



An Coimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre
Workplace Relations Commission



Strategy Statement 2025-2027

Workplace Relations
Commission

*A Decade of Impact,
A Future of Fair Work and Equality*



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Workplace Relations Commission Strategy Statement 2025-2027

A Decade of Impact, A Future of Fair Work and Equality

**Presented to the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and
Employment by the Board of the Workplace Relations
Commission in accordance with section 21 (1)(b) of the
Workplace Relations Act 2015**

Contents

WRC Board Foreword	2
Director General's Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The Review	5
Purpose of the WRC	6
Our Vision; 2025 and beyond	7
Our Values	8
Key Strategic Ambitions	9
Strategic Pillars	9
Success Factors	11
Strategy Statement 2022-2024 Review	12
Appendix 1	13

WRC Board Foreword

The Workplace Relations Act (2015) mandates the Board of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) to prepare a Strategy Statement for the consideration of the Minister every three years.

Because the WRC has been in existence for ten years, and because our new Director General came on board last year, the Board felt that our Strategy Statement should be based on a thorough evaluation of labour market conditions and on a deep dive into the organisational capabilities of the WRC to meet the needs of stakeholders. With this in mind, we commissioned labour market research from the University of Limerick (UL) and a review of organisational effectiveness from consultants KPMG.

The UL report entitled *Work and Employment Transformation in Ireland: A Review of Labour Market and Workplace Relations Challenges* was presented at a conference in June 2024. The feedback from the conference also informed the preparation of this Strategy Statement. Four key areas were explored in detail: inflation, recruitment and retention challenges, technology (with a particular focus on remote working and artificial intelligence), and climate change and how these are impacting work and workplace relations in Ireland.

It is the case that the effectiveness of any strategy is dependent on the organisational capacity to implement it. That is why the work undertaken by KPMG, under the guidance of the Director General, is a vital complement to the research just mentioned. We are confident, this Strategy Statement,

incorporating as it does, insights from both projects, will serve our stakeholders well over the next three years.

In its first ten years the WRC has fulfilled the expectations contained in the 2015 Act, including during the difficult period of the pandemic. But the world keeps changing and new challenges continue to emerge, not least the geoeconomic pressures coming from the US. The WRC must continue to be agile and effective in responding to whatever labour market changes turn out to be inherent in this rapidly evolving environment. That is the purpose of this Strategy Statement.

David Begg
Chairman



Director General's Foreword

As the Workplace Relations Commission enters its 10th year, we reaffirm our commitment to championing fairness, dignity, and equality in Irish workplaces. The next phase of our strategy builds on a decade of progress and is shaped by the evolving world of work, societal expectations, and importantly the needs of those we serve.

It is important that the strategic direction of the WRC must include proactive engagement with emerging labour dynamics, support for inclusive employment practices, and adaptive frameworks to maintain industrial harmony in a fast-evolving growing economy.

The [Programme for Government](#) 2025 titled "Securing Ireland's Future" sets out a list of commitments aimed at supporting workers with a strong emphasis on equality, fair treatment and progressive workplace policies. It further targets the creation of an additional 300,000 jobs by 2030. The Programme also supports the central role of the Workplace Relations Commission in industrial relations and employment rights.

Stable industrial relations are a critical factor in our labour market. During the period of this strategy, work is being advanced by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment to prepare Ireland's national action plan on how Ireland can progressively promote collective bargaining through the development of an institutional framework supportive of a voluntary system of collective bargaining and industrial relations. The WRC will play its full part in supporting the action plan consistent with its strategic commitments set out in this document.

Our strategic framework is built around four interlocking pillars ensuring we continue to protect workers rights, resolve disputes, empower people with knowledge, and strengthen our own capabilities through continuous improvement. These pillars support a vision of a just, inclusive, and equitable world for all in Irish society.

Our strategy is not just a roadmap for the WRC - it is a recommitment to the people we serve: workers, employers, their representatives, our people, and wider society. We will uphold the rights, resolve the challenges, and be agile for the future of work.

Audrey Cahill
Director General



Introduction

Under the Workplace Relations Act 2015, the Board of the Workplace Relations Commission is required to submit a Strategy Statement to the Minister every three years.

This document, *"A Decade of Impact, A Future of Fair Work and Equality,"* marks the WRC's fourth Strategy Statement since its establishment on 1 October 2015. It reflects both our evolution over the past decade and our ambitions for the future, ensuring that the WRC remains a responsive, trusted, and forward-looking institution at the heart of Ireland's labour market.

This strategy was shaped through a deeply consultative process, grounded in the voices and insights of our people. Over the course of four Strategy Session Workshops held across five geographical locations, WRC staff from all functions contributed to a shared vision for the next phase of our development.

To support this process, the WRC commissioned KPMG to undertake an Organisational Efficiency and Effectiveness Review. This future-focused initiative assessed how the WRC can enhance its capacity to deliver on its statutory mandate, identifying opportunities to improve service delivery, strengthen internal capabilities, and build greater organisational resilience.

Together, these engagements have informed a strategy rooted in the lived realities of our work and the evolving needs of our service users. It positions the WRC to lead confidently into the next decade—promoting fair and inclusive workplaces, enforcing employment rights, and fostering constructive industrial relations across Ireland.

200+
staff voices

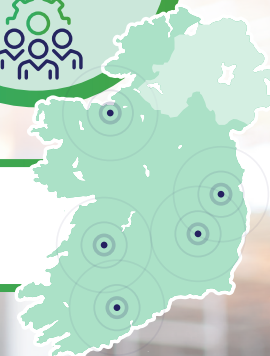


4

Strategy Session
Workshops;



5 geographical
locations;



The Review

The review engaged stakeholders across all functions of the WRC and surfaced practical, cross-cutting challenges while also highlighting the organisation's strong service ethos, readiness for change, and digital ambitions.

Approach Summary

- **Stakeholder-Led Diagnostic:** Through workshops and interviews across all divisions, the review gathered insights on operational bottlenecks, systemic inefficiencies, and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Functional and Cross-Functional Analysis:** Assessed end-to-end business processes, technology infrastructure, data use, workforce planning, and organisational structure.
- **Evidence-Driven Recommendations:** Provided targeted, actionable recommendations grouped into five pillars—business process redesign, digital transformation, organisational realignment, workforce resilience, and a clarified operating model with our line department, Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE).

The review offers a critical foundation for shaping the WRC's **new strategic direction**, particularly in light of rising labour market demands and institutional pressures:

1. **Supports Strategic Capacity:** By identifying specific improvements in process clarity, technology, and workforce agility, the review equips the WRC to operate more efficiently and scale effectively as demand grows.
2. **Drives User-Centric Reform:** Recommendations such as self-service tools, digital submissions, and outcome-based KPIs align directly with the strategic objective of delivering a modern, accessible, and responsive service.
3. **Improves Resilience and Retention:** Through better workforce planning, leadership development, and institutional knowledge retention, the strategy will address capacity risks and foster long-term organisational resilience.

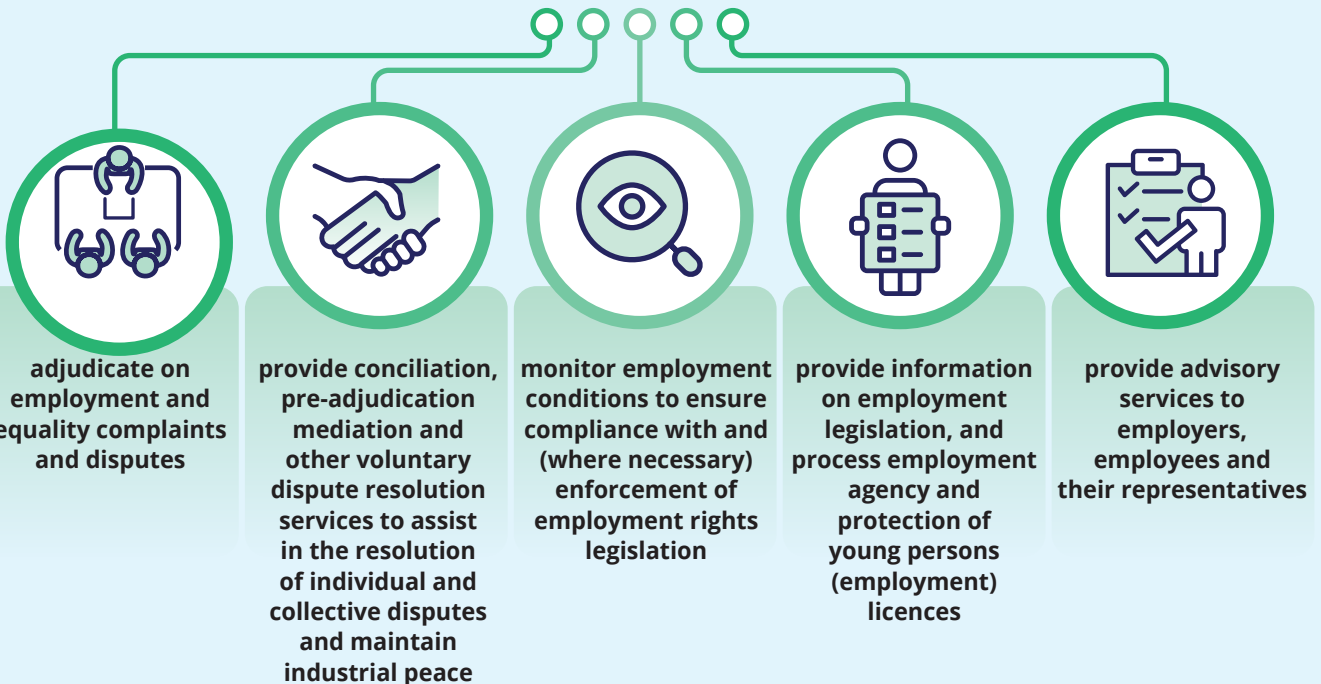
4. **Enables Data-Driven Oversight:** With improved data access and governance, the WRC can shift from reactive problem-solving to proactive, evidence-based decision-making—supporting accountability and better service outcomes.
5. **Facilitates Strategic Partnership with DETE:** A clarified operating model will ensure aligned governance and operational autonomy where needed, strengthening the WRC's ability to deliver with assurance and agility.

In essence, the review sets out a clear operational blueprint that enables the WRC Strategy to not only respond to immediate service delivery challenges but to anticipate and shape the future of workplace relations in Ireland.



Purpose of the WRC

The functions of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) are to:



Additional functions set out in section 11 (1) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 include:

- promoting the improvement of workplace relations, and maintenance of good workplace relations,
- promoting and encouraging compliance with relevant enactments,
- providing guidance in relation to compliance with codes of practice approved under Section 20 of the Workplace Relations Act 2015,
- conducting reviews of, and monitor developments as respects, workplace relations,
- conducting or commissioning research into matters pertaining to workplace relations,
- providing advice, information and the findings of research conducted by the Commission to joint labour committees and joint industrial councils,
- advising and apprising the Minister in relation to the application of, and compliance with, relevant enactments, and
- providing information to members of the public in relation to employment

Our Vision; 2025 and beyond

We envision a society where employment and equality standards are upheld for all through the delivery of high-quality services.

At the heart of our organisation lies a deep commitment to fairness, dignity, and equality of opportunity for all. We believe that employment is not merely a means to an income but also a pathway to empowerment, inclusion, and personal growth. Similarly, equality is not just a principle—it's a practice that must be actively nurtured and defended in every workplace and community.

Our vision reflects our aspiration to contribute to a society where everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, can thrive in an environment that respects their rights and supports their potential. To achieve this, we are dedicated to upholding robust employment and equality standards that are applied fairly and consistently.

We recognise that real change happens not just through policy, but through the delivery of meaningful, high-quality services that reach people nationwide. Whether it's through advisory, consensus building, support, training, or compliance initiatives, our work is driven by a desire to make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and the systems that serve them.

By fostering strong partnerships, embracing innovation, and remaining steadfast in our values, we are striving to build a future where fairness is the norm and quality is the standard.



Our Values

Our values are the foundation of everything we do. They shape how we work, guide our decision-making, and reflect our commitment to creating a more just, equitable, and high-performing organisation. Most importantly they inform our culture. These principles are more than just words - they are the standards we hold ourselves to and the lens through which we deliver our services.

As our organisation has evolved, so too have our values. We came together to reimagine our values to inspire and guide us through the next stages of our strategic journey.

In a landscape where trust, fairness, and accountability are more important than ever, we are proud to champion a values-driven approach. Each of our values represents a core belief that drives our purpose forward and ensures that we remain true to our vision of a society where employment and equality standards are upheld for all.

These values that we share across our organisation, guide how we engage with our stakeholders, support our teams, and serve the public—ensuring that our work not only meets expectations but sets the standard for excellence through efficient and effective delivery of services.



Trust and Integrity

We are honest, reliable, transparent and consistent in all our interactions both with our stakeholders and one another. We strive to do the right thing and hold ourselves to account.



Independence and Impartiality

We perform our functions independently. We will always act with neutrality in the delivery of our services and endeavour to check any biases.



Efficiency and Innovation

We will continuously create new ideas, share our expertise and in turn enhance the efficiency of our service delivery.



Equality and Fairness

We espouse the values of equality and fairness and endeavour to provide a workplace where our people can thrive. We promote equality and accessibility throughout our services.

Key Strategic Ambitions

Workplace Relations Commission Key Strategic Ambitions 2025-2027

- Increase accessibility to our services for all
- Strengthen compliance in high-risk sectors
- Improve efficiencies across all our services
- Build a modern, data-informed, adaptive and agile organisation
- Strengthen our resilience and build on our positive culture
- Launch and embed the Knowledge, Information & Advisory Division
- Empower service user led resolution over imposed solutions

The Strategic Pillars set out below are the core elements of focus to deliver our long-term vision and strategic ambition.

Our key strategic ambitions set out above, serve as the foundation for defining our strategic pillars, ensuring that each pillar directly supports our overarching goals and drives aligned, sustainable progress.

Strategic Pillars



Rights Protection Compliance & Enforcement



Purpose: Safeguard employment rights through inspections, enforcement, and compliance support.

Key Actions:

- Proactive risk based inspection strategies
- Actively engage with employers to promote voluntary compliance with legislation prior to enforcement
- Enforcement up to and including criminal and civil proceedings where necessary
- Cross-border and joint enforcement activities with national and international partners to reach vulnerable cohorts in society

Accessible Fair & Impartial Dispute Resolution



Purpose: Provide efficient, impartial, and people-centred resolution services.

Key Actions:

- Efficient and timely conciliation, mediation, facilitation and adjudication services
- Develop accessible resources across multiple channels to provide service users with the tools to minimise conflict, complaints and disputes
- Pilot initiatives such as partnerships with advocacy groups to support accessibility programmes using their insights journey through the WRC
- Document key processes across our operational areas to improve the user experience

Empowerment Through Education & Engagement



Purpose: Equip employees, employers and the public with the knowledge to uphold rights and the mechanisms available to resolve issues early.

Key Actions:

- Establish and embed the new Knowledge, Information & Advisory (KIA) Division
- Deliver Outreach and Education activities with focus on vulnerable cohorts in our society
- Establish stakeholder communications strategies and feedback models
- Support the labour market of the future through research and data insights

Organisational Strength & Strategic Evolution



Purpose: Build internal capability to deliver our ambition and adapt to changing needs using evidence-based data-led approaches.

Key Actions:

- Shape 3-year ICT roadmap to expand digital access across our services
- Agree clear and transparent KPIs for our outputs
- Strengthen our culture through strong people initiatives
- Develop clear career progression frameworks with linked training and development plans

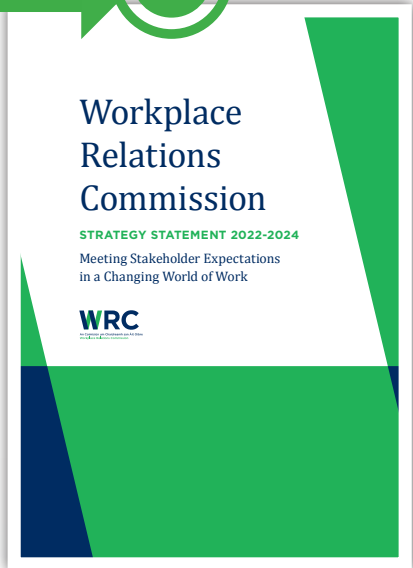
Success Factors

- ✓ Improved compliance rates across key employment sectors
- ✓ Increase in public awareness of employment and equality rights
- ✓ Reduction in repeat complaints or disputes from the same sources
- ✓ Positive impact on employment equality and workplace relations nationwide
- ✓ Increase in complaints resolved without recourse for an adjudication decision or enforcement



Strategy Statement Review

The Workplace Relations Act 2015 requires that all WRC Strategy Statements contain a review of the implementation of the immediately preceding strategy statement. This review is set out in Appendix 1.





Appendix 1

Strategy Statement 2022-2024 Review

The Strategy Statement *Meeting Stakeholder Expectations in a Changing World of Work* included the three calendar years from 2022 to 2024.

The 2022 – 2024 Strategy Statement committed to refine and reshape its services through continued innovation and identification and sharing of good practices. The strategy identified three key strategic aims to maintain and build on the strong foundations established over the preceding years.

- Resilience and Continuity,
- Continuous Improvement, and
- Assisting Adaptability.

The strategic objectives, actions and outcomes outlined in the Strategy Statement informed and were reflected in the annual business and risk management plans delivered by each Division of the WRC. Additionally, the Annual Reports published over the duration of the Strategy, detailed the progress achieved on the strategic objectives and actions therein.

Some notable achievements in line with the ambition and commitment of the 3-year Strategy are summarised below.

Resilience and Continuity

The 2022-2024 Strategy Statement identified the teams working at the Workplace Relations Commission as its primary asset and the cruciality of attracting and retaining talent as a marker to success. The Strategy envisioned a level of turnover on foot of retirements and data indicating overall labour market opportunities and trends.

Over the period of the Strategy, the WRC workforce increased by 14% to match increasing levels of demand and service expansion and stood at 235 (headcount) at the end of 2024.

In efforts to ensure effective delivery of the Strategy during a time of envisioned turnover, the WRC continued to engage proactively with its parent

Department, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), to provide a talent pipeline to deliver on the Strategy objectives and statutory functions. Together with the DETE, the WRC encouraged upskilling and delivered relevant training and development programmes to support its people and ensure they were competent and confident to deliver their duties.

Reflecting the changing legal and operational environment and to make provisions to strengthen agility and resilience in its workforce, the WRC embarked on the recruitment of additional resources and associated training for both the Inspection and Adjudication Services.

There were a number of impactful retirements during the term of the Strategy which had the potential to present a level of vulnerability in service delivery but careful succession planning in the context of upskilling and embedding an agile mindset ensured continued high-level service delivery pending the completion of recruitment campaigns to appoint substantive and high calibre personnel into key positions. This challenge also created the opportunity for the WRC to test its ability to improve and adapt in a combination of known and unknown situations and its resilience and ability to thrive in disruptive and changing environments.

Supporting staff through organisational led policies including implementing and embedding a formal blended working arrangement in conjunction with the DETE was a key factor to building a resilient organisation. The arrangements are kept under review as the service demands and workforce needs evolve to ensure continued organisational adaptability and meet the strategic goals and operational needs of the WRC and the public it serves.

Following the launch of the Strategy Statement 2022 – 2024, the WRC held an all-staff Conference on Thursday, 19 May 2022 bringing staff together from all WRC offices for the first time since Covid-19 in 2020, further building connectivity across teams, embedding positive collaboration and creating supportive networks. Regular meetings, anchor days



and the publication of the in-house staff magazine became a key feature during the delivery of the Strategy and underpinned the development of the next Strategy.

In the final year of the Strategy, the WRC embraced the commitment of its teams to stay connected and to develop a strong WRC community and a culture of inclusiveness and involvement. In 2024 a number of all-staff townhall sessions using online platforms and staff engagement workshops across all WRC locations were facilitated by the Corporate Services Divisions and delivered by the Director General and her senior management team.

In October 2022, the then Minister for Business, Employment and Retail, Damien English TD., officially opened the new WRC Southern Region Office, centrally located in Cork City. This represented the culmination of the WRC ambition to be in a position to deliver its full suite of services regionally. The placement of the 5 WRC locations was reviewed over the period of the Strategy to ensure that the WRC was strategically located in areas of high demand for services. This level of review will continue over the period of the new Strategy Statement 2025-2027.

Continuous Improvement

In the context of continuously seeking to strengthen the capacity and capability of the organisation and to explore ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the quality of the services of the WRC, the Strategy Statement 2022-2024 paved the way forward, setting out our strategic ambitions and building a foundation for developing activities to realise the objectives and vision of the Strategy.

To stretch the effectiveness of service delivery across the WRC's geographical locations, the WRC upgraded the technology in the Cork and Dublin offices. This upgrade project provided critical signposting in the form of digital display boards for service users, complementing and further improving the process in the lead up to an adjudication hearing.

Furthermore, dedicated rooms were refit to accommodate and facilitate hybrid and remote hearings offering an alternative service channel and removing barriers for some in accessing adjudication and mediation service. Over the course of the Strategy the WRC conducted adjudication hearings in person and remotely with an average of 70% being in-person and 30% conducted remotely.

An ICT Strategy was developed to align with and support the objectives set out in the 2022-2024 Strategy. This ICT Strategy laid the foundations for medium-term digital advancement within the WRC and focussed on delivering “Digital First” solutions.

Building on the progress to develop and deploy web-based, user-friendly digital solutions, the WRC partnered with a service provider to design a new case management system for conciliation, advisory and mediation services. This system was rolled out in 2022 and in addition to adding efficiencies to the administration of the services, it also provided the ability to collect key data and insights to inform future strategy and further improve services.

A new modern application process for complainants that leverages innovative technologies and greatly improves the services offered to the service users of the WRC was launched in 2024. This new application process (e-Complaint Form) is fully compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and is available in both Irish and English.

The WRC made significant strides towards attaining its 3-year objectives through advancing digital solutions to services and in the understanding that more digital advancements will ensue in succeeding years as technology evolves and continues to disrupt traditional practices and processes.

Effective improvements were made in 2023 following the launch of Phase 1 of the Robotic Process Automation (RPA) project. RPA Phase 1 provided for a more streamlined and efficient system to work in tandem with human touch points on the initial handling and correspondence of complaint applications. Following the success of Phase 1, the WRC embarked on RPA Phase 2 during 2024. Phase 2 delivers the automatic generation of hearing and postponement letters to relevant parties to adjudication hearings. This Phase also encompassed the issuing of letters relating to postponements of hearings. The RPA’s ability to process large volumes of data and issue correspondence with precision has boosted productivity enabling the WRC to keep ahead of ever-increasing service demands.

Assisting Adaptability

Employment law developments over the last three years have resulted in the continuing improved conditions for workers. The WRC is paramount to the positive drive and progression to assisting its stakeholders, employers and employees in understanding and dealing with new and amending law that impacts on economic and social change and challenge.

Government and the WRC’s parent Department, DETE have driven much positive and progressive changes over the last few years and have achieved a significant amount to further enhance the protection of employees.

The WRC made significant strides towards attaining its 3-year objectives through advancing digital solutions to services and in the understanding that more digital advancements will ensue in succeeding years as technology evolves and continues to disrupt traditional practices and processes.

For example, the Employment Permits Act 2024 introduced significant changes to the employment permit systems in Ireland, including the introduction of a new seasonal employment permit.

The Employment (Collective Redundancies and Miscellaneous Provisions) and Companies (Amendment) Act 2024 was commenced on 1 July 2024. The Act amended the Protection of Employment Act 1977 to further enhance the protection of employees facing collective redundancies caused by their employer’s insolvency.

On foot of these legislative changes, the WRC through its services and communications deliver key messages to stakeholders, adapt procedurally and structurally to support the legislative changes, upskill its teams, and develop Codes of Practice to support and provide a written set of rules which define how persons or bodies must act in given situations.

The WRC published its Code of Practice on the Right to Request Flexible Working and the Right to Request Remote Working on 7 March 2024 as provided for under the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 2023. The purpose of the Code is to provide practical guidance to employers, employees and any other persons as to the steps that may be taken for complying with one or more provisions of Part 3 of Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 Act, which includes provisions regarding requests for remote working arrangements, and also with Part IIA of the Parental Act 1998-2023,

which includes provisions regarding requests for flexible working arrangements for caring purposes. The publication of this Code was critical in a time where remote, blended and hybrid working arrangements were being embedded in organisations across Ireland.

Additionally, the WRC website is a vital source of information and a critical interface with the WRC services for citizens of Ireland. The WRC website provides updates on service delivery models and employment and equality rights, both generally, and aligned to legislative changes. Furthermore, the website contains a library of short videos in several languages to demonstrate how our services work in practice.

The WRC social media channels are another key communication tool to share employment and equality related information and legislative updates with the public. The reach of these platforms increased steadily over the period of the 2022-2024 Strategy Statement and continue to provide an accessible mode of vital communication.

Pivotal discussions were facilitated by the WRC during 2023 and 2024 between the Government and the Public Sector Trade Unions/Associations on a successor agreement to Building Momentum. The WRC facilitated discussions resulted with the publication of The Public Service Agreement

2024- 2026, the successor agreement to Building Momentum.

In delivering on its commitment to contribute to the development of knowledge and debate on the changing nature of the world of work, the WRC commissioned the University of Limerick (UL) to carry out a piece of research on *Work and Employment Transformations in Ireland: A Review of Labour Market and Workplace Relations Challenges*. The key themes that emerged included the impact of inflation, climate change, technology and recruitment and retention on the labour market.

On 6 June 2024, the Workplace Relations Commission hosted a Stakeholder Conference entitled “The Future of Work?”, The themes for the Conference were led by those identified in the UL research project and the Conference provided a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to hear from keynote speakers and presenters on trends and insights in the world of work.



