

Fórsa opts for “straight 1%” for clerical, admin & executive grades

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Fórsa has told the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform that it has decided “to opt for a straight 1% pay round” for clerical, administrative and executive grades, rather than seek the increase via the new sectoral bargaining route in the ‘Building Momentum’ agreement.

The union’s general secretary, Kevin Callinan, told union branches that the decision was arrived through an internal consultation process. This included “a large-sample representative opinion” survey of members, which showed over 90% of them opted for the 1% option.

The final decision was taken by the union’s National Executive, “because the grades straddle five of the union’s six divisions”.

“In other cases”, he advised the branches, “where groups, grades and categories reside solely in one of the Fórsa divisions, the decisions will be taken by the appropriate divisional executive committee following consultation with representatives of the grade concerned”.

The move is significant as it is the first decision taken by a public service union to accept a straightforward one per cent pay rise for a significant group, rather than use the new sectoral bargaining mechanism, which is a novel feature of the new public service agreement.

This suggests that where grades cut across a number of union divisions – as in this case – this less complex approach may be adopted. But where grades or categories are represented by a single branch, the sectoral bargaining route may be chosen.

DECISION EXPLAINED

In his April 28 internal communication, Mr Callinan explained that ‘Building Momentum’ establishes a ‘sectoral bargaining fund,’ which is worth 1% of basic pensionable pay. This is on top of the agreement’s two general round increases, each worth 1% or €500 a year (whichever is the greater), which are payable on 1st October 2021 and 1st October 2022.

Under the agreement, individual groups, grades and categories of civil and public servants can opt to use the 1% sectoral allocation as a sectoral pay round, payable on February 1, 2022.

“Alternatively, they can use the allocation to deal with outstanding adjudications, recommendations, awards or claims, up to the value of 1% of pensionable pay”, the general secretary said.

Mr Callinan said that clerical, administrative and executive grades across the civil and public service “were identified as a single cross-sectoral bargaining unit for the purpose of sectoral bargaining”. This includes the following grades:

- Clerical officer (CO)
- Grade III
- Grades IV-VII
- Executive Officer (EO)
- Higher Executive Officer (HEO), and
- Administrative Officer (AO).

The general secretary told the branches that at a scheduled meeting on Wednesday, April 28, the union’s National Executive decided to opt for “a straight 1% pay round for these grades”.

“This followed consultation with the five Fórsa divisions concerned (civil service, education, health & welfare, local government & local services, and services & enterprises) and the two Equivalent Grades Committees that represent clerical officer/grade III members and Executive Grades/Grades IV-VII. The consultation also involved a large-sample representative opinion survey of members in the grades, in which over 90% of those surveyed opted for the 1% option,” he said.

‘ANALOGOUS GRADES’

“In this instance”, the general secretary continued, “the final decision was taken by the union’s National Executive. This is because the grades straddle five of the union’s six divisions. In other cases, where groups, grades and categories reside solely in one of the Fórsa divisions, the decisions will be taken by the appropriate divisional executive committee following consultation with representatives of the grade concerned.”

Later the same day (April 28), Mr Callinan communicated the decision to Colin Menton, DPER’s assistant secretary general in charge of pay and pensions.

He further advised the department that “consultation between the union and management in each sector was now required to identify which linked and analogous grades would be comprehended by this decision”.

In the meantime, internal Fórsa consultations are continuing “in order to determine the desired approach for other groups, grades and categories”.