

Government's "absence of urgency" in repealing FEMPI "disappointing" - Fórsa

**Brian Sheehan**

**The Fórsa general secretary, Kevin Callinan, has expressed disappointment to Public Expenditure Minister, Jack Chambers, for an "absence of urgency" in meeting a Government promise to repeal FEMPI emergency pay legislation.**

The union leader was referring to an April 8, 2025 official reply to correspondence from Mr Callinan, who sought action on a commitment to repeal legislation that helped pave the way for talks on the Public Service Agreement, 2024-26.

The Department's letter acknowledges that the commitment of the last administration to "review and repeal" FEMPI measures was given "ahead of, and in the context of, the negotiations" on that agreement.

Principal Officer, Eric Doyle, responding on behalf of the Minister, writes that he was directed by Minister Chambers to reply to the union leader's letter of February 25, which had called for action on the commitment to repeal the legislation.

Mr Callinan actually wrote on two separate occasions regarding the matter, the first time to the previous Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery, and Reform, Paschal Donohoe (on November 5, 2024) and more recently, on February 25, to the current incumbent, Mr Chambers. (See [\*"Relaxed" approach to repeal of 'FEMPI' ... in IRN 12 - 20/03/2025\*](#))

#### **"RELAXED APPROACH"**

In that February 25 correspondence, Mr Callinan said that the failure to repeal FEMPI emergency pay legislation had rendered "completely empty" any plans by the current Government to secure a new public service deal, adding that the published government legislation programme for Spring 2025 provided "no indication that this is a priority".

The Fórsa general secretary further observed that the Government's "relaxed approach" to repealing FEMPI was "offensive". He claimed that this left the Government "fundamentally in breach of the Public Service Agreement 2024-26".

In the government side's response on April 8, Principal Officer Eric Doyle, explained that following ratification of the Public Service Agreement, "we commenced the required work to progress this matter". He described FEMPI as a "complex piece of legislation, the repeal from which may require consequential amendments to other legislation."

In this context, the Principal Officer said, "there has been ongoing engagement with the Attorney General's Office and we are actively working through the advice received with a view to bringing forward the legislative proposals necessary to fulfil the commitment given".

#### **'ONE OF YOUR OFFICIALS'**

Replying directly to the Minister, Mr Callinan – on behalf of Fórsa's national executive committee – noted they had considered the April 8 letter "from one of your officials, Mr Eric Doyle" in response to the general secretary's February 25 letter.

Mr Callinan advises Minister Chambers that the NEC had asked him "to write to you again and to highlight the following":

- ‘(1) The fact that you chose not to reply yourself has been noted;
- (2) The failure to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation outlined in my letter has also been noted;
- (3) The absence of any urgency to bring the government back in line with the commitment made and the expectation created prior to the negotiations of the current Public Service Agreement is further noted;
- (4) The fact that you chose not to take up my offer to discuss the issues is viewed as disappointing.’

The letter concludes: “Our NEC resolved to take these points into account when making future decisions in relation to the issues involved.”

## **FUTURE TALKS**

It is now likely, given the letter from the Department and the Fórsa general secretary’s response, that the FEMPI issue will be left in abeyance - until the official side’s efforts to bring forward legislative proposals have concluded.

Pay talks on the next public service agreement are unlikely anyway until well into 2026, IRN understands. There are still three separate 1% pay rises due under the current PSA (in August of this year, and in February and June of next year). With inflation low, calls for a review on the basis of rising prices would seem unlikely.

Meanwhile, the local bargaining clause of the PSA is set to dominate talks between the public service unions and various departments, overseen by Public Expenditure and Reform.

The local bargaining strategy outlined by Fórsa may, in turn, set the direction of travel for other unions. The PSA allows for 1% of payroll costs of the particular grade, group or category concerned, followed by a commitment to a further 2% under the timeframe of a follow-on national agreement.

Fórsa is seeking the elimination of certain increments, which would allow quicker increases for members across a broad swath of the membership, as well as a ‘top up’ or an additional increment for those already at the top of their scales. It is an ambitious overall claim that will challenge the negotiators on the government side. (See [\*‘New public service bargaining claim ...’ in IRN 11 - 13/03/2025\*](#))