

# ICTU publishes articles showing impact of joining EU has had on workers

## ANDY PRENDERGAST

**To mark Europe Day, ICTU's series of articles demonstrate the positive impacts – and challenges – for workers since Ireland joined the EEC in 1973, with Congress leader Owen Reidy arguing that the future of Irish trade unions lies in Europe.**

The publication contains 15 articles by past and present trade union officials and leaders, as well as introduction from the Minister of Enterprise, Simon Coveney.

Congress general secretary Owen Reidy said that while membership of the European Union “has had a significant, positive effect on our working life, most people have no idea of the full extent.

“From equal pay for women and men doing the same work to a living wage for our lowest paid workers, a shorter working week, family leave and safe workplaces, EU membership has played a pivotal role in improving workers’ rights and working conditions.”

He added: “But EU membership has not been costless for workers nor has the Irish trade union movement always been enthusiastic about membership. Workers and jobs paid dearly in the progression towards free trade competition when we joined the Common Market in 1973 and again in the conditions of the €85 billion bailout agreed with the troika in 2010.”

ICTU President and Fórsa General Secretary Kevin Callinan said: “One of the earliest dividends from EU membership for workers was the ending of the marriage bar in the civil service, which had denied tens of thousands of women, including my own mother, access to employment and careers.

“But the marriage bar still casts a long shadow in terms of reduced pension income for individual women and a gender imbalance in senior leadership positions throughout the public and private sectors. The recently agreed EU Pay Transparency Directive will help close these gaps for this and future generations of working women.”

Launching the publication, Owen Reidy said the 15 papers set out “first-hand accounts and insights in to landmark EU-related events and some of the many ways EU membership transformed workers’ rights and working conditions in Ireland. Taken together they present

a recent history of the immense progress in our workplaces and the not always straightforward journey getting there.”

The list of papers include:

- An Economy and Workforce Transformed by *Simon Coveney TD*
- Trade Union Opposition to EEC Membership by *Patricia O'Donovan*
- The Demise of Ireland's Car Assembly Industry by *Patricia King*
- The EU, Irish Employment Law and Workers' Rights by *Kevin Duffy*
- Ending the Employment Ban on Married Women by *Kevin Callinan*
- 50 years of European Trade Unionism by *Esther Lynch*
- Social Europe and the European Pillar of Social Rights by *Blair Horan*
- Safe and Healthy Workplaces by *Peter Cassells*
- Equality in Social Welfare: the struggle to get Directive 79/7 implemented by *Rosheen Callender*
- EU Law and Industrial Disputes by *Éamonn Donnelly* and *Catherine Keogh*
- EU Enlargement and Migration by *David Begg*
- Work and Care by *Phil Ní Sheaghda*
- The Implications of EU Membership on Economic Crises by *Tom McDonnell*
- Northern Ireland and UK EU Exit by *Patricia McKeown*
- The Irish Trade Union Movement's Place in Europe by *Owen Reidy*