

Media statement on behalf of the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Initial public service pay offer lacks credibility

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The officers of the Public Services Committee (PSC) of the Irish Congress of trade Unions (ICTU) met with affiliate and non-affiliated unions and associations this morning to provide an update on the public service pay talks, which adjourned at 3am this morning.

Unions expressed concern that the Government's initial pay offering last night illustrated its lack of preparedness to complete a sustainable and robust multi-year pay deal, and further undermined perceptions of the Government's approach to the process of securing a new agreement.

Speaking after the meeting, PSC chair and Fórsa general secretary Kevin Callinan said, in failing to meet the basic test of dealing with the cumulative gap between wages and inflation – amounting to almost 19% over the last three years – the revised pay offer of 7.5% (plus 1% for local bargaining in two phases), with 1.5% payable in March this year, would equally fail any test of credibility in a ballot of union members.

He added: “The Government has effectively undermined its own approach to negotiating a multi-year public service pay agreement in a number of ways.

“In contrast to its recent measures to address the cost-of-living challenge on the National Minimum Wage and social protection payments, where it has demonstrated a real pragmatism, its approach to completing a public service pay agreement lacks credibility,” he said.

John King of Siptu added: “The initial offering - which would have put little more (before deductions) than an average of just €5 per week in the wages of low-income public service workers, and €10 per week in the wages of those on middle-incomes in the first year - failed the basic test of creating a robust agreement in the face of a continuing cost-of-living crisis.”

Phil Ní Sheaghdha of the INMO added: “The tabling of that pay offer followed months of delay before the process of negotiations got underway last year, painfully slow progress over the course of 11 meetings in November and December, consequently allowing the previous agreement to lapse at the end of 2023.

“All of these factors really undermine the credibility of the Government's approach to doing a deal and, as we adjourned this morning, a significant gap on pay measures between both sides remains,” she said.

John Boyle of the INTO said: “We remain focused on returning to the negotiations to ensure we can complete a deal that is robust enough to endure the 30-month period envisaged,” he said.

The PSC unions also finalised the wording of a ballot for industrial action, with unions poised to commence a ballot should it become necessary in the coming days.

ENDS