



Pensions Commission Submission

About USI

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 374,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience. The goal of USI is to work for the rights of students and a fair and equal third-level education system in Ireland.

USI is a full member of the European Students' Union (ESU) which represents students from 46 National Students' Unions in 39 countries, and a member of Eurodoc, the European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers.

Younger perspectives

In Ireland, there are more young people going to third level education than ever before and the trends continue to show an increase in student numbers for the years ahead. We know that those with a college education are likely to have a greater income and therefore pay more through taxation.

The commission recognised in its report that younger people may not have the opportunity to contribute to pensions as they may in the past due to other costs such as housing. This is a significant challenge for young workers. It is worth noting that there are many other costs that will impact a younger person's ability to invest in pensions as the overall cost of living for young working professionals, especially in cities, as the cost of living in Ireland is more expensive than 93% of countries in the world¹.

Young people want to be able to work in Ireland however, many are forced overseas due to poor conditions of employment. According to USI research, released in 2016 found that 93% of student

¹ [Cost of Living in Ireland - 2021 prices. \(expatistan.com\)](http://expatistan.com)

nurses and midwives consider emigrating with 73% stating payment as the core factor². These issues need to be addressed so that young professionals do not feel they need to leave the country for fair pay and conditions.

Fair and Flexible Pensions Scheme

USI believes that there should be a fair and flexible pensions scheme is needed.

We don't believe there should be a requirement for anyone to finish work before they reach the state pension age. There may also be scope to allowing people in the public sector to continue working past the state pension age, if they wish to do so. This is a conversation that should be explored between the Government and the Trade Union bodies.

USI believes there is a value in offering additional benefits to employees who choose to remain in the workforce past the retirement age.

Finally, USI can also see value in providing for early retirement in some sectors that are overly arduous on employees – these could be very physically demanding roles or roles that can have negative impacts on employee health and wellbeing. This again is a conversation to explode with staff representative bodies.

Conclusion

Young people in 2021 have lived with the consequences of investment cuts to public services, have been expected to work in precarious sectors to pay their rent or afford college. It is important that young people's voices are specifically heard in relation to this matter as it is unfair to expect that same cohort to have less at the end of their working life.

² [93% of Student Nurses Considering Emigrating when they qualify as a Nurse | Union of Students in Ireland \(usi.ie\)](https://www.usi.ie/news/93%-of-Student-Nurses-Considering-Emigrating-when-they-qualify-as-a-Nurse)