



# Ensuring Good Future Jobs

A collection of essays published  
by TASC and Carnegie UK Trust

Edited by: Amie Lajoie (TASC), Gail Irvine (Carnegie UK Trust)  
and Shana Cohen (TASC)



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# Introduction: About this collection

Shana Cohen, TASC

# Introduction: About this collection

***Shana Cohen, TASC***

*Future Jobs Ireland 2019* details the government's strategic priorities in preparing workers for job markets of the future while addressing current challenges, such as the productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the impact of automation/technology and the transition to a low carbon economy. The report<sup>1</sup> states that, "The Government is ambitious to build upon the gains we have made in recent years and to ensure our people enjoy higher standards of living and quality of life now, and into the future" and declares that, "Future Jobs Ireland will ensure our enterprises and workers are well placed to prosper in the rapidly changing global economy" (p. 1).

Government policy should account for the impact on the national job market of technological innovation, the urgent need to advance climate action, and global economic trends. These changes could affect demand for particular skills and the capacity for marginalised and vulnerable social groups, parents returning to work, and older people not wishing to retire fully to participate in the labour market.

The Future Jobs Ireland report itself focuses much of its attention on upskilling, productivity, climate action, economic diversification, labour force participation, especially amongst women re-entering the labour market and welfare recipients. While all of these areas merit policy intervention, the collection of essays assembled here asks if policymakers need to focus as well on the quality of work itself, especially amongst groups at risk of exploitation and discrimination. These groups include young people; women with children; men and women without third level degrees or who are disabled or suffering mental health issues; migrants; and Travellers. The collection brings together organisations and scholars who either advocate for these groups or represent them. The collection also includes representatives from business, trade unions in different sectors, and academics specialising in labour market analysis. By bringing together their perspectives, we are aiming to contribute to the debate on the quality of work as well as the question of employment. Does having a job necessarily lead to a better quality of life in all instances? How difficult is it to find a job that provides a decent income and leads to better opportunities in the future?

By concentrating on having a job, rather than what the job provides, especially concerning financial security and personal wellbeing, the Future Jobs report risks mistaking all employment for employment which delivers improvements in wellbeing. For instance, the report claims that "A labour market which offers flexible working solutions can result in a win, win, win for employers, workers and society. For the employer, benefits include greater attraction of workers from a larger pool of

1 From the DBEI (2019) Future Jobs Ireland <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Future-Jobs-Ireland-2019.pdf>



talent especially valuable in a tight labour market, staff retention, a more motivated workforce with fewer sick days and greater productivity" (p. 61).

Certainly, some workers would prefer a flexible arrangement for a variety of reasons, including childcare (see Orla O'Connor's contribution). But others may not want these arrangements at all, as Michelle O'Sullivan, Joan Donegan, James Doorley, and Patricia King note; workers in some cases are forced into self-employment and precarious working arrangements because they are the only options available to them. Moreover, the jobs may also be low-wage (see Rob Sweeney's and Edel McGinley's contributions), leading to persistent financial insecurity and personal anxiety. Certain workers may also be systematically excluded from participation (see Charlotte May-Simera's essay). The motivation and greater productivity the report refers to may not be applicable, provoking questions as to how much flexible working should figure into strategizing about future jobs, at least from the employees' perspective.

The employees' perspective and needs must drive policy as much as that of employers to contribute to raising productivity and sustaining employment rates. To give an example, the report rightly looks to developing complex skills to meet employer demand. In Ireland enrolment in higher education rose 16% between 2012 – 2017, and particularly in technology and science degrees, which experienced a 38% increase during the same period<sup>2</sup>. However, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy rates in Ireland are relatively low compared to other EU countries. The EU Digital Economy and Society Index 2018 reported that 52% of Ireland's population lack basic digital skills, which is one of the lowest levels in the EU, and Ireland has one of the lowest shares (79%) of the population using the internet, a figure based on shares increasing more rapidly in other EU countries<sup>3</sup>. Though the report does mention implementing Upskilling Pathways to improve literacy rates and encouraging enrolment in lifelong learning, the statistics cited above suggest this investment should be as great a priority as computer programming, science, and engineering (see Ted Fleming's contribution).

At the same time, as Joan Donegan points out, the livelihoods of those teaching should also be considered. Education, care, and health services (see Phil Ni Sheadghda's contribution) depend on frontline staff who may be struggling with insecure work, low pay, understaffing, and long hours. Policy regarding jobs must account for their working conditions and motivation so as to assure quality of service. This intersects with Richard Wynne's essay on the importance of the promotion of mental health in the workplace. In addition, policy support for models of economic democracy (see Cian McMahon), community wealth building approaches (see Seán

2 From Irish Higher Education Authority (2019) <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/01/Higher-Education-Authority-Key-Facts-Figures-2017-18.pdf>

3 From the EU Digital Economy and Society Index 2018: "Ireland continues to suffer from significant skills shortages. Since 2012 the proportion of enterprises who tried to recruit ICT specialists, but experienced difficulties, has consistently remained above 50 %. ICT skills shortages are also confirmed by a recent analysis of vacancies by the competent national authority. The proportion of ICT specialists in the overall workforce is slightly above the EU average, but far below the leading EU country (Finland, with 6.6 %)." (2018, p. 5) [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/ie-desi\\_2018-country-profile\\_eng\\_B4406C2F-97C3-AA9A-53C27B701589A4F3\\_52225.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/ie-desi_2018-country-profile_eng_B4406C2F-97C3-AA9A-53C27B701589A4F3_52225.pdf)

McCabe) and management practices more attuned to employee needs (see Tomás Sercovich) would also contribute to enhancing worker morale and motivation, and potentially greater income.

In sum, preparing for future job markets and the diverse needs of different social groups helps everyone, from children in school to pensioners and parents seeking part-time work. Policy has to consider what makes for a good job, rather than just the job itself. As Gail Irvine notes, more comprehensive and consistent definitions and measurement against progress is essential to informing future policy and practice on good work. The emerging consensus from the essays here is that a good job offers a decent wage for the cost of living, protects individual dignity, allows the worker to plan for the future, and treats fairly particular categories of workers, such as migrants or disabled people. Future job policies should seriously regard these dimensions. They may seem less tangible than the traditional infrastructure and skills strategies of industrial policy, but today in Ireland we need policy to go beyond the narrow, if important, matrix of skills and job supply to seek to promote jobs that contribute to public optimism and perceptions of a flourishing society.

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# Ireland: Republic of opportunity or state of insecurity for young workers?

James Doorley,  
National Youth Council of Ireland

# Ireland: Republic of opportunity or state of insecurity for young workers?

***James Doorley, National Youth Council of Ireland***

A decade on from the economic crisis, Ireland is a different country. The recession left scars on all our citizens and impacted as they were by unemployment, debt, cuts in income supports and the withdrawal of social services, young people were hit harder than most. It is welcome that youth unemployment has declined from 31% in 2012 to 14% today and many more young people are at work. However, in the last decade, major changes have taken place in the labour market and there has been significant growth in precarious employment. This trend impacts in particular on young people. Many young workers are having the traditional entry into well-paid and secure employment elongated and frustrated by precarious employment, which takes many forms and is characterised by in-work poverty as well as the insecurity related to the nature of the employment contract. These include rolling temporary contracts, agency contracts, bogus self-employment and the so-called "if and when contracts", where there are no guaranteed hours of work and equally important, no certainty in your weekly pay packet. To address these deficiencies, Government must prioritise quality employment, where young workers have access to jobs that deliver decent and stable wages, have security of tenure and enjoy good working conditions that balance work and family life.

A significant proportion of young people working in post-crash Ireland are in precarious employment, which brings with it financial uncertainty and impacts on personal and family life, and on health and well-being. A survey undertaken by Red C and on behalf of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) in 2017, indicated that almost half of people aged 18 to 29 in Ireland are on non-standard contracts, and more than one third are on temporary contracts and in part-time work. Also, precarious work is no longer confined to typical "gig economy" jobs, such as short-term positions or activities in the arts, delivery workers, etc., but is now prevalent in sectors such as education, healthcare, telecommunications and IT (Pembroke, 2018).

Despite uninterrupted economic growth over the last seven years, improvements in labour market conditions for young workers has been relatively slow. All this suggests that without Government action and policy change, the current labour market conditions of precarious work will become a new norm for young people. As highlighted by the research of TASC and others, precarious employment and low pay not only impacts on the financial well-being of workers, it also has significant knock-on effects on their personal and family life. As they have no guaranteed hours or income from week to week, they often miss important family gatherings, cannot socialise with friends and put off medical appointments because of the cost. The variable nature of the working hours also inhibits the capacity of the employee to undertake further education or training.

## More and Better Jobs

It was understandable during the economic crisis that the focus of Government policy was on reducing the high numbers on the live register, however, too much time and focus were invested in creating new jobs at any cost, with insufficient attention being given to the quality of the new jobs which the State was supporting. The creation of low pay and poor-quality jobs may reduce the live register figures in the short term, but it merely shifted young workers from the ranks of the unemployed to that of the working poor. There should have been a greater focus on not just more jobs, but more and better jobs. The recent publication of the Future Jobs Ireland 2019 report is welcome in that regard, with an increased emphasis on quality employment. Yet more is needed.

NYCI has called for a comprehensive Government policy to address precarious employment for a number of years. Such a comprehensive policy would include the following components:

- First, we believe the Government should accept and adopt the robust recommendation from the Living Wage Technical Group for a Living Wage of €12.30 an hour. While the increase in the minimum wage in recent years has been welcome, it does not provide an acceptable minimum standard of living for many workers. As almost 40% of those on the minimum wage are under 30 years, the living wage would make a significant difference in the lives of many young workers.
- Secondly, while we welcome the enactment of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018, which commenced in March 2019 and is designed to tackle 'if and when contracts,' unpredictable working hours and the incorrect designation of employees, it needs to be rigorously implemented. Many workers, especially young workers are in a vulnerable position and may be apprehensive about reporting prohibited employment practices and therefore it is important that the Workplace Relations Commission takes a proactive approach to ensure full compliance with the new law.
- Thirdly, much more needs to be done to support young workers in low paid jobs and with limited educational qualifications to retrain and upskill. Enhancing skills and qualifications will better enable young workers to navigate the ever changing and turbulent job market, in particular arising from the changes brought about by decarbonisation, digitalisation and globalisation. At present, almost three-quarters of those engaged in life-long learning already have third level qualifications. This data indicates that many of those who really need to engage in life-long learning to upskill are not doing so for a variety of reasons. As outlined earlier, many workers on low pay and in precarious employment cannot afford the cost nor commit the time to do so. There are undoubtedly other barriers, and the Government needs to develop a strategy to support more young workers in precarious employment to upskill and retrain.

- Finally, the Government needs to be more proactive in supporting employers who provide good quality employment and to confront employers and employment practices which create and sustain precarious employment and poor-quality jobs. It would appear in recent years that some employers have developed business models predicated on precarious employment and low pay (Sweeney, 2016). It is crucial that such behaviour and business models are not subsidised by the taxpayer. At present, Government provides grants, subsidies and tax breaks to employers and businesses to create and sustain employment, much of this is welcome and to be commended, however, this may not always be the case. As the economy improves it is vital that all supports to employers are scrutinised to ensure they are supporting quality employment. Otherwise, employees are being short-changed and good employers are being placed at a disadvantage by less scrupulous employers.

The labour market has changed dramatically in the last decade and young workers are at the frontline of that transformation. As a result, Government policy must adapt to ensure quality employment and more and better jobs. A comprehensive policy as outlined above to support quality and well-paid employment would assist lower paid workers, promote upskilling and retraining, reward good employers and employment practises, be positive for our economy and most importantly, would help to tackle the state of insecurity many workers experience. Young workers are especially vulnerable in this regard. We need to redress this imbalance, to ensure that the workplace is a republic of opportunity for all employees.

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# Improving the quality of management to deliver better jobs

Tomás Sercovich,  
Business in the Community Ireland

# Improving the quality of management to deliver better jobs

## *Tomás Sercovich, Business in the Community Ireland*

The era of disruption is with us to stay. The pace of change in our economy, technology and society is relentless. The world of work is evolving and new models of work and workplace practices are taking shape. For this reason, the Future Jobs Ireland initiative is a welcome development.

The transformation of the workplace comes with significant challenges. The new skills that the workplace of the future will require, the displacement of jobs due to automation and artificial intelligence, new working practices (for example gig economy and contract workers) or the multi-generational workplace (Baby boomers, Millennials and Gen Z working together with different styles and priorities) are some of the issues that need to be understood, assessed and managed. The change taking place is systemic and will require leadership and a coordinated approach from government and regulators, businesses, and civil society to help us navigate the transition and be better equipped with the vision, policies and mind-set required.

Management will play a key role in facilitating or hindering this process of change. Management is much about policies, processes and procedures put in place to drive workplace transformations as it is about the people implementing this change. What is the role of the manager in this new era? We have always known the importance of good management, how more people leave jobs because of their manager than for other reasons for instance, but what can or should managers do to deliver a better work experience for the worker – and ultimately benefit the business and society? How can national policy help deliver this – and what else needs to happen? In our view, it is important that the Future Jobs Ireland initiative highlights the role of high-quality management for building good employment relations and strategic vision for businesses of the future. This is work Business in the Community Ireland has been engaged in for many years, working in partnership with business leaders in Ireland.

Over a decade ago, Business in the Community Ireland developed the [Business Working Responsibly](#) Mark, based on ISO 26000 and audited by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), which assesses responsible and sustainable business practices. Environmental practices, community engagement, customer and supplier relationships and corporate governance are all covered by the assessment but underpinning all of these is how the business behaves towards a critical stakeholder: the employee. Whether the employee is a contract worker or permanently employed, their behaviour and performance are central to how that business acts towards all its stakeholders – the essence of corporate social



responsibility. The Mark is an inventory of management practices that support “good work” including:

- Clear, accessible and understandable policies that show the company's commitment to its employees (permanent and non-permanent), namely what they can expect in terms of having a voice, developing their skills, supporting their physical and mental well-being, receiving fair rewards, and feeling a sense of belonging and flexibility to manage work and life.
- A workplace culture that is set at the top with senior leaders as role models providing a sense of purpose to the organisation and supporting and rewarding good, consistent management across the business. The company values are visible in how it behaves internally and externally, in who gets rewarded and how problems are resolved.
- Strong focus on continuous learning and development, focused on skills requirements as well as the need to facilitate the employability of staff at all levels of companies and organisations. Training on resilience and managing change in uncertain times has to be the norm.
- Recognition that change is endemic in every sector and that, while hard decisions may have to be taken to sustain the business, how those decisions are implemented and how fairly and openly change is managed are factors driving employee engagement and employer reputation. Resilient managers who can cope with change and support employees through change can deliver business results and reduce the impact on mental health.

While these practices are good, they are not sufficient from a societal viewpoint. Through our [Employment programmes](#), we hear real-life experiences of migrants and marginalised job-seekers who wish to participate actively in the labour market but who cannot get past the application phase or who are routinely under-employed. Inequality and the exclusion of segments of society from new opportunities will potentially be exacerbated by workforce transformations already mentioned.

Business in the Community Ireland recognises that business has a role to play in helping people thrive in our society. “Better business for a better Ireland” is how we express our purpose. Together with a cohort of our member companies, which have achieved the Business Working Responsibly Mark, we are exploring issues that are important for society and for employment in the future:

1. Worker of the Future
2. Social Inclusion<sup>1</sup>
3. Transition to a Low-carbon Economy

<sup>1</sup> Earlier this year, Business in the Community Ireland published the [Inclusive Employer – A blueprint for companies to understand how their approach towards employment and retention links to diversity and inclusion from a broad perspective, including interactions with local communities and marginalised groups in society.](#)

The learning from these CEO-led collaborative initiatives will inform how we support businesses to be responsible in society and will be codified in the Business Working Responsibly Mark so that the assessment process evolves to meet society's needs and expectations of responsible business.

We don't have all the answers to how to sustain good work in an uncertain future but we recognise that the scale of the challenge ahead, with climate change and workplace disruption, is beyond what one business alone can tackle. Partnership and collaboration including business, government and civil society will facilitate the sharing of best practice and provide a forum for jointly raising the bar on what responsible business means in our society.

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# A roadmap to decent work and inclusive growth

Patricia King, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

# A roadmap to decent work and inclusive growth

## *Patricia King, Irish Congress of Trade Unions*

The term "decent work" was originally coined by the International Labour Organisation in making clear that the level of employment (quantity) cannot be divorced from its quality. The ILO, as well as a series of international conventions and treaties that Ireland has signed and ratified, are unequivocal that a worker's right to have their union recognised as their representative and collectively bargain the terms and conditions of their employment is a defining feature of decent work.

Today, the number of people in work in Ireland is at an all-time record high<sup>1</sup>. But against this backdrop, the economy is not working for far too many working people. Quantity and quality of employment do not go hand in hand. The creeping casualisation of work and the erosion of employment rights, synonymous with the army of riders delivering food around our cities, is not limited to platform work, where "gigs" have replaced jobs. Decent jobs are fast becoming a relic of the past in certain trades and professions due to the practice of rogue bosses wilfully misclassifying their workers as self-employed subcontractors to evade employer's social insurance contributions, established pay rates, and employment law. In sharp contrast to the considerable gains for employers, there are serious financial consequences for workers and the public purse from bogus self-employment. Occupational pensions, a hallmark of decent work, are in decline in general and among young workers in particular with just one in six (16.3%) of those aged 20 to 24 years and two in five (41.5%) aged 25 to 34 years with pension coverage (CSO, 2018). Workers without a supplementary pension face a significant drop in living standards in their old-age. Wage theft and breaches of workers' rights are on the rise<sup>2</sup>. The €3.1m recouped in unpaid wages and the 45% non-compliance rate among the 5,753 workplaces inspected by the Workplace Relations Commission in 2018 are likely to be only the tip of the iceberg.

Low-pay is endemic. Almost one in four (23%) full-time workers earn less than two-thirds of median earnings, the third highest incidence of low-pay across the 36 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Only the United States and Latvia are higher (OECD, 2019). Were it not for the half a billion euros spent annually on welfare top-ups to the poverty wages of 53,000 working families, the rates of in-work poverty and deprivation would be considerably higher. Wage inequality is unacceptably wide and growing. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has published an annual "Fat Cat" report for the past four years (For example, see ICTU, 2017). Our analysis shows that the average salary for chief executives in Ireland's top 20 companies increased by 6pc between 2016 and

1 2.3 million people are in employment, Labour Force Survey, Q2 (CSO, 2019)

2 In 2018, €3.1m in unpaid wages was recovered by WRC inspectors, 75pc more than in 2017, up from €1.77m, and twice that recovered in 2016 (WRC, 2018)

2017, as opposed to full-time employees who netted a meagre pay rise of just 1.7%. Even more alarming, it would take the average worker over two centuries (230 years) to earn what one top paid boss earns in a single year. This wage gap between the top and the rest is fuelling the inequality crisis in advanced economies.

The challenges we now face as a country in terms of wages and conditions, and inequality will not be resolved without fundamental reform of labour law. Earlier this year, Congress published a roadmap for reversing the decline in decent work and workers share of the growth they contribute to each day<sup>3</sup>. A cornerstone of our plan - *The Route to Reform* - is to secure collective bargaining rights for all workers in Irish law (ICTU, 2019). In short, collective bargaining is the official process by which trade unions negotiate with employers to determine terms and conditions of employment, including pay, hours of work, pensions and other benefits, on behalf of their members. Collective bargaining addresses the inherent power imbalance in the employment relationship by giving added weight to the expression of worker interest than can be achieved individually.

While the Constitution guarantees the right to join a union, there is no legal obligation on employers to recognise a worker's union or to engage in collective bargaining negotiations. In practice, almost half of all workers are covered by collective agreements given that many good employers recognise the benefits that come from voluntary union recognition, such as being able to negotiate wages collectively for large groups of workers at the same time, increased productivity and reduced staff turnover<sup>4</sup>. But, in the absence of trade union legislation the other half of the workforce, many of whom are the workers most vulnerable to exploitation, are denied the right to come together and collectively bargain their wages, benefits and working conditions.

While Ireland is committed to upholding the right to collectively bargain under a number of international conventions and treaties, we have failed to legislate.

In addition to securing a legal right to bargain, our reform plan calls for a series of additional rights for trade union members to be placed on a statutory basis through a new Trade Union Rights Act, including the right to:

- participate in trade union activities in the workplace;
- organise within the workplace;
- reasonable time off to engage in trade union training and activities;
- access for trade union officials to workplaces for the purpose of communicating with members;
- protection against penalisation on the grounds of trade union membership or activities in line with the Protected Disclosures Act.

3 Just under €300 billion was added to economic output in 2018, an overall rise of 7.9pc on the previous year. When the activity of multinationals is stripped out of the measure, the economy grew by €172 billion or 3.9pc. (CSO, 2019)

4 The OECD estimates total collective bargaining coverage in Ireland to be between 40-50pc.

The positive role played by trade unions and the benefits of collective bargaining are increasingly recognised by the World Bank, the IMF and the OECD - institutions not known to be natural bedfellows of trade unions. Their conclusions that collective bargaining is: "associated with higher employment, lower unemployment, a better integration of vulnerable groups and less wage inequality [and] help strengthen the resilience of the economy against business-cycle downturns" are wholly evidenced-based (OECD, 2018).

Until meaningful action is taken to strengthen unions and guarantee bargaining power to all workers, we, as a country, will continue to fail to tackle inequality, poverty pay and insecure work.

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# Improving mental health at work

Richard Wynne, Work Research Centre

# Improving mental health at work

***Richard Wynne, Work Research Centre***

## **What do we know about mental health, wellbeing and work?**

The issue of mental health in the workplace is receiving more and more attention in public health circles and in general discourse today. Much of the coverage of the issue is concerned with acknowledging the reality of mental ill health for significant proportions of the working population, and the need to raise awareness of its impact on the individual. And while this acknowledgement is needed, there are many facets to the issue in the workplace context that don't receive enough attention. Primary among these is the interaction between work and mental health and wellbeing. The development of good jobs in the future in Ireland will contribute to the maintenance and promotion of good mental health amongst the population.

Even though there is no widely accepted definition of what constitutes a "good" job, we can point to a number of characteristics of jobs that are positive. These include high levels of control over working conditions, fair treatment, supportive environments, good communications, opportunities to develop personally, clarification about the job roles to be fulfilled and being able to manage workload effectively. Other factors such as job security and good physical working conditions are also important.

Employment and working conditions can have both a positive and a negative effect on mental health and can play a big role on the management of employees' mental health, even if work is not the only factor in any problems that they may have. We know from research that, on average:

- *Employment is generally good for mental health* – people in work generally have better mental health than people who are unemployed. Levels of mental distress among unemployed people can be as much as 3 times higher than working populations in good jobs.
- *Poor working conditions can contribute to poorer mental wellbeing* – factors such as high levels of job demands, low levels of capacity to make decisions and chronic or high levels of stress at work are associated with symptoms of anxiety, depression, fatigue and wellbeing. Our data suggest that high levels of stress at work, for example, lead to levels of mental distress that can be 2 or 3 times as high as the general working population.
- *Poor work organisation is also associated with poorer mental wellbeing* – factors such as shift and night work, and precarious work contracts are all associated with lower levels of mental health. Rotating Night workers, for example, (especially those who have not chosen to work nights) may report disruption to mental wellbeing at up to 3 times the rate they do when on days.



Of course, many people develop mental health problems independent of the kind of work they do. Other factors are also important – general lifestyle factors, living conditions, social interaction, genetics and some physical illnesses may all play a role in the development of mental health problems. The World Health Organisation estimate as many as 25% of people will experience a mental health problem at some stage in their adult lives (WHO, 2001).

Not all mental health problems are the same – they vary in severity from relatively minor disruptions in mood to full blown mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or severe depression. Depending on factors such as severity, whether the person was working at the time of its onset, and the policies and actions of the employer, the prospects for the individual of remaining in work and recovering from illness can be significantly affected (Wynne et al., 2015).

### **So, what can the employer do?**

Employers have some legal responsibilities that they must take under health and safety legislation, while there are also some voluntary actions that can significantly influence recovery and employment for people who develop a mental health issue. These can be labelled under the banners of prevention, promotion and (re) integration.

Health and safety legislation demand that employers take “reasonably practicable” preventive actions in relation to any factor that may cause damage to employee health. In practice this means identifying the hazards in the workplace that may contribute to poor mental health (e.g. high job demands, violence at work, night work, psychoactive substances), assessing the risk to health associated with them, and taking a range of possible measures that can prevent damage from occurring, or can protect the workers from damage (though this is not seen as an alternative to prevention). The kinds of action that might be taken include reducing jobs demands (e.g. reallocating work to others, providing better equipment or training), redesigning shift schedules or replacing toxic chemicals with non-toxic alternatives. Employers may also promote mental wellbeing in the workplace. This may be done by addressing workplace issues, e.g. improving opportunities for social support and interaction; or by using the workplace as a venue and social environment to undertake wellness programmes and training, e.g. social or sporting activities, wellbeing training or cultural activities.

The third type of action is needed when mental health issues for the individual are sufficiently serious as to cause significant absence from work, or when it prevents the person from finding employment in the first place. Research shows that when an employee develops a more serious mental health problem that causes absence from work, they tend to be absent for longer periods and have a lower chance of returning to work at all when compared to people with a physical health problem. Here, actions that aim to return the person to work (either to their old job or another one), or, in cases where the mental health problems are so severe as to preclude a return to work, actions that manage a dignified exit from the workplace are needed.

Employers can also take action to help people with mental health problems find employment, often in conjunction with labour market agencies, through such instruments as social employment schemes.

Employers that undertake all of these actions well are hard to find, but there are some examples of good practice that show what can be done<sup>1</sup>. One example of company level good practice from the UK is provided by BT, who have implemented a comprehensive programme for a number of years that focuses on prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation (MQ, 2019). The challenge now is to seek to grow this small pool of workplaces, so that the potential for employment to promote mental health and wellbeing is realised while at the same time helping to mitigate the many negative impacts of mental health breakdown. Fundamental to growing this pool of active employers is the need to increase awareness of what is possible. In addition, the provision of incentives can also help, as would better enforcement of health and safety legislation (to address the lack of action on psychosocial workplace hazards). Employers would also benefit from greater awareness and usage of the tools that are available to promote mental health at work – these include awareness campaigns, training, tools for assessment, and tools that support workplace interventions, whether they come from the health and safety or health promotion approaches<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Models of Good Practice from around Europe gathered by the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion. <https://www.enwhp.org/?i-portal.en.8th-initiative-work-in-tune-with-life-models-of-good-practice>. Other national level examples can be found at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=716&langId=en>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the toolkit to support employers developed as part of the ProMenPol project in which the Work Research Centre was a leading partner - <http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/?i=promenpol.en.promenpol-tool-kit>

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# Curbing bogus self-employment

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# Curbing bogus self-employment

***Michelle O'Sullivan, University of Limerick***

The quality of jobs refers to the impact of the features of the job, particularly contractual aspects and the conditions of work, on workers' well-being (de Bustillo et al., 2009). In terms of contractual aspects, workers' employment status has important short- and long-term ramifications for their well-being. Disguised or bogus self-employment (BSE) involves the deliberate misclassification of workers as self-employed when the characteristics of their employment warrant a classification of "employee". In terms of the quality of jobs, BSE is associated with higher levels of risk, insecurity and long or irregular working hours for workers (Broughton et al., 2016). Workers experience greater risk because they have less access to employment rights protection, collective bargaining representation, union-negotiated pay rates, occupational pensions and social welfare payments. Sectors identified as having BSE in Ireland include construction, food processing, IT, finance, transport, the creative arts and aviation as well as so-called 'gig' companies, particularly in food delivery.

As well as having negative outcomes for workers, poor quality jobs are usually also unsustainable for industries and the state. Organisations with BSE undermine other organisations who incur the costs associated with hiring employees in terms of pay, employment rights and social insurance contributions. Organisations' use of BSE can also reduce their incentive to train or upskill workers, diminishing the future productive capacity of an industry (Wickham and Bobek, 2016). The state suffers from reduced income, losing 30–45 per cent of tax/social insurance receipts under a self-employment arrangement when compared to a standard employment arrangement (Department of Finance/Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 2018). It is this context that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions declared that "bogus self-employment cheats us all".

There are a number of challenges facing policy makers regarding BSE. One challenge is the lack of statistical data available to identify the extent of BSE. By its nature, it is extremely difficult to capture its pervasiveness through proxy indicators can be used such as identifying the proportion of self-employed without employees (so-called "own account self-employed") as a proportion of employment in a sector.

A second challenge involves legal issues over identifying the correct employment status of an individual. Legal disputes between workers and organisations over employment status continue despite long-established legal tests and government guidelines. Disputes and claims over BSE are decided by a state agency or civil court, which can be a time-consuming and sometimes expensive process. Relatedly, deciphering employment status has become more difficult because of the increasing complexity in employment relationships. For example, intermediary companies connecting employers and workers are sometimes created to disguise an employer-employee relationship.

A third challenge concerns the incentives for BSE. Employers are incentivised to engage in BSE because it reduces their obligations to those workers under legal, tax and social welfare systems. Classifying workers as self-employed also offers organisations greater labour flexibility as such workers can be “hired and fired” easily. It has been acknowledged too that some workers may accept or support being classified as self-employed because it can lead to reduced taxation costs for them. In addition, it is administratively easy for employers to classify workers as self-employed and the Government has been criticised for facilitating this particularly in construction, where workers may not even be aware of their self-employed status (Wickham and Bobek, 2016).

A fourth challenge is a sociological one, concerning power relations in employment. Workers are generally in an unequal, subordinate relationship with an employer and, in the absence of the collective power of unions in a workplace, they can feel obligated to accept the status of self-employment to get any work.

So, what should be done to address BSE and improve the quality of jobs? Policy makers have recognised that the issue must be tackled and have introduced or proposed a number of legislative measures. The Competition (Amendment) Act 2017 allows trade unions the opportunity to have a group of workers prescribed as “false self-employed” or “fully dependent self-employed” for collective bargaining purposes and three groups of workers came immediately under the legislation’s remit: voice-over actors, session musicians and freelance journalists. More recently, opposition parties have proposed three legislative bills on BSE but the Government has signalled its intention to introduce its own measures, which reportedly include revising guidelines on determining the employment status of individuals, establishing a unit to investigate claims of BSE, increasing fines on employers who engage in BSE, and introducing anti-victimisation protections for workers.

While the full detail of the Government’s plans are not yet available, there are a number of additional recommendations that can be made in regard to BSE. First, we need to consider how measures can address the incentives for BSE which would be more effective than measures aimed at tackling BSE after it has occurred. Policy measures in this regard include reducing the gap in social insurance contributions between the self-employed and employees, as recommended by a government departmental working group in 2018. In addition, the Government can also cease facilitating BSE by requiring employers to satisfy authorities that a worker meets the criteria of genuine self-employment and by ensuring workers are consulted in the classification process.

Second, there should be a focus on the employment rights of workers given the considerable legal debate internationally about how legal systems can keep pace with emerging forms of employment. We need to think more systematically to ensure all persons who work can access fair terms and conditions. An alternative to the current binary employee/self-employed categorisation would be to classify all persons who “personally provide work or a service” as workers, with a range of employment rights, but this should not be used as an opportunity to downgrade

employment rights generally (see O'Sullivan et al., 2015). A third recommendation concerns the resolution of claims of BSE. It is unclear what role the Governments' proposed new unit will play given that, at present, three state bodies have, to varying degrees, some role in relation to employment status disputes - the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Revenue Commissioners, and the Workplace Relations Commission. A streamlined and speedy system for determining employment status in contested cases would be welcome. Finally, Government policy should support stronger worker rights in relation to unionisation and collective bargaining, ensuring that workers' collective power prevents BSE and enforces employment rights. In the absence of strong unions, greater responsibility rests with the state to address BSE, requiring it to introduce strong policy measures and invest significant resources than would otherwise be necessary.

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# Future of work in rural communities in Ireland

Seán McCabe, TASC

# Future of work in rural communities in Ireland

***Seán McCabe, TASC***

Quality work should provide for a decent standard of living. However, it is not simply a matter of securing productive and safe work which provides a fair income. There are many external factors beyond the work itself which determine an individual or family's standard of living and so it is unwise to disassociate quality of work from the societal context in which the work takes place.

A comparison of net income for workers across countries would miss out on nuances related to the social welfare and security systems that provide for healthcare services, education opportunities and dignified retirement. Similarly, when seeking to understand the quality of work in different contexts within a country, it is necessary to take into consideration the potential for personal development, social integration and community cohesion. This is particularly true when considering livelihoods in rural communities in Ireland. Rural decline is an overused and dehumanising phrase, but it is a reality for too many communities in Ireland. It describes the loss of community, culture and identity in villages across the country - a loss of young people to urban centres; a loss of essential services like post offices, schools and Garda stations; a loss of social hubs like pubs and sports teams; and a loss of small, locally owned businesses. This is the societal context with which we must reconcile our understanding of the future of quality work.

Agriculture has been the lifeblood of rural Ireland for generations. Beyond providing the community with food, agriculture has provided jobs – and not just for the farmers and farm labourers. The broader community – shop keepers, butchers, bakers, creamery and abattoir employees - depended on agriculture for their living. Yet today, a combination of market forces are undermining both agriculture and the fabric of rural life that depends on it. These forces are impacting the standard of living for farmers and the broader community, diminishing quality of life and rural livelihood opportunities. A recent TASC report, *Cherishing All Equally*, highlighted that agriculture is the most unequal sector in Ireland in terms of income. The sector also faces significant challenges to reduce its contribution to Ireland's green-house gas emissions in the face of climate breakdown and stands to suffer the worst impacts from changing climates.

Motivated by these factors, I recently undertook a journey around Ireland to meet with farmers and their communities to listen to their aspirations for the future of their work and their communities. It quickly became clear that the much-feted economic boom brought about by intensification of dairy in Ireland may not be a panacea for rural decline but may, in fact, accelerate it. Other, less prosperous areas of agriculture – like beef or tillage – are confronting existential challenges of their own while growing of vegetables is hardly visible and those who are facing fierce



competition just to survive. In these conversations, I heard of the need to expand dairy farm capacity to handle bigger dairy herds, with many households taking on intergenerational levels of debt to finance this expansion – the construction of new milking parlours and slurry pits, building or expanding sheds, renting land and purchasing stock. Farmers told me how the increase in labour required by the larger farms had to be borne by the family as there generally wasn't local labour available and, if there was, the money wasn't there to pay wages. They spoke to me about the lack of negotiation power they wield against the large supermarkets who dictate the price for their product, and they expressed their concern that further decreases in the price of milk, or increasingly frequent adverse weather, might force their family into dire financial straits.

Such vulnerability to market forces is not new. In 1891, deeply troubled by out-migration from rural Ireland and concerned with the survival of Irish farms, Horace Plunkett formed the first dairy cooperative in Ballyhahill, Limerick. Three years later, there were 33 co-operative creameries and agricultural bodies around Ireland and the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society was established to support them. Within another four years, 947 agricultural co-operatives were affiliated with IAOS.

On my travels, many older farmers lamented a loss of self-reliance. Local creameries and abattoirs as co-operatives have transitioned to hybrid Public Limited Company (PLC) based models where co-operative members have a share in the PLC. Local processing hubs have closed in the name of economic efficiency. This centralisation of processing, together with the loss of price-taking options and the rapid proliferation of large scale "edge-of-town" supermarkets has slowly increased pressure on farmers and resulted in the loss of jobs and locally owned businesses in the wider community. In addition, poor or non-existent public transport services coupled with stricter drink-driving laws have increased rural isolation and the erosion of local government powers have exacerbated the challenge of revival.

Continued intensification of the dairy sector is likely to lead to the end of the traditional family farm in Ireland. The ramification of this for the wider rural community and the future of quality work in rural Ireland is unclear. However, in the absence of policy measures to prevent further decline, rectify inequality in the agricultural sector and address the pressing need to significantly reduce greenhouse-gas emissions from agriculture and other high emissions sectors to meet internationally binding climate targets, it would appear that agri-business and large retail corporations, rather than farmers and rural communities, are the primary beneficiaries of intensification.

In seeking to holistically address the standard of living in rural Ireland and reverse rural decline, it is necessary to consider how quality work can be fostered in rural communities. We could do worse than to revisit the work of Horace Plunkett for inspiration. A cooperative economy holds wealth in a community and prevents the value of labour and product from being unfairly extracted.

Community wealth building is a place-based approach to economic regeneration which empowers local government and enables communities to create and retain wealth locally. Such models are reliant on progressive procurement by anchor institutions, such as the local authority, hospitals, football clubs and universities, to

channel funding into local, worker owned cooperatives that pay living wages. Larger procurements are broken into smaller lots where possible, to enable and encourage local SME, third sector, co-operative and social enterprise participation. Based on a commitment to promoting local economic growth, such models have been successfully deployed in a number of cities around the world, including Preston, Manchester and Cincinnati.

How would such a model work in communities in rural Ireland? The lack of existent anchor institutions is an initial stumbling block. Efforts to ensure plural ownership of the local economy could start with the major challenge facing our communities locally and globally – climate change. Action to combat climate change requires significant investment in rural Ireland – in terms of the deployment of renewable energy services, the retrofitting of homes and the development of an appropriate public transport network to end car dependency. If such investment was channelled through local government following a community wealth building approach, it would provide for temporary anchor institutions to stimulate local economies and help ensure social approval for climate action. There is an imperative to couple community business with the proliferation of climate action through community-led local development. This would allow for the diversification of livelihoods for struggling farmers and create avenues to quality work while also encouraging in migration to rural communities.

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# Ireland, low pay, and the Living Wage

Robert Sweeney, TASC

# Ireland, low pay, and the Living Wage

***Robert Sweeney, TASC***

The idea that work should pay is a key component of our social contract. Without adequate pay, the ability to live a life that is independent and dignified is reduced. At the same time, low pay is associated with other measures of low job quality such as precariousness, repetitiveness, among others (Eurofound, 2017 p. 37-49). As such, integral to a definition of quality work is a quality and decent wage. This short essay discusses the issue of low pay, its relevance in an Irish context, and the Living Wage and other policy levers to tackle low pay.

The structure of advanced economies has changed markedly over the last number of decades, forcing new pressures on wages and the cost of living. For most of today's developed nations, though not Ireland, the so-called Golden Era of Capitalism of the 1950s and 1960s was one of unprecedented and shared prosperity. Large improvements in living standards were supported by real wage increases - economic growth was both egalitarian and sustained. This was made possible by a confluence of factors: economies were very much manufacturing based; growth was led by an expansion of goods markets whose demand had not been saturated; organised labour was much stronger. This meant that falling goods prices due to productivity improvements led to increases in real wages as demanded by unions, but without reducing profits as overall output continued to grow. Regarding the latter point, suburbanisation and the growing demand for home appliances were key (Applebaum and Schettkat, 1995).

Today, primarily due to automation, the structure of advanced economies is very different. Labour saving technical change means that across the developed world the share of the workforce employed in manufacturing has shrunk, and employment in services has risen. Other drivers of deindustrialisation are the moving of production to lower-cost, emerging countries, demographic factors, and a greater demand for services as societies become more affluent (Schettkatt and Yocarini, 2006). Though many of the new jobs in the service sector are high-skilled and well-paying occupations, many are not. The entry of women, especially young and working-class women, into the workforce has meant that many of the activities traditionally performed in the home are, by necessity, now performed outside it. The growth in restaurants, laundry services, and paid child- and eldercare are obvious examples.

This has important implications for the sustainability of wage increases towards the lower end of the labour market. Take the example of care work, which is responsible for much of the growth of services (Dwyer, 2013). Being a face-to-face service, the potential for non-labour cost reductions/productivity improvements is limited. If wages in the childcare sector, for instance, were to increase inordinately, it

necessarily translates into costs increases. Households have the capacity to provide the care themselves when the cost of external care becomes unaffordable. Thus, large improvements in the pay and conditions in the sector would most likely result in employment losses as cost increases lead to care being provided in the home. Good conditions and pay on the one hand, and high employment on the other can be reconciled only if considerable public subsidy or provision of care is provided, as is done in the Nordic countries.

The current climate makes the fight for pay and conditions of low-pay workers even more challenging. The wage of a worker is determined not only by skill-level and bargaining power but also by the profitability of the sector in which the worker operates. Not only is organised labour in a weaker position than before, but companies and governments have increasingly outsourced lower-end jobs to service firms. A classic example is the cleaning service firm which must bid against other firms for work from the larger firm or bureaucracy, reducing the capacity of the low-wage employer to pay decent wages (see Applebaum, 2017). Many governments have attempted to relieve the plight of low-paid workers through increases in the minimum wage. Statutory increases, however, have generally been well below what is considered the minimum needed to live a dignified life. It is in this context calls for a living wage have been growing louder, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world and economies where living costs have been rising (see Eurofound, 2018).

Ireland's development trajectory and economic structure on the one hand, and labour market institutions on the other predispose it to high rates of low pay (23% of full-time workers) and high living costs. These two factors combined make the need for a living wage all the more urgent. Regarding its labour market institutions, trade union membership is relatively low, as is the share of the workforce covered by collective bargaining agreements. It is also comparatively easy to fire people (see Sweeney, 2018a). Labour, then, is in a comparatively weak bargaining position to demand increases in pay towards the low end.

Regarding Ireland's development path, the traditional model of industrialisation involving the expansion of indigenous manufacturing base was largely bypassed. To simplify, Ireland went from an agrarian economy to an export and FDI-based economy. The share of the workforce employed in hospitality, retail, and agriculture is thus high in comparison to other high-income European countries (O'Riain, 2014: 62). Similarly, the absence of urban industrial centres and the proliferation of small towns has bequeathed the country with state structures more attuned to local, parochial politics than is the case elsewhere (Breathnach, 2010). The state has seemed unwilling to correct large market failures, most notably in the provision of housing and healthcare, which are key drivers of living costs. In what is already an island economy on the periphery of Europe, this contributes to Ireland having one of the highest costs of living on the continent. Without wages to match, in-work deprivation is high (Taft, 2018).

The Living Wage Technical Group is a group formed by academics and civil society organisations to calculate the Living Wage each year in Ireland. The Living Wage

is the “wage which makes it possible to live a minimum acceptable standard of living” (Living Wage, 2019a). The calculation is arrived at by surveying members of the public on what they believe is an acceptable minimum standard of living and what no individual should do without. The Living Wage for 2019 was calculated to be €12.30 per hour, up 40c from 2018. The main driver of increases in the Living Wage in recent years has been the cost of renting (Living Wage, 2019b p. 4). For comparison, the minimum wage for 2019 is €9.80.

The Living Wage figure is based on a single adult household where the adult works full time. The single, headline figure is a weighted average for the whole country, with different living wages calculated for Dublin, rural, and urban regions. Further calculations are performed to calculate the Living Wage for households with children, which factor the number of children, the current level of social supports, and are again presented as different figures according to location. For two parents with one infant child, the so-called annual Family Living Income for 2019 ranged from €19,930 (rural areas) to €26,640 (Dublin) per adult. The latest calculation observes that provision of childcare and social housing would “notably reduce these income requirements” (Living Wage, 2019b: 4).

Given Ireland’s high levels of low pay, implementation of the Living Wage would benefit large sections of the workforce. At a minimum, those currently earning less than the Living Wage would then be on the Living Wage. As employers desire to maintain the earnings hierarchy, it would also move some workers’ pay above the Living Wage. The most likely beneficiaries would be those currently earning slightly above or below the Living Wage threshold. The demographic profile of people earning below the Living Wage in 2013 was female (60%), under 40 (65%), with at most a leaving cert education (56%). Interestingly, slightly more than half (51%) are in households in the upper part of the income distribution (Collins, 2015).

Implementing the living wage is challenging. For instance, even with more strategy and resources devoted to industrial policy, economic structures change only slowly over time. Moreover, the hospitality sector in Ireland is large and profit margins in it are slim. Challenges to implementing the Living Wage are, however, not insurmountable if appropriate interventions are made. It is not true that all sectors with high levels of low pay have low profit margins, such as the retail sector (Sweeney, 2018b). Statutory increases in the minimum wage above what we have seen in recent years are therefore manageable. Beyond changes to the minimum wage, bringing down living costs, and hence the level of the Living Wage, through public interventions in the health and housing sector is similarly well within the reach of the state. Unions and civil society organisations can also alleviate inadequate pay. Sector-by-sector collective bargaining is a mechanism through which wages can be raised with due deference to the different circumstances that pertain in distinct industries. Firms could then be encouraged to take the “high road” to profitability that involves investments in productivity-enhancing training as is common in Northern and continental Europe, rather than the ‘low road’ Anglo-Saxon reliance on low-cost and precarious employment (see Applebaum and Schmitt, 2009). In short, policy options are available to tackle low pay which should be examined if the government is serious about its commitment to high quality jobs, now and in the future.

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# Women and work

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# Women and work

## *Orla O'Connor, National Women's Council of Ireland*

Central to discussions on the nature of paid work today is the question of "quality work", how is it defined and how can we achieve it. For the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC), Ireland's leading feminist organisation with over 190 member groups, moving away from structural inequality in the labour market where women's employment patterns have been defined by part time, low paid and increasingly precarious employment must be at the core of "quality work". A model of employment defined by decent pay, equal promotional opportunities and career progression, flexibility and environmental sustainability is one that would support economic equality and independence for women.

Today, Irish women make up almost half of the workforce (CSO, 2016a). However, while discrimination and unequal pay is illegal, there remain significant obstacles to achieving equality between women and men in paid work. These obstacles mean that the gender pay gap in Ireland continues to stand on average at 13.9% in favour of men (Eurostat, 2019). This gap affects women throughout their careers, culminating in an even greater gender pension gap of 26%.

Low pay is a critical cause of the gender pay gap. In 2016, the Low Pay Commission found 60% of minimum wage workers were female (Low Pay Commission, 2016). In 2014, it reported that 50% of women workers earned less than €20,000 annually. Supporting women out of low paid work and into sustainable, secure and well-paid employment also requires a greater focus on the interaction of our welfare and employment policies, particularly for lone parents who are at most risk of poverty and women dependent on qualified adult payments.

The sectors where women workers predominate, the personal, the community and social services sectors have experienced the most aggressive casualisation of terms and conditions over the last decade. Women predominate in all forms of temporary precarious work, part-time, uncertain work hours, and self-employment<sup>1</sup>. It's clear that women must be at the centre of the fight for secure, quality and well-paid work. This is particularly urgent in the area of childcare, eldercare and personal care workers. These vital social services are being delivered by women, often young women, women of colour or migrant women who are vulnerable to the most precarious working conditions.

Care also has an impact on women and work, with the CSO in 2016 reporting that 98% of all unpaid care work is undertaken by women (CSO, 2016b). There are over 450,000 women who state their role is "home duties" compared to just under 10,000 men<sup>2</sup>.

1 More women than men are in temporary employment, with approximately 27,700 females in temporary employment compared to approximately 18,000 males. The majority of part-time temporary employees are female (55%). Women represent the majority of the part-time self-employed without employees, 51% (ICTU, 2017).

2 The number of men looking after home/family nearly doubled in the 10 years up to 2016, rising from 4,900 to 9,200 (CSO, 2016b).

Limited possibilities to cost-effectively, efficiently and flexibly combine paid work with family responsibilities are some of the main reasons that women predominate in low paid roles. In 2018, it was revealed that just two of the 17 top civil service jobs are held by women (Irish Examiner, 2018). Alongside this, according to the 2019 CSO Gender Balance in Business Survey - Only one in nine CEOs in large enterprises in Ireland in 2019 were women. Women occupied 28% of Senior Executive roles compared with 72% for men. The vast majority of Chairpersons were male at 93% with 7% being female. The overall composition of Boards of Directors was 80% male and 20% female. Moreover, those that do avail of flexible working arrangements find that senior positions are by in large still seen as full-time by default.

Workplace segregation continues to be a feature of the Irish labour market as, women are grossly underrepresented within manufacturing, IT, engineering and skilled trades. Only 25% of those working in Ireland's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries are women (Maguire, 2018).

A World Economic Forum (WEF) gender gap report placed Ireland top of the table for educational attainment, indicating that there is no difference in terms of education for both men and women. However, when it came to economic participation and opportunity, Ireland slumped to 49th, due to lower female participation rates and lower average earnings for women. As the WEF notes, a large number of countries – Ireland included – “have failed to reap the returns on a pool of highly educated and skilled women” (World Economic Forum, 2016).

### **Feminist Economic Vision**

Making all jobs flexible, unless there is a compelling need not to, would remove the stigma flexible working continues to carry and allow workers to use it to shape their jobs and work around their family and community life. This would also challenge the widespread perception that visibility equals productivity. NWCI is one of the founding organisations of the Campaign for a 4 Day Week in Ireland, alongside trade unions, environmental organisations and some businesses. This Campaign provides an opportunity to generate a new conversation on the re-organisation of work around the realities of women and men's lives, encompassing the realities of care in our society and providing a sustainable society and economy.

NWCI is also part of the Campaign to move from a minimum wage to a Living Wage, currently estimated at €12.30 per hour. This would be a significant first step to achieving quality work for women and also would significantly reduce the gender pay gap. When men are expected to have similar working patterns to women, particularly in the years after having a child, the implicit assumptions of motherhood and what that means for work will change. So too, hopefully, would the penalties associated with it. This can also help change work cultures so that work is not defined by hours spent there, but the contributions made, and where a better balance between work and family life is prioritised not only for the performance outcomes it can result in, but also for the shared social goals of gender equality and recognition of care in society.

Achieving quality work can only be ensured if the necessary public services that can support and sustain this model of work are in place. This requires comprehensive public childcare which provides high quality early years education and childcare and a flexible model of after school hours care. It also requires accessible public transport for all. Quality work will be achieved when all paid work can enable us all to have a decent standard of living.

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# Cooperatives and the future of work in Ireland

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# Cooperatives and the future of work in Ireland

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Recent debates surrounding the transformation of work have tended to emphasise the adverse employment effects of economic, technological, environmental, and demographic change. In the first instance, globalisation and deindustrialisation have contributed towards growing economic inequality by weakening workers' bargaining power. Likewise, automation and advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) threaten to further displace and disperse workers; while global warming and environmental degradation foreshadow job losses relating to resource-intensive industries and extreme weather. Finally, a growing and ageing population is set to increase pressures on both available resources and active workers.

In seeking a progressive, pro-worker response to these challenges, one area that is often overlooked is, ironically enough, the internal organisation of the workplace. This concerns how the decision-making process is governed, and in whose interests – it is fundamentally a question of the distribution of workplace power. This short essay contends that the cooperative model has an important role to play in reconciling twenty-first century work with economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Schwettmann, 2019; CICOPA, 2018; Webb, 2016). We explore how cooperatives can improve working conditions and serve as a standard for integrating economic activity with collective wellbeing and quality of life. We also discuss the potential to expand the cooperative sector in Ireland (McCarthy, Briscoe and Ward, 2010).

At the outset, it needs to be recognised that much recent commentary on the future of work has served to distract from the most pressing tasks facing the global and Irish labour movements. In particular, scare stories in the business press concerning the "rise of the robots" and the "end of work" lack a robust empirical basis, and seem more intended to cow workers into accepting precarious conditions of employment. As the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute (EPI) concluded in their recent assessment: "There clearly are serious problems in the labour market that have suppressed job and wage growth for far too long; but these problems have their roots in intentional policy decisions regarding globalization, collective bargaining, labour standards, and unemployment levels, not technology" (Mishel and Bivens, 2017; Upchurch, 2018).

But while stronger trade union and political organisation is the first port of call for workers in such circumstances, the potential of cooperatives to further democratise the workplace shouldn't be discounted. Cooperatives might even begin to form the basis of a transition to a more sustainable economic system. Regarding the overlapping trends outlined at the beginning of this piece, Jürgen Schwettmann writes in a recent volume bringing together cooperative researchers from the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) that:

*We must come to the conclusion that the current economic system is not sustainable. Yesterday, growth was the miracle recipe to cure all social and economic ills; today, growth has reached its limits because the natural resources that fuelled it in the past are disappearing. Capitalism has reached its peak. The world needs to reorganize national economies and the global economy to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability. (Schwettmann, 2019)*

So, what is it about cooperatives that makes them any more potentially compatible with "a post-growth society" than conventional capitalist firms? Can we also imagine how they might provide better quality employment and conditions for their workers? For a start, cooperatives are primarily motivated by the needs of their members, rather than by profit (Schwettmann, 2019). The latter is only the means to an end, not the end in itself. The ICA defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise" – one member, one vote (ICA, 2019). As such, cooperative governance principles derive from "values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity", as well as "the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others" (ICA, 2019). Hence, "genuine cooperatives are people-centred, they promote equality and sustainability, they show concern for the community, and they look at the longer term" (Schwettmann, 2019).

That said, cooperatives come in many different forms: consumer cooperatives, whose members are the consumers of various commodities; small business (producer) co-operatives, whose members are small and medium businesses; community cooperatives, whose members are community representatives; worker cooperatives, whose members are those who work within the enterprise; and solidarity (multi-stakeholder) cooperatives, whose members are a combination of the various classes already mentioned (Webb and Novković, 2014). From a sustainable work perspective, we argue that worker membership of cooperatives is a necessary requirement if they are to be considered *genuine* cooperatives, adhering to the movement's values and history as self-help organisations of working people (International Labour Organisation, 2014). Therefore, we advocate worker cooperatives and *worker-inclusive* solidarity cooperatives as a sustainable alternative to business as usual (Novković, 2019; CICOPA, 2014).

Across the world, cooperatives are the most wide-spread enterprise alternative to conventional capitalist and state enterprises. Yet, while the impact of cooperatives of all types is substantial – over 1.2 billion members, employing just shy of 280 million people (nearly 10 percent of the world's employed population) and benefiting some three billion people (about half the world's population) – the scope of worker cooperatives is comparatively small, albeit more significant than is usually thought (ICA, 2017; CICOPA, 2017). The International Organisation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives (CICOPA) estimates that there are 11.1 million cooperative worker-members worldwide (CICOPA, 2017). Although worker coops account for a very small proportion of all firms in most countries, they tend to be concentrated in particular

countries (e.g. Italy and Spain) – and even particular regions within those countries (e.g. Emilia-Romagna and the Basque Country) – that have instituted a supportive cooperative development ecosystem (Bateman, 2013).

Cross-country empirical evidence has mounted in recent decades to indicate that worker cooperatives are a viable economic alternative to conventional capitalist firms; in terms of their relative size, capital intensity, survival rates, employment stability, productivity, and profit retention. In fact, on average, worker coops generally outperform their rivals according to these measures, owing to greater organisational efficiency and worker-controlled flexibility (Pérotin, 2016). And while less research exists on social aspects of worker coops, sociologists of work are showing increasing interest. One prominent study from the Alternative Organisations and Transformative Practices Research Cluster at Middlesex University suggests that worker coops adhering to the movement's values and principles greatly improve the lived experience of workers both within and beyond their workplaces (Ozarow and Croucher, 2014). This extensive investigation of the worker-recovered companies (WRCs) movement in Argentina, which became widespread following the 2001 crisis<sup>1</sup>, and where workers who were owed unpaid wages occupied bankrupt firms and resumed production under workers' control, found that:

*The WRCs' social goals have been largely upheld. They have overwhelmingly prioritised maintaining and creating sources of dignified work, higher wages or social projects for local communities over profit maximisation...*

*...Survival is a clear precondition. Despite enormous legal, logistical and commercial pressures, tensions with unions and attempts at co-optation from the state, the WRCs have almost without exception survived and flourished since 2001. This is consistent with European experience, where workers' cooperatives were up to three times more likely to survive the economic crisis in Italy between 2007 and 2010 than other forms of enterprise, and 50 per cent more able to do so in France in 2012 (CECOP, 2013 p. 11-12). The model is clearly viable. (Ozarow and Croucher, 2014)*

Cooperatives of all types are relatively widespread in Ireland: "[W]ell over half of the Irish population are members of a co-operative, many of whom may not realise they are members and part-owners of the business which serves them" (McCarthy et al., 2010). There are about 1,500 cooperatives in Ireland altogether. Credit unions dominate the Irish coop sector, though agricultural coops also have a strong history (Doyle, 2019). "Workers' co-operatives are less common in Ireland than elsewhere, but this business model is attracting increasing interest as a useful means of job creation and small business development" (McCarthy et al., 2010). The last quantitative study of the Irish worker coop sector found that there is around 20 still in operation, employing 135 workers – a significant decline from the 82 worker coops, employing 591 workers, identified by the now-defunct Cooperative Development Unit (CDU) in 1998 (Gavin et al., 2014; McMahon, 2019). The present weakness of the Irish worker coop sector relative to other European countries can be attributed to the

<sup>1</sup> The best and most up-to date figures put the number of [worker-recovered enterprises in Argentina] at 314, with a total workforce of 13,462, continuing a trend of strong growth since 2001' (Larrabure 2017, p. 3).



lack of any comparable institutional support structure (Worker Cooperative Network, 2012), which itself reflects the relative weakness of the Irish labour movement and the absence of a strong cooperativist political culture in Ireland (McMahon, 2019). The worker-inclusive solidarity cooperative form is all but unknown in Ireland (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Coming back to the future (and present) of work<sup>2</sup>, worker-inclusive cooperatives have the potential to help address many of the challenges now facing us. Platform cooperatives allow workers to collectively appropriate and initiate technological advance for their mutual benefit, such that “technological innovation and control by a few can be de-coupled” (CICOPA, 2018). Furthermore, the requirements of worker creativity and flexibility – or “economies of scope” – at the technological frontier of modern-day production mean that “the cooperative form has a comparative advantage because decentralized and democratic management is often conducive to their delivery” (CICOPA, 2018).

Worker-inclusive cooperatives also can help to tackle Ireland’s high incidence of low pay (Sweeney, 2019) by reducing intra-firm pay inequality: “Executive and non-executive pay differentials are much narrower in worker co-operatives than other firms” (Pérotin, 2016). Take the famous Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC), for example, where the salary ratio between the lowest and highest paid worker is 1:9, as compared to 1:129 for the average FTSE 100 company (Hodgson, 2017). MCC is “the largest industrial workers’ co-operative group in the world, the largest business group in the Basque Country, and the tenth largest in Spain” (Hodgson, 2017). Meanwhile, back home, “It would take 230 years for the average worker to equal the 2017 earnings of one of Ireland’s top paid CEOs” (Rigney and Sweeney, 2019).

While the cooperative values and operational principles appear consistent with a post-growth environmental ethic, expecting coops to address all of the challenges of globalisation, demographic change, and environmental degradation may well be asking too much of them. But even here the coop *model* potentially holds the seeds of an answer. This requires shifting from a focus on market competition between cooperatives to a focus on *cooperation* among cooperatives via coop networking, federation building, and democratic planning. The cooperative form is also probably better suited to small and medium enterprise, rather than macro-level strategic activities where state enterprise takes precedence. But again, state enterprise may benefit greatly from cooperative governance structures, such as autonomous work groups, works councils, or board-level worker representation (Harnecker, 2013; Novković and Veltmeyer, 2018).

The Irish labour movement should take inspiration from successful Irish worker cooperatives like the Quay Co-op in Cork city. With its roots in the social movements,

2 As Siôn Whellens points out, ‘In reality, the “Future of Work” is already the “Present of Work” for hundreds of millions of people. We see the acceleration in mass migrations from the countryside to the cities, from the poor south to the richer north, and of people fleeing from areas devastated by war, economic and environmental collapse. In the richest countries, it is more like “The Past of Work” as workers’ rights, incomes and organisation have been eroded by thirty years of ideologically-driven political innovation, the privatisation of public goods, removal of workers’ rights, and erosion of social benefits such as health and social care. As technology, wealth distribution and modes of work follow the social politics, the 21st century looks more and more like the 19th.’ (CICOPA, 2018)

Quay Co-op has thrived as an environmental and social justice worker coop since 1985<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, Trademark Belfast, the anti-sectarian unit of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)<sup>4</sup>, has incubated a number of successful worker coop initiatives in recent years (Nolan, Perrin-Massebiaux, and Gorman, 2013). The first such initiative was Belfast Cleaning Society, established in 2012 as an 'interface worker coop', bringing together working-class women from across the sectarian divide, to counteract precarious working conditions in the contract cleaning industry. Belfast Cleaning Society are a proud living wage employer: "*We don't cut corners, we clean them*"<sup>5</sup>.

The experience of Bord na Móna, the Irish state-owned enterprise (SOE), during the company's last major crisis in the late-1980s is also remarkable. The SOE's governance and management structures were significantly cooperativised with the widespread introduction of autonomous work groups on the bog operation, alongside works councils and board-level worker representation. This transformation resulted from negotiations between unions and management and ultimately revived the company's fortunes (Mistéil and Lawlor, 1997; Clarke, 2010). "For the majority of participants, and particularly the core members, the experimental work groups in Bord na Móna created the conditions for high work motivation, performance and satisfaction" (Faughnan, 1991). A number of previously unviable bog operations were also transitioned to successful worker cooperatives with trade union support (McMahon, 2019; Millar and McMahon, 2017)

A reasonable strategic aspiration might be to initially aim to grow the Irish coop sector to something resembling that of Emilia-Romagna. The Italian region has a population roughly equal to that of the South of Ireland, but with "more than 40% of its GDP generated in the cooperative sector" and one of the very highest living standards in Europe (Bateman, 2013). The ultimate aspiration should be towards what James Connolly called an Irish "Cooperative Commonwealth" (Connolly, 1915). The benefits of the cooperative work model, in terms of advancing sustainability within the workplace and wider society, means that we should aim for nothing less.

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# Ár dTír Féin: The skills we need for the future

Ted Fleming, Columbia University

# Ár dTír Féin: The skills we need for the future

## *Ted Fleming, Columbia University*

I recently found in our attic some well-used primary school textbooks from the 1950s. Among them was Ó Dúirinne's *Tír na hÉireann: Leabhar ar ir-eolas ár dTíre féin* (*The Country of Ireland: A Book on the Geography of our own Country*). Its first sentence asks the reader to look at a map of Europe where you see two islands beyond the mainland. The smallest and furthest out is Ireland - "*ár dtír féin*" (p. 5). It states that there is no land that gets in the way of ships going back and forth to America across the busiest trade route in the world (sic). The key phrase is "*ár dtír féin*" (our own country). This school book in Irish was part of a remarkable project of nation-building with its strong self-images and national pride. Following the disastrous Economic War of the 1930s and the World War of the 1940s, it was time to build "*ár dtír féin*".

While some were learning about Ireland (including the route to America!) others were not learning a great deal in this bi-lingual world of 1950s catholic national schools. A view of Ireland as an independent confident nation with its own language and culture was in contrast to the economic reality experienced by many others. From this era, we inherited high emigration, unemployment and low levels of literacy. During the following decades, a great deal of educational energy was expended supporting economic development including free secondary and third-level education, the innovative Institutes of Technology and increased third-level participation. It came as a shock to the system when the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) produced empirical evidence of low literacy levels (Morgan, et al., 1997). There were 500,000 people unable to read the instructions on a box of Aspirin. These many educational interventions have been successful – to a point. Though well-intended these policies have had mixed results. Some people have been left behind.

Literacy is still a priority in further education (FE) courses and is an important piece of the learning landscape as Ireland continues to plot its development as an economy. The current search for a Future Jobs Strategy is an opportunity to reorient the vector of development and maintain literacy as a priority. This is proposed knowing that education is highly valued in our society as a way of enhancing social and economic mobility.

Literacy involves an ability to read and write a range of typical and functional texts but in adult education theory and practice, literacy has a broader definition. It is understood as the ability to engage in contextualised debates and read in ways that are more than functional and focused on the requirements of a job. Reading may involve understanding how society is structured and organised. This reading involves being able to understand that behind "common sense" ways of seeing the world there are more critical and layered meanings. The ability to ask questions, especially about how power is exercised, is an example of what is called reading the

world (thinking of Paulo Freire here). One can read or understand global warming in a way that might lead one to think of actions that one might take as an individual, as a community or as a society. This is a form of literacy.

This kind of literacy is not just a matter of decoding the string of letters in a word or the meanings of words in a sentence. It is a matter of decoding context. It is about the matrix of things referred to in a text and things implied by it. For example, take this sentence about the Land League: "it was a struggle for farming land in 19th century Ireland and was about security of tenure and fixed rents". Literacy is more than the ability to read or understand this set of facts and more than knowing about Michael Davitt. It is also the ability to extrapolate and contextualise the nature of land ownership then and now. Why are property rents so high today? What are the consequences of this? If banks and government and landlords are at the centre of power why are so many homeless today? Are 19th-century evictions connected (or not) to current homelessness?

Many other questions about who we are today might be explored. Travellers, disability, inequality, democracy, a republic, Brexit, climate change could be studied. Literacy of this kind might be described as a form of "social infrastructure" that needs to be at the front of all education and given a priority in public policy, education and training including a Future Jobs Strategy.

We could ask, following a current debate in the United States (Liu, 2019), what does every Irish person need to know? As yet, we have no idea what knowledge or literacies are required to be an Irish citizen. What knowledge is necessary to have the appropriate "social infrastructure" required for a healthy, thriving, egalitarian society? Why build an economy and not a nation? How many people could quote any part of the Easter Proclamation of 1916? It says:

*We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland..*

*The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally..*

We have no idea in Ireland what literacy is required to lift us beyond being just an economy to become a Republic, a democracy, a society that works as hard for human rights and worker's rights and freedom as it does for the economy. Who we are and who we will be is a task that requires, as it always did, literate and critical citizens. We will not Google our way to this.

At least the school textbooks of 1950 had a version of Irish identity. We hardly noticed its hidden curriculum and we can be critical of that too. The current (not so) hidden curriculum is to draw a line around knowledge and literacies that are functional and useful for an economy, and in its focus on training, it ignores education. In the context of lifelong learning and a national jobs strategy, it might be a worthwhile goal to include broader social learning goals. As a result, a competitive economy may result in a healthy, fulfilling and equal society and it may indeed contribute to becoming "*ár dtír féin*" – our own country!

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# Good Future Jobs for all? Persons with disabilities remain on the margins

Charlotte May-Simera,  
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# Good Future Jobs for all? Persons with disabilities remain on the margins

*Charlotte May-Simera, National University of Ireland – Galway*

There is a lack of attention in the Future Jobs Strategy directed towards hardwiring our economy to offer a truly inclusive labour market, where all citizens who are able to work can access work, including those with disabilities. As a result of limited, targeted actions to increase their employment, people with intellectual disabilities, in particular, remain excluded from the general labour market. Ireland has, however, ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which provides a legal framework to realise the rights of persons with disabilities to work and to participate in society.

For most people, work is a significant part of how we define ourselves and we relate to each other. Paid employment not only brings social connections and clarifies our roles in society, but its material benefits are also essential to lead a self-directed life. Many people with intellectual disabilities are, however, not in paid employment (Ellenkamp et al, 2016). Instead, according to figures captured by the National Intellectual Disability Database (NIDD), many continue to attend segregated day services, and little efforts are directed at increasing their access to meaningful work opportunities.

Focusing on the numbers attending work, employment and training services, most individuals registered on the NIDD attended an 'Activation Centre', (8,476 in 2017) as the principal service. The second most attended service was the "Sheltered Work Centre" (2,356 in 2017). The Department of Health, (DOH) identifies that those availing of disabilities services are still largely not participating in work or society and spend their days in segregated, group settings (Department of Health, 2012). Despite claims by the DOH to increase inclusion in more open rather than sheltered work settings, there is no significant evidence that this has taken place<sup>1</sup>. Instead, reports indicate that people remain merely 'occupied', bored and unemployed as a result of their placement in Activation Centres (McCarron et al., 2011).

Against this backdrop, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy, (CES) was eagerly awaited. Launched by the Department of Justice and Equality in 2015, the CES outlines a ten-year plan to increase the employment of people with disabilities. However, when it comes to increasing the employment of persons in segregated settings such as those previously mentioned, the Strategy merely refers to moving people into "more appropriate" training as opposed to meaningful employment on the open labour market<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See generally: Health Service Executive, 'New Directions: Report of the National Working Group for the review of HSE Funded Adult Day Services', (2012).

<sup>2</sup> NIDD

In 2018 Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (CRPD), a legally binding human rights treaty that promotes and protects the rights of persons with disabilities<sup>3</sup>. Article 27 of the CRPD sets out the rights of persons with disabilities to work and how State Parties are to achieve and ensure access to this right in a detailed manner. Accordingly, States are to recognise the right of persons with disabilities to access work in an open, inclusive and accessible environment. The CRPD clarifies that the provision of reasonable accommodations in the workplace is an integral aspect of this right.

To achieve increased participation, it is recommended that the Department of Social Protection increase the scope and resources available to the Employability services in each county so that more people can benefit. Furthermore, the conditions placed on any benefits packages received by people with intellectual disabilities (i.e. limitations of income through earnings or hours worked) may not function as a deterrent to take up paid employment (often referred to as the benefit-trap). Additionally, all measures and grants available as a means to provide reasonable accommodations in employment must be adapted and designed to support people with intellectual disabilities, specifically<sup>4</sup>. With regard to the types of reasonable accommodations that could be adopted, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission offers some guidance in the context of job applications:

- providing someone to read or interpret application materials for a person who has limited ability to read or to understand complex information;
- demonstrating, rather than describing, to the applicant what the job requires;
- modifying tests, training materials, and/or policy manuals; and
- replacing a written test with an 'expanded' interview', (to allow the applicant to demonstrate their ability to do the job)<sup>5</sup>.

To ensure good quality jobs for *all* of Ireland's citizens, employment policy must be aimed to support *all* of Ireland's citizens into real work and have the opportunity to become future workers and employees, in line with the obligations under the CRPD. To achieve this we need to start tackling the widespread, continued segregation of persons with intellectual disabilities in disability services and address this as a form of continued social exclusion. Real opportunities require tangible actions such as increased supports available. It is suggested here that the existing Employability services must be scaled up and that reasonable accommodations must be further tailored to facilitate inclusion in the workplace.

3 Initially Ireland has signed with intent to ratify in 2008. With full ratification in 2018, Ireland became the last EU Member State to ratify due to extensive delays in progress towards preparing domestic legislation for compliance.

4 The Department of Social Protection, through its Employability service, provides employment and recruitment services to people with disabilities and operates a reasonable accommodation fund, which includes a Job Interview Interpreter Grant, Personal Reader Grant and Workplace Equipment Adaption Grant to support people with disabilities to gain and retain employment.

5 Available at: [https://www1.eeoc.gov/laws/types/intellectual\\_disabilities.cfm](https://www1.eeoc.gov/laws/types/intellectual_disabilities.cfm)

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# Situating migrant workers in the future of work agenda

Edel McGinley, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

# Situating migrant workers in the future of work agenda

## *Edel McGinley, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland*

In the Future Jobs Ireland Strategy (2019), the focus on quality jobs, the transition to more sustainable work and a low-carbon economy is laudable. However, it does not fully reflect the complexity of Ireland's labour market. It fails to acknowledge that Ireland is a low-waged economy, with 20% of people working in low pay; that precarity is a key feature of our current labour market; and the migrant labour is now the backbone of many of Ireland's key industries and local communities, with essential high intensity jobs regularly performed by migrants. There are also growing concerns about the racialisation and stratification of Ireland's labour market which needs to be addressed.

In the future of work, we need to ask hard questions of certain sectors. Are they economically viable when they are built on the back of the exploitation of migrant labour? The fishing industry is a case in point. Research carried out by MRCI into the experience of migrant fishers revealed widespread exploitation in certain segments of the industry (MRCI, 2017):

- A majority (65%) work more than 100 hours a week
- Average pay is just €2.82 per hour
- Discrimination, exploitation and verbal and physical abuse are common

There is a concentration of migrant workers in the agri-food sector (meat, poultry, pig, mushroom farming, fishing), in hotels and restaurants, in cleaning and care. Their work is seldom recognised. Across these industries pay is low and conditions far from ideal; on top of this, migrant workers face discrimination in accessing employment and discrimination in the workplace. The vulnerabilities and precariousness associated with immigration status merit special mention, as immigration status impacts on progression and participation and requires a specific focus when developing strategies to ensure equal outcomes for migrants in the labour market.

An additional group of invisible workers meeting the needs of the labour market in Ireland are undocumented workers who are vulnerable to exploitation. These workers provide essential work across the country, with some living here as long as 19 years. Research carried out by MRCI found that the overwhelming majority (89%) are in employment, typically (though not always) in sectors where low-paid work is prevalent. The top three sectors of employment are Restaurant & Catering (32%), Domestic Work (29%), and Cleaning and Maintenance (13%). Other sectors include retail, hotel, medical, healthcare and agriculture (MRCI, 2016).

As part of a Just Transition framework, which is yet to be fully articulated, a response to undocumented migrants is essential. This framework should also have a significant focus on addressing low pay and providing a focus on secure employment. While there have been positive movements upwards in the rate of the minimum wage, this does not go far enough. Adopting the living wage as a minimum standard as part of a Just Transition framework is essential.

A growing concern, not mentioned in the strategy, is Ireland's ageing population. Care at home is more cost effective and preferable for many people looking to age with dignity. Much home care work is carried out by migrant workers. However, this is an unregulated sector where enforcement of rights and standards is scattergun at best (MRCI, 2015a). Investment in alternative models for the delivery of care, which provide quality jobs and quality care and recognises the role of migrants in this work must form part of cross-departmental strategies into the future.

There also needs to be an acknowledgement that both labour and skills shortages will persist into the future. As populations age, we will need more not less migration to Ireland. Currently, our immigration system is very restrictive and work permits continue to contribute to the vulnerabilities of workers. Sectoral permits have not been adopted and mobility – a central tenant of decent work – remain elusive for many migrant workers.

The strategy articulates the need to attract new talent, however, it is not enough to just attract new talent, there is a need to enshrine migrants' rights and entitlements into law. The right to family reunification and long term residency, to name just two are fundamental (MRCI, 2015b).

A cornerstone in protecting migrant workers is ensuring worker representation and collective bargaining. Ireland's voluntarist system of collective bargaining needs to be strengthened and put on a stronger legislative footing. Migrant workers are more protected in this type of system, as is evident in the Swedish model.

It is worrying that flexible working solutions are so embedded in the strategy. Flexible arrangements should benefit both employer and employee, but in practice, flexibility is often at the expense of workers' security and rights. Flexibility without security reinforces power imbalances between employer and employee and leaves workers vulnerable to abuse. Workers in low wage working environments and migrant workers in general tend to have less control and autonomy over their work, in part due to discrimination and work permit restrictions. Having control and certainty over hours and remuneration is central to building strong and resilient communities and a thriving society. While no job is for life, all jobs should build a worker's skills and experience for the future of work. Investing in training and upskilling which actively includes migrant workers is key to promoting progression and addressing the stratification of the labour market.

In 2018, one in ten workers who accessed MRCI services reported experiencing exploitation. Tackling exploitation and non-compliance is in everybody's interest. This is particularly relevant in creating a level playing field for new and emerging

SMEs and in upholding a decent work agenda to protect workers' rights. Protecting migrant workers holds the line for all workers. If we are to build a decent work economy, one not dependent on exploitation and inequality, we must address these issues head-on in all our strategies for the future.

Therefore, some key components needed for future jobs strategies to uphold a decent work agenda are as follows: moving towards the Living Wage, introducing a scheme for undocumented workers, tackling non-compliance, carrying out research into the stratification of the labour market, developing a strategy for home care that recognises the contribution of migrants, introducing sectoral work permits, providing in work training targeted at migrants in low waged work, and enshrining the rights of migrants in legislation.

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# Getting health care right for good future jobs and care

Phil Ni Sheaghdha,  
Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation

# Getting health care right for good future jobs and care

## *Phil Ni Sheaghda, Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation*

Health care jobs aren't going anywhere. Our population is ageing, we're living longer, and treatments are becoming more effective – but also more complex. The future will doubtless see major changes in health, but due to the importance of human care and interaction, it is a sector uniquely resistant to the much-predicted automation which so often features in discussions on the future of work. Even if robotic medics are an unlikely prospect soon, health care remains the subject of much debate and scrutiny. This is a good thing! One key aspect of ensuring good (current and future) jobs in the healthcare sector is for policy makers to understand and invest properly in a fit for purpose healthcare service.

### **Getting the model right**

Health care and its provision is complex and expensive. We aspire in Ireland to universally available care based on need, not on ability to pay. Happily, this is where the arguments usually begin. There is a strong political and public consensus for the availability of health care for all, but in practice access to the health system is a major problem, leading to many of those with private health insurance jealously guarding their privileged rights to speedier access.

It's all down to trust. The concept and principle of equal access to health care is sound and achievable. However, the way government approaches policy change – particularly the roll out of Sláintecare – indicates that the change will be slow, segmented and only when matched with financial and political expediency. You can't blame the public for being sceptical. When it comes to healthcare and political promises, they've heard it all before. Political pledges on health grow, but so too do waiting lists, trolley counts, and the numbers of people who can't even register with a GP.

Change doesn't come cheap, and while the government rhetorically support the universal Sláintecare plan, they have still not set out a transition fund to begin the switch. Such funds are needed to clear legacy overruns and shift from a bloated, bureaucratic management model to a more agile, dynamic one. The proposed six new regional health areas are a welcome start on that and could help deliver services closer to where the need arises, "delaying" the system.

### **Short-term budgeting**

Healthcare workers' recruitment and patients' needs are not perfectly contained in single financial years, but inexplicably our budgeting system acts as if they are. The Sláintecare plan sensible suggests multi-annual budgeting, but unfortunately, our

government does not agree. Instead, they continue with the old-fashioned annual budget system in health, with its clear negative impacts on staff, recruitment, and retention. Another consequence of annual budgeting is a tendency towards short-term, often counterproductive, thinking. The current HSE recruitment "pause" is a perfect example – restricting the number of staff hired or promoted based entirely on arbitrary financial controls, rather than patient or service needs.

In the short run, these policies are unlikely to save money. To provide essential services, the switch to more expensive agency staff is inevitable. In the long run, we know there are serious staffing consequences too. The recruitment moratorium introduced at the end of 2007 left a bitter taste in the mouths of many health professionals when they were forced to leave Ireland to seek employment – despite their skills being clearly needed here. This "bitter taste" is a significant hurdle in efforts to attract those professionals back to Ireland. In that context, it is not surprising that the HSE's much-trumpeted 'bring them home campaign' did nothing of the sort, enticing less than 100 nurses and midwives back over two years. A recruitment pause causes fundamental changes in health service provision. The failure to consider optimum long-term staffing can be summarised in a single statistic: Ireland has fewer nurses and midwives working in its public health service in 2019 than it did in 2007.

This statistic is particularly galling given the increased demand on the health services in an Ireland which is both growing and ageing. And, of course, as patients from 2007 can testify: we didn't have enough staff then either. Thankfully, the recent nurses and midwives' strike delivered agreement on a funded plan to measure patient dependency and set staffing levels based on that. When piloted in Ireland, this model reduced the length of hospital stays, cut patient mortality, reduced staff burnout and saved money for the exchequer. It was a win-win – and a clear sign of how the future must be.

Up to this point, there has simply been a failure to evaluate the staffing requirements to meet the demands of a growing population. Internationally, Ireland's penny-pinching, stop/start approach to recruitment just won't cut it anymore. Worldwide there is a grave shortage of health care professionals – by 2030 there will be an estimated shortage of nine million nurses. Ireland is thus in increasing competition with the UK, USA, Australia, Canada and others as we try to entice nurses and midwives from India and the Philippines. The idea that we would introduce a recruitment pause at home, forcing newly qualified professionals to leave, while furiously trying to recruit staff from abroad is like trying to fill a bucket with water that has a large hole in it. The drive to stay within the annual budgetary requirements and the foolish application of a recruitment pause indicates that the system will be slower to change than we would hope.

### **Technological change**

Health services are heavily dependent on qualified and competent professionals. While advancements in technologies are undoubtedly of great benefit to health services, they rarely reduce the requirement for skilled professionals. Technology

is extremely important in driving efficiencies in relation to patient records, remote access to case conferencing and expert review of diagnostic scans. It delivers efficient, faster, less invasive procedures and more accurate diagnostic services. It clearly improves patient outcomes but does not lower the need for staff. Unfortunately, it is not always the case that these technologies are available, particularly in community health care provision settings: this is inexcusable in the 21st century. Regardless of technological development, the need for staff is likely to remain a constant demand in modern healthcare.

### **The Commitment**

Health care workers deliver an incredible service in short-staffed, under-resourced services. But I know from daily conversations with nurses and midwives that they are tired of apologising to the patients and the public for delayed services and overcrowded environments. Innovations and changes are not a problem for these employees. Healthcare workers are typically the first to embrace innovation. It is a feature of their daily work and a feature of health research and innovation. If you want to see the depth of their commitment, merely look at the endless new qualifications they secure, the shift to nurse and midwife-led care, the transfer of duties traditionally performed by doctors, the on-the-job mentoring, or the lifelong learning to ensure up to date data and research is utilised correctly. Much of this is done in their own time or at their own expense.

What is needed is a reciprocal commitment from policy makers to implement the very practical recommendations of Sláintecare: invest in front-line staff, invest in staff planning and recruitment, replace bureaucracy, and move services that can be delivered by community services to the community services. Getting this right will allow healthcare workers to get on with what they came into the profession to do – deliver quality diagnostics and care. In such a system, private health insurance will truly then become an individual choice – not a necessary safeguard to secure timely access to the health service. Demands on that service will only continue to grow. Qualified health professionals are up for the challenge: now it's time for policymakers to get the system right.

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# Organising workers in the modern (and future) world of work

Joan Donegan,  
Irish Federation of University Teachers

# Organising workers in the modern (and future) world of work

## *Joan Donegan, Irish Federation of University Teachers*

The Irish Federation of University Teachers is the pre-eminent trade union representing academic, research and senior professional staff in Irish universities. It was founded in the mid- 1960's. The issue of security of tenure has always been a central concern for all those unions worldwide, which, like IFUT, represent these grades in universities. However, in the context of this reflection on the topic of organising workers in the modern world of work it is noteworthy that the question of job security should have, in the past and today, had such a significant impact on our union's experience of membership recruitment, but in such radically different ways in each period.

### **Then**

In the early years of our existence, although it was formally a trade union and recognised as such by employers and other trade unions, IFUT nevertheless acted more in the character of an Academic Staff Association. Its preoccupations were, generally speaking, those of the cohort of university staff who were more concerned about academic issues such as professional autonomy and academic freedom than the more basic issues of pay and working hours. Those who were most active in the leadership of the union were those who were more likely to feel more secure in their jobs. This was true even though there was a degree of tension between this group and the younger, newer academics who felt that their place in the university was disproportionately marginalised and excluded from influence.

As IFUT grew in numbers and confidence it was effective as a negotiator on behalf of its members across the full range of their concerns as employees and not just as academics and/or professional staff. But such activity was taking place in the context where it was taken for granted that conditions of employment in a university would be more favourable than for the generality of workers elsewhere in the economy.

### **Now**

Nowadays we have the opposite situation. Today, one of the most significant impediments to the greater recruitment of new members in our area of influence is precisely because they do *not* feel secure in their employment. It needs to be said clearly that the current situation facing early-career academics and researchers is not just *somewhat worse* than that of their predecessors, it is *radically so*.

Insecure and precarious employment is now practically the hallmark and norm for the treatment of new academics and researchers. This is extremely concerning and leaves a bitter taste given that government and Higher Education rarely misses an

opportunity to declare their commitment to “the knowledge economy” and to the promotion of research. Yet the default position is that full-time researchers in our universities are employed (often for long years) on short-term and highly insecure contracts. It is a fact that practically all of those who have managed to move onto more normal, standard-duration, contracts did so only with the benefit of strong trade union support, and in spite of strenuous efforts by their direct employers and the government department which (inadequately) funds the colleges to maintain them in long-term insecurity.

Since IFUT spends approximately 70% of its time and resources dealing with problems of, or arising from, precariousness, it feels particularly frustrating that it is this very ubiquity of insecurity which is, at the same time, making it more difficult for us to bring the benefits of trade union membership to those most in need of it. The effect of these precarious contracts is to make employees feel that they have no future in employment. Indeed, the official policy of a growing number of universities is that they are not employees but merely “trainees”. It does not take much thought to work out that, if a worker is encouraged to think that he/she is not an employee, then they will be more reluctant to join a trade union whose main perceived aim is the improvement in the pay and conditions of those who are employees.

So, for IFUT “organising workers in the modern (and future) world of work” requires us to persuade workers to let us represent them so that, as a first step, they will *become* employees with all of the hard-won rights that such a status is supposed to confer.

If the predicament of researchers is bad (and it is and has been for about the past 15 years) then, sadly, we can say that their colleagues on campus who work as early-career university teachers are rapidly catching up with them in the infamous “race to the bottom” which has been referred to by no less a person than the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins (most recently in a speech commemorating the centenary of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on September 17, 2019).

It is now quite commonplace for newly commenced university teachers to not only have the same insecure contracts as their researcher colleagues but to also be denied sufficient hours. Many are allocated only a very small number of teaching hours per month or term so that their “weekly hours” might only amount to a very small fraction of the “standard working week”. (We should also point out that the pay offered to such teachers, who have the same prior qualifications as “regular” university Lecturers, used to be calculated *only* on the actual hours in the lecture hall, preparation and time on pre-lecture research was unpaid, as was any follow-up time in assessing or advising students. This blatantly unfair situation has changed only recently and only because of strong pressure from IFUT).

In such egregious circumstances, there is yet one more barrier for a union trying to recruit such staff- they simply cannot afford the price of the standard weekly or monthly union sub.

In IFUT’s case, we now offer sliding scales for union membership subscriptions based on the numbers of hours worked. Thus, the union may get as little as €4 per month

from such members which is, it is not difficult to calculate, hugely below the actual cost to the union of providing representation. It is also the case that such levels of sub-par treatment of the workers concerned means that they need and deserve much more, not less, of the union's time and resources than 'regular' employees.

## **Conclusion**

Many people reading what we have set out above will be surprised that there are so many problems regarding conditions of employment in the university sector, a sector whose image is still, generally speaking, one of privilege, good pay and security of employment. Many others may make the common mistake in assuming that when it comes to the task of recruiting employees into a trade union then "the worse the better", in other words, that the more problems there are facing employees, the more easily can they be persuaded to join a trade union to fight for improvements.

I am not sure this was ever true but the current reality is that the growth in the prevalence of precarious forms of employment means that, not only are the affected employees worse off but also that they will feel even more nervous and inhibited from combining with colleagues to pursue collectively an agenda for better terms and conditions. Thus, trade unions such as IFUT have had to work not only harder but more imaginatively to come up with new ways of attracting members and assisting them to fight for improvements in their lot. It would indeed be very welcome, and, we think, appropriate if our national government (which has a mandate to serve the common good) were to be more pro-active in promoting measures to reduce insecurity of employment and encouraging the orderly negotiation of better conditions of employment.

University staff make a critical and positive contribution to the holistic well-being of our society. Surely, therefore it makes sense for them to be valued and afforded the space, the respect and the security which will enable them to deepen and enhance the quality of that contribution. Poor conditions of employment combined with high levels of insecurity are contributing to the deterioration in the attractiveness of the academic profession. This cannot be good for students or society.



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# Measuring good work and why it matters

Gail Irvine, Carnegie UK Trust

# Measuring good work and why it matters

## *Gail Irvine, Carnegie UK Trust*

There is much debate currently about the future of jobs. The pace of change – in the rapid rise of digital technology and the ever-growing globalisation of the economy – is understandably leading to anxieties about that we are on the cusp of widespread disruption to whole industries and forms of work, perhaps the very conception of work itself. The media is attracted to headlines about robots taking over our jobs. Yet we can also observe longer running trends, including the decline of trade unions and collective bargaining; the rise of working poverty; chronic skills mismatches and shortages in key industries; and the narrowing of opportunities with those with no formal skills, which are contributing to justifiable anxiety about the future prospects for workers.

In Ireland, part of the response to these trends has been *Future Jobs*, the cross-departmental, multi-year agenda from the Irish Government, “*preparing now for tomorrow’s economy*”. Forward-looking initiatives of this kind are important in structuring employment and labour market policy. Yet we also need to define and measure the issues we are seeking to address. We need to identify the nature and type of jobs that we want to support and understand how well these ambitions for quality work are currently met within the labour market in Ireland. As employment trends are playing out differently in different sectors, regions and for different groups of workers, it’s important to look to the evidence to understand the most pressing current challenges and how they can be alleviated.

There are challenges in accessing robust data on the changing nature of work, particularly regional level data. An important first step is for governments to explicitly recognise a role in scrutinising the quality of work. This should be accompanied by committing resources towards tracking the levels of quality work in the economy. Why? Because simply getting people into work is not where public policy’s interest should end. Any type of employment is still generally better for health, wellbeing and the economy than being unemployed – but we need to measure our progress against much more than just this low bar. As levels of in-work poverty attest, getting a job is no longer a guaranteed route towards financial self-sufficiency. This undermines the social contract of work as well as putting further pressure on social security and health services. The UK-based What Works Centre for Wellbeing, which collates the highest quality available evidence for policy making, notes the positive wellbeing impact offered by jobs which exceed minimum legal standards to deliver on aspects of job quality, concluding that: “having a job is good and having a good quality job is miles better”<sup>1</sup>. In sum, quality of work really matters – to tackle low

1 Submission by Nancy Hey, Director of What Works Wellbeing to the Carnegie UK Trust, September 2017. See <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/product/job-quality-and-wellbeing/> for more information.

wages and in-work poverty, to unlock individual potential, build healthy and thriving communities, and ensure that paid work contributes to a better quality of life.

Future Jobs Ireland may be well positioned to undertake quality of work analysis and action. But it is important that any attempt to measure quality of work goes beyond (undisputedly important) questions of pay and skill levels to encompass a broader range of aspects of job quality that matter for the wellbeing of individuals and labour markets. This might include data on terms of employment (contract types, flexibility and work-life balance); worker voice and representation, health and safety and mental health impacts, use of skills, and opportunities for training and progression. Job quality is a multi-dimensional concept, and while we may have our own views about what makes a good and bad job, there are examples of job quality frameworks being developed to advance "quality work" policy ambitions.

Efforts to measure quality of work in Ireland would not be starting from a blank page. High quality academic, national and European surveys have been used to capture data on different aspects of job quality over the years. For example, the CSO tracks key employment metrics through the Labour Force Survey while some other qualitative aspects of job quality are captured through Eurofound surveys such as the European Working Conditions Survey. Our [Fulfilling Work in Ireland](#) research used these data sources to analyse availability and quality of employment through the Great Recession to 2017. The picture that emerged was mixed. Ireland had amongst the highest median hourly earnings in the EU, and workers in Ireland reported comparatively high scores on issues such as career prospects and their ability to express their ideas and influence decisions at work. But we also found that there had been a serious increase in involuntary part-time and temporary working during the recession; that young people were the worst affected by deteriorating pay and terms and conditions; and that pay inequality, as well as endemic low pay in sectors like hospitality and cleaning, were urgent issues.

This report gave us a picture of a point in time. There are various other organisations drawing insights from their analysis of what labour market data we have, such as Social Justice Ireland and TASC. What is lacking though is consistent, wide-ranging, regularly reported national data. The CSO's Labour Force Survey is very regular and robust, but provides only limited coverage of quality issues (e.g. pay, contract type, over and underemployment). The European Working Conditions Survey provides rich qualitative job quality data on aspects such as worker autonomy, workplace relations and work-life balance. However, its frequency (every 7 years) is sub-optimal to inform policy-making, and its relatively small national sample size limits the analytical possibilities. Ireland's labour market has clearly undergone great changes through pre and post-recession to today, but the reporting of these changes – and therefore our understanding of what to do about them – lags behind.

Ireland is of course, not the only jurisdiction in facing this challenge. The Carnegie UK Trust has undertaken recent work with the RSA to seek to instigate national job quality reporting in the UK. We sought to take forward the Taylor Review of Modern Employment recommendation that "UK Government should identify metrics

against which it will measure success in improving work, reporting annually on the quality of work in the UK economy". We brought together a group of cross-sectoral stakeholders in an eight-month process to think through some of the conceptual and practical challenges of measuring job quality annually, and to agree on a workable framework to begin doing so.

Our group discussion focused on the key question of "what to measure and how to measure it?". There is a weight of academic evidence discussing key indicators of job quality, so the challenge was to prioritise these to a manageable set of measures to go in a national survey. After much discussion and debate, we arrived at 18 priority metrics, grouped under seven dimensions:

Dimension	Concepts to be measured
1. Terms of employment	2. Job security 3. Minimum guaranteed hours 4. Underemployment
2. Pay and benefits	5. Pay (actual) 6. Satisfaction with pay
3. Job design and nature of work	7. Use of skills 8. Control 9. Opportunities for progression 10. Sense of purpose
4. Social support and cohesion	11. Peer support 12. Line manager relationship
5. Health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing	13. Physical injury 14. Mental health
6. Work-life balance	15. Over-employment 16. Overtime
7. Voice and Representation	17. Trade union membership 18. Employee information 19. Employee involvement

The preferred survey vehicle for collecting data on these measures was also debated, but we concluded that the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) was the most

optimal by far. The characteristics of the sample and regularity of the LFS would offer a much greater level of segmentation and analysis, which we saw as crucial for informing policy interventions and stimulating debate. We also saw a presentational opportunity, to place job quality on equal footing with job quantity. Our vision was that when the new LFS employment statistics were released and in the news cycle, we would also see stories covering a range of things that matter to the quality of working life – such as changes and trends in pay, contract type, employee representation and people's health and wellbeing at work.

Agreeing exactly what job quality metrics to measure progress against can be challenging, but this is where the value of a cross-sectoral group comes in. In our process in the UK, hearing perspectives from academia, policy, small businesses, key sectors like retail, the trade unions movement and many others allowed us to consider the different aspects of quality work, and how these can be enabled and reported on. Arriving at a consensus view signalled strongly to government that this agenda had a broad range of support and authority they could draw upon as they moved ahead. In December 2018, the UK Government's [Good Work Plan](#) announced its commitment to taking forward measurement on job quality, and to consider the recommendations of our Working Group. There may be an opportunity to advance a similar initiative in Ireland, which could act as an important sounding board and influencer on what is measured as progress towards "good quality" Future Jobs.

Of course, getting better data about work in Ireland can only be a starting point. Tackling the complex causes of issues like low pay, low skills use and insecure work in different sectors obviously requires political will and a range of actions over the medium term. Nevertheless, it is an important step. Better data can help to inform public incentives and interventions that promote better work. Shining a light on sectors where job quality appears high can help other employers understand how aspects of good work and job design can be encouraged and enabled for a more productive workforce. Most importantly, asking more of the right questions about job quality in Ireland will get more of us talking about how to improve it.



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# About the Authors

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***Joan Donegan,  
General Secretary, Irish Federations of University Teachers***

Joan Donegan was appointed General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) in 2017. With over 20 years comprehensive knowledge of industrial relations procedures and employment law, Joan Donegan has brought a wealth of experience to IFUT. Joan is also a qualified Mediator with a practicing certificate from the Mediation Institute of Ireland and has an Honours M.A. from Maynooth University in Mediation and Conflict Intervention Studies. She is currently continuing her studies for a PhD with the Education Department at Maynooth University.

***James Doorley,  
National Youth Council of Ireland***

James has a BA and MA in Applied Social Studies from Maynooth University and also holds law degrees, a LL.B from DIT and a LL.M from TCD. James is Deputy Director of the National Youth Council of Ireland. He has been a member of the National Economic and Social Council since 2011. He is a Board Member of the Residential Tenancies Board and a member of the Senate of the National University of Ireland. He is also Chairperson of North Leinster Money Advice and Budgeting Service.

***Dr Ted Fleming,  
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Dr Ted Fleming is Adjunct Associate Professor of Adult Education, at Columbia University, New York and External Academic Advisor to Larissa Learning City and Citizens' University – a UNESCO funded Project. Received the Jack Mezirow Theory of Transformative Learning Award for 'original contribution to the theory of learning' writing on Axel Honneth. In 2016, delivered the inaugural Mezirow Memorial Lecture at Columbia University. His latest publication is entitled "European Perspectives on Transformation Theory" by Ted Fleming, Alexis Kokkos and Fergal Finnegan (published in 2019).

***Gail Irvine,  
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Gail Irvine is Senior Policy and Development Officer at the Carnegie UK Trust, a charitable foundation which aims to improve the wellbeing of the people in the UK and Ireland. Gail leads on the delivery of the Trust's Fulfilling Work programme, including projects on measuring good work in national statistics, improving quality of work and productivity, using public sector procurement to promote good work, and piloting a basic income in Scotland.



***Patricia King,  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions***

Patricia King is the General Secretary of ICTU and became the first woman to serve in this position when she took up the post in 2015. Patricia 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 2010. She has represented workers in all areas of the economy and was a lead negotiator in both the Croke Park and Haddington Road agreements. Patricia played a leading role in the Irish Ferries dispute of 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.

***Charlotte May-Simera,  
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Charlotte has an undergraduate degree in Children, Welfare and Society from the University of Exeter and a Graduate Certificate in Psychology from the University of Sunderland. She also holds a Bachelor of Social Work from the Hogeschool Zuyd, Maastricht, a postgraduate degree in Comparative European Social Studies from the Metropolitan University London and an LL.M. in International and Comparative Disability Law and Policy from the University of Ireland, Galway. Charlotte has an extensive background in working with disability and children's services and supporting disability self-advocacy. As a trainee in the Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Charlotte worked on European Youth and Social Inclusion policy before becoming a Communications Assistant at the European Disability Forum.

***Seán McCabe,  
TASC***

Seán lead's TASC's work on Just Transition, with a particular focus on local wealth building in rural communities. Prior to joining TASC, Seán worked as a Policy Officer with the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice for five years. During this time he engaged with the negotiations leading to the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He also led the Foundation's work on intergenerational equity. Seán spent five years working in the private sector, as a catastrophe risk analyst with Renaissance Reinsurance. He also spent 2 years working in a hospice in Kolkata, India, and worked with the Environmental Protection Agency in Sierra Leone building the agencies capacity in Geographic Information Systems. Seán holds an B.Sc in Applied Physics from Dublin City University and an M.Sc. in Development Practice awarded by Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin.

***Edel McGinley,  
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland***

Edel McGinley has worked with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland since 2006. She is the current Director of MRCI. In her time here she has coordinated the Justice for the Undocumented Campaign, held responsibility for MRCI's communications and labour migration policy, and coordinated the Domestic Workers Action group. Edel is the current chair of PICUM (the Platform for the International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants) and a board member of Uplift, a multi-issue campaigning organisation. Before joining MRCI, Edel worked in various social care and youth work positions. She has a BA in Applied Social Studies, an MA in Globalisation, and Diplomas in Youth and Community Work and Digital Media Technology.

***Dr Cian McMahon,  
International Centre for Co-operative Management, Saint Mary's  
University***

Dr Cian McMahon is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the International Centre for Co-operative Management at Saint Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Cian holds a PhD in economics from the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), where his thesis focused on the potential of the worker cooperative model as the basis for a sustainable mode of production. He lectured on heterodox economics and radical political economy at NUIG, and worked previously as a Policy Analyst with the Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) to promote greater economic equality and participatory democracy across Irish society. Cian is also involved in trade union and activist education.

***Phil Ni Sheaghda,  
Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation***

Phil is a trained intensive care nurse and general secretary of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO). She has worked as a nurse in Ireland, Australia, the UK and USA, following training in Dublin and London. She began work for the INMO in 1998, later completing an MA in industrial relations and a Higher Diploma in employment law. She was Director of Industrial Relations from 2008 until 2018, when she was appointed General Secretary. She has overall responsibility for the organisation, leading on INMO's advocacy on national nursing policy and through various public sector pay agreements. In 2019, she led the organisation's first strike in two decades – winning pay increases and staffing improvements for nurses and midwives.

***Orla O'Connor,  
National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI)***

Orla O'Connor is the current Director of National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI), the leading national women's membership organisation in Ireland. She was also Co-Director of Together For Yes, the national Civil Society Campaign to remove the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the referendum. For her pivotal role in Together For Yes, Orla was recognised as one of the "100 Most Influential People" by TIME magazine in 2019. Orla holds an MA in European Social Policy and has worked in senior management in non-governmental organisations for over 25 years. Orla is a feminist and an expert in the policies needed to progress women's equality in Ireland. She has led numerous high level, successful campaigns on a wide range of issues on women's rights, including social welfare reform, pension reform, and the introduction of quality and affordable childcare.

***Dr Michelle O'Sullivan,  
Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick***

Dr O'Sullivan's research expertise is primarily on the quality of work with particular attention to precarious jobs, public policy and employment law. Other research interests include trade unions, workplace technology, employee voice, and workplace bullying. She co-led the first study on zero hours contracts in Ireland, commissioned by the Irish government in 2015, and was co-investigator of the first study on workplace bullying in nursing in Ireland. She is co-editor of the comparative volume *Zero Hours and On-call Work in Anglo-Saxon Countries* (2019) and co-author of *Industrial Relations in Ireland* (2020). She is co-editor of the *Irish Journal of Management*, is a Scientific Council Member of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies and is a government-appointed Board Member of the Workplace Relations Commission, the state dispute resolution body.

***Tomás Sercovich,  
Business in the Community Ireland***

Tomás was appointed CEO of Business in the Community Ireland in January 2018. Previously, he worked with Spain's largest sustainability network, Forética as Director of External Affairs, where he increased the international profile of the organisation and its external reputation and impact. Between 2002 and 2012, Tomás held several positions with Business in the Community Ireland, including Manager of the Membership Services Team. He is a member of the Board of CSR Europe since 2008 and is a member of the World Business Council of Sustainable Development. He also sits on the board of Young Social Innovators. Tomás has also sat on the judging panels of a number of awards including SEAI Sustainable Energy Awards, Limerick Chamber Regional Business Awards, Google Impact Challenge, Good Governance Awards and Energia Family Business Awards. Tomás holds a BA in International Relations from Universidad de Belgrano in Argentina and a Master's degree in International Relations and International Management from the Università di Bologna in Italy. He also holds a Certificate in Management from DIT.

***Dr Robert Sweeney,  
TASC***

Dr Robert Sweeney is the policy analyst at TASC. At TASC he researches issues surrounding socioeconomic inequality in Ireland and also the European Union. He is a member of the Living Wage Technical Group and has made presentations and submissions to the Low Pay Commission on the minimum wage. He has a PhD in economics from University of Leeds. His academic research interests include inequality, macroeconomics, and finance. He has published and refereed in international journals in economics and political economy.

***Dr Richard Wynne,  
Work Research Centre***

Dr Richard Wynne has worked in the area of workplace health and wellbeing for more than 30 years, as a Director of the Work Research Centre, a Board Member of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion and as a part time lecturer in UCD. His interests include mental health in the workplace, stress at work, the impacts of shift working and managing disability and return to work. He has worked as a researcher and consultant on projects for the European Commission and for a range of Irish and international organisations.



This Ensuring Good Future Jobs collection represents a coordinated response to the Future Jobs Strategy Report that was published by the Irish government in March 2019.

The collection features contributions from 15 key social partners in Ireland, including business representatives, academics, the trade union movement and wider civil society. Their essays describe the challenges faced by workers in different sectors and from different backgrounds in Ireland today, consider what good quality future jobs might look like for these workers, and outline what policies and practical changes may be needed.



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The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work.

TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change) is an independent progressive think-tank whose core focus is addressing inequality and sustaining democracy.

