

# DPER & unions close to finalising sectoral bargaining units, key chairs agreed

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**Public service union leaders and officials from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform are close to finalising agreement on the various sectoral bargaining units which are a central feature of the new public service agreement, Building Momentum.**

The parties met recently as part of continuing exchanges between them on issues related to the agreement. It is expected that they will be able to sign off on a formal list of sectoral bargaining units in the next few weeks, which will be made publicly available.

The 'sectoral bargaining' element of the agreement has been described by DPER Minister, Michael McGrath, as representing an "innovative approach to dealing with outstanding issues surrounding pay and conditions in the public service".

There is to be a sectoral bargaining fund equivalent to 1% of basic salaries, with an eventual payment date of February 1, 2022. This will be in addition to the two general round increases of €500 or 1% (whichever is greater), to be paid on October 1, 2021 and October 1, 2022.

The purpose of the new sectoral bargaining fund process is "to deal with outstanding adjudications, commitments, recommendations, awards and claims within the terms of the Fund and within the Exchequer funding limit in place".

## ROLES FOR MULVEY & DUFFY

Meanwhile, IRN understands that Kieran Mulvey, the retired chief executive of the former LRC, is to chair the agreed 'Independent Body' that will examine the "Haddington Road additional working hours". This issue was one that union members had continually pressed their leaders on since the hours were conceded a decade ago.

Separately, a former chairman of the Labour Court, Kevin Duffy, is to chair two of the agreement's important internal oversight bodies, the Public Service Agreement Group (PSAG) and the Tripartite Implementation Body (TIB).

## €150M TO WORK WITH

Mr Mulvey's independent body on additional working hours will make recommendations "to be applied equitably" across all affected grades, groups, categories and sectors.

It is to report by end of this year, after considering issues such as the context for the pay and productivity measures within the HRA, verification of the additional hours worked and associated costs.

To enable commencement of the recommendations during 2022, an “envelope of €150m” will be available. In regard to the 2023 estimates, the parties are to engage proactively in relation “to such provisions as are necessary to roll out any remaining recommendations”.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

On dispute oversight and resolution, issues can proceed directly to the PSAG after initial bilateral engagement. The PSAG can make a recommendation to the parties, including a proposal on further discussions.

Such disputes can also be referred to a Joint Review Group (JRG), and then return again to the PSAG for further “consideration”.

What are described as matters of “strategic or national importance, with significant implications for the Agreement”, can be referred to the Tripartite Implementation Body (TIB) for discussion and decision. The TIB can also make a recommendation for resolution.

However, the parties can return to the WRC or the Labour Court/Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme if required. Where the Court or the Scheme make a recommendation regarding the matter in dispute, “the process is concluded.”