

2nd June 2021

An Tánaiste
Mr. Leo Varadkar, TD
Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment
Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: National Resilience and Recovery Plan – Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Redundancy

Dear Tánaiste,

I refer to our meeting last night, also attended by your colleague Ministers and representatives of business organisations, regarding the above.

As you are aware, the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) has proved essential for maintaining workers' incomes, and hence aggregate demand, as well as the concept of social solidarity all through this major public health emergency.

We welcome the progress that has been made in reopening the economy over recent months but even the more optimistic amongst us would acknowledge that some major sectors will still not have re-opened fully by the 7th of September.

It is very likely therefore that workers in sectors such as aviation, hospitality, arts and entertainment will still find themselves subject to public health restrictions and hence excluded from their employment and to be on reduced incomes.

Planning to cut the PUP in these circumstances demonstrates little or no regard for the situation of these workers. As I clearly stated to you at the meeting, ICTU **cannot and will not** support the Government's plans to cut the income of some of the lowest income workers in the State. When and how the PUP is withdrawn must be based on concrete evidence and not on baseless and frankly insulting claims that workers 'do not want to return' to their jobs.

The Government's intentions in this regard have to be contrasted with the myriad of supports, schemes and arrangements in place, and planned, to subsidize private business. While ICTU has always advocated and supported the need for measures to support employment it is, quite frankly, deplorable that the Government has chosen not to afford an equivalent consideration for low income workers. At the very least, the Government must immediately put in place the mechanisms to ensure that no worker under public health restrictions suffers any loss in income.

On the matter of redundancy, we note your intention to continue the extension of the non-application of Section 12 of the Redundancy Payments Act 1969 until the 30th of September.

The continuation of this measure will deny workers their entitlement to claim their statutory entitlements to redundancy payments where such arises. It is yet another mechanism utilised to serve the interests of the private business sector, with scant regard for interests of workers.

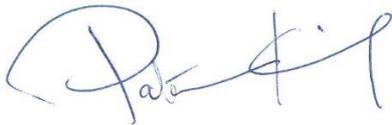
This will be further exacerbated if measure are not put in place to afford redundant workers full credit for all reckonable service inclusive of the pandemic period.

We would expect that you will, as a matter of urgency, set out proposals as to how these issues will be satisfactorily rectified and that equity of treatment will prevail.

It took a pandemic to shed light on the many failings in how the State protects workers' living standards in the context of a temporary loss of earnings. And it also highlighted how many frontline and essential workers were underpaid and undervalued.

Ireland's labour market was facing major weaknesses and challenges before the pandemic. Many of these have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It is our firm view that these can best and in fact can only be addressed by ensuring decent pay for every worker through collective bargaining by trade unions of their choice, radical reform of the social security system in the form of a shift away from our meagre flat-rated income supports to pay-related benefits, as well as the enhanced provision of comprehensive universal public services, in line with the services provided in other high-income European countries.

Yours sincerely



Patricia King
General Secretary