

The Stop 67 campaign organised by SIPTU, alongside the National Women's Council of Ireland, Age Action and Active Retirement Ireland successfully raised the proposed rise in pension age as a major issue during the general election of 2020. The campaign not only made it an issue but also managed to make it a voting issue for many people.

The success of the campaign can be measured by the fact that in the programme for Government, Our Shared Future the Government committed to deferring the increase from 66 to 67 and established a Pensions Commission to consider the options. The terms of reference for the Commission is to:

- Develop a range of options for the government to consider to address the sustainability of the State Pension and the Social Insurance Fund in terms of pension age, eligibility criteria, contribution rates, pension calculation methods and pension payment rates.
- Examine how private sector employment contracts specifying retirement ages below the State Pension Age may be impacting on the State's finances and pension system.
- Consider how people who have provided long-term care for incapacitated dependants can be accommodated within the State Pension system.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions have submitted a comprehensive submission to the pensions commission and the FSU support the conclusions and 21 recommendations made in the submission.

We would strongly argue that the payment of €203 based on jobseekers benefit payment proposed for people who reach the age of 65 as a transition payment until they qualify for the pension at 66 needs to be raised to the rate of the contributory pension payment. This would give some relief to people who rely on the payment to purchase essential food and services, in a modern economy we need to ensure that people can retire in the clear knowledge that they will at least have an income that will keep them off the poverty line.

- **Raise the transition payment from €203 to €248.30.**

Unlike other Countries Ireland has no built in flexibility to look at the possibility of people receiving the pension at different times in the over working life. People who join the workforce at an early age, who may be in a physical arduous job should be able to access their pension at any earlier age. This is common in other Countries and should be considered and supported.

- **Introduce a lower pension age for workers who entered employment at a young age.**

There are a number of actions that the Government can take without delay which would be a benefit to pensioners in planning for their retirement. It is not acceptable that pensioners must wait until budget day to know if they are going to receive any increase in the coming year. Pensioners need income certainty like everyone else. The FSU would urge the Government to act now on their stated commitment on income certainty for pensioners.

An annual increase to the pension received in retirement through Indexation would protect the pension from inflation and cost of living. There have been many reports which have advocated for this over the last two decades. It needs to happen without delay.

The Government should move to implement its commitment to indexation of pension with delay.

The FSU understands the complexities surrounding the pension issue and feel strongly that all options need to be considered to ensure that the pension age eligibility does not rise, and a comprehensive plan is developed to provide for future pension payments.