



Irish Senior Citizens Parliament

Pre Meeting submission.

The Bill: discuss Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Employment (Restriction of Certain Mandatory Retirement Ages) Bill 2024.

Introduction:

My name is Pat Mellon and I am the Chief Executive of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament (ISCP).

The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament offers a strong, unified voice representing the needs and rights of older people at local, national and European levels. Our aim is to influence policy and decisions that affect the lives of older people. We seek to enable and encourage older people to self-advocate and to build capacity and confidence to speak for themselves on all issues. Our vision is an Ireland where older people are valued as equal citizens, can enjoy the full protection of their human rights and are full and active participants in society.

The ISCP welcomes and thank the Oireachtas Committee for the opportunity to engage and outline our views on the Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Employment (Restriction of Certain Mandatory Retirement Ages) Bill 2024

We met with a cohort of our member base to listen to their views on this key issue and the following content is the result of this discussion.

The ISCP has at the core of its work the issue of equality and rights for older people. We work to ensure the implementation of policy commitments pertinent to ageing and older people. A fundamental element of this relates to ensuring our members and older people generally have security of income in their older years. Central to this is the choice to work up until and beyond the state pension age.

I really resented being told' I was too old to continue working' it also made me feel useless. One day I was senior member of my firm, offering key value and expertise, the next I was out, all because of by birthday and age' (June)

The current system whereby employers can (and do) enforce retirement ages into contracts prior to the state pension age needs to change. It is an ageist and discriminatory practice. This is particularly relevant as we look at a population with 1.5 million people over 65 years and older by 2051 (CSO 2022). We are also seeing age discrimination cases on the rise, so not only do employers need to address age inequality but need to create an 'age friendly' workplace.

We believe strongly in the rights of older people to continue to contribute to society in all areas, including choice regarding their working life. In the last few years, we have worked with many retired worker/staff associations with a similar experiences and concerns relating directly to their date and age of retirement and the lack of clarity relating to 'a legal age' for retirement.

With the current situation people who had to retire when they reached the age of 65 must seek Social Welfare Benefit Payment until they reached 66 and could get the State pension but cannot avail of supplementary benefits.

'I am at a loss to understand with no legal age for retirement how I was told 65 was the magic number. I wanted and was more than able to continue, no one can explain this to me' (Breda)

ISCP believe strongly in the right of older people to choose their retirement age. For some, having entered the workforce in their teens and into work requiring physical labour, their capacity to continue working may be beyond their physical health. We believe this needs further debate and discussion and a more nuanced approach than the current system.

For others, that are more than able and capable of continuing to work beyond 66 years and would wish to do so for a variety reasons. Some of these relate to financial security and having the option to continue to work longer and pay into their pension (both state and occupational) would be welcomed.

A key factor for the ISCP is the opportunity of sending a message that older people have a lot of experience and knowledge that does not cease to exist at 66 years. They can and do offer a genuine contribution that enhances and supports wider society.

We again thank you for your time and look forward to meeting you all.