

BETTER PAY, JOB SECURITY

Labour's policy on work is one of our five policy commitments that must be at the core of any agreement with other parties in the next Dáil.

Work is changing and we need to change with it. A job for life doesn't exist anymore. But that doesn't mean we can't have better pay, job security and be better able to balance our work and family commitments. Too many workers are underpaid, many jobs are insecure and wages aren't keeping up with the cost of living. People need a pay rise.



MORE POWER TO YOU

Labour will guarantee everyone the right to be represented at work by a trade union, and employers will be required to negotiate with their employee's representatives. This negotiation process, called collective bargaining, is the norm across Europe and it underpins the productivity and resilience of the Northern European economies. We will ensure a right of access for trade union representatives to workplaces, including through constitutional change if required.

The most productive countries in the EU have one thing clearly in common: they set wages and working conditions through negotiation between employers and employees.

Collective bargaining has delivered dynamic economies with higher wages, longer holidays and better working conditions. In return,

employers get more certainty, more committed and ultimately more productive staff. Everyone is a winner, and everyone shares in the benefits of growth. Labour wants Ireland to follow the same route to economic and social success.

A LIVING WAGE

Labour will require the Low Pay Commission to chart a path to a living wage, to increase the national minimum wage until it remains above two-thirds of median income (as it was originally in 2000) and is sufficient to provide a minimum essential standard of living. This measure will benefit one in four workers.

In a civilised and fair society, everyone who works should be able to make ends meet, and have some savings left over. At the very least, their physical, psychological and social needs should be met by their earned income. This is the least that should be achieved in a wealthy country like Ireland. There is now clear international evidence that raising wages at the bottom of the economy does not cause a loss of jobs.

THE GIG ECONOMY

Labour will enforce a right to certainty of working hours and eliminate bogus self-employment and "if and when" arrangements.

This will support people to balance their family life and childcare arrangements, as well as improving their weekly pay. Basic rights like paid holidays, sick leave and protection against unfair dismissal are being eroded by the so-called "gig economy". The Labour Party and the wider labour movement continue to fight to keep these basic protections for people at work, regardless of their industry.

Labour is leading the fight against bogus self-employment. There are now around 200,000 workers being hired as "independent contractors" to drive us, to deliver packages or to deliver take-away meals, among other roles. Labour is fighting to guarantee them their basic rights, including minimum pay, maternity leave and certainty of hours. Labour have already led in banning precarious zero-hour contracts. And we will lead again in regulating the gig economy.

THE PENSION AGE

Labour will stop the age rise and we will maintain the State Pension age at 66.

This will give society and the economy more time to adjust to people living and working for longer.

In addition, we will link social protection payments to the cost of living, including pensions, based on the creation of a new national cost of living index, linked to the real cost of living of a modest but sufficient income. The level of increase should be recommended to the Minister by an independent group, to remove the politics from annual increases.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil are both planning to raise the pension age to 67, which is faster and further than almost any other country in the developed world. And the savings will be relatively small, compared to the surplus of nearly €4 billion in the Social Insurance Fund that pays for pensions. Ireland has the youngest population and with one of the highest fertility rates in Europe. In fifty years' time, we will still have the lowest proportion of older people in the EU. While we do have to adjust to people living and working longer, we do not have to have the highest pension age in the EU.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Labour will introduce a Right to Flexible Working Hours (where an employer only has to make a reasonable adjustment to allow for them) and we will provide a **Right to Disconnect from work-related emails and calls after hours**. This will help to reduce stress and wasted time from commuting, and to facilitate work-life balance for parents and carers in particular.

Technology has opened up new opportunities for more flexible working arrangements. This has the potential to increase productivity and to provide a better work-life balance, all while cutting congestion, lowering our climate emissions and creating more flexible conditions for childcare. Yet, unlike other EU countries, there is currently no law that requires employers to grant flexible arrangements.

The Labour Party has consistently been at the forefront of advancing workers' rights. And we will continue to shape the future of work. Labour will implement a **National Flexible Working Strategy**, to develop good practice standards for permitting people to work from home or from other locations, noting that women are still disproportionately the primary caregivers for children. This will develop greater opportunities for flexi-time, remote working and open up the possibility of a Four-Day week or shorter working day.

