



Congress Economic Conference

‘Globalisation & Irish Workers’

**23rd April 2008
9.30am - 5.30pm**

Croke Park Conference Centre

Congress' Economic Conference 'Globalisation & Irish Workers'

Conference Chair : Lucy Fallon Byrne
*Director of the National Centre
for Partnership & Performance*

09.50am	<p>Patricia McKeown, President, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Opening Remarks and Introductions</p>	11.30am	<p>Prof Frances Ruane, Director of the ESRI <i>The Irish Economy: Strengths and Weaknesses</i> Prof Ruane will give an overview of the Irish economy and highlight how policy needs to develop to meet the challenges of globalisation. She will examine the issue of 'job churning' and explore where new jobs might be created. Prof. Ruane will also examine the move to more evidence-based and consistent policy making and highlight where we need to act more effectively.</p>
10.00am	<p>Brian Cowen, Tánaiste & Minister for Finance <i>Is Globalisation Good for Ireland and for Irish Workers?</i> Mr Cowen will make the case that Ireland, as one of the most globalised economies in the world, has gained greatly from the process. Whilst acknowledging that there are downsides, he argues that by investing in upskilling and lifelong learning we can equip ourselves for the challenge. Mr Cowen will argue that the Social Partners and the State can greatly enhance Ireland's capacity to adapt and prosper.</p>	12.00pm	<p>Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, MEP, Leader of European Socialists and former Prime Minister of Denmark <i>Global Governance after the Financial Crisis</i> The current global financial crisis demonstrated that the market does not always work, even for those at the top. What possibilities are there now for greater cooperation between sovereign states to regulate markets, banks and global corporations effectively for the common good? Is the state moving back into the market? Will the excesses and adverse effects of globalisation be reduced with new governance structures for international financial markets and for multinational firms?</p>
10.20am	<p>Prof Michael Best, Professor Emeritus, University of Massachusetts <i>Towards a Post Offshoring Development Strategy: A Voice for Labour</i> In the first phase of rapid growth, an economic 'Mandarin' led by the IDA, successfully executed an industrial strategy of attracting fast growing technology-led enterprises in rapidly growing sectors, which generated growth and jobs. Unfortunately, off-shore imitators now abound. However, we have a rich legacy of skills and organisational capabilities which, combined with technological advances, provide strong foundations on which to build a new strategy to meet today's conditions. Prof. Best will argue that Ireland needs a broad-based economic development strategy in which organised labour has a voice in shaping the nation's investment priorities. But turning the vision into reality will depend upon extending Social Partnership into new domains.</p>	12.30pm	<p>Discussion</p>
		1.00pm	<p>Lunch</p>
		2.00pm	<p>Jack O'Connor, President SIPTU <i>Irish Trade Unions in a Globalised World</i> Jack O'Connor will argue that while Ireland has gained from globalisation, the current model is flawed and badly needs reform. Those at the top gain too much and those below too little. The lower and middle income workers are being squeezed - financially and by growing insecurity. Mr O'Connor will argue that Social Partnership has worked well, but that it is an uneven partnership and must now be rebalanced if Ireland is to adapt to the intensification of globalisation.</p>
11.00am	<p>Coffee</p>		

2.30pm

John Evans TUAC, Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD

How Unions Should Respond to Globalisation Internationally

Mr Evans is General Secretary to the OECD's union advisory group (TUAC), on which Congress is represented. TUAC has consultative status with the OECD and its various committees. As a result, Mr Evans has a keen insight on all aspects of the process, deregulation of banking, private equity firms, employment, the world economic outlook, governance of multinationals, etc. He will give a bird's eye trade union view of what globalisation promises, or threatens, for workers.

4.30pm

David Begg, General Secretary of Congress

A New Direction for Social Partnership in the Globalised world

David Begg will set out the future for the Irish trade union movement in a world where globalisation is intensifying and when, for the first time in many years, Irish employment growth will be low. He will ask if globalisation means a shift in power to corporations and if the share of wages going to National Income will continue to shrink. And does the current global financial crisis make the introduction of new forms of governance a necessity?

5.00pm

Discussion

3.00pm

Sue Longley, International Union of Food & Allied Workers

How are Workers in Developing Countries coping with Globalisation?

This speaker will give the views of workers in the developing world, where many of the jobs lost in the West are moving for reasons of cost. While workers in the developing world are getting industrial jobs, many are being exploited by major Western companies, or their sub contractors, and by some major brands. Often they work long hours for poor pay. Unionisation is difficult or even illegal in some countries, but there are successes to report.

5.30pm

Ends

3.30pm

Coffee

4.00pm

Prof David Jacobson, DCU School of Business

Globalisation: Must the Government choose between Irish Firms and Multinationals?

A key factor in the Celtic Tiger was the multinational sector but these have tended to obscure the home grown success stories. Prof. Jacobson will examine some of these successes and raise questions about whether there are any lessons that may be helpful for the future of industrial policy.

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Parking available

Ireland is one of the countries which has most benefited from Globalisation. Foreign Direct Investment has poured in – attracted by flexible, educated English-speaking workers, a benign business environment and low company taxes. The conference will address the pressing issues of the day:

- * **Is there a race to the bottom on tax?**
- * **Are we too dependent on the US, or are all small economies open and globalised?**
- * **Have we built sufficient numbers of strong Irish firms?**

The delegate fee is €295, and €150 for Congress affiliates and union officials/stewards. This covers all costs including lunch, coffees and a Briefing Paper - published later for all participants. Early booking is advised. We recommend that each union consider block booking ASAP to ensure places.

Payment to Congress. For further information and to book places book on-line at <http://www.ictu.ie/> or contact Louisa Gavin on 01-889 7742 or e-mail louisa.gavin@ictu.ie

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