

BETTER  
WITH THE  
**FSU**

# BUDGET 2026

**financial  
services  
union**

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## Who we are

The Financial Services Union (FSU) is the leading Trade Union representing staff in the Financial Services, Fintech, and Tech sectors. We support employees of retail banks, global financial services organisations, technology and FinTech organisations and workers in the Games and Animators sector.

We understand what employees want, we give sound advice, and we secure better outcomes in pay and conditions for our members. We are a representative and campaigning union based on shared common values of decency, fairness, equality, and respect in the workplace.

Our purpose is to support, enable and empower members to achieve their career ambitions while leading the development of a sustainable, ethical financial services sector. Our ambition is to be a progressive and innovative trade union, recognised for supporting, representing, and enabling members.

Our vision is of an FSU that is at the heart of the financial services community. Through our deep understanding, insights and focus on the changing world of financial services and our members' needs, we enable progress that benefits consumers, the sector, and the economy.

# financial services union

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# Artificial Intelligence and the role of the State

We need to provide:

*“Training opportunities for workers - both younger and older – to drive upskilling and support transition to new roles that may not even exist yet”*

From the speech by Governor Gabriel Makhoul to OECD  
22 September 2025

These sentiments expressed by the Governor of the Central Bank Gabriel Makhoul accurately reflect the findings of recent research undertaken jointly by the FSU and TASC into the possible impacts of AI in the wider financial services sector.

The research revealed widespread concern about the advances of artificial intelligence in the workplace.

In our research 88% of respondents believe AI will lead to job displacement and 60% report feeling less secure in their roles than they did five years ago. While many workers acknowledge AI's potential benefits, including increased efficiency and improved decision-making, these advantages are overshadowed by fears of job loss, wage stagnation, and intensified managerial oversight.

Notably, workers under the age of 35 and those in administrative roles express the highest levels of anxiety about AI-driven displacement.

Other significant findings highlight concerns about AI's role in decision-making and worker surveillance. Over 61% of respondents expressed unease about AI being used in hiring, firing, and promotion decisions. Furthermore, 58% of workers are concerned about increased managerial oversight and surveillance through AI systems, fearing a loss of privacy and greater performance monitoring.

Workers also reported a skills gap, with only 28% feeling adequately prepared to use AI

tools in their daily work. Younger workers (under 35) were more likely to feel comfortable adopting AI compared to their older counterparts, while women were less likely than men to feel prepared for AI-driven changes.

Government intervention can play a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of AI integration on financial services workers. A robust policy framework should mandate transparency in AI decision-making, ensure the ethical use of AI in hiring and workforce management, and establish clear accountability for employers. While the EU AI Act takes substantial steps to address some of the risks of AI systems, additional interventions should address the adverse labour market effects of AI.



## Funding.

The Government should announce funding for research into the impact of AI on Financial Services alongside other high- exposure sectors to include:

Targeted AI training programmes for Financial Services:

- Support for businesses in transitioning affected employees into AI augmented roles rather than replacing them outright, fostering sustainable employment and sector resilience.
- Expand AI education through established financial industry bodies rather than relying on technology-driven training initiatives.

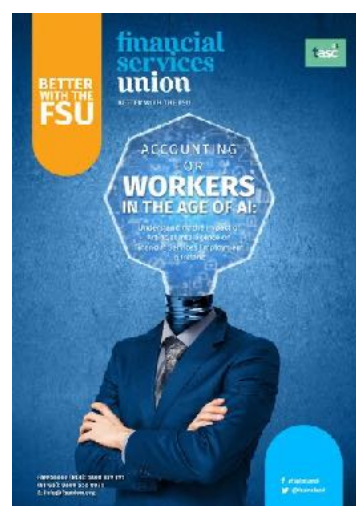
Introduce financial incentives for AI upskilling:

- Establish tax credits, grants, or subsidies to encourage mid-career professionals in high-exposure sectors to pursue AI-related education and reskilling opportunities.

Ensure inclusive and accessible AI training:



- Expand AI learning initiatives to encompass non-technical workers and mid-career professionals, ensuring a more inclusive approach to AI literacy and workforce transition.



## **Increase the statutory redundancy payment from €600 per week to €1,000 per week.**

The statutory redundancy payment of €600 was last increased twenty-one years ago.

That increase brought it from £400 to €600. An increase in this payment is overdue, and the Minister for Finance should act decisively in the budget and increase the payment from €600 to €1,000.

The €600 weekly cap has not kept pace with wage inflation and is not reflective of average weekly earnings. Increasing the payment to €1,000 a week would give some solace to workers who are dealing with the effects that a redundancy can have on their living standards.



## **Increase incrementally, paid maternity leave from 26 weeks to 52 weeks.**

Childcare placement for children under one year of age is a widely acknowledged problem and one that is causing severe issues for women returning to the workplace.

The current entitlement for maternity leave payments compounds this issue. Currently maternity leave entitles the mother to 26 weeks paid maternity leave together with 16 weeks additional unpaid maternity leave.

The Government should look to extend paid maternity leave to 52 weeks which would give great solace to parents who cannot find suitable childcare but need to return to work. This can be phased in over a number of years.

## Collective Bargaining Support Fund

In Ireland, unlike other countries, there is no obligation on employers to negotiate with trade unions. The industrial relations mechanisms currently in place are inadequate and can be, (and are) ignored by employers.

Ireland is an outlier in having no recognition in legislation of the need for employee representatives to have protection against dismissal.

This means that employers in Ireland can and do unfairly dismiss employee representatives for engaging in trade union activity.

As part of the transposition of the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages the Government is obliged to publish a national action plan to support collective bargaining. This plan is currently being drafted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Tourism and is due to be published shortly.

The plan, when published will require resources for training and education of employees and employers' bodies. It will require new training initiatives and courses.



The plan will need to explain what collective bargaining constitutes and the benefits that can accrue to workers, employers and society from collective bargaining.

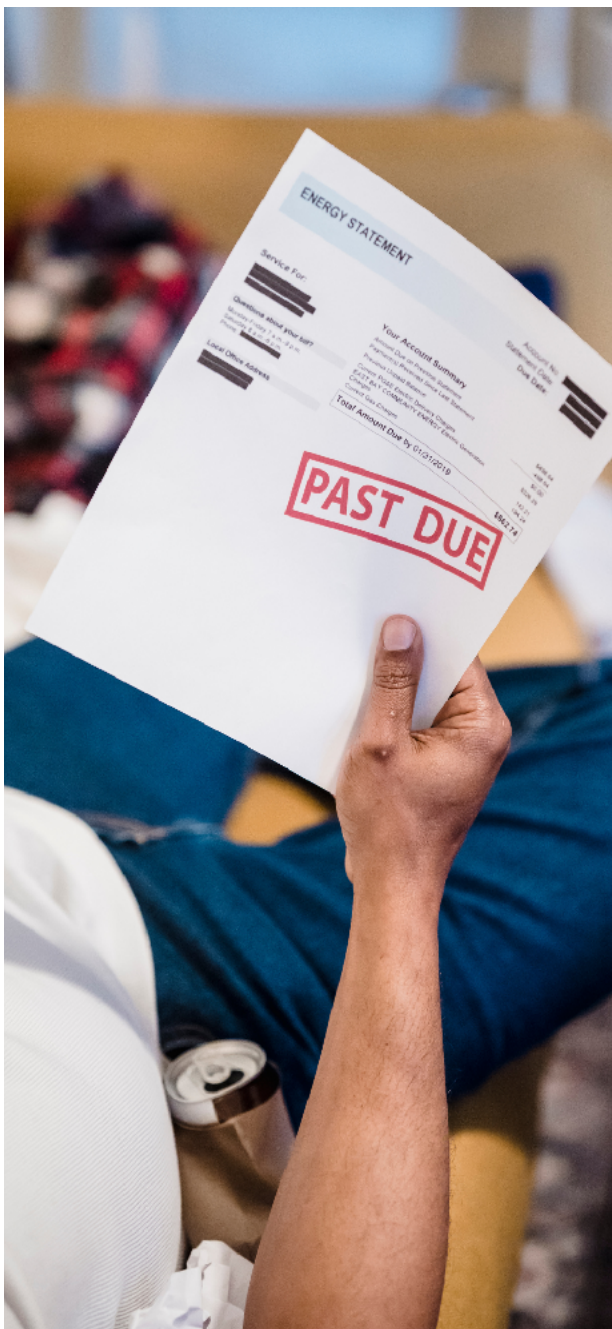
Unless there is a concerted effort by all to promote collective bargaining, the 80% threshold required in the EU Directive will not be met.

To help unions, employers and the general public the FSU propose the Government task the social partners to begin discussions on what resources will be required to implement the action plan required under the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wage and set up an initial fund at budget time for the set purpose.



## Tax on Benefits/Vouchers

The decision made by the Government in the last two budgets to increase the maximum amount that can be received in one year from the benefit/voucher scheme firstly to €1,000 and then to €1,500 tax free was a positive step. This allowed once-off payments to be made to workers to help them financially in challenging circumstances. This benefit should be continued.



## Tax relief for union membership

In 2020 the Department of Finance carried out research into the potential reintroduction of tax relief for trade union subscriptions. It reported that the measure if reintroduced at the same level as previously set would cost in the region of €37 million in a full year.

In a budget that is likely to offer a VAT decrease for hospitality from 13.5% to 9 % at a cost of circa one billion euro surely a tax relief or hard-pressed workers at a cost of €37 million would be fair and appropriate.

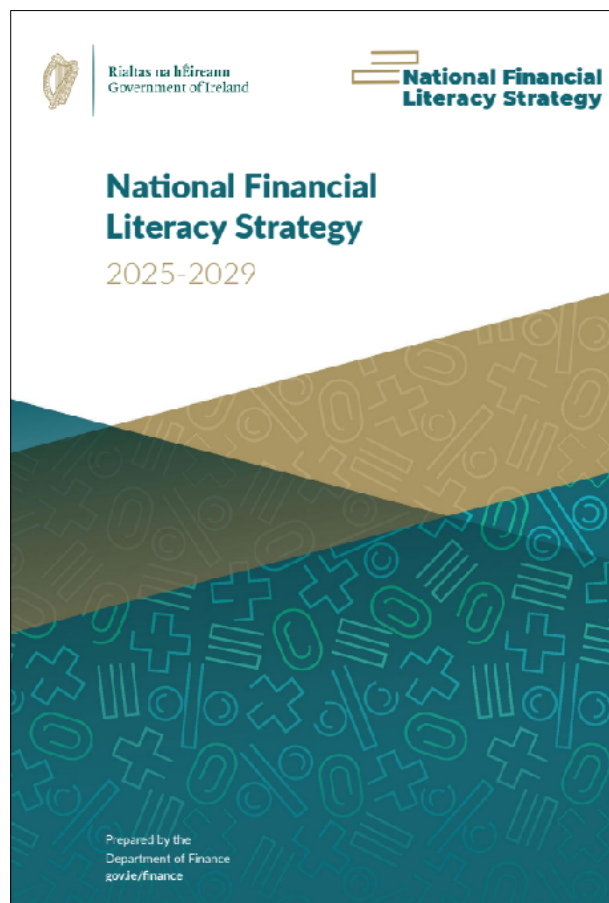
## Ring-fence funds from the banking levy for social good including funding for a financial literacy program in communities across the Country.

The FSU supports a financial levy on the main retail banks. We also support an expansion of this financial levy to include other financial institutions such as Revolut.

We need to move away from the levy being seen as a punishment for the behaviour of the retail banks prior to the banking crash and for it to be viewed more as the banking sector contributing in a positive manner to the provision of financial literacy programs and other areas of social good.

For this to happen we need to changes its name and expand its reach to other financial institutions. We would ask that the Central Bank be tasked with seeing how this would be fairly constituted.

In February 2025 Minister Donohoe published the first ever national financial literacy strategy. The establishment of this strategy was key recommendations from the banking review report in 2022.



The launch was accompanied by much fanfare and promises of collaboration between all stakeholders and annual stakeholder forums and annual action plans. The FSU welcomes the initiative but are conscious the plan will continually compete for resources with other well-meaning initiatives from the Department of Finance.

To allay any fears that funding may be problematic to the implementation of the financial literacy plan we ask the Department of Finance to ring fence a portion of the banking levy funds every year to provide regular source of income. This has the benefit of the main financial institution contributing in a positive way to the financial literacy levels of people.

## Recommendations

- Funding for research into the impact of AI on Financial Services alongside other high-exposure sectors.
- Increase the statutory redundancy payment from €600 per week to €1,000 per week.
- Ring-fence funds from the banking levy for social good including funding for a financial literacy program in communities across the Country.
- Tax relief for union membership.
- Tax on Benefits/Voucher.
- Collective Bargaining Support Fund.
- Increase incrementally, paid maternity leave from 26 weeks to 52 weeks.

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