

Unite Submission to the
Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media Committee

Opening statement.

We thank the Committee for inviting our members to give evidence today. We at Unite firmly believe that workers' experiences need to be listened to, respected and acted on appropriately in order to move towards fair and decent employment practises in this industry as in all others.

Unite's Hospitality & Tourism Branch has had ongoing concerns about the Sector previous to the pandemic. Those concerns are based on the experiences of our members and other workers in the sector.

Issues such as:

- Low wages
- Precarious working hours
- Lack of decency and respect
- Minimal enforcement of workplace rights
- Inequality

On the basis of these concerns, we embarked on two pieces of research. The first of which examined the extent of employment in the sector and the demographics within focussing on gender, age and nationality.

The second piece of research is a survey entitled "*Hidden Truths*"- *The reality of work in Ireland's hospitality and tourism sector*" published in July 2021, the findings of which are revealing of a Sector where many of the employment practices are in general not good for workers.

For example:

- 55.6% reported being paid below the living wage and
- 29.6 % of employees in supervisor/managerial roles reported being paid below the living wage;
- 65% said they had no work life balance and experienced unsocial working hours as a constant;
- 70% reported witnessing or being bullied at work; and
- only 31% of the survey respondents believed that migrant workers were treated equally in the work place.

We believe that these issues among others have a vital and often negative impact on the recruitment and retention of staff in the sector.

Employers and their representative bodies need to reflect on their own behaviour and words. It is unhelpful and insulting to see comments recently calling for PUP payments for people to be cut off in order to force people back to the workplace weeks before the reopening of businesses.

Let us all remember that workers did not cause the Covid pandemic or the lock down.

Workers in this sector have the same needs as everyone else; that means they have to eat and pay their bills. Cutting their source of income puts them at risk of poverty and eviction amongst many other negative outcomes.

Unite believes, from our discussions and surveys with workers, that there is an appalling level of disrespect towards workers in this sector and it is widespread. Scenarios such as recently described online by one young worker who received his wages with a bucket of coins, is only one example of the type of humiliation that so many workers face on a regular basis. The view that staff are unskilled, cheap, temporary and easily replaceable is a major factor in how they are treated.

Unite believes that there needs to be a vast improvement in the way workers are treated by employers and management across the Hospitality & Tourism Sector. This begins with decent pay and contracts, an end to precarious employment, followed by a robust and enforceable anti bullying legislation.

The fact that we have still to see appropriate legislation to prevent the theft of workers' tips, as recently seen in the UK, is an indication to those employed in hospitality that their rights are secondary to the profits of their employers.

As a trade union, we would strongly argue for trade union recognition and with that a right to collective bargaining as practiced across the European Union and for the right of access for trade unions to represent the interests, health safety and well being of workers in this sector.

As our President MD Higgins recently said "The right to collective representation is a basic one appropriate to all workers as is recognised in European law".

Unite the Union RoI
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