

Confronting Challenges

Colleagues,

The sustained attack on public servants and the work we do shows no sign of abating. But we in Ireland are not alone in this. Many parts of the western world are being deluged with propaganda that public services are inefficient, unproductive and too expensive and those who work in them unwilling to change outdated practices.

We must challenge this misinformation at every turn. It purposely ignores significant reforms that have been delivered, to build on the excellent work carried out by public servants, including teachers, every day. It disregards the enormous contribution that public servants have made to fixing the public finances. Spurious comments by vested interests, whose agenda lies in dividing private and public sector workers, must also be challenged and faced down by all of us in the trade union movement. This is not easy where the contribution of public services to our society is constantly undermined.

The INTO has always operated on both a trade union and professional organisation level. On the trade union front, it is in our interest to ensure that the Croke Park Agreement, which was agreed by our membership, is implemented in full. We must also ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that school staffing and resources are protected and that school leadership is supported. Those who deliver a quality public service are entitled to recognition and reward. We must engage with our partners in education to progress fairness

for teachers and primary education in general.

On a professional level, teachers are ambitious to lead debate and reform on key educational issues including literacy and numeracy, teacher education, professional planning and school organisation. Teachers will also make no apologies for demanding adequate resources to provide the best possible education for our pupils.

It is important, as we look to the future, to refocus our efforts. The immediate challenge facing us is to ensure that the issues for teachers and primary education are brought home to all the political parties and candidates in the upcoming general election. It is also important, as we look to the future, that we mobilise our younger members, that we debate what type of society and education system we want, and that we adapt our structures and services to respond to the increasing demands placed on members.

It is not a time to turn inwards, nor to be distracted by ill-informed and populist comments by those whose only interest is in weakening our resolve in order to drive through an uncaring ideology. It is a time to confront the challenges, to unite in the face of unprecedented financial cutbacks, and to ensure we emerge stronger and more determined from this difficult period in our history.

Ní neart go cur le chéile
Sheila Nunan (General Secretary) Jim Higgins (President)

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Croke Park Agreement

School management, the INTO and the Department have had discussions relating to the implementation of those aspects of the Croke Park Agreement which relate to additional time and the contract review. The following reflects the outcome of these discussions with a view to implementation in schools. This document will be reflected in a DES Circular to issue to schools in the coming week. Details on the implementation arrangement including the number of hours to be worked for the remainder of the year will be contained in the circular. A Q&A document on the implementation is currently being prepared by INTO and will be issued to members.

Additional time

1. Additional time of one hour per week is provided for in the Agreement.
2. At present, schools close early or for a day or half days to facilitate activities such as school planning, staff meetings, national inservice provision etc. A central purpose underlying the provision of additional time is to provide for these essential activities to take place without reducing class contact/ tuition time.
3. In addition, there are situations where schools require supervision immediately before or after school opening/ closing and this additional time may also be used to provide this where needed and for lesser daily periods than those at paragraph 5.
4. Over the course of the primary school year, the additional time provision amounts to 36 hours. Without prejudice to the provisions of paragraphs 5 and 6 below it is expected that there will be consultation at school level as to the optimum usage of this block of hours in order to meet the requirements of the school and to significantly eliminate the erosion of class contact time.
5. The hours in question may be utilised by schools in the manner set out at (a) or (b) below or by a combination of the provisions in (a) and (b).
 - (a) Having regard to paragraphs 3 and 4 above, school management may designate the usage of the 36 hours in blocks of 1, 2 or 3 hours. These may be scheduled over the course of the 183 day school year and the time period should be scheduled outside the normal school hours.
 - (b) Where there is a consensus among the school staff to so do, school management may utilise part of the hours in question aggregated as full days, subject to a maximum aggregation of the equivalent of two days, outside of the 183 days during which the school is open for tuition. The maximum applicable here will be subject to review for the school year 2012/2013 in light of the experience of its operation.
6. Having regard to paragraph 4 above, school management may designate the use of the 36 hours to provide additional time to deal with some or all of the following items.
 - school planning
 - continuous professional development
 - induction
 - pre and post school supervision
 - policy development
 - staff meetings
 - nationally planned inservice
 - school arranged inservice.
7. The 36 additional hours are separate from the existing arrangements in relation to parent/teacher and staff meetings. In the case of staff meetings, school management may utilise some of the additional hours to remove the 'half in' element of these meetings.
8. Schools should record the full usage of the additional hours and publicise this in the normal school communication to parents.

Contract review

1. It is a central objective of the Agreement that Public Service reform provide for better arrangements for those who avail of such services. In this regard, the additional contracted hours provision serves to protect against erosion of class contact/tuition time.
2. In addition, it is essential to have flexibility in re-organising post of responsibility duties within a school. For this purpose, the school management may reassign post holders to alternative responsibilities appropriate to the level of the post (special duties or assistant principal) as required by the priorities and needs of the school. In such reassignment management will have regard to the genuine needs of the school as discussed and identified in consultation with staff, will act reasonably and will consult with the relevant post holders(s). It is accepted that where difficulties arise in this matter, recourse may be had to stages 3 and 4 of the grievance procedure. The reassignment will take effect pending the outcome of this procedure.
3. The Croke Park Agreement has as a core objective the need to ensure that the Irish public service continues its contribution to the return of economic growth and prosperity to Ireland, while delivering excellence in service to the Irish people. In keeping with this core objective and given the vital importance of education to our society, teachers will continue to cooperate with the implementation of change and will contribute to the realisation of national educational policies and objectives. The terms of the Teachers' Conciliation and Arbitration scheme apply in the case of significant changes in the terms and conditions of teachers.



INTO Action Plan

The CEC has decided on a range of actions and initiatives over the coming months to campaign against cuts proposed for primary teachers and primary education.

- A Branch Secretaries' briefing: Saturday, 8 January 2011.
- Regional Conference including pre election Education Debate with Party Spokespersons: Saturday, 12 February 2011.
- Implementation and maintenance of the Croke Park Agreement to protect headline pay and jobs.
- Co-ordinate Public Service campaign on pay proposals for new entrants.
- Compile guidance on the Work Placement Programme.
- Meeting with the Student Union representatives in the Colleges of Education on jobs, salaries, pensions and other working conditions.
- Meeting has been held with the Retired Teachers' Association of Ireland on pension issues.
- Preparation of a General Election strategy including lobbying material.
- Opposition to staffing cuts: survey of schools affected, protection of supports for vulnerable children, safeguarding DEIS and negotiations on redeployment.
- Ringfence education funding and build alliance with management bodies and parents.
- Campaign for ICTU "A Better Fairer Way" against low wages and, in particular, cuts in ancillary staff wages in schools.
- Develop and maintain maximum communication with all INTO members at all levels.



Delegates at Branch and District Officer Conference on 8 January 2011

School Closures due to Snow

The DES has confirmed to INTO that it will hold discussions with the teacher unions and management bodies in January regarding the impact of the severe weather conditions on some schools. Pending these discussions it is the view of the DES that reopening prior to 10 January 2011, as agreed, was unnecessary.

It is also acknowledged that the impact of the snow has varied widely from region to region and from school to school. Further updates will be posted on the INTO website when available.



Further information on the campaign will be given in the January/February InTouch and further updates will be posted on the INTO website.

National Recovery Plan

Shocking attack on new teachers and the marginalised

Education 2012 – 2014

The INTO described the National Recovery Plan, published last year and incorporated by government into the national bailout plan as a shocking attack on new teachers and on the most disadvantaged and marginalised pupils.

The union dismissed claims by government to have protected education as “grossly exaggerated”. They said it was clear that ordinary workers were being asked to pay the price for the lunacy of the banks and the government’s mismanagement of the crisis.

In the first year of the Plan up to 700 job losses are planned in primary schools affecting Travellers, newcomer children without English and disadvantaged children. The INTO said most of these children were in families facing poverty and hardship because of government cutbacks.

New teachers will be hardest hit by the government proposals. Sheila Nunan, General Secretary, said the salaries

of new teachers would be cut by 14% and they would be forced to pay more into their pensions than they could ever hope to get back. “In addition, the job losses in schools will mean these teachers will find it harder to get jobs,” said Ms Nunan.

She said the plan was being brought in to rescue the country from an unprecedented financial catastrophe created by the government and financial institutions. She predicted the plan would destroy jobs, accelerate emigration and mortgage defaults, reduce living standards and increase poverty. Ms Nunan said class sizes had been given a temporary reprieve and said the union would continue to campaign to have the numbers in classes reduced.

“Irish primary classes are already the second most over-crowded in the EU,” said Ms Nunan. “Everyone in the country should know the benefits of smaller classes.”

Public Service numbers at end year and associated pay savings*

	2000	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Opening numbers ceilings	247,250	319,450	307,900	308,000	307,400	308,500	309,350
Number ceilings				301,000	298,800	296,500	294,700
Of which:							
Civil Service	34,050	39,300	37,350	36,200	35,800	35,250	34,600
Health Sector	81,500	111,050	106,850	105,300	103,800	102,300	100,800
Education	67,850	94,650	93,700	93,300	94,100	95,050	95,750
Justice	12,250	15,700	14,800	13,750	13,600	13,400	13,250
Of which							
Gardaí:		14,400	14,500	13,500	13,350	13,150	13,000
Defence	12,100	11,250	10,800	10,500	10,400	10,300	10,300
Local Authorities	29,100	35,000	32,200	30,750	30,400	30,000	30,000
NCSAs**							
	10,400	12,500	12,200	11,200	10,700	10,200	10,000
Annual Ceilings Reduction				7,000	8,600	12,000	14,650
Cumulative Numbers Reduction since 2008				18,450	20,650	22,950	24,750

* Numbers rounded to the nearest 50 whole-time equivalents.

** Non-Commercial State Agencies.



Education and Skills

The key cutbacks in the education sector include some one off measures as well as structural measures with significant medium-term impacts.

The key cutbacks are:

School transport

- Significant cutbacks in the school transport scheme and the introduction of charges at primary level.

School Funding

- 5% Reduction in all capitation grants

Education Fees

- Replace Student Services Charge with a flat higher education student contribution of €2,000, and introduce €200 charge for PLC students.

NEPS

- Cap numbers at current level of 178.

Payroll savings

- Reduce teacher numbers by a combination of measures.
- 10% reduction in salary for new entrants and all entrants to start on 1st point.
- Additional reductions in PS numbers.

Other

- Non-pay Administrative Savings
- Management of emerging expenditure pressures and other estimated savings.

Other Key Points

Pensions

- The 'grace period' under which pensions are calculated by reference to the pre-cut rates of pay is extended to end February 2012 (from end December 2011).
- An average reduction in pension payments of approx. 4%. This will apply to existing retirees and to those who retire prior to end February 2012.
- Those who retire from March 2012 onwards will not be liable for this reduction as their pension and lumpsums will be calculated on 2010 salary scales which will reduce their pension and lumpsums by 7% on average.
- There will be no change in public service pension scheme terms or method of calculation for existing staff.

New Entrant Public Servants

- Legislation will be published shortly facilitating the introduction of the new 'career average' pension scheme in 2011.

Tax, PRSI, Health Levy Relief on Pensions

- PRSI and Health Levy relief on pension contributions will be abolished in 2011 (Current Rates – Class D 4.9%; Class A 8%)
- Income Tax relief to be reduced as follows:
 - 2012 – 41% to 34%
 - 2013 – 34% to 27%
 - 2014 – 27% to 20%
- The abolition of the above reliefs will apply to the standard pension contribution and the 'pension related deduction'.

Salary Scale for new entrant

- 10% reduction on scale.
- Teachers commence at first incremental point.
- This is a reduction (without allowances) of 13% (for a B.Ed) and 15.8% (for a post-graduate) compared to the existing scale.

Future Threat to Class Size

The Four Year Plan predicts further cuts in teacher payroll costs, from the school year 2012/13. In advance, the Department of Education and Skills has said it will consult with the education partners and provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the process of identifying a range of measures that Government can consider. If alternative feasible measures to deliver these cannot be identified, class sizes will be increased.

Reduction in teacher numbers in 2011/2012 school year

€24m in savings (€98m in 2014) is to be cut from the education budget by reducing teacher numbers through a combination of measures leading to a reduction of up to approximately 1,200 posts in 2011 (700 primary posts, 500 post-primary) which, however, will be partly offset by the addition of some 875 new posts due to demographics. The measures to reduce teacher posts include:

- Defer provision of 150 extra teachers in September 2010;
- Change favourable pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) to the standard PTR for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and for Gaelscoileanna;
- Withdrawal of resource teachers for Travellers posts at

primary level and of equivalent teaching hours for Travellers at post-primary level. Transitional arrangements will be put in place for schools with a high concentration of Traveller children;

- Redeploy existing supernumerary posts in post-primary schools from September 2011;
- A phased reduction in numbers of language support teachers, through demand driven reduction and, if necessary, a change in allocation rules; and
- Removal of rural co-ordinator teaching posts and of Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers.

Teachers will be redeployed in accordance with the terms of redeployment schemes.

Graduate Work Placement Programme

On 29 November 2010, the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills announced the extension of the WPP to schools. She stated that this was “a major extension of the initiative to help and support the unemployed”. On 30 November 2010, the INTO issued a press release which strongly disputed the claims, stating that not one additional job would be created. The INTO also announced the launch of a new Substitute Service – SubSearch.

At its meeting in December 2010, the CEC expressed serious concerns about the WPP. The CEC was also concerned about the WPP being referred to as part of the Croke Park agreement. In fact, the WPP is mentioned only in the Civil Service Sectoral Agreement. Graduate placements provided there include, for example, positions as Translator, IT Specialist and Architect.

DES Circular 0066/2010 states that it is a condition that any placements should not displace an existing member of staff or be used to fill a vacant post (and each school must sign a declaration to this effect). Amongst matters clarified in the Circular’s Q&A Guide is the opportunity to complete the service and professional competence aspects of the probationary process. A meeting between INTO and DES took place in December and addressed a range of concerns including the voluntary nature of the WPP, clarifying the matter of probation, the duration of placements, the period of notice required to leave a placement to take up paid substitute or other teaching work, and the need for a monitoring process.

The CEC reviewed matters in January 2011 and decided (1) that INTO should not oppose the scheme outright, (2)

that INTO should be cautious and vigilant about the operation of the scheme in particular schools, and (3) recommended that, where schools were participating, short-term (e.g. 2 month) placements only should be offered, subject to the wishes of scheme participants. The Executive gave detailed consideration to risks and concerns related to the WPP including potential exploitation of unemployed teachers and that working without payment could become a route into teaching. On the other hand the CEC noted that the programme is entirely voluntary and the commitment of DES senior officials that there is no proposal to make any aspect of the scheme compulsory, that vacancies in schools (including substitute positions) would continue to be filled in the normal manner, and that an INTO/DES/Management Committee would be established to monitor the operation of the scheme.

The coming year will bring significant difficulties in securing employment in teaching due to cuts in teacher numbers. The CEC believes that it would not be in the interest of unemployed teachers to seek to shut them out of schools and out of a programme which will be subject to regulation and where certain benefits, including probation, may accrue to participants. The CEC is acutely aware of concerns of members regarding the WPP and will continue to closely monitor this situation. A meeting has been arranged with student leaders to discuss this matter and the INTO will provide guidance to schools on our website.

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INTO SubSearch launched

The INTO has launched a new service aimed at helping unemployed teaching graduates to get substitute work in primary schools. Subsearch works on the basis of a qualified primary teacher who is available for substitute work being able to register with the site and confirm their availability in up to three locations throughout the country. Principals who register on the site will be able to search locations to get a list of all available substitutes and will be able to define the distance from the location

they wish to search. Substitutes will have to confirm each week their availability for the following week in order to keep a rolling up to date list of substitutes in particular areas.

In light of the very high levels of teacher unemployment being experienced by recent

graduates the INTO urges in particular all principals to register on the site and avail of the facility as it is rolled out in the coming weeks. It is important that all teachers do as much as we can to maximise employment opportunities for recent graduates. The INTO wishes to thank Seaghan Moriarty and his team at Digilog for the technical support in developing the Subsearch facility.





Universal Social Charge (USC)

General Provisions – Questions and Answers

What is the Universal Social Charge?

The Universal Social Charge (USC), which came into effect on 1 January 2011, is a tax payable on gross income, including notional pay, after any relief for certain capital allowances, but before pension contributions.

Who is liable for the USC?

All individuals are liable to pay the USC if their gross income exceeds the threshold of €4,004 p.a. (€77 per week).

Are there special treatments for older persons?

Yes. While there is no age related exemption individuals aged 70 or over will only pay USC at a maximum rate of 4% irrespective of the level of their income.

What is exempt from the USC?

Where an individual's total income for a year does not exceed €4,004

- All Dept of Social Protection payments
- Payments that are made in lieu of Dept of Social Protection payments such as Community Employment Schemes paid by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation or Back to Education Allowance paid by DES.
- Income already subjected to DIRT
- Exempt income sources which can be viewed on www.revenue.ie

What are the rates and thresholds of the USC?

The rates of USC are:

- 2% on the first €10,036
- 4% on the next €5,980

7% on the balance.

Persons over 70 years are not liable at the rate of 7% but instead pay at 4%.
(See table at bottom of page.)

Are the higher rates being charged on all earnings or just on the earnings over the relevant threshold?

- Aged under 70 years of age
 - The 2% USC applies to all payments up to €10,036 p.a. The 4% USC is charged on all payments from €10,036.01 p.a. to €16,016 p.a. incl and the 7% is being charged on all payments in excess of €16,016 p.a.
 - Aged 70 years and over
- The 2% USC applies to all payments up to €10,036 p.a. The 4% USC is charged on all payments in excess of €10,036.

What income is liable for the USC?

The USC is payable on gross income after relief for certain capital allowances, but before relief for pension contributions.

Employer/pension providers should note however that if any Dept of Social Protection payments, for example, illness benefit, have been paid to an employee, or salary sacrifices approved by the Revenue Commissioners have been made by the employee, the amount on which the USC is calculated will differ. Therefore, when recording gross pay, these amounts should be deducted and the total pay thereafter, before superannuation contributions, should be used when calculating the USC due.

What if I have overpaid the USC? How can I claim a refund?

The USC is calculated on a pay period by pay period basis. Where the USC has been applied for particular pay period(s) throughout the year but you are ultimately liable at either a lower rate or are exempt because you have not exceeded the thresholds at the end of the year, you will have overpaid the USC. In this situation you will be due a refund of some or all of any USC paid.

Where you have been in continuous employment with an employer/pension provider throughout the year in question (i.e., from 1 January to 31 December), your employer/pension provider may refund any overpayment of USC deducted at the end of the year. Where you have not been in continuous employment with an employer/pension provider throughout the year in question, Revenue, rather than the employer/pension provider, will deal with any refund of USC due at the end of the year.

For payroll purposes the following Universal Social Charge rates apply to persons aged under 70 years:
Applicable to payments made from 1 January 2011 Income Thresholds

Per Year	Per Week	Per Month	Rate of Universal Social Charge
Up to €10,036.00	Up to €193.00	Up to €837.00	2%
From €10,036.01 to €16,016.00 incl	From €193.01 to €308.00 incl	From €837.01 to €1335.00 incl	4%
In excess of €16,016	In excess of €308	In excess of €1335	7%

Check your Salary

The INTO provides an online calculator in the Members' Area of the INTO website. There is also a pension calculator available for members retiring.

If you are accessing the Members' Area of the website for the first time you will need to register. Details of how to register are available on the INTO website at

<https://www.into.ie/ROI/Downloads/HowtoAccessMembersArea.pdf>. See also the next issue of InTouch about checking your salary and tax allowances.



Literacy and Numeracy

Major issues for consideration by the INTO this year and into the future

Two reports relating to English literacy and numeracy in Irish schools were published recently. These were:

- The report of the 2009 National Assessments in English Reading and Mathematics.
- PISA 2009

The findings of these reports, especially PISA, prompted the DES to prepare a draft plan for literacy and numeracy in schools. The draft plan is relevant to both primary and post-primary schools. All of these documents are available on www.into.ie

The INTO is organising a consultative process to enable members to give their views on the proposals in the draft plan. A summary of some of the key points will be included in the January/February edition of InTouch. A discussion forum

is in the process of being set up in the members' area of the website where members can make a valuable professional contribution to these issues.

It is also proposed to hold discussion meetings at District level to discuss both the draft plan on literacy and numeracy and literacy will be a topic for the Consultative Conference on Education, scheduled to take place next November. These meetings will also discuss the Teaching Council draft policy paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education.

Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official, is coordinating the Organisation's response to the Draft Plan on literacy and Numeracy. Anne McElduff, Assistant General Secretary is coordinating the Organisation's response to the Teaching Council's policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education.

Seanad Election

Vote and let your voice be heard

The CEC is calling on all INTO members to make sure you are registered to vote in the upcoming General Election.

Visit www.checktheregister.ie, then click on the local authority area where you live (e.g Kerry County Council), fill in the requested information and the system will immediately inform you if you are on the register or not.

If you are not on the register, you can apply to be added to the supplementary register. You can also apply to update the register if you have changed address. Forms for each of these purposes are available from your local Garda Station, Library, Post Office or online from your local authority.

Dear Colleague,

As you may be aware, I have decided to contest the next election to Seanad Eireann as an independent candidate on the NUI panel. I am delighted and honoured to have received the endorsement of the CEC in this campaign.

It seems certain that the Seanad will remain in place in the medium term. It would however be difficult to argue with anyone opposed to its continuation in its current form. At a minimum it needs immediate, radical reform and sufficient independent voices.

That said, the Seanad does offer the opportunity to have a strong voice for teachers, education and the wider public service in the Oireachtas. There is no doubt that the immediate future will see further attacks on trade unions and public services. Every effort is being made to blame trade unions for current economic difficulties and to deflect the blame from the real culprits. The opportunity to use the platform of a Seanad seat to stand up for teachers, trade unions and the public service must not be lost.

I believe I have the track record to fight this election and, if successful to provide a strong voice for education, public servants and trade unions. I will not be found wanting in terms of energy, enthusiasm, determination and commitment.

Your active support would be a big help. Even if you do not have a vote yourself you can still make a significant contribution within your local community.

If you feel able to give me any assistance in this election campaign, however small, please email me on seanad@into.ie.

Bheinn an-bhuíoch d'aon tacaíocht go bhéadfá a chur i mo threo. Ní neart go cur le chéile,

Declan Kelleher

