

**LAUNCH PROGRAMME**

# **Fórsa Women's Activist Network**

Saturday 3rd November 2018

**Fórsa trade union,  
Nerney's Court,  
Dublin.**

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# AGENDA

- 10.30am**            **REGISTRATION - TEA AND COFFEE**
- 11.00am**            **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**  
Melissa Brennan, Fórsa NEC and secretary, ICTU Women's Committee
- 11.05am**            **OPENING REMARKS**  
Patricia King, general secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- 11.20am**            **BUILDING THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS NETWORK**  
Ann McGee, Fórsa president
- 11.40am**            **GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING**  
Orla O'Connor, director, National Women's Council of Ireland
- 12.00pm**            **WIVES, MOTHERS, WORKERS:  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL POLICY**  
Laura Bambrick, social policy and legislative officer,  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- 12.20pm**            **PLENARY SESSION - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**
- 12.45pm**            **LUNCH**
- 1.30pm**             **WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY**  
Angela Kirk, Fórsa head of division
- 1.50pm**             **THE IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING FOR  
WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**  
Lisa Wilson, economist, Nevin Economic Research Institute
- 2.10pm**             **THE FIGHT TO MAINTAIN FLEXIBLE WORKING IN  
ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL**  
Fiona Fallon and Florence Hickey, Fórsa Roscommon branch
- 2.20pm**             **THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FÓRSA AND THE INSPIRE  
TRAINING PROGRAMME**  
Margaret Coughlan, chair, ICTU Women's Committee
- 2.40pm**             **PLENARY SESSION - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**
- 3.00pm**             **CLOSING REMARKS**

# About our speakers



**MELISSA BRENNAN - Chair  
Fórsa NEC and secretary, ICTU  
Women's Committee**

Melissa has been an active member of the union since her appointment to the public service in 2001. She currently serves on the union's National

Executive Committee and Civil Service Divisional Executive Committee. Melissa was nominated to the ICTU Women's Committee in 2008 and has served as secretary to that committee since 2014. Melissa has represented ICTU at the Women's Council of the Isles and at EU level. She played a lead role in the development of the ICTU Women's Committee Programme of Work, an agenda to advance the concerns of women on the island of Ireland. Melissa was the driving force behind the development, distribution and analysis of a major survey on gender equality in the structures of the Public Service Executive Union (PSEU). She also led the development of a series of recommended actions arising from that report.



**PATRICIA KING  
General secretary, Irish  
Congress of Trade Unions**

Patricia is the general secretary of ICTU. She is a former vice-president of Siptu and also served as one of two vice-presidents of Congress. A full time

official with Siptu for over 25 years, she was the first woman to serve as a national officer of the union when she was appointed vice-president, in May 2010. She has represented workers in all areas of the economy, in both the public and private sectors. Patricia was a lead negotiator in both the Croke Park and Haddington Road agreements. She played a leading role in the Irish Ferries dispute (2005/6) and in subsequent negotiations that saw an overhaul of employment rights law and the establishment of the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA). Patricia currently serves on the boards of the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA), the Apprenticeship Council, Court Services Board and the Low Pay Commission.



**ANN MCGEE  
Fórsa president**

Ann was elected president of Fórsa at the union's inaugural conference in May 2018. Previously, Ann was president of the CPSU. Ann is a clerical officer working in the Department of

Employment Affairs and Social Protection in the Sligo Pensions Office. She lives in Dromahair Co Leitrim, family life is busy with her husband David and two teenagers. Ann gained a lot of experience over the past number of years at branch level, working daily with members on a range of issues. As Fórsa president, Ann is a new face at the top table of the union with new ideas and strategies aimed at putting members first. Ann firmly believes that all our voices are needed as we renew our resolve to address the persistent inequalities in our society and pays special tribute to all our members and union representatives that have shown leadership in the area of women's rights, disability and fighting for equality for all.



**ORLA O'CONNOR  
Director, National Women's  
Council of Ireland**

Orla is director of National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC), the leading national women's membership organisation in Ireland, with over 190-

member groups and was co-director of *Together for Yes*, the national Civil Society Campaign to remove the 8th Amendment. Orla holds an MA in European Social Policy. After starting out in local community-based projects, Orla has worked in senior management in non-governmental organisations for over 25 years. Orla represents NWC in a wide range of national and international fora. Orla is a feminist and an expert in the policies needed to progress women's equality in Ireland. She is an accomplished public speaker, with a strong analysis of public policy. Orla has led numerous high level, successful campaigns on a wide range of issues on women's rights, including social welfare reform, pension reform and for the introduction of quality and affordable childcare. Orla is passionate about ensuring access to women's reproductive rights, about ensuring more women are in leadership positions, about ending violence against women and increasing women's economic equality.



**DR LAURA BAMBRICK**  
**Social policy and legislative officer,**  
**Irish Congress of Trade Unions**

Laura is social policy officer with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Laura is a policy analyst and government specialist with an extensive knowledge of all the main public policy areas. She holds a PhD and MSc in social policy from Oxford University and a BA in social policy from Trinity College. Prior to taking up the post of social policy officer with Congress, Laura worked as a policy advisor at the Office of the Assistant Secretary General, United Nations headquarters in New York, at the Social Justice and Policy Unit of the Society of Vincent de Paul national office, and in the Office of the Tánaiste and Department of Social Protection.



**ANGELA KIRK**  
**Fórsa head of division**

Angela is Head of Fórsa's Services and Enterprises division. She is a member of ICTU Executive Council and also sits on the ICTU Private Sector Committee. She started work in Dublin City Council in 1980 and was very active in her local branch of the union from that time. She became chair of the Dublin City branch and was elected to the Local Government and Local Services division while a member of the Dublin City branch. She is a full time official with Fórsa since 2000 and has represented branches in health, local government, civil service, and commercial and non-commercial state agencies. As head of the Services and Enterprises division, Angela is the most senior female official in Fórsa.



**LISA WILSON**  
**Economist, Nevin Economic**  
**Research Institute**

Lisa is an economist at the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI). Her main research interests lie in the areas of labour markets, income distribution, poverty, public expenditure, living standards and well-being. Since taking up her position in the NERI Lisa has also been carrying out work concerned with job quality and its economic and social importance, the future of work, the gendered nature of employment, housing and its impact for living standards in Northern Ireland.

**FIONA FALLON and**  
**FLORENCE HICKEY**  
**Fórsa Roscommon branch**

Employees of Roscommon County Council, Florie (branch chair) and Fiona (secretary), are activists with Fórsa's Roscommon Local Government branch. Since taking up their respective union roles in Fórsa they have been involved in a three year battle with management over access to flexi leave. This entailed two Labour Court recommendations, negotiations with management and the WRC, and organising the first ever strike action by Fórsa. After four strike days, they succeeded in bringing the employer back to the negotiating table. The struggle to maintain family friendly work practices continues as management is now seeking to curtail work-sharing and parental leave patterns. At the height of their dispute, in June 2018, a rally in support of the Roscommon strikers was attended by over 1,000 members from across the country. Both Florie and Fiona believe that it's essential to win the battle to retain flexible working as this mostly affects working mothers who are trying to remain in the workforce while at the same time raising their families.



**MARGARET COUGHLAN**  
**Chair, ICTU Women's Committee**

Margaret got involved with IMPACT trade union in 1996 when she worked in the HSE as a community catering manager. She is on full-time release from the HSE since 2000 and is currently chair of the Wicklow Health branch. Margaret held the position of vice president of IMPACT for ten years. Her role included being chair of the CEC Training sub-committee. She is also a member of the NEC Equality sub-committee. Margaret also represents Fórsa on the ICTU Disability committee and has been chair of the ICTU Women's Committee for the past three years. Margaret has been a champion of equality rights all her working life and introduced the INSPIRE training programme to IMPACT, which has been carried through into Fórsa.