

Advocacy - ICTU

- **How do you balance experience and performance within the gender pay equality?**

All workers - regardless of their gender - are entitled to equal pay based on experience and performance. The gender pay gap is not based on women's lesser experience or performance but rather structural issues in the labour market and society as outlined in our submission.

- **What would be the benchmarks for pay for companies to adopt?**

As outlined in our submission, the minimum wage is a legal floor in terms of hourly pay rates. However, it is not sufficient to provide people with an acceptable standard of living and that is what the living wage does. It is our view however that collective bargaining is the best method to arrive at agreed payment levels.

- **With a perception that motherhood and part time working is synonymous with people being penalised, what solutions does ICTU have to offer to reduce/eliminate such penalties?**

No one measure will combat the motherhood pay penalty; instead a range of measures must be considered. These include combatting the issue of low pay generally - 25.7% of women earn less than €300 a week. And a particular focus is needed in sectors where women predominate, such as:

- Accommodation and food service activities (Women 54%) and where 68.1% earn less than €400
- Wholesale and retail trade (Women 49.7%) and 43.9% earn less than €400¹

Married men worked longer hours in paid employment than married women in 2018. More than half of married men (56.5%) worked for 40 or more hours per week compared with 21.6% of married women.

¹ Figures quoted from CSO Earnings using administrative data 2018

Many women do not increase their work hours after having children because they cannot afford to pay for childcare, therefore addressing the issue of the cost of childcare as well as accessibility must be a priority.

Also, to support all working parents to take family leave and the more equal sharing of care within families, Congress recommends family benefits be paid as a percentage of earnings.

Flexible working must also be available as a right for all workers.

- **Why was there no mention of increased competitiveness in your presentation - what is the value proposition that will persuade all employers in an economy to embrace significant and deep change to make gender equality a reality?**

The question implies that unless there is a “value proposition”, somehow employers have no role in “making gender equality a reality.” People’s fundamental rights at work are negotiated internationally at the ILO – a tripartite body including the world’s Governments, employers and workers as represented by their trade unions. Among the fundamental rights is the right to be free from discrimination on a range of grounds, including gender. Governments, including our own have adopted equality legislation to ensure this right is protected and have also adopted the sustainable development goals which include access to decent work for all (Goal 8) and gender equality (Goal 5). Our labour market is built upon a traditional male breadwinner model which needs to be redesigned to ensure these rights become a reality for all.

Governments and employers also recognise that by excluding women, businesses are ignoring the talent of half of the population. The Government here launched Balance for Better Business in 2018 an independent business-led Review Group to improve gender balance in senior leadership in Ireland in recognition of the compelling business case for more diverse boards and leadership teams.

- **Have you an example where a collective agreement has been gender-proofed?**

All collective agreements (public and private sector) are gender proofed to ensure that any measures agreed do not disadvantage one group over another. Trade unions are noted for advocating on gender equality and research has shown that in unionised companies and sectors of the economy, as well as in countries with a high coverage of collective bargaining, a general tendency exists to have shorter working hours for both women and men, more flexible work options under secure employment conditions, better protection for non-standard workers, in addition to a narrower gender pay gap.

This is illustrated by a recent agreement between Dankse Bank and the FSU trade union who secured a Domestic Violence policy, new commitments on training as part of their job security agreement which will help women to progress, and an increase in paid Maternity Leave to 26 weeks which was previously only 6 weeks, special leave increased to 10 days from 5, (which is generally used for childcare issues etc..) and parents leave increased from 3 days to 10 days.

The CWU also now has in place a collective agreement with Eir around domestic violence. The main achievement is up to two weeks paid leave for legal meetings, to attend court hearings, for hospital/medical appointments, to mind family members, or for any other incidents related to domestic violence.

- **Does ICTU and those organisations it represents have their respective houses in order with gender equality?**

In striving to achieve economic development, social cohesion and justice Congress upholds the values of solidarity, fairness and equality.

The objects of Congress include the following clauses:

- To ensure full equality in all aspects of employment opportunity and to oppose discrimination on any such grounds as race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, politics, religion, sex, age, disability, marital

status, family status, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller Community.

- To strive for full equality in civil society in Ireland and to oppose discrimination on any such grounds as race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, politics, religion, sex, age, disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller Community

These objects underpin all of our activities and we seek to ensure gender balance throughout our structures.

It is also worth noting that the 4 general secretaries of the trade union centres on these islands (Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales) are all women.

- **If Ireland adopted a four-day week - what would it do to our competitiveness post Brexit, especially if other European countries did not embrace a four-day week? [Remember France's adoption of a 36-hour week that reduced its competitiveness when no other European countries did likewise].**

We believe that a gradual, steady and managed transition to a shorter working week, with no loss of pay or productivity, can boost economic competitiveness.

Ireland can become a global leader in embracing a new model of work which is focused on outcomes and results, not time spent at the desk or in the office. This can deliver a greater work-life balance, gender equality and environmental sustainability, which will attract, sustain and retain a world-class workforce.

More productive employees and workplaces will strengthen our competitiveness, not damage it. Numerous academic studies, including from Stanford University's John Pencavel in 2014², show that there is no correlation between working longer hours and achieving greater productivity.

² See here: <https://siepr.stanford.edu/research/publications/productivity-working-hours>

In fact, according to OECD figures, some of the most productive and competitive economies in Europe have among the shortest average working hours, such as Denmark and the Netherlands. Meanwhile, countries with longer average working hours, such as the UK and Greece, score among the poorest when it comes to productivity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to radically rethink how we organise our workplaces, our society and our economy. The disruption to deeply embedded norms it has brought about has illustrated the potential for very different models of work, for both workers and employers. Recent Behaviour & Attitudes research showed a significant degree of openness from Irish employers towards the concept of a four-day working week, with almost half of employers surveyed stating that trialling a four-day week in their own workplace setting is something they believe to be feasible. Ireland now has a unique opportunity to take the lead in developing a new deal for workers with a four-day week at its heart, and to proactively reorganise how we work in a way that shares the benefits of the 'fourth industrial revolution' of automation and digital technology with workers.

For more research please visit www.fourdayweek.ie or <https://autonomy.work/research/>