

First 'trade union week' prioritising new protections for trade union members

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The inaugural 'trade union week' is running events across the country, seeking to build momentum for enhanced rights for trade union members, with transposition of the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive around the corner.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is putting legal protections and rights for workers to join a union to the fore, as part of the first Trade Union Week with events happening across Ireland to promote the benefits of trade union membership.

Running between 29 April and 6 May, members and representatives from across 44 trade unions affiliated to ICTU are holding Trade Union Week events in workplaces, schools, further and higher education institutes, and retail outlets, focused on issues such as enhanced job security, advice and supports for workers, improved terms and conditions of employment, and better pay.

The programme also features public lectures, marches, and rallies across the island of Ireland. Trade Union Week is taking place as part of the 'Better in a Trade Union' campaign.

Commenting at the launch of Trade Union Week, ICTU General Secretary, Owen Reidy said workers can still be discriminated against due to union activity.

"This week, 800,000 affiliated members will reach out to colleagues and friends to talk about the benefits of trade union membership, they do so without adequate legal protection against discrimination or unfair dismissal for trade union activity. Ireland has a strong history of trade union membership and yet it is one of only two EU countries which does not protect employee representatives from being discriminated against for their trade union activity.

"This week, we celebrate a collective movement that has secured better pay and conditions for workers. But there are multiple workplaces across this island where trade union representatives are banned from organising. Ireland must introduce the right and legal protection for workers to join a trade union and to access the valuable support and advice that membership affords them."

Ireland must transpose the Adequate Minimum Wage Directive by 15 November this year, under which the State will be obliged to promote collective bargaining. Mr Reidy says this

“cannot come quickly enough for the hundreds of thousands of workers who are currently denied that right.”

“We want to see the Minimum Wage Directive implemented as a priority to ensure all workers can enjoy full rights and legal protections, and to remove any barriers that exist around joining a union,” he said. “Our aim for Trade Union Week is to show those yet to join a union the huge benefits that exist in collective action and bargaining. Every worker is better in a trade union.”