:

- Recruitment and organising
- Industrial relations and policy
- Enhanced communications.

One year on, several action points contained in the strategy have either been delivered or are advancing positively. In recent months, recruitment numbers within the division have risen considerably. Consolidation of branches within Revenue and the Department of Social Protection has occurred and there are more plans for further consolidation initiatives.

The quest to restore the Civil Service as leaders in the field of policies of excellence has moved positively. Despite initial reluctance from DPENDR (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery, and Reform), policies on menopausal welfare and provision of supports for domestic violence were introduced. The policy on domestic violence supports, while an excellent policy, is underwhelming in respect of the number of leave days provided and the staff side has lodged a claim to increase this number based on comparator policies within the employment market. A mid-term review of the strategy is now underway.

Access to the state industrial relations (WRC/Labour Court)

The staff panel of unions took a decision in 2014 to seek access to the state's industrial relations mechanisms. Although exploratory discussions took place at that stage with DPENDR, no real progress was made, except for the drafting, by the staff side, of a new proposed internal disputes resolution procedure, which would be utilised as a mechanism for resolving disputes within the workplace. In autumn 2022, the staff panel re-

iterated its determination to attain access to the WRC and Labour Court, and the union tabled this resolve, in addition to the proposal on internal dispute resolution processes at the General Council in September 2022.

There are two principal reasons why the unions took this course of action. Firstly, the staff panel of unions firmly believes that the General Council and Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme are outmoded, not agile enough to resolve disputes in a timely manner and, that the processes therein, are heavily weighted in favour of the employer. Secondly, the unions believe that the denial of access for civil servants to the industrial relations processes provided by the state is a clear denial of workers' rights, leading to an environment where it becomes increasingly difficult to resolve any trade dispute. Workers across the public sector are not denied such rights.

In the absence of a response by the official side to what had been tabled in September 2022, the staff side indicated its intention to consider withdrawing from General Council. In January 2023, DPENDR explained that a legislative change was required regarding the legal definition of a worker in the context of the Civil Service. Although the staff side has never accepted this, rather than become embroiled and bogged down in a battle of legal variance, the staff side decided that it would push the official side to clarify what steps were being taken to remove this legal obstacle. In addition, the staff side formally stated its intention to consider whether to continue to participate at General Council.

Following direct exploratory discussions with DPENDR in July 2023 it became clear that the official side did not favour a move to the state's industrial relations mechanisms. Discussions commenced on an overhaul of the Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme, which would afford civil service workers the same standard of dispute resolution as those who have access to the processes provided by the state. This includes a new dispute resolution process which would be facilitated by officers of the WRC, and adjudication and arbitration processes which would have the same time efficiency as the state industrial relations processes. Furthermore, an overhaul of the Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme would need to include a fair and efficient grievance procedure.

The staff side has proposed a model to the official side and the union is awaiting a response on whether DPENDR will agree to this. Failure to reach agreement on this proposal will again result in staff side consideration on the matter of continued participation at General Council.

Department of Education

A Blended Working policy has been negotiated and agreed in the department which provides for three days working from home and two in the office subject to review. The department will not agree to full flexi in a blended working context. However, Fórsa will continue to seek same as a priority for members.

An executive officer (EO) competition was held in the Department of Education for the first time in a long number of years, as liabilities had built up over a considerable period of time. An internal AP competition took place in 2023 and a live extended HEO panel is in place. Higher clerical scales have been reviewed and awarded satisfactorily up to the end of 2023.

Fórsa had sought statistical data on contract workers in the department for some time and eventually received some details in 2023. While some of the numbers weren't surprising there was an unacceptable number of contract workers identified in ESBS in Blanchardstown in the payroll/pensions area. A total of 35 people. The union has sought further details and will be pursuing the cessation of contracts as soon as possible.

Fórsa secured agreement, in principle, for the reintroduction of the 1% PCW allowance for P&T grades across all DoE areas and awaits further discussions.

Department of Further Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

A Blended Working policy has been established and agreed in the department which provides for three days working from home/two in the office, subject to review. The department will not agree to full flexi in a blended working context however, Fórsa continues to seek this as a priority for members.

DFHERIS continues to grow as a department and are currently staffed with:

- 24 x Principal Officers (POs)
- 57 x Assistant Principals (APs)
- 19 x Administrative Officers (AOs)
- 50 x Higher Executive Officers (HEOs),
- 55 x Executive Officers (Eos)
- 20 x Clerical Officers (COs)

The union continues to seek to have all units staffed with permanent civil servants. The Audit Unit has proved difficult but union representatives continue to work through issues with the department.

The professional and technical grades in the DoE and DFHERIS are anxious to engage with the department with a view to establishing one team which will work on projects in both departments and will be staffed efficiently.

State Examinations Commission (SEC)

Fórsa's examination and assessment manager (EAM) grades have ongoing concerns in respect of the interpretation by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) of the Memorandum of Understanding that established the SEC in terms of the ratio of EAMs to seniors. Fórsa awaits a disagreed report from Departmental Council so that the union can pursue this.

The SEC was more than reluctant to agree a Blended Working policy and, following months of engagement Fórsa was not in a position to sign off on the proposals as they were extremely restrictive in nature. The proposal sets out a provision for one day working-from-home for approximately six months of the year with a ban on working from home for the other six months of the year. It has been implemented and is subject to review.

Expressions of interest messages issued in February for 'packing' in 2024. The director of operations will be engaging with line managers about the release of staff within each section, as has been the annual practice for this process.

The admin staff involved in the packing process receive 'Saoire Cúiteamh' days which are issued pro-rata, depending on the time they spend in packing, with a maximum of four days. They also work a shorter day, are not on flexi for the duration of the packing and are compensated on the clock with one hour nine minutes per day. They work four hours overtime per night.

Members are reluctant to express interest in packing and there are mixed views as to whether release is an issue, but it remains of concern that this has led to the outsourcing of packing in the last number of years.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The NCSE has engaged Fórsa in a consultation process on a restructuring programme which has been a positive engagement to date.

The restructuring proposal splits the current role of the regional manager into policy roles and practical lead roles, managing team managers, SENOs (special education needs organisers), advisors, visiting teachers and therapists.

The policy roles will be staffed by existing staff (formerly regional managers, now national development leads) and the practical roles will be staffed by two new national coordinators. Fórsa is also seeing an increase in staffing levels in all grades which is a very welcome development.

The future of the Therapist grades is still a work in progress as they continue to await confirmation from the Department in terms of the permanency of the work on the SIM Project. As the structure of the organisation changes and develops into five pillars, the administration teams develop and increase in numbers.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The NEPS is also restructuring and splitting the role of regional directors into policy and practical work practice. It's proposed that the regions would change from eight regions to six, and that the roles of the regional directors be split in order to balance

the demands of both providing a high quality educational psychological service to all schools in Ireland, as well as meeting the demands of NEPS policy-related work with the department.

While there's no major objection to the restructuring programme, Fórsa members are keen to see equity across the regions in terms of staffing levels and reporting structures. There's an opportunity to put a robust reporting structure in place, for all admin grades, in each of the local offices and regional offices across the country.

The filling of vacancies and the increase in staffing levels and equitable structures are the key concerns for members.



Clerical Branch PSO Sligo.

Inspectorate

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced in November 2023 that the new First 5 Implementation Plan 2023-2025 includes the following actions:

- *“Bring together the functions carried out by Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate and the Department of Education (DE) Inspectorate’s Early Years team into a single body that provides integrated care and education inspections. The work of the new integrated body will be underpinned by the development of a single quality framework for Early Learning and Care.”*
- *“Develop a single, integrated quality framework for ELC to replace Síolta and the two existing inspection frameworks and to be used as the common reference framework for all inspection activities and for self-evaluation by ELC settings. This quality framework will integrate both structural and process quality, and will support providers to assess and enhance their own performance and service delivery along the quality spectrum, from regulatory compliance to excellence.”*
- *“Develop and use appropriate methods to take account of the views of children and parents in the inspection of ELC and SAC.”*

The department is currently drafting the Terms of Reference for two complementary steering groups that will commence these planning processes, with a view to the steering groups being established and holding their first meetings in Q1 2024. Milestones for the steering group on a single inspection body in 2024, include consultation with stakeholders (including unions) but no timeframe has been set for this yet.

Members still face uncertainty as to their future in the Civil Service, while both Primary & Early Years and the Post-Primary branches continue to work together in a positive way to bring about change, and to influence working practices within the Inspectorate.

National Shared Services Office (NSSO)

Fórsa negotiated a Blended Working policy, facilitating maximum flexibility, and in 2023 negotiated full flexi for blended working.

The NSSO is introducing shared workspaces, commencing with a pilot in Clonskeagh. The workstation sharing system will enable staff who avail of blended working to reserve a workspace in advance of attending the office. This will be dependent on the specific building layout and facilities in each location.

A proposed project to implement a streamlined, customer focussed NSSO pension service is anticipated shortly. The aim is to provide excellent, accurate, timely and accessible pensions services, via multiple channels, to the civil and public servants who are NSSO customers throughout their career and beyond retirement. Fórsa is currently assessing any IR implications and the branch will be engaging with members affected by the proposed changes.

Probation in the NSSO is currently managed by a performance improvement plan which approaches the subject in a negative context. It guides managers on what they need to do in respect of due process before deeming an officer to be satisfactory as opposed to a progressive approach in supporting a new recruit through the probation process in a positive way.

The union has indicated dissatisfaction with the approach and will seek to adopt changes to the current approach.

Fórsa has been working toward the streamlining of acting-up policy across all locations and is currently engaged with the NSSO on a draft policy. The union sought to remove a cap on overtime earnings in the NSSO which resulted in a new overtime policy document preventing managers from imposing a cap on earnings.

Staffing levels in the NSSO continue to be an issue as members face increasing difficulty in to complete tasks and duties in depleted teams. Recruitment, organisation and retention is a continued focus for the branch committee in the coming years.

Department of Social Protection (DSP)

There has been significant change in DSP over the past two years mainly driven by the consolidation of back-office functions, automation, the Ukrainian refugee response and the cost-of-living crisis. Fórsa has outlined the need for appropriate consultation in the context of the ratification of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, in advance of implementation of significant change.

Functional management structures

The fundamental change in management structures, from geographic-based to function-based, has led to a consolidation of many back-office functions. Line management may be located in other counties and, in some areas, access to some family-friendly policies has been restricted. The functional model led to the establishment of the National Processing Team (NPT), a virtual back-office Intreo Centre processing unit as well as the National Intreo Contact Centre (NICC), a virtual DSP contact centre.

Staff numbers in Intreo centres available to deal with customers face-to-face have reduced with the establishment of the NPT and NICC. Fórsa has sought additional staffing in customer facing Intreo centre roles and the implementation of an agreed template on staffing numbers. Fórsa members in a growing number of centres are facing lengthy queues, frustrated customers, restrictions on leave, work-related stress and in some cases unrealisable work output expectations.

National Intreo Contact Centre (NICC)

A pilot has been introduced in NICC where a mix of telephone-based, and non-telephone-based work, has been introduced in a small number of areas. Fórsa has sought that no more than 50% of work in the NICC be phone-based, in the interests of health and welfare. There are examples in DSP and in other departments where there is a successful mix of phone and other work. The union hopes that a successful pilot will allow for a greater work mix. Restrictions on flexi attendance in NICC has been flagged by Fórsa as a problem, as has the lack of

staff rotation to be facilitated under DSP staff mobility. Where there is a variety of work, feedback indicates improved work satisfaction and wellbeing, as opposed to the current practice of working exclusively via phones.

Longford Contact Centre

Members in DSP Longford are currently phone-bound throughout the working day. DSP staff on phones in all other locations, other than Longford, have access to blended working. Fórsa has sought a mix in work as well as access to blended working.

Ukrainian refugee and cost-of-living crisis

More than 105,000 Ukrainian refugees have received temporary protection orders in Ireland since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Fórsa members in DSP are providing supports to these and other refugees. Despite automation and back-office processing, there has been an increase in footfall in Intreo centres (ICs).

New financial supports are also available to people living in Ireland who are struggling to make ends meet due to significant cost of living increases. This has driven footfall to ICs and has put Fórsa members in IC, Community Welfare Officer (CWOs) and support staff in Community Welfare Services (CWS) under extreme pressure. While there has been sanction to increase staffing in DSP the increase in numbers, the grading of the staff, and appointment of temporary staff, remains inadequate to deal with the level of increased workload.

Digital self-service

Following an independent risk assessment, complementing a comprehensive internal DSP risk assessment, DSP staff are operating digital self-service on the floor in ICs on a voluntary basis. Fórsa has advised that co-operation with this new initiative will be kept under review, considering potential risks to members. Fórsa has also sought that DSP use technology to facilitate remote demonstrations carried out behind the protection of counters.

Grade appropriate work

A disagreed report is to be signed off, and the matter of grade appropriate work referred under the C&A scheme for third party adjudication. The technical report, published in 2007, outlined IC grade appropriate work. Two adjudication findings have noted that new technology has automated and simplified certain processes and that certain tasks are now appropriate to the CO grade. DSP is now requesting that COs carry out other work which is graded at a higher grade in the technical report and is appropriate to the EO grade. Fórsa raised grading of work in ad-hoc facilitated negotiations under the auspices of the WRC, in the context of the rollout of Front Office Back Office (FOBO). The matter of grading of work will now be assessed at adjudication/arbitration.

Community Welfare Services (CWS)

As part of the settlement of the dispute in Sligo over downgrading of CWS work – from HEO (CWO) to EO level – a review of the area was agreed to include staffing levels, grading of work, capacity and services to the public. CWO numbers have been more than halved since the CWS function transferred from the HSE.

This has led to the closure of CWS clinics as well as other outreach activities and home visits. The reduction in community-based services available to the public has driven increased footfall into ICs. Fórsa hopes that the review will give a framework to protect valuable CWS emergency services and will potentially lead to an increase in CWO numbers.

Discussions on the provision of an on-call allowance for CWO members, who make themselves available for out-of-hours work, have concluded with the proposals withdrawn. Fórsa noted that to expand the on-call work span would require additional CWOs.

EOI/HEOI claim

The Civil Service Adjudication process recommended in February 2024 that an allowance should be payable to our Executive Officer Inspector (EOI) members. This follows on from a lengthy process dating back to 2017 when PSEU lodged a claim for an upgrade of EOI posts to HEO level, on the basis that work was interchangeable.

The adjudicator recommended that an assessor be appointed to assess whether the posts should be upgraded to HEO level, should receive an allowance or the status quo be maintained. The Assessor, having carried out a thorough and comprehensive review, recommended an allowance with adjudication or arbitration deciding on the level of allowance. The adjudication recognised that an allowance should be paid and has referred the matter back to DSP and Fórsa to reach agreement on the quantum of allowance. Fórsa has sought a speedy resolution given the lengthy process to date.

Computer Operator shift changes

Recognition of ongoing additional working hours, following the reduction in the working day, remain outstanding. The absence of an agreement will lead to a referral to third party for resolution.

Public Employment Services (PES)

The introduction of an online appointment Public Employment Services (PES) for jobseekers was agreed following certain assurances, including use of discretion and work within catchment areas. Video appointments have facilitated a potential increase in remote working for PES staff but customer take-up remains low.

Blended working

Under an extended flexi pilot approximately 600 staff in DSP could accrue flexi while working remotely. The feedback from staff and management was that the facility to accrue flexi while working from home was positive and did not cause difficulties for the business.

Despite the positive feedback from the pilot, senior management made a decision to cease flexi accrual for staff when working from home and did not extend this facility to other staff. Fórsa has made a claim at General Council seeking the extension of flexi accrual to all on blended working, regardless of whether they are working from home or not. At present, all others on flexitime and participating in blended working in DSP can only accrue flexi when working in the office. Fórsa is seeking the extension of flexi accrual when working from home under blended working.

Since the end of January 2024, the number of DSP staff sanctioned for blended working is 4,206. This equates to 59% of the staff of the department, down from 60% in 2023. The number of days staff can avail of blended working has been restricted in 2024, with 124 fewer staff (4% less) having four days remote working than in 2023. The largest increase has been in staff working less than one day per week, which has increased by 402 staff (9% increase). Fórsa is seeking that members in the contact centre in Longford are given access to blended working.

Appeals Office

Fórsa forwarded its observations to DSP, in relation to proposed changes to the Appeals Office, as part of a public consultation process established by the department. The union awaits further engagement.

The public consultation process follows on from AHCPs and Fórsa forwarding a submission to the Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands on the operation of the Social Welfare Appeals Office, following proposed changes to the Social Welfare Appeals Regulations.

Fórsa's concerns related to the potential undermining of the independence of the Appeals Office, and changes to reporting and working relationships, which would also have had potential implications for medical assessor members.

Medical Assessors

Agreement was reached on applying the higher scale to the medical assessor (MA) grade. The backdating of the allowance will be referred to adjudication, Fórsa sought that the allowance be backdated to when this local bargaining clause was negotiated, but the parties were unable to reach agreement.

Acknowledgement

Since the last Fórsa biennial conference there has been a significant turnover in Fórsa reps. Some have retired or moved through Civil Service mobility, while others have been promoted (including some into the AHCPs ranks). Fórsa acknowledges and thanks all those reps for their tireless work and engagement. In some cases, they have represented their work colleagues over many decades, and the union wishes them well.

Education Division

Leadership and organisation

Throughout 2023 and 2024 the Education division has continued to grow and develop, consolidating progress made in strengthening membership and organisation during the pandemic.

Divisional priorities over the last two years have been to increase bargaining strength and influence through maximising the recruitment of new members and strengthening branch capacity. This objective has been successful in raising the profile of the grades, groups and categories of members within the division and has delivered beneficial outcomes that would not have been achievable without significant membership growth.

Gaining traction

During the period under review, the Education division continued to gain ground and consolidated Fórsa's position as the leading union and the authoritative voice for non-teaching staff across the education sector. Divisional membership grew from 15,100 in February 2021 to 18,800 in April 2024. Since 2019 the Education division has grown by more than 50%. This represents significant and sustained growth with the greatest gains being made in recruiting school secretaries, SNAs and higher education staff.

This membership growth is set to continue through the establishment of the national School Caretaker branch and other significant developments across the division. The continued development of the Education division should result in a membership figure approaching 20,000 by the time of the next biennial conference in May 2026.

Divisional industrial strategy

The Education Division Executive Committee (DEC) continued its approach of dividing agenda items under the headings of organising, policy and industrial relations. The committee regularly takes stock of divisional conference resolutions and receives presentations from staff and organisers working in the division outlining their plans.

The divisional industrial strategy forms the basis of work in the division and seeks to implement the relevant sections of the Fórsa Strategic Plan. This is a process requiring the identification of bargaining objectives, aligning activity with those objectives and maximising branch and member involvement in such activity designed to achieve improvements to pay, conditions of employment, status, influence and branch effectiveness.

The division reviews membership levels each month and agreed several membership targets for the division between 2022 and 2022, all of which have been met.

From 2022 to 2024 the divisional strategy included the following objectives and outcomes:

1 Implementing the new pay agreement for school secretaries

Following a campaign of industrial action from 2020, a new national pay agreement was secured for grant paid school secretaries in March 2022 with benefits backdated to September 2021. Staff were added to the Department of Education payroll system and, as of 14th September 2023, they are paid centrally, as are public servants. The benefits of the pay agreement have delivered significant pay increases and a new incremental scale which mirrors the clerical officer pay scale. Members received considerable back pay in September 2023 when they moved to the new scale.

Secretaries are now paid throughout the year due to the agreement secured to average salaries over 52 weeks. The income members would have received through claiming jobseekers benefit, during weeks of school closure, has been replaced with a new on-

boarding allowance, set at the maximum jobseekers rate. This is paid to all members for any days, or weeks, when they would otherwise not have been paid by the school. This allowance is added to salary and the total is averaged over the year.

2 A pay campaign for school caretakers

A framework agreement for school caretakers was concluded in March 2022. Negotiations continue to focus on collecting pay data to enable the Department of Education and Fórsa to conclude discussions on a similar pay agreement as agreed for secretaries. Progress has been slow, the new agreement should be completed in 2024, no agreement has been reached in the effective date of implementation.

3 National review of the role of the SNA / negotiating a new contract

Throughout 2022, and 2023, Fórsa conducted the #RespectForSNAs campaign. This campaign sought greater recognition and respect for the work of the SNAs. In response to the issues raised the Minister for Special Education and Inclusion announced that a new National SNA Workforce Development Plan would commence in January 2024.

This process will review the role of the SNA for the first time since 2005. The proposals being discussed include a new contract, new training and development frameworks, a new minimum qualification at QQI Level 6, a national redeployment scheme to enhance job security, revised job descriptions and changes to other conditions of service such as special leave, the 72-hour obligation and June working.

The aim of the process is to professionalise and modernise the role of the SNA to reflect the reality of the work undertaken with students. The workforce development plan involves independent academic experts, the Department of Education, National Council for Special Education (NCSE), schools inspectorate, childrens rights groups, school management bodies, in addition to Fórsa. The new arrangements are to be agreed and implemented by September 2025.

4 Negotiating the end of the use of 32-hour contracts for SNAs

In March 2023, a new SNA job-sharing circular was agreed, removing reference to a 32-hour working week for SNAs. While substitute SNAs are still paid using a 32-hour pay divisor, job sharers are no longer required to work a 16-hour week. They work 50% of the full-time hours and paid 50% of their full-time salary. This brings an end to attempts by school employers to impose a 32-hour week on SNAs, who would normally work on a 'bell-to-bell' basis. Fórsa secured agreement on this issue with the Department of Education which then issued a letter to all school management bodies to provide clarification.

6 Abolishing the '72-hour' and June working obligations for SNAs

Negotiations have commenced on the Fórsa claims for the abolition of these obligations. The union is seeking a new dispensation, based on continuous professional training and development, with any additional work requirements outside of class being strictly and solely related to the needs of SEN students. These claims will be addressed by the development of the new workforce development plan.

7 Negotiating a new funding and governance structure for School Completion Programmes

Following the transfer of administrative responsibility for the school completion programme (SCP) to the Department of Education in 2021, Fórsa has sought meaningful engagement on the future funding and governance structures, aimed at securing public service status for SCP staff.

A national seminar in March 2022 was well attended and supported. The then Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, attended and provided commitments to secure the future for the SCP within the education sector. Since then, Fórsa secured an agreement, under the auspices of the WRC, which obliges the Department

of Education to develop a framework for the employment of SCP staff by September 2024. Regular engagement continues, the union secured a further agreement on the use of the correct public service pay-scales for project workers and co-ordinators and discussions on the need to align annual and other leave entitlements continue.

8 Implementing a new job evaluation scheme in higher education

A WRC agreement in 2019, to design and implement a new job evaluation scheme for members working in Technological Universities, Institutes of Technology and Mary Immaculate College, was concluded following a successful campaign of industrial action. Work on the design of a new job evaluation scheme has been led by facilitator Sean McHugh, who has assisted the parties in developing a robust scheme and which has now been tested across different higher education institutions. The first tranche of jobs will be evaluated before the end of 2024 with the number expected to reach 10% of all clerical and library jobs within the Technological Universities and Institutes of Education.

9 Agency labour in Education and Training Boards

Some Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have been routinely using agency labour to fill clerical admin posts, citing the difficulties in obtaining sanction from the Department of Education as justification for the continued practice. Fórsa raised the issue at the Education Oversight Group as no agreement had been concluded with Fórsa on outsourcing labour, contrary to the provisions of the national pay agreement. Fórsa has made a referral to the WRC, seeking agreement on the use of direct labour, with agency staff being given the opportunity to transfer to public service posts.

10 A fair grading structure for ETBs

Fórsa continues to pursue a joint union claim with the TUI, AHCPS, SIPTU and UNITE seeking a uniform grading structure across all ETBs. This claim was first discussed when the RTBs were created more than 10 years ago. The employer has consistently refused to standardise arrangements. A further engagement at the WRC is scheduled for May. In tandem with this claim, Fórsa is also seeking to standardise grades through the introduction of a new job evaluation scheme for members working in ETBs. Discussions on this continue.

Other developments

SNA allocation model

Fórsa continues to advocate for changes to the SNA allocation model and is seeking clarity on the future direction of policy for the special education sector. Joan McCrohan serves on the consultative forum for the review of the EPSSEN Act, a process which might finally result in the statutory guarantee of access to education for all children first promised in 2004.

The proposed 'frontloading' SNA-allocation model, first proposed in 2018, has not been implemented and the Schools Inclusion Model pilot - covering 72 schools in HSE CHO Area 7 - has not yet been rolled out to other parts of the country. Despite this lack of progress some positive steps have been taken with a freeze on mainstream SNA allocations since 2020.

Since then, more than 1,000 new posts have been added to the national allocation in each successive year. There have been a very small number of potential redundancies. In 2023, only 20 posts were affected.

Personal Assistants in further and higher education

Fórsa secured a significant pay increase, worth 30%, for personal assistants working in further education colleges. The PAs undertake similar work to SNAs in schools. They are employed on a spot rate which has been increased to €21p/h as of January 2024. Fórsa has referred a claim to the WRC for secure contracts, an incremental scale and paid annual and sick leave. The Department of Education has proposed a review of the PA role. Fórsa has welcomed this development, and the union will pursue further improvements to terms and conditions through negotiation at the WRC and, if necessary, referral to the Labour Court.



Limerick Health & Welfare Branch. Heuston Hall Building, Limerick.

Health and Welfare

Sláintecare – health regions

Progress on the implementation of Health Regions (formerly known as regional health areas) has been slow. Fórsa and the other health unions received further presentations which focused on the design model. There has been no engagement on what, if any, impact this may have members within the HSE.

The position of Regional Executive Officer went to public competition in Q3 2023 with six candidates being appointed. The first commenced their position in late 2023.

It is expected the remaining positions will commence in Q1 2024 and each health region will be fully operational September 2024.

It remains our understanding that it is envisaged the Department of Health will retain responsibility for setting health policy and retain an oversight role. The HSE will support regional health areas, ensuring consistency and national frameworks and models of care, they will also design national service requirement and standards and will monitor and assure performance of the Health Regions.

The focus will be on the operational planning and delivery of primary, community and hospital health and social care services at regional level – so that decisions can be made about specific delivery models closer to the service itself. Each Health Region will have autonomy over, and accountability for the delivery of services, outputs and outcomes for patients, service users, their families, and local communities.

- Area A Dublin North - North East
- Area B Dublin South - Midlands
- Area C Dublin South - South East
- Area D South/South West
- Area E Mid West
- Area F West - North West



Fórsa recognises the urgency required to address the potential impact for members working within some corporate functions, hospital groups and community health areas.

Recruitment – Clerical Admin & Managerial Grades

In early 2023, Fórsa raised concerns with HSE senior management over its failure to adhere to collective agreements on filling promotional positions. The union had also raised the issue of over-reliance on agency workers and external private consultants. Despite union efforts to resolve these issues, management failed to engage.

In June 2023, the HSE issued memos instructing all managers in the HSE and Section 38s to pause recruitment across the managerial/administration grades. Fórsa’s Divisional Executive Committee (DEC) took the decision to protect employment and promotional opportunities by commencing a ballot of industrial action.

Against a backdrop of profligate spending on external private consultants, management paused all recruitment at Grade III and above in July 2023, citing concerns over the number of clerical admin/managerial grades recruited in the previous six months. In October, the HSE further implemented a much wider recruitment ban.

Fórsa's ballot closed in August. Members voting overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action, up to and including strike action, and the union served three weeks' notice of the commencement of industrial action measures, including a work to rule, from 4th September 2023.

The parties were subsequently invited to attend the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and agreement was reached to suspend industrial action in light of sufficient progress being made. The parties agreed to develop a framework document to address union concerns on the filling of promotional positions and external private consultants. The HSE agreed to replace any position that became vacant from 1st September 2023.

Despite this progress, the HSE abandoned discussions and imposed a full recruitment ban in early October. Fórsa immediately lifted its suspension of industrial action. Fórsa escalated the action in late October with further instructions not to cooperate with external private consultants and other measures.

Further escalation was planned throughout November. However, this was suspended as the parties reengaged at the WRC. However, talks adjourned with no further progress. The union organised a series of nationwide lunchtime protests in December. Rolling work phone and email bans were planned for January 2024, and the parties were again invited to attend the WRC. Talks took place in January and February while the campaign of industrial action continued.

Pay Restoration – Community & Voluntary Sector (Section 39, 10, 56 & 40)

Fórsa's campaign for pay parity for members working in Section 39, 56 and Section 10 organisations continued throughout 2023, in cooperation with INMO and SIPTU colleagues.

In January, Fórsa's National Executive Committee took the decision to ballot for indefinite industrial action in a number of employments, with the union ready to foot the wage costs of striking staff. Unions served fresh pay claims on a number of employer organisations.

The parties engaged in WRC-facilitated talks between April and July 2023. However, a proposal in July – for a five per cent increase from January 2024, and a commitment to have further talks about future pay arrangements following any successor to the Building Momentum agreement (due to expire at the end of 2023) – fell short of what could be considered acceptable, and the talks broke down.

Unions had sought full terms of the Building Momentum agreement (9.5%) and a process that would ultimately seek to restore the link to public service pay in the future, citing this as the means to overcome the significant recruitment and retention challenge within the community and voluntary sector services affected by this dispute.

A ballot for industrial action took place in August and September, with overwhelming support from union members to take strike action in pursuit of pay equality. The union served notice on employers. Indefinite strike action was set to commence on 17th October. Preparations got underway, supported by a comprehensive media strategy.

On the eve of strike action, unions were invited to attend the WRC. Following lengthy talks unions secured an interim agreement. Strike action was suspended to allow for consultation on the new set of WRC proposals, which were put to a ballot of members.

The proposals meant members will receive the following pay adjustments:

- An increase of 3% backdated to 1st April 2023
- An increase of 2% from 1st November 2023
- An increase of 3% from 1st March 2024

A ballot, concluded in November 2023, won strong backing and the union immediately sought a timeline for payments from the funding bodies. Some payments were made prior to Christmas 2023, with most funding made available in January 2024.

The union regards this campaign as ongoing, and outstanding issues remain, including 1.5% from the terms of Building Momentum. Following the conclusion of public service pay talks in January, and dependent on the terms agreed, Fórsa will seek further engagement throughout 2024 to achieve pay equality for members in the community and voluntary sectors.

National Joint Council (NJC)

The National Joint Council is the primary forum for the management of industrial relations in the health service. Management and the Staff Panel meet bimonthly with an interim NJC being convened in the intervening period. The purpose is to oversee the conduct of good industrial relations and to address any matters arising.

In addition to the main forum there are multiple subgroups:

- Pensions
- CPD/LLL
- Policies & Procedures

Fórsa has sought the reestablishment of the mobility and transfer subgroup and await confirmation that the HSE will engage further.

Pandemic Special Recognition Payment

The scheme for those working in the HSE and Section 38 organisations closed early in 2023 with the conclusion of the appeal process. Some members in Section 39 organisations have received this payment, but a large volume of members continue to be excluded, including members in Tusla.

Fórsa is to engage in a public and lobbying campaign to have this addressed on behalf of these workers.

Special leave with pay - Long Covid

The staff panel lodged a claim seeking that a specific scheme be established for health care workers suffering with Covid-19 and long Covid which they contracted in the workplace. Unions sought that healthcare workers suffering with long covid, who were denied access to the extended special leave with pay scheme based solely on the date they acquired the disease, be paid retrospectively and their sick leave record reinstated.

A Labour Court recommendation in November 2023 did not concede the claim to retain the 10 days special leave with pay, but did recommend that the parties re-engage prior to the end of extension, and that the Court remained available if the parties were unable to find a resolution.

Fórsa also sought the return of 10 days special leave with pay to cover the period when health service staff are absent due to Covid-19, and the the staff panel secured an extension to the current scheme until the end of March 2024, which was further extended by three months to July 2024.

Job evaluation scheme

The job evaluation scheme available to clerical admin grades III to VI, working in Section 38 organisations and the HSE, continues to receive applications. Members experienced significant delays and the union identified some initiatives which were put in place, effecting a reduction in the waiting list. The union estimates targets to reduce member waiting times, to between 3 to 6 months, will be met by the end of 2024.

Domestic Abuse Policy & Paid Leave

Delegates at Fórsa's national conference 2022 unanimously backed a motion from the union's national executive calling for statutory paid leave for victims of domestic violence.

The conference motion committed the union to actively campaign to legislate for an effective statutory entitlement to paid leave for victims of domestic violence and encourage the union's networks to raise the issue of workplace supports for victims and survivors of domestic violence with employers in their sectors. Fórsa pursued this and developed alliances with other advocacy groups. Last year we saw introduced into legislation the right to paid leave for victims of domestic abuse.

Fórsa brought this forward to the national joint council and continuously pursued this on behalf of members. Late last year the policy was sign off by the trade unions and will issue within the HSE and Section 38 organisations shortly. The staff panel of unions received its first draft of a HSE specific policy, and engaged with management to develop and agree a policy to provide the necessary supports for members in the workplace.

Menstrual/menopause workplace policies

Fórsa lodged a claim in September 2022 seeking the implementation of workplace health policies that would put in place appropriate measures for female members. A draft menopause policy is in

place to provide supports to members across the HSE and Section 38 organisations, and the union has raised the need for a draft menstrual policy.

National Investigation Unit

The union has emphasised the need for this unit to be fully functionally, and to allow for consistency in its application across all HR investigations. Partial recruitment took place in 2023, falling short of the required number of assessors, and the HSE had planned to recruit in the open market. This has since been halted by the recruitment ban and no competition has launched.

Robotic process automation

Fórsa received a presentation from HSE management on the use of robotic process automation. Over the last four years various projects have commenced which transfers repetitive administrative tasks to virtual assistants - work previously undertaken by clerical admin. Fórsa was informed that more than five million transactions have been processed to date, the equivalent of 649,420 manual hours. This process got underway without any engagement with Fórsa or other trade union. Fórsa has sought engagement to discuss these projects and any further proposals that may utilise AI (artificial intelligence).

HSCP, Pharmacy and Statutory Regulation

Community Healthcare Network Model (CHN)

The final draft of the joint report was published and circulated in June 2023. A referral was made to the WRC so that negotiations could commence on the outcome of the learning site evaluation.

In October and November of 2023, the National Health Office team alongside the DEC undertook a significant consultation exercise with members working in the CHN Model. This included a members

meeting for all members working within the model, an online survey circulated to all members, a meeting for Network Managers and a meeting for Discipline Managers.

Negotiations at the WRC are to commence this year. The union is cognisant that negotiations are taking place in the context of a move to health regions which envisage the CHN as a central tenet of the Integrated Healthcare Areas (IHA).

Fórsa will be represented in these negotiations by the National Health Office team, members of the Divisional Executive Committee, a Network Manager representative and a Discipline Manager representative. Fórsa's position is that any outcomes agreed arising from the joint evaluation will apply across all CHN/ ECCN models of working, and that all clinical staff aligned to the CHN model must agree to the reporting structures as set out by the employer.

The employer has tabled the expansion of this model to ICPOP/Chronic Hubs/Interrai but this has not been agreed. Fórsa is of the strong view that any such discussion/agreement is of limited value while the overarching elements of the CHN model must be discussed in the context of the joint learning site evaluation report.

Fórsa was alerted that CHO Chief Officers had moved to provide permanent contracts to Network Managers without recourse to the appropriate legislation or the existing IR processes in mid-2023. Fórsa raised an immediate objection with the HSE which subsequently undertook an internal investigation into the matter. Fórsa awaits proposals from the HSE as to how it will address this situation.

Career Pathway Review (CPR) Dispute

Arising from the 2018 CHO agreement, the Career Pathway Review chaired by Robbie Ryan was established and comprehends the following groups: Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietitians, Speech and Language Therapy, Orthoptics, Podiatry, Social Care and Social Work.

In February and March of 2023, Fórsa engaged with HSE management to extend the staff to senior career pathway outside of Primary Care - a longstanding objective since the publication of the Interim Report. The HSE denied agreeing to this extension, and Fórsa's Health & Welfare

DEC declared an immediate dispute. The union's understanding was that the recommendation would be honoured for all the eligible staff grades regardless of where they worked.

The dispute also comprehended the failure by the HSE to close out the process for all eligible members in Primary Care, to agree the appropriate structure for Social Work members in Primary Care (a prerequisite for implementing the pathway) and to conclude the overarching CPR process for all other grades comprehended.

The union conducted a ballot of members in July and August 2023, and members backed industrial action. The Dispute Committee of the DEC sanctioned a work-to-rule, including withdrawal from the supervision of third level placements and this was due to commence in September 2023.

The WRC invited the parties to talks in advance of the commencement of industrial action. These led to a set of proposals which demonstrated enough progress for the industrial action to be suspended, pending further discussions.

Since September 2023, discussions between the HSE and Fórsa have been taking place on a weekly basis to close out the process in primary care, and to agree the implementation of a staff to senior pathway outside of primary care. The recruitment embargo imposed on HSCPs complicated matters in the closing weeks of 2023.

However, further progress and proposals were agreed at the WRC. Talks continued in January 2024 and the industrial action remains suspended to allow space for these talks to conclude.

In addition, Fórsa has sought the focused engagement on the Social Work Structure in the CHN Model as agreed at the WRC in September 2023.

Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT)

There was positive engagement in the early part of 2023 with the management side (HSE, S38 and S39) in relation to CDNTs. A confined competition was agreed for senior posts, in addition to participation in the clinical governance review conducted by Genio, as well as collating feedback on the draft AON protocol.

In May, the relationship between Fórsa and health management deteriorated significantly due to unilateral actions in relation to accrued savings from vacant posts. This culminated in the HSE publishing a Roadmap for Service Improvement in the autumn without any engagement or consultation from Fórsa, despite repeated efforts by the union. Fórsa declared a dispute with the HSE, S38 and S39 employers in relation to the Roadmap, and issued an instruction of non-cooperation to all members working in disability services.

Following extensive discussions at the WRC in December and January, significant proposals were agreed and the instruction was lifted. These included a commitment to develop a workforce plan by June 2024, and the recruitment of Interim Discipline Managers for the six professions in the model by 1st March 2024 in each of the nine CHOs.

Hospital Pharmacy

As part of the review of the Building Momentum public service pay agreement Fórsa secured agreement for the implementation of the WRC Agreement 2020 (Implementation of the McLoughlin Report, 2011). This is further affirmed in the new Public Service Pay Agreement, ratified by the Public Services Committee of the ICTU in March 2024.

Regular engagements took place throughout 2023 between Fórsa, the HPAI and the HSE on implementing the outstanding aspects of the agreement, following the publication of the 1st circular in December 2022. A draft circular on Deputy PEM positions and the introduction of the Advanced Specialist Pharmacist grade issued to the Department of Health and DPENDR (Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform) for sanction at the end of 2023.

Hospital Pharmacy Technicians

In November 2023, Fórsa and the National Association of Hospital Pharmacy Technicians (NAHPT) launched a position paper setting out the need for statutory regulation of the profession. Following the launch, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland agreed to meet with Fórsa to discuss the position paper. Fórsa has also sought engagement

on the role development of Hospital Pharmacy Technicians. The union hopes that a process can be established in 2024 to address this.

Audiology

Conciliation took place in the first six months of 2023 to agree a unified structure for Audiology. This is now with the Senior Management Team of the HSE and Department of Health for sanction. Fórsa is following up regularly seeking a definitive timeline for implementation.

Clinical Biochemists

Fórsa met with the assistant national director, HR, for the Acute Hospitals Division in 2023 to discuss the growing trend of hospitals failing to replace Principal Biochemist posts. The HSE confirmed that there is no intention to eradicate these posts, and shared some high-level themes from the National Review of Laboratory Services. Fórsa is actively pursuing the four hospital sites where this issue has emerged, and awaits the formal publication of the National Review of Laboratory Services. The ACBI has worked closely with Fórsa on this issue.

Clinical Engineering

In the latter half of 2023 Fórsa sought engagement with the Acute Hospitals Division of the HSE on the structure of the profession. The Clinical Engineering National Professional Committee was formally re-constituted to support this work in 2024.

Clinical Measurement Physiologists

In 2022, terms of reference were agreed for a joint working group between the HSE and Fórsa with the task of delivering recommendations on the future of workforce planning, including service development for Clinical Measurement Physiology (5 strands). The group was tasked with delivering a report in May 2023. However, ongoing delays led to Fórsa referring the matter to the WRC.

In addition to the workforce review, Fórsa has been pursuing issues of 'grade drift' within the profession, and has sought engagement with Community Operations in relation to the appropriate staffing and governance of Community hubs.

Counsellors in Addiction Service

Fórsa sought engagement with the HSE in 2023 for a review of the role of Counsellors in Addiction Services as it has not been reviewed since 1999. An initial meeting took place but the actions agreed were affected by industrial action undertaken by Fórsa members in the clerical, admin grades. The parties are to reconvene.

National Counselling Service

There was constructive engagement with the management side of the National Counselling Service throughout 2023. However, the parties were unable to reach agreement on the disputed pay scale for Senior Counsellor Therapists. Following conciliation, the matter was referred to the Labour Court at the end of 2023. Fórsa awaits an updated proposal from management in relation to the pre-accreditation counsellor grade having provided feedback on a first draft proposal.

Dietitians

In later 2023, Fórsa received positive confirmation from the management side that there would be engagement on two key issues for Dietitians: HP&I Dietitians on the move into the CHO operating model and that a group would be established to look at Dietetic Workforce resourcing. The union is hopeful that both engagements will yield positive progress for dietitian members in 2024.

Psychology

Fórsa has sought a process with the employer to look at several key issues affecting psychologist members (recruitment and retention, career structure, caseload management, clinical governance, assistant grades). There was little movement on this in 2023, engagement is set to take place in 2024.

Peer Support Workers (mental health)

Throughout 2023, Fórsa engaged with HSE Mental Health to agree terms and conditions for Peer Support and Senior Peer Support Worker roles. All items were agreed except pay scales for both roles, and this matter was referred to the WRC in 2023. The parties agreed to reflect on solutions following engagement at the WRC and will need to re-engage in early 2024 to identify a route forward.

Orthoptics

In addition to the career pathway review Fórsa is currently pursuing the creation of a grade code for Clinical Specialist Orthoptics who are currently not recognised in the consolidated pay scales. While the HSE has indicated its support, the grade code has not yet been added to the grade code list. Fórsa continues to pursue this with the HSE.

CORU/statutory regulation

We continue to meet with CORU regularly to discuss the concerns of our HSCP members who are regulated or due to be regulated. In addition to these regular engagements, Fórsa sought an emergency meeting with CORU to discuss the regulation of psychologists following the broadcast of an RTÉ *Prime Time Investigates* programme on this issue. Fórsa also participated in the recent stakeholder survey organised by CORU.

Engagement with key stakeholders

Throughout 2023, Fórsa built very positive strategic relationships with all the main HSCP professional bodies on issues of common concern. Fórsa has also worked to create and build a relationship with the National HSE HSCP Office, and has sought formal engagement with the Chief HSCP Officer of the Department of Health.

National Professional Committees (NPCs)

Fórsa has active National Professional Committees (NPCs)/national reps in the following professions: Audiology, Clinical Biochemistry, Clinical Engineering, Clinical Measurement Physiology, Counsellor Therapists (NCS); Dietitians;

Occupational Therapy; Orthoptics, Physiotherapy, Podiatry, Speech and Language Therapy, Social Care Work, Social Work, Psychology, Counsellors in Addiction Services Hospital Pharmacy and Hospital Pharmacy Technicians. The NPCs meet regularly to advise and inform the work of the National Health Office team.

TUSLA, HSE, Social Work and Social Care Work NPCs

Tusla restructuring

Fórsa is expecting formal proposals on the design of structures under six new regions. Tusla management had advised that it is still working on the draft structures and this was expected to be presented in February 2024. The union will be engaging with members and branches affected around the implications of any new structure.

On Call – Children’s Residential Services

In 2023, a previous WRC conciliation conference was postponed allowing the parties to re-engage locally. Despite local engagement, the parties were unable to reach agreement. The matter was referred back to the WRC.

Job evaluation dispute – Tusla

A long-standing dispute (since November 2020) regarding the removal of the job evaluation scheme from Fórsa’s members in Tusla has been taken through numerous third-party processes to have the scheme reinstated, including referral to the Public Service Advisory Group (PSAG). The decision of the PSAG was that the dispute should be referred to the Labour Court for decision.

The Labour Court heard the case in July 2023. The Court determined that the parties were not in dispute and therefore had no jurisdiction under the terms of the Industrial Relations Act. Arising from that decision of the Court and Tusla’s admission to the Court that it agreed with the union position, Fórsa sought immediate implementation of the Job Evaluation Scheme. Tusla’s position remained

unchanged, despite being in agreement with the union position. Tusla was prevented from re-opening job evaluation as it required sanction from DPENDR (Department of Public Expenditure and NDP Delivery & Reform) which was not forthcoming.

Fórsa balloted members for industrial action, which was carried in favour of industrial action by a 95% majority. The union served notice in October 2023 and industrial action in the form of a work-to-rule commenced on 25th October and remains in place. The action to escalated in December and the parties were invited back to the WRC. This engagement did not result in any agreement and the parties agreed a joint referral back to the Labour Court.

The union’s case is that the Job Evaluation scheme was an inherited collective agreement, protected on transfer to Tusla in 2014 under the Joint Framework Agreement signed between the union and employers at that time. The employer is in breach of the framework agreement and sanction from DPENDR should not be a requirement in this instance.

Career Pathway Review – Tusla

Fórsa lodged a claim with Tusla in 2022 seeking application of the recommendations of the Career Pathway Review interim report to our HSCPs in Tusla.

Social Care Workers – CORU registration

CORU regulation for Social Care Workers came into effect in November 2023. To mark this Fórsa hosted a one-day conference on the 18th October 2023 entitled “Are you ready for statutory regulation?” More than 200 members registered, and the CEO and Interim Registrar of CORU gave a keynote address at the event. Fórsa will host a series of information seminars throughout the regions in 2024. All social care worker members can register to attend.

Educational Welfare Officers – Tusla

Fórsa's Educational Welfare branch adopted a motion at its AGM seeking parity of treatment with regards to annual leave as their social work colleagues in Tusla. The union pursued the claim which went to the Labour Court in 2022. The Court noted that the standardised annual leave of social workers had been the subject of a 2009 productivity agreement between the union and health sector employers. The Court recommended that the parties re-engage to agree productivity measures as a basis for standardising the annual leave of EWO and SEWO grades in line with social work grades. A productivity agreement was achieved in 2023 which gave rise to an increase in annual leave for the two grades which are now aligned to social worker annual leave rates. Members voted to approve the deal in the Autumn of 2023. Fórsa also secured a retrospective element to the new arrangements, backdated to 1st April 2023.

National Emergency Out of Hours Service (NOHS) – Tusla

Tusla recently conducted a review of the NOHS. The report and recommendations arising from that review were shared with Fórsa for discussion in January 2024. A joint working group was established to look at the recommendations of the report and develop and implementation plan. There will be four management nominees and four union side nominees to the working group. Union nominees will be one union official and three workplace representatives and terms of reference are in development.

Social Work

Career Pathway for social workers in primary care

The recommendations of the career pathway review (CPR) interim report for the progression of eligible HSCPs from basic to senior grade remains outstanding for social workers in primary care. This was raised as one of the issues for the union

in our WRC engagement in September 2023. The agreement reached in the WRC was that there was to be some focused engagement between the parties during the month of October. Residual issues remain for existing social work team leader grades in primary care when basic grades are promoted to the same level.

Adult safeguarding (HSE)

In July 2023, the union took several issues of concern to the WRC, including the pursuit of a fully developed National Plan for Adult Safeguarding, outlining the disciplines in the vision for adult safeguarding services in Ireland and a clear outline of how adult safeguarding teams fit into the overall health structure.

Discussions were stalled when the HSE's CEO announced the appointment of an independent expert to conduct a review of safeguarding services. Fórsa welcomed the appointment and the union's social work safeguarding representatives were given the opportunity to meet with the independent expert to present their views. Publication of the report and its recommendations is awaited.

Corporate Services

E Health & Disruptive Technology

Fórsa has continued to engage with management with a particular focus on the recruitment of contract staff or contractors. Under an agreed system management could apply for derogations in exceptional circumstances, but this has run into difficulties. Fórsa objected to the temporary filling of two senior posts – the CISO and CTTO – in eHealth. Following discussions these posts were put out to public competition by the Public Appointments Service. Neither competition was successful and Fórsa is seeking to have these posts readvertised at the earliest possible date.

Another area we have prioritised is the helpdesk. This work was effectively outsourced several years ago and the union has sought the reintroduction of this work to the HSE. Management has a proposal

paper on helpdesk staffing and has indicated that it cannot seek to implement it until there's more certainty on how eHealth will function in the context of newly established health regions. Fórsa will refer the issue to the WRC for conciliation if this can't be resolved.

IFMS

IFMS (a single national Integrated Financial Management and Procurement System) went Live for Implementation Group 1 (IG1) on 3 July (HSE East, Shared Services, National Distribution Centre, Primary Care Reimbursement Service, National Ambulance Service, HSE National and Corporate Services, and Tusla). The launch of this system was then planned to be further rolled out to other geographical regions over the next few years.

The launch last year did not go well. Real issues emerged putting Fórsa members in procurement in a very difficult position because the new system was not syncing with the National Distribution Centre. This led to confusion around ordering and delivery of goods. The union engaged with the procurement group and, while progress has been made, some issues remain, including invoice payments.

It's been reported that the Department of Health have given the HSE significant sums to speed up the roll-out and implementation of IFMS in all areas of the HSE. However, Fórsa expressed the view to management that there can be no further roll-out until the issues from the launch phase have been resolved.

Finance

Fórsa has been discussing the move to four payroll hubs with management. There will be no immediate changes and discussion has focused on the practical effects in the different areas. Management has clarified that no member will have to move location due to the establishment of the new hubs.

The Department of Health is now proposing to change the roll-out schedule and the union is considering the establishment of a national consultative group.

On application for blended working members are being told that they will have no entitlement to flexi-leave. Fórsa is seeking that management change this to at least ensure that members can work flexi on in-office days.

Environmental Health Officers (EHO)

Fórsa negotiated changes to the shift arrangements in Dublin and Rosslare ports, ahead of implementation in January. Consultations were set to continue and there are reviews built into the proposal. The union has sought clarification on the policies for staff returning from career breaks and, in particular, to what post they return.

Last year's AGM voted to abolish an additional charge on top of union membership for EHOs. All members in the Environmental Health service are now represented by the group.

Internal Audit

In early 2023, Fórsa issued a notice of non-cooperation due to unilateral changes implemented by management. The issues were referred to the WRC and led to a WRC agreement. Fórsa subsequently engaged in local discussions and returned to the WRC in late 2023. Despite efforts, management did not agree to a consultative process between IA management and Fórsa. The WRC proposed that Fórsa and National Employee Relations should meet to seek to agree a consultative process.

Management proposed that all audits for 2024 and beyond will be national audits. Fórsa has sought clarity about what this means, particularly for members work locations. Fórsa is operating in line with the WRC agreement in 2023 which stated that members work in their geographical area unless either the member, or Fórsa, agreed to the change. Fórsa holds this position until the union receives clarity on the national audit.

Healthcare audit

Members in Healthcare Audit had their promotion arrangements changed without consultation. In 2021 it was moved into the auspices of Internal Audit but all staff were given the assurance that

their terms and conditions wouldn't change. However, for senior posts there was now a requirement to have an accounting or education qualification, which has applied to Internal Audit staff for some time. Fórsa referred the issue to the WRC. However, the issue was resolved to members' satisfaction following further discussions with management.

Civil Registration

The Civil Registration (Electronic Registration) Bill is currently making its way through the Oireachtas. The legislation could have a significant effect on members in Civil Registration. Fórsa is continuing to engage with management on the grading in the area as the union believes there are some areas where the grading is not uniform across the country.

Dental services

The union has been working with the Irish Dental Association (IDA) and meeting jointly with management on issues affecting dental surgeons. The main focus will be the implementation of the National Oral Health policy. Fórsa is seeking to resolve issues around annual leave and the filling of senior posts for dental nurses and hygienists.

National Ambulance Service

Both Fórsa and SIPTU are seeking to resolve group regrading for the ECAO and ORM grades in the National Ambulance Service. Following a WRC agreement representatives from each grade were assessed and unions are now seeking to have all members in these grades upgraded to finalise this long-standing issue.



Mater Hospital #betterinaunion.

Local Government and Local Services

Divisional Council

The Divisional Council comprises of one delegate from each branch with members in the division and the divisional executive committee. The council meets quarterly throughout the year.

In February 2024, Fórsa piloted the first ever extended divisional council. Over 60 delegates attended, and the focus of the event was on policy implementation/development and building organisational capacity at local level in employments across the sector.

Divisional strategy

The Local Government and Local Services Divisional Executive Committee agreed in September 2022 that all industrial priorities for the division must be underpinned by a membership growth and capacity/density building strategy. The division is committed to ensuring the work complements and contributes to the overall union effort to achieving the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan has a core mission to create:

- A union where members feel involved,
- A union where activists feel empowered,
- A union where staff feel heard and involved.

The union's bargaining objectives and priorities are aligned with activities aimed at growing the union by developing strong branches and member involvement in activity designed to improve pay, conditions, and influence. The division reviews membership levels regularly and has agreed membership growth targets.

EPSU

Fórsa is a member of EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, representing eight million workers in 54 countries. Richy Carrothers represents Fórsa on its Local and Regional Government Standing Committee.

Local Authority National Council (LANC)

Fórsa national secretary, Richy Carrothers is the union side secretary to the Local Authority National Council (LANC), the negotiating forum made up of recognised trade unions and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). The LANC is independently chaired by the WRC. The local authority oversight group reviews the implementation of the sectoral elements of the Building Momentum national pay agreement.

Fórsa has sought to improve structures and engagement to ensure that national bargaining arrangements in the sector are functional and fit for purpose.

The future of Local Government services

Fórsa is at the forefront of standing up for local government. The "More Power to You" campaign - for increased revenue and powers for local authorities - strives to strengthen and improve local government services to communities and citizens and focuses on reforms covering waste, water, housing and energy services.

Fórsa, SIPTU and Connect, representing over 30,000 local authority workers continued to mobilise. In the run up to the elections on the 7th June 2024, the union will be seeking to influence candidates and parties about the necessity to reimagine the local government sector. Strengthening local government is not just the most direct and effective way of improving services, providing for communities and restoring trust in society - it is the only way.

Remunicipalisation of domestic waste services

At Dublin City Council (DCC), a working group involving the unions commissioned the research division of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), to submit a proposal in respect of the remunicipalisation of domestic waste. The request covered two key areas for the research as follows:

1. A comparative analysis that reviews DCC's waste collection system to other comparable European cities, with specified criteria including coverage, cost of service, quality of service, public satisfaction, terms and conditions of employment and environmental impact.
2. Consideration of evidence in the context of waste management arrangements in Dublin city and Ireland, including a description of the current legal and regulatory context. It is intended that the research will draw attention to legislative and other changes required to enable DCC re-enter the domestic waste collection service.

The research team indicated that the work would be carried out in two phases. Phase one was completed by February 2022, reviewing the available data. The initial report is to be discussed with the SPC sub-committee to enable an informed decision on the approach to be taken in phase two.

Key finding - phase one

In general terms, it has been challenging to identify directly comparable data from the cities chosen for this project. Within each location there are varying administrative structures. There are also variances in how and why data is collected, making it difficult to establish uniformity across the agreed criteria for a comparative analysis. In addition, there are significant variances in terms of population, population density, and housing types, all of which influence how waste collection methodologies are determined.

There are also important historical, cultural, political and economic reasons why waste management has evolved the way it has in the various jurisdictions. Notwithstanding these

limitations, the research has identified some key findings and data to inform discussions on a more detailed phase two analysis. These are:

- A kerbside waste collection service is availed of by 82% of households in the DCC administrative area. This compares with 100% of households for the other cities assessed.
- The proportion of households living in apartments, rather than houses, in the comparative cities is very high, almost the reverse of the situation in Dublin. This has a significant impact on waste collection.
- The average volume of waste produced by households in Dublin appears to be higher than in other cities studied.
- All households in the other cities examined are required to pay for waste collection, with those on low incomes supported through social security.
- Transition to a more environmentally friendly approach to waste collection is of moderate priority in the comparator cities. For example, in Stockholm, the extent to which potential contractors use environmentally friendly vehicles is taken into consideration in the evaluation process.
- Data on traffic congestion attributable to waste collection vehicles is not monitored by any of the cities. Early starts are a tacit acknowledgement that waste collection does cause some traffic challenges and that having streets free of traffic allows for more efficient collection. However, early starts may also suit employees.
- Data from two operators suggest that householders in Dublin city pay on average €243 per annum in waste collection costs. In Copenhagen the average is €284, in Oslo €258, and in Salzburg €232. Average annual waste costs in Stockholm are significantly lower (€88), though for the 10% of households living in houses it's €205.

- Average salary figures are significantly higher in all of the comparator cities. Data on the cost of living shows that Stockholm and Dublin are very similar, with Copenhagen somewhat higher and Oslo is about 20% higher. When rent is factored in, Dublin is on a par with Copenhagen and much closer to Oslo.

The phase two report has been completed and subsequently presented to DCC. Fórsa, along with other trade unions launched the report at the Oireachtas last year. Following ongoing briefings and lobby, unions have successfully ensured the establishment of a cross party working group to deal with the remunicipalisation of waste and are working to scope out the necessary legislative changes required. The full report is available [here](#).

Workplace attitudes survey

The division conducted a local government workplace attitudes survey which was completed by over 2,100 workers in the sector. The issue-based research set out to capture the views and opinions of people working in the sector in grades represented by Fórsa. The results of this survey will shape and inform the union's bargaining strategy as the union seeks to make the sector a better place to work.

The research carried out is the most comprehensive and wide-ranging survey of local government workers ever and Fórsa is drilling into the data results with a view to publishing a report. The data gathered is both rich and informative, so make sure to watch out for further updates on the results.

Some headlines:

- 59% of participants have been employed in their local authority for more than 10 years.
- 80% of respondents would apply for job evaluation if a scheme was available.
- 40% of respondents are actively seeking an alternative job, with 46% of those stating that lack of career progression as the reason.
- 67% of participants have dealt with aggressive or abusive service-users.
- 80% have dealt with cohorts promoting far right, racist or homophobic agendas.

Veterinary services

A dispute arose in 2020 regarding the continued provision of services by the local authority veterinary inspectors under a service level agreement. The union had raised concerns regarding the failure of the Food Safety Authority Ireland (FSAI) and the County and City Management Association (CCMA) to agree to the renewal of the existing service level agreement beyond September 2020. The intention was to redeploy staff under transfer of undertakings legislation.

Following a ballot of members to take industrial action, up to and including strike action, the union secured an agreement that ensured funding for the service level agreement to continue throughout 2021. Discussion would continue on seeking an alternative to the service level agreement. The LGMA has proposed that the staff would be redeployed to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A number of meetings have taken place with the staff, the LGMA and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Management to date has failed to respond meaningfully to issues pertaining to a long running dispute in respect of professional added years. To that end, the union was left with no option but to pause all engagement on the prospective transfer to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in order to protect the position of members. The instruction remains in place as management has failed to respond meaningfully to the union's concerns.

Fórsa members are demanding confirmation that the LGMA and the DAFM accept that veterinary inspectors employed by local authorities are entitled to receive professional added years to their pension for local authority service and that this provision will transfer with them as an entitlement in the civil service. Until confirmation has been provided to the satisfaction of members, local authority veterinary inspectors will not be in a position to co-operate any further with this proposed transfer to the DAFM.

Civil Defence Officers

The union has been actively attempting to address member concerns in respect of the control drug policy which would result in the unilateral change to contracts of employment, making civil defence officers the “responsible” person. Management representatives negotiated with the Department of Defence and the national civil defence branch about the introduction of a memorandum of understanding which would govern the HPRA registration and license for controlled drugs without the engagement of civil defence officers. This is a clear breach of contract and industrial norms. The union constantly requested that management furnish Fórsa with documentation in respect of the negotiations and the memorandum.

The document never materialised. Therefore, Fórsa was left with no option but seek release of information under freedom of information legislation pertaining to “Responsible Person in the Controlled Drug/CD Branch HPRA License Application” directly with the Department of Defence. The Department of Defence duly released all of the information that had previously been denied to members and a non-cooperation instruction remains in place.

Professional committees

The pandemic significantly impacted Fórsa’s organisational ability to engage meaningfully with professional committees. The divisional executive committee has decided to reboot and relaunch many of the committees with a view to assessing and refocussing on industrial priorities. Fórsa has re-established a number of professional committees recently.

Fire services

The Fire Services National Oversight Implementation Group (FSNOIG) continues. Fórsa represents firefighters and senior officers in Dublin Fire Brigade and senior officers outside Dublin on FSNOIG. The group agreed to separate the retained firefighters and the full-time firefighters.

The retained firefighters’ group is chaired by David Begg, and the full-time group is chaired by Kevin Duffy. Fórsa has representation on both these groups and continues to represent members on issues including the review of internal organisational fire service structures.

Water

Fórsa has been involved in discussions with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the LGMA and Irish Water following the proposals by Irish Water to transfer 3,500 local authority staff to a new single entity. Prior to entering negotiations, Fórsa sought and secured a commitment from the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage that no legal measures would be used to compulsorily transfer staff to the new entity.

Following a number of meetings in early 2021, six days were set aside by the WRC in July 2021 to deal with the industrial relations strand on pay, pensions and related. No real progress was made. Talks adjourned until November 2021. Irish Water produced a working document in November 2021 implying the transfer of staff would take place despite the union sides insistence that talks had only taken place on the basis that there would be no forced transfer of staff to Irish Water. The document contained a provision that Irish Water would take complete control of staffing by 2026. Management made a number of presentations on the pay structure currently operating for staff working directly for Irish Water. The unions outlined their concerns around timelines. Management is to review its document and revert.

The unions met with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O’ Brien to discuss the various strands of the transformation process.

Following that meeting, unions received a paper from the department which commented on each strand as follows:

- **Strand one: Constitutional referendum**
The Minister committed to holding a referendum. Preference is to hold a referendum in conjunction with a referendum on the right to housing. No date or schedule for a referendum has yet been proposed.
- **Strand two: The future of local government**
No response to key union asks, but acknowledgement that numbers employed have not recovered to 2009 levels.
- **Strand three: Status and governance of the new entity**
The entity will be publicly owned with oversight and accountability to the Oireachtas and the Comptroller and Auditor General. Defining the new entity as an “authority”. Composition of the board is under consideration, and it is expected to have a worker representative on the board.

The framework for the future delivery of water services as issued by the WRC in June 2022 will ensure that:

- There will be no compulsory transfers of staff to Irish Water.
- There will be no compulsory redundancies.
- Existing pay is protected, with the chance to earn more through individual or collective Irish Water performance rewards.
- Existing pension benefits are legally protected, with all local authority service taken into account for pension purposes.
- Other working conditions, including hours of work, annual leave, sick pay, allowances, overtime and work location will also remain the same or be enhanced.
- Staff who transfer to Irish Water will receive a €3,000 incentive payment.
- Local authority water workers can also opt to remain in local authority employment on their existing terms and conditions.
- There is a voluntary redundancy option for local authority workers.
- Collective bargaining rights will remain in place.

Three other strands were outstanding as part of this process and to that end, the union side continued to engage with officials from the department and the minister directly. The department issued a document “Irish Water Transformation – The Wider Policy Context” on the 18th July 2022.

Master agreement

The ICTU wrote to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on behalf of the group of local authority water service unions expressing concern that the final master agreement on the transfer of water services from local authorities to Uisce Éireann fails to take account of feedback provided by unions.

The “Master Agreement” is essentially an asset and business transfer process between local authorities and Uisce Éireann, designed to replace the service level agreement which has been in place since the national water body was created, and unions had been invited to provide feedback on its content. Trade unions have been consulted on this framework but are not being requested to agree or otherwise.

Unions have outlined a number of the provisions set out in the agreement that were an unnecessary intrusion by Uisce Éireann into the employment relationship between staff who do not wish to transfer, and their local authority. Unions also raised concerns regarding the maintenance of staff files and are of the view that what is stated in the document could lead to significant breaches of general data protection regulations (GDPR).

Fórsa has advised members that due to concerns, primarily contained in section five of the draft “Master Agreement” to continue with existing reporting relationships, the union will continue to work with the implementation of the framework as the most effective tool to protect members and pay and conditions.

Fórsa and the group of unions for local authority water workers continue to raise the issue of staff shortages in water services, and the potentially significant impact of the decision to end all acting and fixed term contracts in water services on the 31st March 2024.

The union side is pressing the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) to ensure that the public water services are sufficiently resourced, and that where staff vacancies arise, they are filled in line with the terms of the framework.

Members will be aware that Fórsa has repeatedly raised concerns over this. The union pointed to the damaging impact of this decision and following these representations, Uisce Éireann and the LGMA have agreed to bring forward proposals to address the issue at the next meeting of the Irish Water Consultative Group.

Unions received a firm commitment from the employer side that the advice to end all acting by 31st March would be reviewed if posts are deemed critical. This commitment from the LGMA was given due to the union side raising the severe impact that the ending of acting posts would cause to the delivery of water services in the local authority areas. Uisce Éireann agreed that this could have a significant impact on delivery.

As a result of this discussion, the LGMA committed that they would undertake to review, with the senior management in individual local authorities, if specific acting posts should be kept in place due to their critical nature.

It remains Fórsa's position that service delivery must be protected, and that any cliff edge should be avoided, ultimately any decision to terminate acting posts, then management must bear the responsibility for any negative impact on the public. The union position is that the transition period should be utilised to its fullest to ensure a safe and sensible move over to full Uisce Éireann control of all water services. This includes maintaining all posts until they can be filled appropriately.

Referendum

Government has stated that the public ownership of water reflects the clear will of the Irish people and is firmly established as a core principle attaching to the delivery of water services. All parties to the water sector transformation process recognise the fundamental importance attaching to public ownership as a core principle at the heart of the reform process.

Having consulted with his colleagues in Government, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has signalled his willingness to support a referendum on public ownership.

It is most disappointing that Government has yet to honour its commitment to hold a referendum on the public ownership of water. Fórsa and other unions have advocated that Government seize the opportunity to hold the referendum to forever enshrine the public ownership of water in the Constitution.

Fórsa is continuing to gather the signed postcards that will be presented to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, calling on him to deliver on the commitment to hold a referendum on the ownership of water. The Minister has pledged on a number of occasions his intention to recommend such a referendum to Government that would forever enshrine the public ownership of water into the Constitution. To date this commitment has yet to materialise.

Public ownership of water services ensures safe and sustainable access to water for everyone. It is critical that union members continue to press Government to name the date to keep water public and Fórsa is calling on all local authority members in the Municipal and Local Government and Local Services Divisions to sign this postcard calling on the minister to live up to his commitment.

[#KeepWaterPublic](#) [#NameTheDate](#)

Governance of Irish Water

Strong oversight and accountability arrangements go hand-in-hand with public ownership and are highly valued by Government and unions alike.

The Government has now approved the publication of the Water Services (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2022. This Bill will provide for the separation of Irish Water from the Ervia Group as planned in 2023. It also provides that it will be known by the Irish name Uisce Éireann.

In anticipation of this planned legislative reform, separation has already effectively been put in place on a non-statutory basis following the recent appointment of a CEO for Irish Water. The Bill also provides a role for the Comptroller and Auditor

General and the Public Accounts Committee in scrutinising Irish Water. Patricia King, former general secretary of the ICTU was nominated by Congress to the board of Uisce Éireann.

This legislation will reference Uisce Éireann as being a state authority – the “national authority for water services”. This gives proper recognition to the nature of Uisce Éireann/Irish Water as it, in effect, inherited local water services authority functions, including statutory powers of direction and compulsory purchase.

The future of Local Government

The minister noted the concerns raised by the unions relating to the continued and future role of local authorities and the outsourcing of services which they would have normally undertaken.

The document is light on detail and commitment. It fails to meaningfully detail any plans to reinvigorate the sector and the services provided to citizens and communities. The latest offering from Government on the revitalisation of the sector is disappointing. It is an opportunity lost to reimagine local democracy and local service provision.

The unions continue to drive the response with its “More Power to You” campaign.

Job evaluation

In November 2017, the Labour Court rejected the union claim for the implementation of job evaluation in the sector on the basis that “the business case had not been made”. The Court suggested that it would be prepared to consider such a case if made by the union. The Court also noted that the LGMA was to conclude job descriptions for clerical/administrative grades within six months of the hearing. The union business case was finalised. However, to date, the employer has yet to conclude the job descriptions exercise.

The long-awaited return to due process on job evaluation in the sector recommenced under the auspices of the WRC on the 8th July 2022. The LGMA confirmed to the WRC that, by October 2022, they would produce the job descriptions and furnish a written response to the union business case.

Fórsa was back at the WRC on the 26th January 2023. The meeting ended as soon as it began and the LGMA advised the WRC that it had no intention of negotiating or conciliating on the dispute. To that end, the DEC voted unanimously to commence a ballot of members for industrial action. The ballot commenced on the 30th March 2023.

Fórsa trade union members working in local authorities voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action due to the refusal of local authority management to establish a job evaluation scheme for local authority staff.

Many local authority workers continue to take responsibility for additional duties assigned to them during the economic crisis, when 10,000 jobs were lost from the sector during the financial crisis.

Employers continued to resist the claim and frustrate the process, leading to the collapse of negotiations at the WRC.

The LGMA continued to refuse to engage, therefore Fórsa declared the following action:

- An indefinite ban on engagement on all political representations (verbal and written) from the 21st June 2023.
- A telephone ban on the 22nd June 2023 - this included the use of work landline and mobile phones, work telephone calls via online platforms such as MS teams, and work calls via social media platforms such as WhatsApp phone/video and the use of personal mobile phones for work issues.
- Rolling action and escalation of the dispute.

Over the summer of 2023, the WRC continued to facilitate a very challenging conciliation process. Escalation of the dispute was due to commence in late September 2023 with a 24-hour email ban, followed by a 48-hour phone ban. The LGMA declared its intention to unilaterally withdraw blended working during the phone ban under the auspices of “health and safety”, despite the union making clear that reporting for work and login arrangements during blended working remain the same. This was inevitably going to lead to a further industrial response from the union.

The WRC intervened and brokered a process issuing the following note:

“Subject to the provisions of the next Public Service Agreement the parties are committed to engaging on scoping out options for a job evaluation scheme in the sector.”

The Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 contained the following clause:

“The parties agree to re-engage to progress the scoping exercise on options for a job evaluation arrangement in the local authority sector.”

It is the first time that any national agreement has contained any reference to a job evaluation scheme for the local government sector. Whilst the bargaining terrain is challenging, the division remains focussed and united in progressing job evaluation.

Blended working

The union concluded a blended working framework in June 2022 with the sector. The framework includes a policy review. Since the policy issued nationally, the union has been focussed on progressing implementation of blended working across the 31 city and county councils.

Most local authorities are now operating a blended working model. Local authorities have implemented no more than two days available for blended working as a maximum, where available, although this was never agreed and through the auspices of the WRC, the LGMA confirmed that no such direction or instruction was issued nationally. Fórsa formally triggered the review clause of the existing Blended Working Framework. The union has been negotiating with the LGMA in an attempt to finalise an agreement which formally embeds blended working across the sector and that covers as many workers as possible, as per the policy adopted at Fórsa’s divisional conference in May 2023.

Whilst the negotiations had been broadly concluded, with important amendments, appeals to an external third party were proving difficult

and therefore Fórsa had been waiting on the WRC Code of Practice. On the 7th March 2024, the WRC published “Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Request Flexible Working and the Right to Request Remote Working, as required by Part 4, Section 31, of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023”. This now clears the way to conclude the negotiations with the LGMA on an updated framework.

PRSI classification

Fórsa concluded longstanding negotiations on behalf of a member who was outside the agreement reached at the WRC due to a previous ruling by the Department of Social Protection. An agreement was reached and accepted which ensured that this member was not treated less favourably than other members affected by this dispute. This concludes a significant piece of work for members at Dublin City Council in terms of less favourable treatment of PRSI.

Libraries and the far-right

For over twelve months Fórsa members have been subjected to agitators entering libraries, harassing library workers, and attempting to remove books they deem to be “inappropriate”. The central library on Grand Parade, Cork City became the focal point, although, harassment has occurred in many libraries country wide. As a result of management inaction, Fórsa organised a solidarity protest in support of Cork library workers on Friday 7th July 2023 outside Cork City Library, Grand Parade, marching to Cork City Hall. Over five hundred people joined Fórsa’s solidarity march.

Members have been exposed to an unsafe workplace as these agitators freely move around verbally assaulting libraries staff, all the while recording interactions and live streaming to social media.

There are clear legal responsibilities on employers as outlined in Health and Safety at Work legislation. Furthermore, the “Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work” deals specifically with bullying and includes bullying in the workplace by “clients” and “customers”.

Fórsa sought the immediate disclosure of the safety statement and the anti-bullying policy that covers clients/customers.

In the context of the threat posed by far-right actors and agitators, Fórsa has written to local authorities demanding the following:

- Independent health and safety risk assessment at libraries, on the threats from far-right groups entering the library. This should be conducted in consultation with Fórsa’s library members, local representatives/officials
- To engage with An Garda Síochána on emergency response measures
- Review of library by-laws and exploration of legal avenues including barring/exclusion orders and injunctions.

Management is failing in their duty of care to staff and failing to show leadership on this matter. Fórsa produced a suite of support materials issued to support workers.

Fórsa has also had extensive engagement with An Garda Síochána regarding prevailing concerns for the safety of workers and the public at large. The union initiated regular online mass meetings for library members aimed creating a safe space to monitor, review and strategise.

Richy Carrothers, national secretary, is chairing the steering committee of a project spearheaded by UCD: “Resisting Hate: New Foundations for Developing Safeguards and Toolkits for Public Librarians Against Reactionary Responses to LGBTQ Materials (STARR)”.

This project is aimed at tackling the unprecedented censorship challenges in Irish public libraries, not only about books, but also against community groups, in particular the LGBTQI+ community. The union wants a dedicated focus on supports and resources for workers facing harassment in local libraries and online trolling.

Confined recruitment

The new system of confined competitions for promotions for local authority grades IV to VII, was introduced in January 2021 and will be fully operational when all current panels have been exhausted.

The agreement provides that 20% of promotion posts are confined to eligible candidates in their own local authority, while 50% of promotion posts are confined to eligible candidates in the local authority sector nationwide, and 30% of promotion posts are open to public competition. The agreement increases the percentage of grade IV posts to be filled by confined competition from 50% to 70%. The union is seeking to have the same application of a confined competition operate for the positions of senior executive officer in local authorities. Fórsa is going to conciliation for an initial hearing in the WRC. The LGMA is reluctant to consider the claim, and it is likely that the Labour Court will decide the outcome.

Flexitime

Fórsa lodged a claim for a nationwide scheme of flexitime, similar to the civil service scheme, which has 1.5 day’s flexi-leave per flexi period. The LGMA rejected the union’s claim. As flexitime was suspended during the covid period and the introduction of blended working, it was decided not to pursue the matter at that point. If local authority staff are treated less favourably regarding flexible working, following the introduction of the blended working policy, Fórsa will pursue the claim through the WRC.

Since conference 2022, significant gains have been made at Laois County Council regarding a full flexible working scheme, successfully concluding a longstanding campaign by the local branch.

Outstanding awards

Fórsa had sought a review of the mechanism for outstanding awards to senior executive officers under the public service stability agreement (PSSA). Sectoral bargaining measures in the

building momentum agreement provided a mechanism allowing the senior executive officer pay scale to be adjusted to ensure the outstanding benchmarking award could be pursued in a future public service agreement.

Libraries

Members accepted the national libraries agreement which covered staffing, amalgamated libraries, library management systems, “my open library”, promotions, flexitime, health and safety, qualifications, non-professional grade V posts and branch librarians.

The agreement ensured that “my open library” would not be used to reduce staffing levels, and a joint union-management review of the scheme took place between June and August 2020. A review of four open libraries from around the country took place. Management and staff interviews indicated that, apart from some health and safety issues, it was running well, and it was agreed that other proposed schemes could proceed.

However, the pandemic halted any progress, and the union understands that management now intends to proceed. There will be a significant staff consultation process. The feedback in all areas reviewed was positive. The advanced engagement between staff and management provided good foundations for the implementation of “my open library”. Staff advised that while technology supported open libraries, it changed the nature of the work, but did not reduce the level of work.

Water

Fórsa has continued its involvement with the international trade union federation Public Services International’s (PSI) global campaign on remunicipalisation of local authority services. The aim of the campaign is to bring privatised services back into public control. To date, over 1,000 local services have been brought back under the control of local authorities worldwide. The union held several meetings with the group and play an active part by highlighting the need to keep local authority employees in all aspects of public services.

IT/ICT

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage issued new qualifications for IT/ICT grades. A representative working group was established and presented a paper to the LGMA.

The challenges faced by local authorities in recruiting and retaining top-tier ICT professionals are significant and complex. An urgent assessment of ICT grading against existing professional roles is necessary, emphasising the importance of aligning ICT positions with comparable requirements and similar demands. This highlights the significance of ICT roles and the need for a versatile workforce capable of handling a wide range of responsibilities. Such restructuring is essential to deliver a satisfactory ICT service. Additionally, the creation of a National ICT Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Committee to ensure continued excellence in the sector and assist in delivering on national ICT goals is a critical component of the proposal. After decades of spending on hardware and software, Fórsa’s proposal is the first investment in the individuals responsible for delivering returns on those substantial capital costs and for enabling the digital delivery of services. To this group’s knowledge, no evaluation of ICT roles or structures has ever taken place. Elsewhere in the public sector this process is well underway, and the local authority sector now finds itself at a severe disadvantage.

Investing in a versatile workforce of skilled professionals will not only ensure the successful implementation of digital services but also provide a solid foundation for future technological demands. By attracting and retaining these multifaceted individuals, local authorities can effectively optimise their workforce, enhancing overall quality and efficiency across their ICT departments.

Grade claims

Fórsa had taken a claim to the WRC and the Labour Court on behalf of tenant liaison officers. The claim was to have an independent evaluation, as the union was aware that officers in other local authorities were being paid at a higher grade. The Labour Court

rejected the union’s claim on the basis that Fórsa submitted a national claim to have a job evaluation scheme introduced in the local authority sector.

The union recognised that there are groups of employees carrying out roles and functions throughout the sector, but in some cases are paid two grades below their counterparts elsewhere. Based on the Labour Court recommendation, the union has established a working group representing several analogous grades. The aim of the working group is to collate information that will support the claim to have a local authority job evaluation scheme.

Other grades

Fórsa has numerous members who are employed by local authorities across the country undertaking the exact same role but are paid at different grades within the same profession. These individual professional grades undertake the same duties, with the same level of responsibility etc.

The grades concerned are:

- Archivists
- Authorised officers of motor tax
- Architectural conservation officers
- Environmental awareness officers

- Heritage officers
- Housing liaison officers
- Museum curators

Management has replaced qualified positions with generic posts without consultation with the union and the members affected have no staff support or career pathway. These professionals are standalone in most locations with a high level of responsibility.

The working group is of the view that no other grading structures within the service have seen such disparity in their terms and conditions for undertaking the same roles and duties. Members have not been given any promotional opportunities despite having taken on duties of a higher position due to the changes and new projects approved by management within their working environment.

Over the last two years a group of representatives from each of the professions have created a substantive business case outlining their issues as follows:

- Parity of pay, terms and conditions with colleagues within the same profession.
- Protection of grading structures.
- Reinstatement of suppressed positions.
- Review of job specifications.



Municipal Employees'

Divisional strategy

The Municipal Employees' Divisional Executive Committee agreed that all industrial priorities for the division must be underpinned by a membership growth and capacity/density building strategy. The division is committed to ensuring the work complements and contributes to the overall union effort to achieving the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan has a core mission to create:

- A union where members feel involved,
- A union where activists feel empowered,
- A union where staff feel heard and involved.

Fórsa's bargaining objectives and priorities are aligned with activities aimed at growing the union by developing strong branches and member involvement in activity designed to improve pay, conditions, and influence. The division reviews membership levels regularly and has agreed membership growth targets.

EPSU

Fórsa is a member of EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, representing eight million workers in 54 countries. Richy Carrothers represents Fórsa on its Local and Regional Government Standing Committee.

Local Authority National Council (LANC)

Fórsa national secretary, Richy Carrothers is the union side secretary to the Local Authority National Council (LANC), the negotiating forum made up of recognised trade unions and the

Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). The LANC is independently chaired by the WRC. The local authority oversight group reviews the implementation of the sectoral elements of the Building Momentum national pay agreement.

Fórsa has sought to improve structures and engagement to ensure that national bargaining arrangements in the sector are functional and fit for purpose.

The future of Local Government services

Fórsa is at the forefront of standing up for local government. The "More Power to You" campaign - for increased revenue and powers for local authorities - strives to strengthen and improve local government services to communities and citizens and focuses on reforms covering waste, water, housing and energy services.

Fórsa, SIPTU and Connect, representing over 30,000 local authority workers continued to mobilise. In the run up to the elections on the 7th June 2024, Fórsa will be seeking to influence candidates and parties about the necessity to reimagine the local government sector. Strengthening local government is not just the most direct and effective way of improving services, providing for communities and restoring trust in society - it is the only way.

Outsourcing

A key priority of the Municipal Employees' division has been to ensure that direct labour is used to the greatest possible extent. Some employers sought to use the pandemic and more recently the labour shortage as an opportunity to outsource services. Fórsa is at the forefront of defending local services and has engaged in extensive industrial relations processes, particularly halting outsourcing attempts of outdoor provision across Dublin City Council.

Despite agreement being reached with the LGMA, ensuring that direct labour is used to the greatest possible extent, as provided for in the public service stability agreement (PSSA), the union is having to intervene regularly to prevent attempts to outsource service provision.

Remunicipalisation of domestic waste services

At Dublin City Council (DCC), a working group involving the unions commissioned the research division of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), to submit a proposal in respect of the remunicipalisation of domestic waste. The request covered two key areas for the research as follows:

1. A comparative analysis that reviews DCC's waste collection system to other comparable European cities, with specified criteria including coverage, cost of service, quality of service, public satisfaction, terms and conditions of employment and environmental impact.
2. Consideration of evidence in the context of waste management arrangements in Dublin city and Ireland, including a description of the current legal and regulatory context. It is intended that the research will draw attention to legislative and other changes required to enable DCC re-enter the domestic waste collection service.

The research team indicated that the work would be carried out in two phases. Phase one was completed by February 2022, reviewing the available data. The initial report is to be discussed with the SPC sub-committee to enable an informed decision on the approach to be taken in phase two. The full report is available [here](#).

Key finding - phase one

In general terms, it has been challenging to identify directly comparable data from the cities chosen for this project. Within each location there are varying administrative structures. There are also variances in how and why data is collected, making it difficult to establish uniformity across the agreed criteria for a comparative analysis. In addition, there are significant variances in terms of population, population density, and housing types, all of which

influence how waste collection methodologies are determined.

There are also important historical, cultural, political and economic reasons why waste management has evolved the way it has in the various jurisdictions. Notwithstanding these limitations, the research has identified some key findings and data to inform discussions on a more detailed phase two analysis. These are:

- A kerbside waste collection service is availed of by 82% of households in the DCC administrative area. This compares with 100% of households for the other cities assessed.
- The proportion of households living in apartments, rather than houses, in the comparative cities is very high, almost the reverse of the situation in Dublin. This has a significant impact on waste collection.
- The average volume of waste produced by households in Dublin appears to be higher than in other cities studied.
- All households in the other cities examined are required to pay for waste collection, with those on low incomes supported through social security.
- Transition to a more environmentally friendly approach to waste collection is of moderate priority in the comparator cities. For example, in Stockholm, the extent to which potential contractors use environmentally friendly vehicles is taken into consideration in the evaluation process.
- Data on traffic congestion attributable to waste collection vehicles is not monitored by any of the cities. Early starts are a tacit acknowledgement that waste collection does cause some traffic challenges and that having streets free of traffic allows for more efficient collection. However, early starts may also suit employees.
- Data from two operators suggest that householders in Dublin city pay on average €243 per annum in waste collection costs. In Copenhagen the average is €284, in Oslo €258, and in Salzburg €232. Average annual waste costs in Stockholm are significantly lower (€88), though for the 10% of households living in houses it's €205.

- Average salary figures are significantly higher in all of the comparator cities. Data on the cost of living shows that Stockholm and Dublin are very similar, with Copenhagen somewhat higher and Oslo is about 20% higher. When rent is factored in, Dublin is on a par with Copenhagen and much closer to Oslo.

Water

Fórsa has been involved in discussions with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the LGMA and Irish Water following the proposals by Irish Water to transfer 3,500 local authority staff to a new single entity. Prior to entering negotiations, Fórsa sought and secured a commitment from the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage that no legal measures would be used to compulsorily transfer staff to the new entity.

Following a number of meetings in early 2021, six days were set aside by the WRC in July 2021 to deal with the industrial relations strand on pay, pensions and related. No real progress was made. Talks adjourned until November 2021. Irish Water produced a working document in November 2021 implying the transfer of staff would take place despite the union sides insistence that talks had only taken place on the basis that there would be no forced transfer of staff to Irish Water. The document contained a provision that Irish Water would take complete control of staffing by 2026. Management made a number of presentations on the pay structure currently operating for staff working directly for Irish Water. The unions outlined their concerns around timelines. Management is to review its document and revert.

The unions met with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O’ Brien to discuss the various strands of the transformation process.

Following that meeting, unions received a paper from the department which commented on each strand as follows:

- **Strand one: Constitutional referendum**
The minister committed to holding a referendum. Preference is to hold a referendum in conjunction with a referendum on the right to housing. No date or schedule for a referendum has yet been proposed.
- **Strand two: The future of local government**
No response to key union asks, but acknowledgement that numbers employed have not recovered to 2009 levels.
- **Strand three: Status and governance of the new entity**
The entity will be publicly owned with oversight and accountability to the Oireachtas and the Comptroller and Auditor General. Defining the new entity as an “authority”. Composition of the board is under consideration, and it is expected to have a worker representative on the board.

The framework for the future delivery of water services as issued by the WRC in June 2022 will ensure that:

- There will be no compulsory transfers of staff to Irish Water.
- There will be no compulsory redundancies.
- Existing pay is protected, with the chance to earn more through individual or collective Irish Water performance rewards.
- Existing pension benefits are legally protected, with all local authority service taken into account for pension purposes.
- Other working conditions, including hours of work, annual leave, sick pay, allowances, overtime and work location will also remain the same or be enhanced.
- Staff who transfer to Irish Water will receive a €3,000 incentive payment.
- Local authority water workers can also opt to remain in local authority employment on their existing terms and conditions.
- There is a voluntary redundancy option for local authority workers.
- Collective bargaining rights will remain in place.

Three other strands were outstanding as part of this process and to that end, the union side continued to engage with officials from the department and the minister directly. The department issued a document “Irish Water Transformation – The Wider Policy Context” on the 18th July 2022.

Master agreement

The ICTU wrote to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on behalf of the group of local authority water service unions expressing concern that the final master agreement on the transfer of water services from local authorities to Uisce Éireann fails to take account of feedback provided by unions.

The “Master Agreement” is essentially an asset and business transfer process between local authorities and Uisce Éireann, designed to replace the service level agreement which has been in place since the national water body was created, and unions had been invited to provide feedback on its content. Trade unions have been consulted on this framework but are not being requested to agree or otherwise.

Unions have outlined a number of the provisions set out in the agreement that were an unnecessary intrusion by Uisce Éireann into the employment relationship between staff who do not wish to transfer, and their local authority. Unions also raised concerns regarding the maintenance of staff files and are of the view that what is stated in the document could lead to significant breaches of general data protection regulations.

Fórsa has advised members that due to the concerns, primarily contained in section five of the draft “Master Agreement” to continue with existing reporting relationships. The union will continue to work with the implementation of the framework as the most effective tool to protect members’ pay and conditions.

Fórsa and the group of unions for local authority water workers continue to raise the issue of staff shortages in water services, and the potentially significant impact of the decision to end all acting and fixed term contracts in water services on the 31st March 2024.

The union side is pressing the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) to ensure that the public water services are sufficiently resourced, and that where staff vacancies arise, they are filled in line with the terms of the framework.

Members will be aware from the updates provided that Fórsa has repeatedly raised concerns over this. The union pointed to the damaging impact of this decision and following these representations, Uisce Éireann and the LGMA have agreed to bring forward proposals to address the issue at the next meeting of the Irish Water Consultative Group.

Unions received a firm commitment from the employer side that the advice to end all acting by 31st March would be reviewed if posts are deemed critical. This commitment from the LGMA was given due to the union side raising the severe impact that the ending of acting posts would cause to the delivery of water services in the local authority areas. Uisce Éireann agreed that this could have a significant impact on delivery.

As a result of this discussion, the LGMA committed that they would undertake to review, with the senior management in individual local authorities, if specific acting posts should be kept in place due to their critical nature.

It remains the union’s position that service delivery must be protected, and that any cliff edge should be avoided, ultimately any decision to terminate acting posts, then management must bear the responsibility for any negative impact on the public. The union position is that the transition period should be utilised to its fullest to ensure a safe and sensible move over to full Uisce Éireann control of all water services. This includes maintaining all posts until they can be filled appropriately.

Referendum

Government has stated that the public ownership of water reflects the clear will of the Irish people and is firmly established as a core principle attaching to the delivery of water services. All parties to the water sector transformation process recognise the fundamental importance attaching to public ownership as a core principle at the heart of the reform process.

Having consulted with his colleagues in Government, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has signalled his willingness to support a referendum on public ownership.

It is most disappointing that Government has yet to honour its commitment to hold a referendum on the public ownership of water. Fórsa and other unions have advocated that Government seize the opportunity to hold the referendum to forever enshrine the public ownership of water in the Constitution.

Fórsa is continuing to gather the signed postcards that will be presented to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, calling on him to deliver on the commitment to hold a referendum on the ownership of water. The minister has pledged on a number of occasions his intention to recommend such a referendum to Government that would forever enshrine the public ownership of water into the Constitution. To date this commitment has yet to materialise.

Public ownership of water services ensures safe and sustainable access to water for everyone. It is critical that members continue to press Government to name the date to keep water public and Fórsa is calling on all local authority members in the Municipal and Local Government and Local Services Divisions to sign this postcard calling on the Minister to live up to his commitment.

[#KeepWaterPublic](#) [#NameTheDate](#)

Governance of Irish Water

Strong oversight and accountability arrangements go hand in hand with public ownership and are highly valued by Government and unions alike.

The Government has now approved the publication of the Water Services (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2022. This Bill will provide for the separation of Irish Water from the Ervia Group as planned in 2023. It also provides that it will be known by the Irish name Uisce Éireann.

In anticipation of this planned legislative reform, separation has already effectively been put in place on a non-statutory basis following the recent appointment of a CEO for Irish Water. The Bill also provides a role for the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee in scrutinising Irish Water. Patricia King, former general secretary of the ICTU was nominated by Congress to the board of Uisce Éireann.

This legislation will reference Uisce Éireann as being a state authority – the “national authority for water services”. This gives proper recognition to the nature of Uisce Éireann/Irish Water as it, in effect, inherited local water services authority functions, including statutory powers of direction and compulsory purchase.



Dublin City Council.

The future of Local Government

The Minister noted the concerns raised by the unions relating to the continued and future role of local authorities and the outsourcing of services which they would have normally undertaken.

The document is light on detail and commitment. It fails to meaningfully detail any plans to reinvigorate the sector and the services provided to citizens and communities. The latest offering from Government on the revitalisation of the sector is disappointing. It is an opportunity lost to reimagine local democracy and local service provision.

The unions continue to drive the response with its “More Power to You” campaign.

Industrial relations and related

Dublin Fire Brigade

The Fire Services National Oversight Implementation Group (FSNOIG) continues. Fórsa represents firefighters and senior officers in Dublin Fire Brigade and senior officers outside Dublin on FSNOIG. The group agreed to separate the retained firefighters and the full-time firefighters. The retained firefighters’ group is chaired by David Begg, and the full-time group is chaired by Kevin Duffy. Fórsa has representation on both these groups and continues to represent members on issues including the review of internal organisational fire service structures.

Agreement was reached with management in relation to a dedicated drivers’ training plan for firefighters. This agreement will ensure that the relevant driver resources are available on the ground to deliver the required service needs as outlined by management. The plan outlines a timeframe for training courses to be held which will deal with the shortfall of drivers currently within the service. In addition, it also allows personnel on the transfer list to be offered training before transferring into a station with relevant driver vacancies.

Technological University Dublin (TUD)

Discussions have continued on the organisation and design of the new university structure, which will have implications for members in the future. Engagement continues with management on the approved design. There have been negotiations on members’ terms and conditions as one organisation, with various claims to be addressed. Conciliation was adjourned on the Tallaght caretakers shift claim, pending the outcome of the operational design process. There are a number of ongoing dignity at work investigations, with an external company still investigating claims against Fórsa members. Fórsa has progressed a number of issues pertaining to pay and attendance in the context of long Covid.

Dublin City Council (DCC)

Dublin City Council’s housing partnership forum continued, covering return to the office, apprenticeships/traineeships, and recruitment issues.

North City Operations Depot

Extensive discussions continued since last conference on the establishment of the north city operations depot (“super depot”). A significant project of DCC, it presented a unique opportunity for management and unions to engage from design to completion, ensure the building is fit for purpose, and address any potential challenges. Now complete, the depot houses stores, waste management services, electrical services/public lighting, housing, road maintenance, traffic, drainage (surface water maintenance unit) and administrative staff.

Under the auspices of the WRC, unions achieved the following:

- Management has committed to recognise the significant change required to work practices and re-location of operations. On that basis, direct engagement will take place with the relevant members affected in relation to the implementation for this section of the agreement. Members received €1,000 in redeployment to the facility and €500 at the end of January 2024

- Travel Time Payment
- Corporate Workshops
- Clocking In,
- Facilities Management,
- Access and Egress
- Allowances.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

The union has engaged in ongoing discussions regarding career pathway and promotional outlets for general operatives.

City of Dublin ETB

The union is addressing a number of individual cases.

South Dublin County Council

There has been a serious breakdown in industrial relations engagement and processes in South Dublin County Council. Fórsa has contacted the WRC mediation/conciliation and advisory service to assist both parties to address this. SDCC has, however, refused to engage in a process with the WRC, and the issue has been brought to the Local Authority National Council (LANC) with a view to persuading management to engage properly with Fórsa.

Housing

Fórsa will continue to highlight the acute housing and homelessness crisis. Its Local Government division continues to seek additional staffing to enable a more efficient turnaround of vacant local authority housing and the approval of additional housing. The division has been critical of elements of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's new housing approval process.

Housing caretakers

Discussions had taken place in relation to Dublin City Council's proposal, under the PSSA, to have housing caretakers moved to a "quad-based" pilot scheme, whereby caretakers would be part of a team, travelling to several areas, rather than looking after a single complex. The pilot was due to start on several occasions and was suspended due to the pandemic.

PRSI

This protracted dispute has been resolved successfully to the satisfaction of all affected members, on foot of negotiations with Fórsa and other unions (both directly with the employer and before the WRC) which has resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin City Council.

Libraries

Members accepted the national libraries agreement which covered staffing, amalgamated libraries, library management systems, 'my open library', promotions, flexitime, health and safety, qualifications, non-professional grade V posts and branch librarians.

The agreement ensured that 'my open library' would not be, and a joint union-management review of the scheme took place between June and August 2020. A review of four open libraries from around the country took place. Management and staff interviews indicated that, apart from some health and safety issues, it was running well, and it was agreed that other proposed schemes could proceed. However, the pandemic halted any progress, and the union understands that management now intends to proceed. There will be a significant staff consultation process. The feedback in all areas reviewed was positive. The advanced engagement between staff and management provided good foundations for the implementation of 'my open library'. Staff advised that while technology supported open libraries, it changed the nature of the work, but did not reduce the level of work.

Services & Enterprises

Pay, terms & conditions

Aviation

Fórsa has thousands of members in airlines, airports, aviation regulation and services. The aviation sector was among the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and has had a turbulent recovery. As a result, many aviation members have experienced the negative impacts post pandemic, such as base closures and delayed recovery in some areas of employment. Fórsa has achieved improvements in almost all employments over the last two years although it has been difficult to negotiate improved pay, terms, and conditions for members in challenging circumstances for this sector.

Dublin Airport Authority

In 2022, Fórsa negotiated a pay increase for members, which was accepted by ballot. The deal provides for 3.75% from April 2022 and 3.5% from April 2023. The pay deal was not applied to all members, as management asserts that not all are covered by collective bargaining. This has led to difficulties with current pay negotiations on a successor agreement, as Fórsa want to achieve a deal that applies to all members. Negotiations are ongoing on both matters.

Shannon Airport Authority

In 2023, Fórsa negotiated a pay deal that would cover members until the end of 2025. The deal provides for a €1,000 tax-free voucher for 2022, 3.75% increase from January 2023, 3.5% from January 2024 and 3% in January 2025. This was the first pay rise many members saw in more than ten years.

Irish Aviation Authority/AirNav Ireland

In 2023, Fórsa negotiated the restoration of a 10% pay cut that impacted members for a nine-month period in 2021. A retrospective pay increase of 3.5% for 2022 was accepted by members, whilst pay talks are ongoing for 2023 and 2024.

The Air Navigation and Transport Act 2022 set up a new commercial semi-state body, AirNav Ireland, and made the Irish Aviation Authority the single aviation regulator for Ireland as it merged with the Commission for Aviation Regulation. This separation has led to a lot of industrial relations changes for members, including negotiations on two separate collective labour agreements.

Air Traffic Controllers (ATC) reached an agreement on several issues, including improvements to salary scales and increases for student air traffic controllers, as well as an enhanced two-year ATC call-in scheme.

CHC - Techcrew

In 2023, Fórsa negotiated a pay deal that would cover members until the end of 2026. The deal provides for 10.25% increase over the life of the agreement, with 2.5% backdated to January 2022. It also enhanced pension provisions.

In 2023, the State awarded a new operator of the Search and Rescue (SAR) service, Bristow Ireland Limited. This is set to commence later this year. Fórsa has negotiated an industrial relations agreement with Bristow that protects members as they transfer to the new provider. A collective labour agreement covering the terms and conditions of SAR Technical Crew has also been negotiated.

Cabin crew

Aer Lingus

In 2023, a new pay deal was negotiated by Fórsa working with the group of unions, SIPTU, Connect, Unite under the umbrella of ICTU. The pay deal was backdated to 1st January 2023, and totals 12.5% consolidated and 1.5% unconsolidated, with the

last increase payable in January 2025. The deal also has a financial floor to help better compensate lower earners, as well as removing the bottom point of the incremental scale and providing for a review process for credits. The credit model review process is currently underway ahead of the next round of pay talks.

Outside of pay related matters Fórsa is currently in discussions around policy changes, including those related to sick leave, bereavement and a new domestic violence policy.

Ryanair

The union recently negotiated two increases to pay for members in the company with an enhancement to the collective labour agreement (2022 - 2027). In November 2023 Fórsa negotiated an annual increase for senior cabin crew of €500, to be paid each year by voucher directly to crew. This was followed by negotiations to enhance the current CLA, despite being constrained by a 'no cost increasing claim' clause. A ballot of members saw the proposals by members in February 2024, leading to an increase in the scheduled block hour payments on an hourly basis, in addition to increasing their annual uniform and medical (Uni/ Med) allowance by over 50%.

Emerald Airlines

Fórsa has been engaging in a recruitment campaign for cabin crew in Emerald Airlines and have been supporting members locally.

Pilots

Aer Lingus

In January 2024, Fórsa/IALPA members in Aer Lingus voted overwhelmingly (98%) to reject a proposed pay increase of 8.5%. The increase was recommended by the report of the Pilot Pay Tribunal, which had taken written submissions and held oral hearings since December 2022. Following conciliation at the WRC, the dispute was subject to a hearing of the Labour Court in April 2024.



Ryanair

Fórsa secured a collective labour agreement (CLA) with Ryanair in December 2022, which provided for pay increases, consolidated variable pay into basic pay, and annual salary increases. Since then, Fórsa has negotiated two addendums to the CLA, which further enhanced pilots' pay.

The first addendum, provided for basic salary increases for captains and first officers in addition to the pay rises included in the original CLA. The addendum also introduced €1,000 a year tax-free vouchers for pilots.

The second addendum to the CLA increased flight pay and allowances for all pilots. Importantly, the union also secured total pay harmonisation for Ryanair pilots across all Irish bases.

These improvements to the CLA mean that pay for Ryanair captains and first officers will increase by 12.6% and 14%, respectively, over the lifetime of the four-year agreement.

CHC/Bristow

In August 2023, it was announced that the new contract for delivering the Search and Rescue Service would be awarded to Bristow Ireland. Fórsa and IALPA have since secured a number of agreements with the company that recognise the union for collective bargaining purposes and protect our members' existing terms and conditions. The agreements were accepted by members in a ballot in December 2023.

All pilots and technical crew are to transfer to Bristow Ireland by 30th June 2025, on the same terms and conditions of employment. Meanwhile, continuity of service, seniority, salary and allowances, pension benefits and existing collective labour agreements (CLAs) remain in place and are protected.

Emerald Airlines

In March 2023, Fórsa/IALPA members in Emerald Airlines voted to accept a new collective labour agreement which provides for a 10% pay increase over three years. The agreement contains a commitment from management that negotiations on enhancing the agreement will happen if the company makes accumulated profits by 2026.



Mater Hospital.

The CLA also includes a seniority agreement at the airline, along with increases to sick pay and the introduction of a service-related pay scale. This pay agreement is the first ever at the airline and is a strong foundation on which the union can build.

Non-commercial state agencies

Fórsa has thousands of members in non-commercial state agencies. These agencies have been going through a significant recruitment process, and with the resulting increase in staff numbers, the union has seen a large number of new members joining the union. Members have benefited from the recent public sector pay agreements.

An Bord Pleanála

The organisation is impacted by the introduction of the Planning and Development Bill 2022 which is a substantial piece of legislation currently passing through the Oireachtas. The proposed legislation will see substantial changes to An Bord Pleanála and how they operate, from changing the name of the organisation to also increasing the organisation's capacity to determine planning decisions on a range of new areas. As a result of

branch engagement around the new legislation Fórsa wrote to every Oireachtas member on the issues raised by members.

The union met with a number of housing spokespersons on the issues identified by the branch in order to seek amendments to the bill. The bill is still under discussion, and Fórsa continues to engage on the issues affecting members.

Coimisiún na Meán (formerly Broadcasting Authority of Ireland)

Following the establishment of the new media commission, Coimisiún na Meán, our members in BAI transferred into the new organisation. A large number of new staff will be needed. Fórsa secured the existing terms and conditions of our members and have agreed an IR forum to address all staff issues in the commission.

Commission for the Regulation of Utilities

A dispute was resolved within the energy safety division, however, there is an ongoing pay disparity issue within the inspectorate that is currently going through conciliation within the WRC.

Fáilte Ireland

Various changes have been made to a tourist information centre following health and safety concerns being raised on behalf of members. A claim has also been lodged for an enhanced and updated allowance for those members who work a '5 over 7' roster and are scheduled for Sunday duties.

Health and Safety Authority

In 2022, our members within the HSA inspectorate were in dispute over a proposed pilot project on out of hours work. Fórsa's position was that the offer of remuneration proposed by management for doing out of hours work was insufficient, and there were a number of other matters identified by the membership. The members' concerns were taken onboard, and management updated their proposal to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Fórsa awaits the outcome from the department.

The Housing Agency

Fórsa has secured a comprehensive IR agreement with the agency.

Marine Institute

A dispute around commercial sea sampling has been referred to the WRC. The persistent use of fixed-term and fixed-purpose employment contracts remains a serious problem.

Despite communications with the Ministers in both the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the employment contracts of several members who worked supporting the service level agreement between the Marine Institute and the departments were terminated.

Sea Fisheries Protection Agency

Fórsa has raised concerns surrounding the manner in which complaints under section 49 of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act (2006) are dealt with. Fórsa is also addressing management's proposal to introduce policies which would radically and adversely alter the terms and conditions of members who hold warrants as Sea Fisheries Protection Officers.

Road Safety Authority

The main issue Fórsa has been campaigning on is for additional permanent jobs in driver testing and an end to the practice of hiring staff on temporary contracts. The campaign has involved a staff petition calling for permanent roles, which was signed by 120 driver testers. The petition was sent to the Minister for Transport and all members of the Oireachtas Transport Committee. The RSA professional branch held a series of meetings with TDs, who then subsequently raised the issue in the Dáil. Fórsa is expecting RSA management to seek sanction from the Department of Transport for permanent tester positions.

In March 2024, RSA management allowed the temporary contracts of seven staff to expire despite record waiting times for driving tests, causing considerable frustration among Fórsa members. This has been referred to the WRC.

Fórsa also achieved significant improvements to the RSA's family friendly policy. The union negotiated an increase in the number of months per year that flexible working is available to staff. The union also negotiated to extend the scheme to include staff on probation and on temporary contracts.

Special EU Programmes Body

Fórsa, alongside our colleagues in NIPSA, negotiated an industrial relations agreement with management in the Special EU Programmes Body.

Teagasc

Fórsa and the other staff associations in Teagasc are in the process of reviewing partnership structures with management, this has included several meetings and the use of external experts.

Claims have been advanced for the Grade III staff officers, both in the regional areas and colleges, who have for many years been seeking recognition for their increased workload.

Blended working arrangements have been rolled out and are currently being reviewed with the staff associations.

Discussions are ongoing regarding internal 'circulation rules' and a revised document is expected.

A new advisory and education strategy will be the subject of engagement with Fórsa over the coming months.

Commercial state agencies

An Post

In June 2023, An Post moved to a new corporate headquarters in the EXO building. In advance, concerns were raised about the disruption and the risks this would cause to members who moved.

The 2022-2023 pay agreement provided 5% over two years and incorporated a tax-free voucher to the value of €750. A new pay claim has been advanced through the Joint Consultative Council forum, negotiations are underway.

Coillte

The current collective labour agreement expires in 2024. The union will commence negotiations on a successor agreement in the coming months.

Engagement with pensioners in pursuit of sustainable increases is ongoing.

Drogheda Port Company

In late 2022, Fórsa concluded a pay agreement in Drogheda Port Company. A two-and-a-half-year agreement commenced in March 2022 with a 3% pay increase from 1st March and a 3% pay increase from 1st September 2023.

Institute of Public Administration

A restructuring within the IPA is currently ongoing, with Fórsa actively engaging to address any issues for members during the process.

Fórsa participated in a job evaluation scheme which led to a job upgrade for many members. Discussions continue to resolve a small number of cases which remain.

Other employments

Community employment supervisors

In October 2022, the union lodged a pay claim with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) on behalf of CE supervisors and assistant supervisors. The parties met under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission conciliation services in February 2023. The DSP outlined an offer which included pay and a collective bargaining agreement. The parties reconvened in March 2023 when the DSP tabled an improved offer which again included pay, and a collective bargaining element. This was accepted by way of ballot.

The deal also contained provision for further discussion on pay and other matters in 2024, with reference to the Public Service Agreement. In February 2024, Fórsa wrote to the DSP seeking discussions on pay and other matters once the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 ballot had concluded. The DSP responded to say that once the PSA ballot had concluded the union would be invited to talks on pay.

The union continues to represent members in Community Employment at both the Operations Forum and the Monitoring Committee.

Eir

A three-year pay deal worth 2% per annum is coming to a conclusion in June and engagement with the company has taken place on a successor agreement.

Irish Water/Uisce Éireann

Negotiations on a new pay agreement have concluded an average increase of 7.7% over two years.

Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA)

Fórsa has been engaging with IIEA management to negotiate pay increases for members. This has resulted in a 5% increase in 2023 and 3% in 2024.

Local employment services

The joint union campaign by Fórsa and Siptu to protect local employment services (LES) and job clubs commenced in 2021, as unions campaigned against the Government-imposed tendering process for LES and job clubs.

Unions had cautioned Government on the risk of privatising LES, saying that job losses and a diminished employment service were likely if private companies took over the services.

In August 2022, the results of a tendering process run by the Department of Social Protection provided good news for Local Employment Services (LES) providers as all 17 'lots', or contracts, tendered were secured by existing LES providers,

many of whom were competing against private companies in the tendering process.

Fórsa attributed the successful outcomes for the existing providers to the interventions made by the unions to protect the services and to protect as many jobs as possible. However, some of the new contractors advised that there would be some job losses.

The tendering process effectively forced some of the contractors to downsize in some areas, while securing a contract had the effect of reducing the scale of potential job losses. Unions continued to engage with the employers and the ILDN (Irish Local Development Network) in an effort to protect as many jobs as possible.

Unions remained concerned that on the position of the Department of Social Protection, which effectively ceased the operation of Jobs Clubs and those staff were made redundant. The union directed efforts to securing decent redundancy terms.

P&O Maritime

A new collective labour agreement was accepted in a ballot. With pay increases totalling 6.75% over its lifetime, it will run until 2024. Discussions are due to commence around increments and allowances.

Pobal

Fórsa is currently campaigning to achieve enhanced pay for workers in Better Start - Pobal's early years service - to properly reflect the skills and responsibilities of these employees.

Fórsa and ICTU have lobbied the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to ensure that a trade union representative is included in the programme board which is overseeing the planning for a dedicated state agency for early learning care and school-age childcare.

Vodafone

The performance bonus system is still in place, with Fórsa and the CWU engaging with the company to progress the current cost-of-living pressures within the context of the current pay agreement.

Appendix I

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	27,314,621	24,971,108
Rental income		594,321	664,531
Interest on deposits, government stocks and dividend income		815,369	721,298
Loss on disposal of fixed assets		(100,586)	-
Loss on disposal of investment properties		-	(38,349)
Fair value gain/(loss) on investments		2,986,201	(6,574,051)
Loss on disposal of investments		(8,714)	-
Other income		32,754	64,270
		<u>31,633,966</u>	<u>19,808,807</u>
Expenditure			
General and other administration expenditure		(29,329,649)	(27,573,075)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year before tax		2,304,317	(7,764,268)
Tax	8	(368,573)	(196,173)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		<u>1,935,744</u>	<u>(7,960,441)</u>

Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		1,935,744	(7,960,441)
Remeasurement of defined benefit plans	16	1,668,000	7,220,000
Fixed assets revaluation loss	9	(233,176)	(17,929)
Total comprehensive income/(expense) for the year		<u>3,370,568</u>	<u>(758,370)</u>

General Fund – Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	20,391,637	18,981,334
Investment income			
Staff loan interest		-	425
Interest on deposits, government stocks and dividend income		124,489	29,947
Fair value gain/(loss) on investments		62,910	(323,988)
		<u>20,579,036</u>	<u>18,687,718</u>
Expenditure			
Administration, establishment and general expenses		(19,753,898)	(19,505,639)
Depreciation on office equipment	9	(491,754)	(395,375)
Net other finance income	5	<u>548,000</u>	<u>79,000</u>
Surplus/(deficit) for the year before tax	6	881,384	(1,134,296)
Tax	8	(28,849)	(1,984)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		<u><u>852,535</u></u>	<u><u>(1,136,280)</u></u>

General Fund – Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		852,535	(1,136,280)
Remeasurement of defined benefit plans	16	<u>1,668,000</u>	<u>7,220,000</u>
Total comprehensive income for the year		<u><u>2,520,535</u></u>	<u><u>6,083,720</u></u>

Developing World Fund – Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	763,706	709,750
Expenditure			
Projects		<u>(525,783)</u>	<u>(805,537)</u>
Surplus/(deficit) for the year before tax	6	237,923	(95,787)
Tax	8	-	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		<u><u>237,923</u></u>	<u><u>(95,787)</u></u>

Developing World Fund – Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		237,923	(95,787)
Total comprehensive income/(expense) for the year		<u><u>237,923</u></u>	<u><u>(95,787)</u></u>

Contingency Fund – Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	1,272,844	1,182,917
Investment income			
Interest on deposits, government stocks and dividend income		690,880	691,352
Loss on disposal of investments		(8,714)	-
Fair value gain/(loss) on investments		2,923,291	(6,250,063)
Rental income		594,321	664,531
Loss on disposal of investment properties		-	(38,349)
Loss on disposal of fixed assets		(100,586)	-
		<u>5,372,036</u>	<u>(3,749,612)</u>
Expenditure			
Investment consultancy fees		(42,400)	(52,317)
Depreciation on buildings & refurbishment		(729,882)	(728,898)
Legal costs of disputes		138,962	(526,283)
Property management charges		(100,073)	(51,996)
Impairment loss on fixed assets and investment properties		(3,786,853)	(2,394,172)
		<u>(4,520,246)</u>	<u>(3,753,666)</u>
Surplus/(deficit) for the year before tax	6	851,790	(7,503,278)
Tax	8	(335,242)	(194,189)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax		<u>516,548</u>	<u>(7,697,467)</u>

Contingency Fund – Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2023

Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus/(deficit) for the year after tax	516,548	(7,697,467)
Fixed assets revaluation loss	9 (233,176)	(17,929)
Total comprehensive income/(expense) for the year	<u>283,372</u>	<u>(7,715,396)</u>

Benefit Fund – Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	540,880	499,480
Expenditure			
Benefit expenses		(234,238)	(280,110)
Overhead expenses		(76,080)	(42,266)
Surplus for the year before tax		230,562	177,104
Tax		-	-
Surplus for the year after tax		<u>230,562</u>	<u>177,104</u>

Benefit Fund – Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus for the year after tax		230,562	177,104
Total comprehensive income for the year		<u>230,562</u>	<u>177,104</u>

Branch Fund – Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Income			
Subscription income	4	4,345,554	3,597,627
Investment and other income		32,754	63,845
		<u>4,378,308</u>	<u>3,661,472</u>
Expenditure			
Administration and general expenses		<u>(4,275,650)</u>	<u>(2,869,483)</u>
Surplus for the year before tax		102,658	791,989
Tax		(4,482)	-
Surplus for the year after tax		<u><u>98,176</u></u>	<u><u>791,989</u></u>

Branch Fund – Statement of total comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus for the year after tax		98,176	791,989
Total comprehensive income for the year		<u><u>98,176</u></u>	<u><u>791,989</u></u>

Union – Statement of financial position

As at 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Non-current assets			
Tangible fixed assets	9	16,661,743	19,612,680
Investment properties	9	10,810,000	11,310,000
Intangible assets	10	573,855	535,026
Investments	11	41,706,718	37,707,480
Pension asset - net	16	16,541,629	13,809,629
		<u>86,293,945</u>	<u>82,974,815</u>
Current assets			
Investments	11	2,223,267	3,449,632
Debtors	12	3,052,861	4,122,798
Cash and cash equivalents	13	39,688,219	37,831,707
		<u>44,964,347</u>	<u>45,404,137</u>
Current liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	<u>(1,940,586)</u>	<u>(2,417,225)</u>
Net current assets		43,023,761	42,986,912
Total assets less current liabilities		129,317,706	125,961,727
Provision for liabilities and charges	15	(729,953)	(744,542)
Net assets		<u>128,587,753</u>	<u>125,217,185</u>
Funds			
Accumulated funds excluding other reserves		114,583,252	112,647,508
Other reserves:			
Remeasurement of defined benefit plans		12,455,000	10,787,000
Revaluation reserve		1,549,501	1,782,677
Total fund balances		<u>128,587,753</u>	<u>125,217,185</u>

Union - Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Surplus/(deficit) for the year before tax		2,304,317	(7,764,268)
Non cash adjustments			
Fair value adjustment on investments	11	(2,986,201)	6,574,051
Fair value decrease on investment properties under construction	9	-	1,796,923
Fair value decrease on investment properties	9	3,605,164	127,500
Impairment loss on fixed assets	9	181,689	469,749
Depreciation of property and equipment	9	1,042,612	990,517
Amortisation of intangible assets	10	179,024	133,757
Interest and dividend income		(815,369)	(721,298)
Changes in defined benefit pensions	16	(1,064,000)	(79,000)
Movement in provisions	15	(14,589)	105,842
Loss on disposal of investments	11	8,714	-
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	9	100,586	-
Loss on disposal of investment properties	9	-	38,349
Total non-cash adjustments		237,630	9,436,390
Net changes in working capital			
Decrease/(increase) in debtors		1,069,937	(852,758)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors		(519,728)	584,175
Net changes in working capital		550,209	(268,583)
Income taxes paid		(325,484)	(196,173)
Net cash generated from operating activities		2,766,672	1,207,366
Investing activities			
Purchase of property and equipment	9	(1,712,290)	(3,481,419)
Purchase of intangible assets	10	(217,853)	(210,357)
Purchase of investments	11	(2,411,950)	(3,325,201)
Proceeds from sale of property and investment properties		-	1,761,651
Proceeds from sale of investments	11	2,616,564	751,500
Interest and dividends received		815,369	721,298
Net cash used in investing activities		(910,160)	(3,782,528)
Net change in cash and cash equivalents		1,856,512	(2,575,162)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	13	37,831,707	40,406,869
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December	13	39,688,219	37,831,707

Fórsa has no borrowings, loans and other finance related transactions which requires disclosures of net debt reconciliation as part of the statement of cash flows.

Appendix II:

Salary scales

[Civil Service here](#)

[Education here](#)

[Health here](#)

[Local Government here](#)

Appendix III:

[Travel and subsistence here](#)

Appendix IV:

[NEC officers here](#)

Appendix V:

[Industrial and organising staff here](#)



Fórsa Trade Union
Nerney's Court
Dublin D01 R2C5
Tel: +353 1 817 1500
www.forsa.ie

