

Green light for WRC external adjudicators' pay increase

## **ANDY PRENDERGAST**

### **The Department of Public Expenditure has sanctioned an increase in pay for external WRC adjudicators – the first pay increase for external AOs since 2019.**

Following a fresh business case put forward by the WRC last year, the Department of Public Expenditure (DPENDPR) has approved an increase in the daily rate for external adjudicators at the WRC, who make up the bulk of the Commission's adjudicator cohort.

The per diem/daily rate for external AOs is to increase just over 17%, from €525 to €616 – the rate that was sought in the business case put to DPER last year.

The 'writing up' days for AOs – days in which adjudicators write up their decisions, paid at the same rate as hearing days – are to be extended from 48 days per annum, to 52.

These changes are due to take effect from 1 May.

There have been a number of attempts to increase the AOs' daily rate over the last few years, without success. DPENDPR had before rejected a submission, on the grounds it needed more information – a matter which made its way to the Labour Court, last year ([LCR23031, see News Analysis in IRN 31/2024](#)).

A key development, conveyed to IRN by adjudicators involved, was the renewed attempt made by the WRC Director General, Audrey Cahill when she took up the top position at the Commission just over one year ago.

The DG worked on a new business case with representative AOs, in conjunction with DETE, which then went before DPENDPR. It is understood that DPENDPR sought more information on the claim again last week, before approving.

## **NEW PATH AHEAD**

The pay increase for external AOs should go some way to remedying the difficulties experienced amongst the AOs over the last few years, witnessed in the aforementioned Labour Court hearing.

There was also the issue of delays with the writing up of decisions by some AOs. Last month, the DG wrote to a number of adjudicators in respect of outstanding decisions, notifying them that the referral of cases to them might have to be reduced in order to resolve the backlog of outstanding cases (see [News Analysis in IRN 13/2025](#)).

The number of written decisions outstanding by mid-March was 700; that has now reduced to just over 400.

It is also understood that there is ambition to set up a new industrial relations framework to provide for stable relations between the external AOs and management, which would avoid a recurrence of the issues that have occurred over the last few years.

A majority of external AOs have joined Fórsa. The Labour Court's recommendation in LCR23031 opened the door to their union representation, as the Court accepted they met the definition of 'worker' for their industrial relations claim.

The pay lift for AOs should help to offset further industrial relations problems in what is a key public service; something DPENDPR will have factored into their decision.

### **INTERNAL AOs**

Separate to the external AOs, a regrading claim for internal AOs, who are civil servants, and members of the AHCPS, is due to be heard by the Civil Service Arbitration Board (CSAB).

The internal AOs are seeking to be regraded from Assistant Principal (Standard) to Assistant Principal (Higher), to reflect the changes in their work, namely the impact of the *Zalewski* ruling of the Supreme Court.

The issue was before the CSAB last year ([IRN 26/2024](#)) which recommended an independent review. The claim that was then put to DETE was rejected, hence the referral to the CSAB.