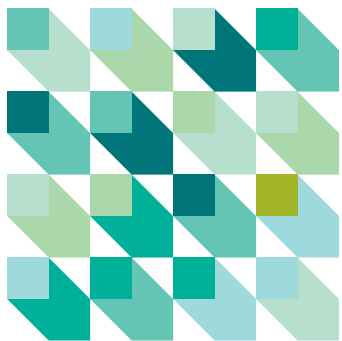




Civil Service
Divisional Strategy 2023-2025

Reclaiming
our place



Foreword

The Fórsa Strategic Plan 2021-2025 sets out a range of objectives, challenges and actions which are aimed at growing Fórsa's influence as the leading public sector union and a leading influence across the trade union movement.

The plan sets out five core objectives to which the union is committed:

- Organising to create a stronger more powerful union.
- Delivering for members.
- Campaigning and Influencing.
- Building an efficient and effective union.
- Futureproofing Fórsa for the challenges ahead.

The Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee, in synergy with the objectives set out in the Fórsa Strategic Plan, has developed its own strategy 'Reclaiming our Place' for the period 2023 to 2025. The title of the strategy spotlights the principal challenge ahead for the Division of behalf of its members in the Civil Service. Despite recovery from the economic crash and austerity measures, civil service employers have continued to operate as if such measures remained in place. This has led to serious deficits in consulting and negotiating with unions on change implementation and a deterioration in the operation of any meaningful industrial relations process.

The General Council model of industrial relations remains in-situ as the civil service industrial relations machinery, despite being conceived in 1952. It is hard to see how modern challenges can be met by such an outmoded system which, in any event, is clearly weighted in favour of management. The Division believes that the civil

service itself, through its own approach, has lost its place as leaders in the field in the creation of modern workplace policies of excellence, to its own detriment.

Furthermore, the Division sees that other areas of the public service have become far more progressive in the area of workplace policies. The Division now resolves to provide leadership in pursuit of reclaiming our place of influence, which in turn, will deliver better outcomes and quality of working life for the workers it represents. We can do this by;

- Organising workers around relevant workplace issues
- Enacting robust member recruitment drives to increase our influence and deliver better outcomes.
- Reaching out to new young workers to encourage and promote union membership.
- Using increased influence to achieve the mantle of leaders in the field of policies of excellence of the civil service.
- Develop assertive industrial relations policies for the betterment of the experience of working life for our members.
- Develop robust and continuous communications methods to and from our members.

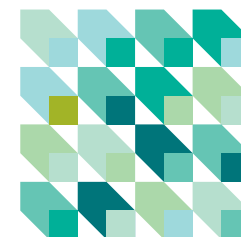
If we pursue this with determination and unity of purpose, we can indeed enhance the quality of working life of workers and can secure better and modern policies which suit the needs of modern society, particularly in the context of working time, working patterns and work/life balance and in the area of equality and diversity. We can also dismantle any move to further the agenda of privatisation and outsourcing which has crept into the civil service.

I wish to thank the CSDEC for its commitment to setting out the strategy, in particularly cathaoirleach Helen Linehan, for her determination to have the strategy document completed. I say thanks also to the entire Fórsa Civil Service staff team for their invaluable inputs and huge contributions to the strategy.

Mise le meas



Éamonn Donnelly
Deputy General Secretary
Head of Civil Service Division





Message from the Chairperson

The Civil Service Divisional Strategy 2023 encompasses the key objectives as outlined in Fórsa's Strategic Plan 2021-2025. There is one difference though, and that is, it is our tailored strategy, our goals, and our vision.

This Strategy would not be possible without the full engagement and participation of you the members, and the Divisional Executive Committee. We have been listening and taking on board your concerns. And, out of this listening exercise, we are extremely pleased to present a document, which is not just for reading, but a document which is going to be actioned and put into practice on behalf of all our members.

Let's make **our** Division a Division that leads, and a Division that we can be very proud of.

Thank you to all involved in the development of this Strategy.



Helen Linehan,
Chairperson,
Civil Service Division





Recruitment and organising

The immediate aim of the Civil Service Division is to recruit a net additional 1,000 members in the year 2023, and continue a similar recruitment trajectory in 2024 and 2025. It is an imperative that we increase our union density, in order to build upon our capacity to deliver better outcomes for members, through increased collective strength and influence.

In addition to simply increasing union density, it is a further imperative that we recruit new members into organised structures. This means that branches which no longer function in accordance with rule requirements, should be reached out to in order to become part of consolidated branches, which can offer better representation for members. This strategy will also aim to increase worker participation in the union and to build our strength from the members upwards. The best prospect of achieving this aim comes through issue-based organising, whereby workers organise themselves collectively around the issues which they face in the workplace.

In order to achieve the above aims, the Division will embark on several practical initiatives, such as:

- A comprehensive mapping of all areas within the Division to identify and establish where there is real potential for recruitment of new members.
- An immediate identity of one area within each of the officials assigned areas where recruitment could be improved readily.
- An immediate identity of branches which no longer function within rule requirements in the assigned areas of each of the officials.
- A surveyed identification of workplace issues across the various departments of the Civil Service.
- Further development of a working synergy with the Strategic Organising Department of the union.
- Development of a systematic identification of new workers hired within the Civil Service.
- The conduct of twice-yearly seminars aimed at newly appointed workers focussing on the navigation of their way through the first year in the workplace, including the probationary period.
- The use of open days in conjunction with other stakeholders promoting the benefits of union membership.
- The take-up of all opportunities to participate in Civil Service induction training which would include enhanced and standardised assistance for those representing the union on induction sessions.
- Systematic dissemination of promotional material outlining the benefits of union membership.
- An 'ask a colleague' initiative encouraging union members to ask a non-member to join the union.





Industrial relations and policy

There is a clear need to develop a targeted industrial relations and policy-based agenda in order to avoid being reactive to every adverse episode with the omission of a clear focus on what can be achieved through clarity and singularity of purpose, to deliver better outcomes for members.

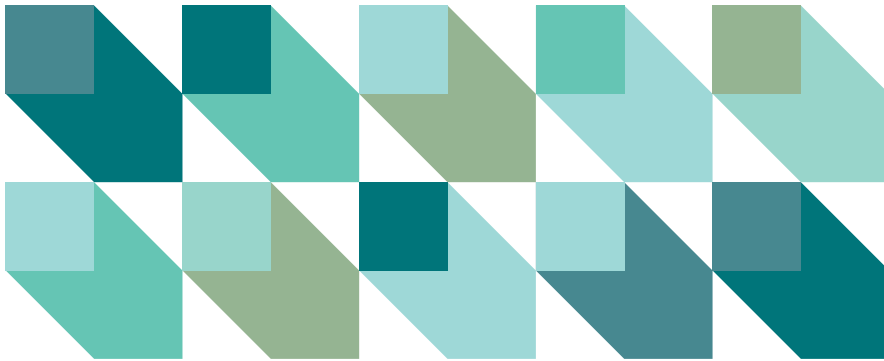
The Civil Service General Council and Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme, conceived and introduced in the 1950s, no longer even goes close to meeting unions or workers needs. The current system completely favours employers over workers, particularly when viewed in conjunction with restrictive dispute resolution procedures currently in operation, in addition to the default position of D/PER to sanction very little.

There is an absolute need to bring the civil service into the industrial relations system which exists across the rest of the public service and consists of an efficient grievance procedure aimed at dispute resolution in the first instance and whereby fair and independent dispute resolution and outcome determination outlets are provided by the state such as The Workplace Relations Commission, Adjudication Service and the Labour Court. A change in the industrial relations system in the Civil Service offers a greater prospect in delivering upon an industrial relations and policy agenda with better outcomes for members. It is also important that the union conveys to young workers that the current system in operation within the civil service, is actually a denial of workers rights and that by joining the union and increasing our collective strength, we have a very real chance of changing the system.

The Division, in addition to the policy set down by motions passed at the Divisional Conference will:

- Robustly pursue the change in the industrial relations system away from the current system and into one which uses the dispute resolution and outcome determination institutions provided by the State and which apply across all other parts of the public service. This may necessitate an industrial mobilisation of members in order to achieve this.
- Robustly pursue the introduction and application of timely, effective and efficient internal dispute resolution procedures.
- Seek to enhance mental health and well-being supports to workers in the civil service.
- Seek to obtain policies of excellence in areas such as supports against domestic violence and menstrual and menopausal welfare.
- Seek to obtain policies of excellence in the areas of blended and remote working, and promote and enhance work-life balance.
- Seek to have 4-day week pilot projects introduced.
- Seek the shortening of the duration of time taken to achieve progressive rates of pay, based on length of service through rationalisation of payscales, and more progressive incremental credit policies.
- Re-establish our ability and capacity to resist change which is introduced without consultation and negotiation, through increased union density and member participation.
- Oppose outsourcing of work, ordinarily applicable to the civil service.
- Generally, re-establish the civil service as an employer which cultivates policies of excellence and again becomes a modern employer of choice.
- Seek to reduce the length of the probationary period in line with EU recommended standards.
- Ensure that the terms of the proposed Civil Service Bill which delegates the responsibility for dismissal downwards is not misused or abused by the employers.





Communications

A common theme which emerges when we analyse our deficits in service is the need for better communications.

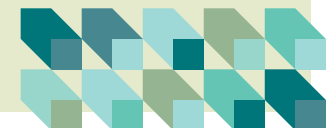
It is vitally important that we have communications systems and structures in place to keep members and branches regularly updated and informed of what we do on a regular basis if we are to increase union density and increase member participation.

We will use the communications channels available, including the CSQ magazine, e-bulletins, website and social media as effective tools in fighting for the goals of our members.

The division will build on our relationships with the Fórsa communications unit to ensure the continued professional evolution of our communications and messaging.

To this end, the Civil Service Division will:

- Engage systematically with the Fórsa Communications Unit to ensure a sufficient and relevant flow of information reaches members on a regular and timely basis.
- Engage systematically with the union's Directorate of Digital Communication to develop new and innovative ways of achieving relevant and targeted digital communication for members.
- Develop a structured approach to the use of the union e-bulletin as a widely read communication tool by agreeing articles to be periodically published and by analysing readership and reaction.
- Provide timely and relevant updates of CSDEC matters to Branches by way of direct communication.
- Ensure that the Civil Service Division webpage is up-to-date and relevant.
- Provide assertive promotion and messaging of union accomplishments to members.
- Develop communications tools for representatives and members to assist in the drive for increased union recruitment and worker participation.
- Deliver continuous targeted messaging promoting the benefits of union membership along with the vulnerability of non-membership.
- Deliver messaging which reduces the false but growing fear among younger workers in joining and participating in the union (often generated by managers who themselves are members of a union).
- Establish a Communications task group of the CSDEC.





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