



Irish Congress of Trade Unions response to working draft of Ireland's National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals

Congress welcomes the development of the plan and notes the involvement of trade unions both nationally and internationally in processes leading to the agreement and subsequent implementation of Agenda 2030. You can read more about trade union involvement here - <https://www.ictu.ie/globalsolidarity/agenda-2030/>

Congress is a leading member of Coalition 2030 and fully associates ourselves with their submission. In addition we would like to offer some additional points from a trade union perspective.

Ireland's starting position

The second paragraph in this section speaks about economic recovery and the increases in the level of employment. We acknowledge the growth in employment but a new Congress study – [*Insecure & Uncertain'; Precarious Work in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*](#) – reveals an alarming growth in precarious work practices across the island of Ireland, since 2008 and confirms that there is now an urgent necessity for government to address this problem decisively through legislation, once and for all. As the study clearly illustrates the impact of precarious work extends well beyond the workplace and its unchallenged growth raises

profound questions as to the type of society we wish to live in. If Ireland is to achieve Goal 8 of decent work for all, we need to see changes to the legislation recently proposed by government that will ensure the elimination of zero hour contracts, guarantee the right to a minimum number of working hours and provide workers with a clear written statement of their terms and conditions from day one.

The study found that female and young workers were more likely to be employed on precarious or insecure terms, with workers in the Distribution, Hotels and Catering, Retail and Construction sectors featuring prominently, along with Public Administration, Health and Education.

The Congress study also found that a loss of workplace rights over recent years, along with official policies – such as reducing employers PRSI on low paid work – has made it easier and more profitable to hire workers on temporary, insecure contracts.

The study revealed that such work practices impact negatively on workers in terms of lower living standards, inability to access secure accommodation and placed them at greater risk of developing health problems.

It also found that such practices have an adverse impact on business and employers through the loss of productivity and innovation. In addition a growth in precarious work results in lower tax revenue for the state.

Such impacts not only cast a doubt on our capacity to deliver on Goal 8 but clearly show the interconnectedness of all the goals and the crucial role that decent work plays in their implementation. Ensuring the components of the Decent Work Agenda is central to the achievement of SDG 1 (ending poverty), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (achieving gender equality) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). If we are to deliver on the “Leave nobody behind”

promise, we need to deal with these decent work deficits as a matter of urgency.

The preamble of the Agenda 2030 also states that the 17 Goals "seek to realize the human rights of all". The draft document refers in various places to the challenge of strengthening the protection of rights but does not display any commitment to making the changes needed to make this happen. Workers in Ireland are still denied their right to bargain collectively with their employer and the right to be represented by their trade union. Ireland will only be truly "well placed to achieve the goals" when these issues are tackled.

Helping to achieve SDGs globally

It is estimated by the ILO that over 600 million new jobs need to be created by 2030, just to keep pace with the growth of the global working age population. That's around 40 million per year. We also need to improve conditions for the some 780 million women and men who are working but not earning enough to lift themselves and their families out of USD 2 a-day poverty. Congress believes that it is very significant that the Irish Government has just taken up a Titulaire role on the Governing Body of the ILO. We note the leading role that the ILO plays in these matters on the global stage and feel that our national SDG implementation plan should reflect this and our commitment to play a leading role in the ILO's work.

Further comments:

We suggest adding 2 further relevant strategies to list on page 14

- The Comprehensive employment strategy for people with disability, and
- The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights;

On Stakeholder Engagement, we welcome the explicit acknowledgment of role for trade unions in the process and our role in the SDG Stakeholder Forum;

On the SDG Champion idea – this is a useful suggestion worth exploring, but organisations may also need support in maximising their impact in this way;

Finally, on Follow up and Reporting, we note trade union participation in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) process to date. In 2017, the International Trade Union Congress published [8 trade union national templates and country profiles](#) (in Europe: Italy, Sweden and Belgium) which were used as advocacy tools in SDG fora, including the [UN High-Level Political Forum on SDGs](#).

We note that Ireland will present [Voluntary National Reviews](#) (VNRs) on our progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and we will be working with the ITUC to develop a trade union report for Ireland, which aims to complement the official report that the Irish Government will present in New York in June 2018. The report will show the engagement of trade unions with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while exposing the shortcomings in national planning and implementation to attain the SDGs with decent work and social dialogue.

Congress welcomes the proposed provision of speaking time for the VNR to HLPF in July 2018.