BETTER WITH THE FSU

financial services union

BETTER WITH THE FSU

PRE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2027

Freephone (ROI): 1800 819 191
(NI-GB): 0800 358 0071
E: info@fsunion.org

/fsuireland
@fsuireland

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.

Pre Budget Submission 2027

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Research undertaken by the Financial Services Union (FSU) in collaboration with TASC shows 88% of respondents believe Artificial Intelligence (AI) will lead to job displacement and 60% report feeling less secure in their roles than they did five years ago.

It is difficult to scroll through social media or pick up a newspaper without reading an article on AI and its possible effects on the workplace and on jobs. We are told AI is going to change the way of work and will effect every aspect of our daily lives.

Whether the warnings about the reach of AI will come to fruition or not is unclear, but it does seem we are at a moment of fundamental change.

We must make decisions regarding how AI is regulated, the role of the legislator, the employer and employee relationship to AI and how we manage the change that AI will undeniably bring about.

The seismic change being advanced by many commentators needs to be managed in a transparent and collegiate manner. That is why the FSU have championed the establishment of an AI forum involving all relevant stakeholders. An AI forum where

issues can be discussed, opinions shared, where legislators and the regulator can listen to different views and reach a decision based on all the available information.

The Financial Services Sector is identified oi the EU AI Act as a sector of high risk and exposure to AI. As a Country we need to be in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that AI brings and also to meet the challenges with confidence and assurance.

Training and upskilling

Other significant findings of our research emphasised the requirement for training and upskilling.

Only 28% of respondents reported 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.

A properly funded targeted training program should be introduced in the Financial Services Sector with direct funding from the Government. All employees should feel comfortable using AI and have the necessary training and support readily available.

Next Steps

Targeted AI training programs 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.
- Establish an AI Stakeholders Forum creating a space for issues to be discussed and opinions to be shared, where legislators and regulators can listen to different views and reach a decision based on all the available information.

STATUTORY REDUNDANCY PAYMENT

The statutory redundancy payment was last increased twenty-two years ago bringing it from €400 to €600 per week, per year of service. The failure to increase it since is one that legislators can rectify in budget 2027. Recent job losses, particularly in the technology and fintech sector, coupled with the rising cost of living, have left workers facing enormous challenges.

We have the disgraceful reality of hundreds of workers in Covalent, being made redundant and not being eligible to receive statutory redundancy due to not meeting the two-year criteria. This is unacceptable in a modern functional economy.

The statutory redundancy payment should be increased to €1,000 a week per year of service and the minimum qualifying criteria of two years brought back to twelve months.

30-DAY STATUTORY REDUNDANCY CONSULTATION PERIOD

The experience of Employee Representatives during recent tech redundancy consultations is a poor one. FSU research found:

- Poor training provisions and the inherent imbalance of resources available to both sides during the process.
- Very short timeframes, employer delay tactics, and ending processes too quickly.
- Poor employer engagement but with very little potential repercussions on the employer.
- No dispute resolution procedure where no agreement was reached.
- A lack of trade union representation allowed when requested by employees.

To bring about a fairer more balanced approach the FSU would propose:

1. Trade union representation and attendance at meetings, if requested by Employee Reps, must be mandatory for Employers to facilitate
2. Employee Reps should have the right to a further 30-day extension of the consultation period where no agreement is reached and before any notice can be given to individuals.
3. Where no agreement is reached, and after the 30-day extension, there should be a very clear and mandatory dispute resolution procedure utilising the WRC and/or Labour Court.

LIVING WAGE

Commentators will express opinions about the effects of increasing the minimum wage to the living wage, the effects of abolishing the sub minimum wage rate for young workers. It is important we remain factual when discussing these rates.

Ireland has a minimum wage rate where 18-year-olds can be paid 80% of the full adult minimum wage and while 19-year-olds are entitled to 90%. A recent ESRI report found no evidence that abolishing this rate would have any material effect on jobs. This is discriminatory rate that should be abolished in the budget.

The decision to defer moving the minimum wage to the living wage from 2026 to 2029 while simultaneously giving the hospitality sector a VAT cut worth close to a billion euro is further evidence of the priorities that the Goverment has placed on placating big business at the expense of workers.

The Department of Finance estimates the total full-year cost of this VAT cut measure to be €867.7 millions.

Abolishing the sub minimum wage rate and moving the minimum wage rate to the living wage would cost a fraction of this and would send a strong signal to PAYE workers that their concerns have equal status with business.

UNION SUBSCRIPTIONS

The national action plan to support collective bargaining contains the following proposal:

“Liaise with the Department of Finance on a proposal to re-introduce tax relief for trade union subscriptions collectively bargained agreements as a weighting in a public procurement projects.”

It reported that this measure, if reintroduced at the same level as previously set, would cost in the region of €37 million in a full year.

This seems a fair and equitable measure which would offer some relief for hard-pressed workers.

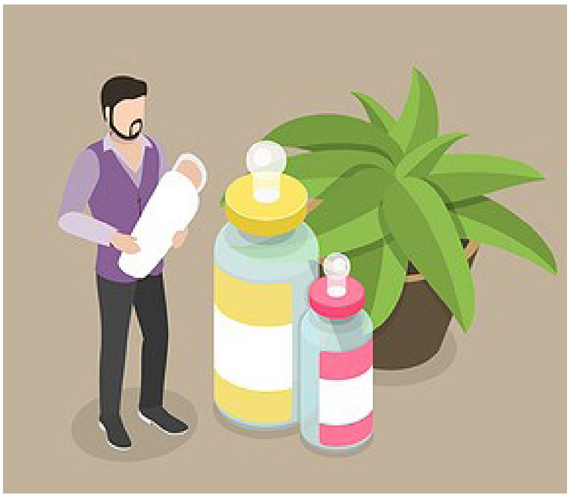
It is time to act on the many proposals on this issue and reintroduce this tax relief in budget 2027.

MATERNITY LEAVE

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 for children under 1 year old but need to return to work. This can be phased in over a number of years.

PATERNITY LEAVE



Ireland's allocation of two weeks paid paternity leave is far below the levels of most European Countries. A recent report published by Movember, a charity that focuses on issues surrounding men's health, found that seven out of ten men who took paternity leave faced financial strain. The FSU supports the call for the establishment of a Paternity Leave Working Group which would examine key barriers and opportunities, including uptake of the leave length go paternity leave, payment rates, and workplace culture.

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.

As part of the transposition of the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, the Government published a national action plan to support collective bargaining. The plan contains twenty-two proposals.

In the foreword of the plan, the Taoiseach comments:

"Collective bargaining is not merely a mechanism for negotiation – it is an important instrument for fostering trust, improving job quality, retaining jobs and ensuring Ireland remains a leader in social cohesion and economic competitiveness."

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Tourism comments:

Collective bargaining "empowers employees, fosters mutual respect and contributes to a fairer, more productive economy."

Action item number four in the plan asks the social partners to develop capacity building programmes to include a number of joint training programmes.

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 proposes 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.

REMOTE / HYBRID WORKING

The current legislation does not provide a fair and balanced framework for employees and employers.

The problems:

- The process is highly procedural and not based on merit.
- Employers can refuse requests for business reasons without providing evidence or documentation.
- Employees feel frustrated because requests with strong merit can be easily dismissed.
- Contracts cited by employers to justify refusals do not need to be produced or verified.
- The framework heavily favors employers, leaving employees with limited recourse.
- The appeals mechanism is considered unsatisfactory and largely technical.
- The WRC has no substantive role beyond checking if employers responded within the required timeframe.

Solutions:

- The WRC should have powers to adjudicate on the merit of remote working applications, not just technical compliance.
- Employers should be required to provide evidence to support business reasons for refusals.
- The FSU strongly advocates for a right to remote working, not just a right to request.
- Introduce a system similar to banded hours under the Employment Act 2018, granting entitlement to remote work if an employee has worked remotely for a sustained period.
- Overall, stronger employee protections and a more balanced framework is required.

PUBLICLY FUNDED DEXA (DUAL-ENERGY X-RAY ABSORPTIOMETRY) SCREENING PROGRAMME, FOR POST-MENOPAUSAL WOMEN.

A DEXA scan is the diagnostic gold standard for osteoporosis, accurately measuring bone density to identify those at high risk before a fracture occurs. Fractures, particularly of the hip and spine, are not minor events. They can lead to long-term disability, loss of independence, and increased mortality.

By catching the disease early, treatment can begin, preventing these life-changing breaks.

When a woman goes through menopause her oestrogen levels severely drop causing brittle bones and osteoporosis. Having a DEXA scan programme to measure bone density would directly addresses the immense and growing burden of osteoporosis and is supported by clinical evidence and economic rationale.

A programme like this can help prevent devastating and costly fractures. Osteoporosis makes bones weak and prone to 'fragility fractures.

Having a screening programme in place has enormous cost savings for the healthcare system long term. The cost of a DEXA scan and preventative medication is far lower than treating a fracture.

Studies from countries like Germany, Japan, and Singapore show that screening women over 50 is really economically viable.

A publicly funded DEXA screening programme is a proactive, medically sound, and highly cost-effective strategy. It prevents immense personal suffering, saves the healthcare system significant money, and improves the long-term health and independence of millions of women.

MAKE THE SHINGLES VACCINATION FOR ADULTS AGED 65+, FREE OF CHARGE AT THE POINT OF DELIVERY

The FSU supports the call from many advocacy groups including age actions and active retirement Ireland for the provision of the shingles vaccination for adults aged 65+, to be made free of charge at the point of delivery.

The current average cost is estimated to cost between €450 and €500. This is a significant financial barrier for older people looking to assess this essential treatment.

The Government should follow the example of many Countries across the EU and make this vaccine free of charge for adults aged 65+

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Artificial Intelligence

    - Targeted AI training programs for Financial Services.
    - Introduce financial incentives for AI upskilling.
    - Ensure inclusive and accessible AI training.
    - Establish an AI Stakeholders Forum.

2. Increase the statutory redundancy payment to €1,000 a week.

3. To bring about a fairer more balanced approach to the statutory 30-day consultation period the FSU would propose:

    - Trade union representation and attendance at meetings, if requested by Employee Reps, must be mandatory for Employers to facilitate
    - Employee Reps should have the right to a further 30-day extension of the consultation period where no agreement is reached and before any notice can be given to individuals.
    - Where no agreement is reached, and after the 30-day extension, there should be a very clear and mandatory dispute resolution procedure utilising the WRC and/or Labour Court

4. Tax Credit for union subscriptions.

5. Extend paid maternity leave to 52 weeks.

6. Establish a Paternity Leave Working Group.

7. Set up a collective bargaining support fund.

8. Introduce a system similar to banded hours under the Employment Act 2018, granting entitlement to remote work if an employee has worked remotely for a sustained period.

9. Publicly funded DEXA (Dual-energy X-ray Absorptiometry) screening programme, for post-menopausal women.

10. Make the shingles vaccination for adults aged 65+, free of charge at the point of delivery

• Stephen Street Upper, Dublin 8, D08 DR9P T: +353 (0)1 475 5908
• Quaygate House, 5th Floor, 15 Scrabo Street, Belfast, BT5 4BD. T: +44 (0)28 90200130.

E: info@fsunion.org www.fsunion.org