



Strategic Plan 2021-2025

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Executive summary

The formation of Fórsa represents the combined efforts of union members, activists and staff in the creation of a better, stronger trade union. Our three former unions had a history of solid success. With a union of over 80,000 members, our challenge now is to build upon the considerable successes we have achieved to date, in order to realise the opportunities that exist to deliver better outcomes for our members.

Our core mission is to create:

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

To achieve this, it is essential we define a clear vision for Fórsa. This Strategic Plan conveys a vision of increased relevance and influence for Fórsa within the workplace and beyond.

It is guided by the principal objects of the union, as provided for in the union's [rule book](#). In developing this plan, the views of union members, branches, activists and staff were garnered through extensive consultation, including interviews, workshops and over 100 written submissions. The plan reflects the outcome of this consultation process.

The Strategic Plan defines what we stand for ([Values](#)) and how we propose to set about achieving our objectives ([Culture](#)). It reflects the nature of our membership organisation, and sets out the five core strategic objectives to which we are committed:

1. [Organising to create a stronger, more powerful union](#)
2. [Delivering for members](#)
3. [Campaigning and influencing](#)
4. [Building an efficient and effective union](#)
5. [Futureproofing Fórsa for the challenges ahead](#)

Each section sets out Fórsa's key goals for the next five years and the roadmap for our future.

This Strategic Plan is designed to provide focus and direction to advance the Union's objectives and to establish a unity of purpose among members, activists and staff. This will ensure that all aspects of the organisation have a common understanding of our priorities, at local level and at national level, in the short, medium and long term.

The five-year plan will be overseen by the National Executive Committee and senior management team. It is subject to annual review and ongoing monitoring, with a final review due in 2025, when the Plan will be updated for the next five-year cycle.

Policy decisions arising from Biennial and Divisional Conferences within this timeframe will also inform the work priorities of the union in the five-year cycle.

National, Divisional and organisational implementation plans across the union will be produced for each strategic objective, with clear responsibilities, reporting lines and timeframes, to highlight how we will ensure that the overall objectives are met.

Delivering this ambitious plan will build a better, stronger Fórsa for our members, activists and staff.



Ann McGee
Ann McGee
President



Kevin Callinan
Kevin Callinan
General Secretary

Fórsa values

Our values are the principles and motives under which we operate. The values we stand by are:

Integrity

We do what we say, earning respect by being honest, fair and doing the right thing.

Democracy

Our organisation is led, driven and run by our members. We respect the democratic process and provide the support it needs to deliver for members.

Representativeness

We are reflective of our membership. We organise and advocate on their behalf on workplace and societal matters and are accountable to them.

Public service

We campaign for quality publicly owned public services. We advocate for workers and service users, promoting how public services can benefit all of society.

Equality and social justice

We advocate for a fairer, more equal and inclusive society that gives protections, rights and entitlements for all. We treat people fairly and equally.

Solidarity and internationalism

We promote solidarity and unity, standing with workers to protect and improve their rights. We work internationally to promote labour standards, trade union and human rights across the world, in collaboration with global trade union federations.

Fórsa culture

Our culture influences and supports the implementation of our strategic objectives. The type of culture we foster in our organisation is:

Member-centred

We put our members at the centre of what we do. We care for our members and are committed to achieving the best possible outcome for them.

Organising

We build union power by ensuring members, activists and staff organise and increase density. We empower our members and branches to take ownership of the issues they face, and to actively play a part in their resolution in order to effect change.

Leadership

We encourage strong leadership at every level. We show leadership through the work we do and how we treat our members, activists and staff.

Professional

We serve and support the interests of our members to the highest professional standards.

Collective

We promote a collective approach to our work at all levels, creating a team dynamic within and across the organisation. We emphasise teamwork, collaboration and togetherness.

Unity

We have a unity of purpose and a unity of understanding about Fórsa's ethos, mission, values, strategy and objectives. We approach our work through collectivism and solidarity. We are an open, inclusive and diverse organisation, which fosters a sense of belonging amongst all.

1. Organising to create a stronger, more powerful union

1.1 Applying an organising approach to all union activity at every level, in line with the national organising strategy, to increase union density and influence.

- Develop and implement a national organising strategy for Fórsa through active engagement with membership, activists and staff.
- Ensure the strategy is supported and applied at every level; workplace, branch, divisionally and nationally.
- Ensure that increasing union density and member engagement is prioritised by all activists and staff.

1.2 Enhancing our capability union-wide to recruit and retain members, aiming for a union of 100,000 members strong within 5 years.

- Include recruitment in the organising strategy. Map new members, utilising this data to assist with potential growth and infill strategies. Identify and remove potential barriers to joining.
- Include retention in the organising strategy. Map leavers and potential leavers, utilising this data to assist with potential issue resolution to increase retention, including initiatives for retirees.
- Prioritise density and mapping exercises to measure density across our membership, and identify organisational opportunities. Ensure our activists, branches and staff understand the importance of mapping and organising and are equipped to carry out this work.
- Develop processes to assist with issue-based organising, building on organising strategies.

1.3 Identifying and developing leadership and encourage union activism across the union.

- Include leadership identification in the organising strategy.
- Improve leadership and organising training for activists and staff, ensuring leaders are educated, trained and supported in their roles.
- Develop information and training resources to educate members and staff of the importance of organising.

1.4 Providing the necessary structures, support and resources to deliver our organising objectives.

- Develop union structures at all levels to ensure we have the optimal organisational structures to organise.
- Improve the support we give members, activists and staff to enable the delivery of our ambitious objectives.
- Prioritise the allocation of resources to enable us to improve our support to activists and service to members.
- Protect activists and members against any unfair treatment by employers.
- Develop processes which enable the ongoing review of our organising strategies and targets.

1.5 Building strong union branches and increasing the number of workplace representatives; enhancing their role, empowering and supporting them.

- Support branches to build and grow.
- Develop a 'workplace representative charter', detailing the important role and the process of becoming a workplace representative.
- Actively recruit workplace representatives to strive for an optimal ratio of no less than one workplace representative to 25 potential members to assist with ensuring that we have an adequate number of representatives. Train and support them to carry out this role.
- Develop a clear succession plan for representatives to ensure retention of collective union knowledge and consistent support for members.

1.6 Identifying strategic growth areas; implementing organising strategies in target sectors, consolidating membership through infill organising in unionised workplaces, grades and professions.

- Utilise density data and strategic research to identify areas of potential strategic growth and infill organising opportunities.
- Develop and implement organising strategies, inclusive of communications, leadership development and measurement processes, to help identify increases in density, retention and workplace representatives.
- Support activists and staff to prioritise the implementation of these strategies.

2. Delivering for members

2.1 Standing up for quality public services.

- Advocate for the delivery and funding of quality public services.
- Campaign for the expansion of public services and to end the privatisation of public services.
- Ensure a unified strategy across Fórsa that defends public services, delivered by public servants, run in the public interest.

2.2 Improving pay.

- Pursue pay increases that improve the living standards and real incomes of our members.
- Strive for the establishment and/or adjustment of pay scales to deliver shorter, fairer incremental progression for all members.
- Campaign to improve the incomes of lower-paid workers, and seek to enshrine the Living Wage as a minimum standard for starting pay.
- Seek to establish bargaining processes to resolve issues affecting specific categories of members.

2.3 Delivering a greater work-life balance.

- Campaign for the right to flexible working, and pursue access to family-friendly policies for all members.
- Strive to achieve reductions in working time for all members.
- Lead the four-day week campaign for a shorter working week for all workers, and seek to negotiate sectoral agreements to pilot the four-day week.
- Campaign for greater access to remote working with improved protections and facilities for remote workers.

2.4 Improving employment standards.

- Seek to ensure that members have access to transparent, equality-proofed job evaluation and career progression opportunities.
- Develop strategies which aspire to improve terms and conditions and ensure high-quality employment.
- Pursue pension provision and protection for all members.
- Advocate for a safe working environment for all members, which is free from risks to their health and respects dignity at work.
- Campaign to end casualisation and precarious employment, and develop strategies to combat anti-union culture in employments and sectors where it is prevalent.

2.5 Advancing workers' rights.

- Campaign for statutory trade union recognition and stronger collective bargaining rights.
- Advocate for the reform of industrial relations legislation to improve protections for workers and unions.
- Promote workplace democracy, and develop strategies to enhance and amplify the voice of workers in the workplace.
- Join forces with Congress, other unions and civil society for the introduction of a Living Wage.
- Provide solidarity to migrant workers.

2.6 Driving a culture of equality and sustainability.

- Promote equality and equal pay in the public, community and private sectors.
- Challenge all forms of discrimination; including that based on race, gender, disability, LGBTQI+, membership of the Traveller community, age, religion, marital status, family status and social class.
- Embed equality into our industrial bargaining and negotiating agenda.
- Incorporate key environmental actions into our bargaining agenda at national and local level, to promote greener workplaces for our members, and promote ethical investments.

2.7 Developing additional membership benefits.

- Grow and develop health, welfare and education supports available to members and their families
- Utilise the purchase power of our over 80,000 strong membership to deliver greater benefits.
- Ensure that partner companies are competitive, ethical, sustainable and recognise unions.
- Encourage and promote alliances with independent local businesses that are ethical and recognise unions, across villages, towns and cities where members live and work.

3. Campaigning and influencing

3.1 Developing a systematic approach to political campaigning and lobbying.

- Ensure Fórsa's campaigns are aligned with our overall strategic and organisational objectives.
- Develop cross-party, reciprocal relationships across the political spectrum, and ensure consistent and structured outreach and engagement.
- Empower members and branches to play a key role in coordinating and driving grassroots political campaigning and local lobbying, to maximise our political power and leverage.

3.2 Delivering our campaign objectives.

- Develop systems and processes to ensure that our campaigning, influencing and lobbying efforts are sustained, consistent and delivered at scale, both nationally and locally.
- Review how we support and resource our campaign and policy objectives through policy development and research support.
- Provide specialised training and education programmes for staff and activists on campaigning and lobbying.

3.3 Enhancing our public role as an influential voice in civil society.

- Champion public services and the role of public servants; strive to be the leading voice for high-quality public services in Ireland.
- Advocate for cultural, social and economic changes which benefit workers, and champion trade unionism and collective bargaining.
- Promote a fairer, more equal and sustainable Ireland and stand in solidarity with others campaigning on social justice issues.

3.4 Building our profile through effective public communications.

- Maximise our media presence, influence and prominence. Empower activists to speak on behalf of the union in the media.
- Enhance our reputation as a pragmatic and constructive organisation through a strategic approach to our public communications and media engagement.
- Develop strategies to increase the public visibility, awareness and relevance of Fórsa, and enhance the public perception of the union.
- Consider the recommendations of the digital strategy review with a view to enhancing our digital output and engagement.

3.5 Embedding Fórsa into local communities.

- Engage with issues that resonate with local communities, and link in with local community organisations, groups and clubs on joint campaigns and initiatives.
- Participate in relevant and appropriate community projects and volunteering initiatives, and support community organisations through sponsorship and sharing our facilities.

4. Building an efficient and effective union

4.1 Delivering effective communications at all levels.

- Enhance our methods of communicating with members and activists, including increasing our digital presence and introducing a member portal and member contact centre.
- Introduce a clear internal organisational communications structure for all communications which ensures quality and consistency for branches and staff.
- Develop systems and processes which ensure that the union remains accessible, responsive and available to members and that Fórsa is visible and relevant in workplaces.
- Ensure our communications are targeted, relevant and communicated appropriately.
- Promote and support the use of the Irish language.

4.2 Providing branches with essential supports.

- Support branches at an organisational level by responding to queries promptly and supporting them to carry out their role.
- Provide training and supports to aid the development of branches and activists.
- Enhance resources to help branches deliver organisational objectives.
- Encourage and support the sharing of good ideas and practices across branches.

4.3 Improving systems and processes to enhance efficiency.

- Review systems within the union to improve efficiency, including the replacement of the membership system.
- Review processes within the union to enhance efficiency, including the development of standard operating procedures, where required.
- Ensure our organisational structures and allocation of resources are accessible, efficient and effective to meet the changing needs of the union and its members.

4.4 Enhancing our position within the trade union movement and increasing solidarity.

- Play a leading role in developing local trade union presence through joint trade union initiatives, trades councils and local trade union centres.
- Strengthen our position nationally through increased collaboration with other unions and alliances across civil society; exploring potential amalgamations, pooling resources and building a stronger Congress to achieve national priorities.
- Deepen solidarity at a European and international level, increasing our presence and participation in the greater union movement.
- Continue to support and fund a range of solidarity projects in the developing world, through Fórsa's Developing World Fund which comprises 3% of all membership subscriptions.

5. Futureproofing Fórsa for the challenges ahead

5.1 Preparing for the future.

- Develop a culture of innovation and continuous improvement; establish greater opportunities for staff, activists and members to innovate and generate new ideas.
- Ensure internal processes are in place to monitor and analyse economic, social and cultural trends, for effective strategic and operational risk management.
- Strive to ensure that workplace organisational change processes include formal engagement with the union and appropriate systems of consultation for members.
- Advocate for the establishment of a meaningful process between government, unions and employers, which focuses on challenges such as climate change and automation, and delivers tangible outcomes.

5.2 Resourcing strategic foresight within Fórsa.

- Review how we resource strategic foresight and support forward planning, addressing the need for qualitative research to assist in preparing for future developments.
- Establish a working group to focus on future challenges and long-term strategies, to assist the union to make well-informed, proactive decisions, guided by expert opinion and research.
- Review our democratic policy formation processes to ensure that our policy fora are enabled to contribute optimally to policy development.

5.3 Developing student structures and outreach programmes.

- Develop a national student outreach strategy for schools, colleges and professional training institutions, ensuring it is sustainable and deliverable with the necessary resources.
- Build relationships with relevant student institutions, programmes and unions, with a focus on courses with direct links to grades and professions represented by Fórsa.
- Evaluate international examples of student, trainee and introductory membership models.

5.4 Enhancing engagement with young workers.

- Develop an organising strategy to recruit young workers through peer recruitment and empowering young activists, utilising new technologies, modern communications and accessible language.
- Encourage and harness youth activism by linking Fórsa membership to relevant campaigns on key causes that young workers care about.
- Establish initiatives to increase youth engagement at branch level, and empower and support branches to undertake this work.

5.5 Creating a greener, more sustainable union.

- Improve the sustainability of Fórsa's offices by bringing energy consumption in line with best practice benchmarks and achieving a resource efficiency rating greater than 50% in year 1, and greater than 90% within 5 years.
- Strive to become carbon neutral by 2025 by reducing the carbon footprint of Fórsa's direct activities, reviewing indirect activities such as procurement processes and offsetting of the remainder of Fórsa's carbon emissions.
- Consider the recommendations of Fórsa's environmental audit with a view to achieving the objectives set out in the report within the target timeframes.

5.6 Creating a more equal and diverse union.

- Undertake ongoing reviews of gender, diversity and equality, focusing on Fórsa's staff elected democratic structures and culture.
- Research approaches to equality and diversity challenges which analyses the actions of relevant organisations both in Ireland and internationally.
- Design an implementation plan to improve diversity and ensure the union is fully equality-proofed.



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Fórsa Trade Union 

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forsa_union 

forsa.ie 

CORK

Father Matthew Quay, Cork, T12 EWV0
Phone: 021-425-5210
Email: forsacork@forsa.ie

DUBLIN

Nerney's Court, Dublin, D01 R2C5
Phone: 01-817-1500
Email: info@forsa.ie

GALWAY

Unit 23-24, Sean Mulvoy Business Park, Sean Mulvoy Road, Galway, H91 HT27
Phone: 091-778-031
Email: forsagalway@forsa.ie

LIMERICK

Roxborough Road, Limerick, V94 YY31
Phone: 061-319-177
Email: forsalimerick@forsa.ie

SLIGO

Ice House, Fish Quay, Sligo, F91 HHX4
Phone: 071-914-2400
Email: forsasligo@forsa.ie

WOODFORD

Unit 2.2 Ground Floor, Woodford Business Park, Santry, D17 E524
Phone: 01-817-1500
Email: admin@ialpa.net