

Social Dialogue mapping

Description scheme for country overviews

IRELAND

Sources:

- 1/ Eurofound Working Life Profiles <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/ireland#actors-and-institutions>
- 2/ OSH WIKI https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/OSH_system_at_national_level_-_Ireland
- 3/ ESENER-3 <https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/esener#!en/survey/overview/2019>

Introduction on Social Dialogue in MS (1)

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is the umbrella group for the large majority of trade unions in Ireland, with 48 affiliated trade unions. At national level, such as with the 2013 public sector agreement talks, the ICTU is the central negotiating body. (ICTU was also one of the tripartite bodies during the formal social partnership era). Trade unions do not have to be affiliated with the ICTU to be a legitimate trade union. However, in the public sector, the employer (Government) does not bargain with non ICTU unions. A trade union must comply with the terms of Trade Union Acts and Industrial Relations Acts and must satisfy a list of criteria to be granted a negotiating licence.

Ibec (formerly known as The Irish Business and Employers' Confederation/IBEC) is the largest representative body for employers in Ireland. It was a tripartite body involved in social partnership (1987– 2009) but has not negotiated at national level since national wage agreements stopped (it does not represent the employer side in public sector-wide talks, but can represent individual public sector employers, such as universities, in dispute resolution).

Trade Unions (1)

- **About trade union representation**

Under article 40.6.1(iii) of the Constitution of Ireland, the right to *form* a union is enshrined. There is no automatic right to *join* a trade union – such may confer obligation on the part of a trade union to accept membership, which itself could be unconstitutional. Trade union members are protected against discrimination under various laws, such as the Unfair Dismissals Act 1977, which makes dismissal for reasons of trade union membership or activity automatically unfair. Some public servants are currently excluded from the ability to form trade unions, and instead form representative associations which entail restrictions around striking.

These include members of An Garda Síochána (police force) and the Defence Forces.

- **Main trade union confederations and federations**

There is just one trade union confederation in Ireland, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Long name	Abbreviation	Members	Year	Involved in collective bargaining (*)
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	ICTU	48 affiliated unions These unions have a combined 566,366 members	2017	Yes

Employers' organisations (1)

- **Main Employers' organisations**

The main employer organisation is Ibec, which lists some 7,500 companies as members, and has 60 sub-branches specialising in specific sectors. Part of Ibec is the Small Firms Association, which specialises in representing firms employing 50 people or less.

The Construction Industry Federation (CIF) specialises in representing businesses in and associated with the construction industry. It has around 3,000 members.

Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME) is a representative body for companies with less than 250 employees. It is a lobby group and does not engage in collective bargaining.

The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) represents over 500 US multinational companies in Ireland, acting as a lobby group.

Long name	Abbreviation	Members	Year	Involved in collective bargaining (*)
Irish Business and Employers' Confederation	Ibec	7,500 firms	2017	yes
Small Firms Association	SFA	8,000 firms	2017	no
Irish Small & Medium Enterprises Association	ISME	8,750 firms	2017	no
American Chamber of Commerce	AmCham	570 firms	2017	no
Construction Industry Federation	CIF	3,000 firms	2017	yes

Social Dialogue on OSH (2)

- **National level**

Occupational safety and health policy at national level is determined by a twelve-member, tripartite Board, with nominees from the social partners and other interests concerned with [safety and health in the workplace](#). The appointment of the Board of the Authority of the HSA is a function of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. The Board oversees the operations of the entire organisation, which operates from eight offices across Ireland: the Dublin headquarters and offices in Kilkenny, Athlone, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford ^[6].

- **Sectoral level**

To help develop sound policies and good workplace practices, the HSA works with various Advisory Committees and Task Forces, which focus on specific occupations and hazards. These advisory committees include the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC), the Construction Advisory Committee (CAC) and three regional advisory committees (North West, South, and South East). Other partnerships led by the Authority include the Work Related Vehicle Safety Steering Group and Consultative Panel, the Healthcare Sector Steering Group, the Third Level Education Group, the Behavioural Safety Programmes group and the First Aid Steering Group. External committee structures of other bodies are also significant partners, in particular the Construction Safety Partnership^[7].

- **Enterprise level**

The HSA consults widely with employers, employees and their respective organisations. The HSA technical experts are regularly co-opted to relevant national groups and set up ad hoc committees at an enterprise level to assist in the delivery of specific projects. The 2005 Act provides details for the consultation between employers and employees to help ensure co-operation to prevent ill health and accidents. Under section 25 of the Act, employees are permitted to select a safety representative to represent them on safety and health matters in consultations with their employer. If a safety committee is in place in an organisation, it can be used a vehicle for the consultation process. A safety representative may consult with, and make representations to, the employer on safety, health and welfare matters relating to the employees at work. The employer must consider these representations, and act on them if necessary. The intention of these consultations is to prevent ill health accidents identify problems and solutions. A safety representative does not have any duties, as opposed to functions, other than those that apply to employees generally. Therefore, a safety representative who accepts a proposal to deal with a safety or health issue could not be held legally accountable for putting the suggested proposal into effect. Safety representatives should be supplied with relevant technical information about risks, hazards, and precautions connected with articles or substances used in the workplace they represent. Safety representatives should also be informed of

any changes that would affect existing risks ^[2].