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Public Affairs Ireland Weekly Newsletter

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Chair of Citizens' Assembly appointed

Supreme Court Justice Mary Laffoy has been appointed as the Chair of the Citizens' Assembly. The appointment was made by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD.

The Citizens' Assembly was established some months ago, and it is believed it will examine and discuss social issues, such as the aging population, fixed-term parliaments, and the repeal of the Eight Amendment.

The motion to set up the group was passed in mid-July this year. It will be made up of 100 citizens of varying backgrounds, including the Honourable Justice Laffoy. It is expected that the Assembly will be ready to begin talks in October of this year. Speaking to the Irish Examiner in July, Jim O'Callaghan TD said,

"We know that the breadth of opinion on the issue in Irish society and we believe that would simply be reflected in the citizens' assembly."

Justice Laffoy is most-widely known as the judge who presided over the 1999–2003 Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse. She was called to the Bar in 1971 and to the Inner Bar in 1987. She was appointed as a judge of the High Court in 1995 and to the Supreme Court in July 2013.

In a press release welcoming the appointment of Justice Laffoy, Senator Ivana Bacik stressed the importance of the work the Assembly would be doing. Focusing on the issue of repealing the Eight Amendment, she said,

"I hope that the Assembly will commit from its outset to engage with international expertise on reproductive health, and to draw on the knowledge of medical and legal experts as well as stakeholders with professional and direct personal experience."

Many have criticised the establishment of the Assembly, dismissing it as an attempt by some in the Dáil to avoid making a decision on a topic that has proven not only to be complex and emotional, but incredibly divisive among citizens.

NAS calls for emergency service availability during strike

Members of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) that belong to SIPTU have called for the HSE to lay out a contingency plan for the days of industrial action planned.

The workers will begin their strike on Wednesday 10 August. Members of the NAS have issues with conditions of employment and the development of the service. Of particular concern are the monies due to NAS workers under the Public Service Agreement, an Intermediate Care Service as suggested by the Labour court, and a system of annualised hours.

Paul Bell, SIPTU Health Division Organiser, said

"We are calling on the HSE to immediately enter into discussions to develop a contingency plan that ensures public safety and emergency cover for the duration of any strike action by our members".

Representatives from SIPTU are due to sit down in talks with management of the HSE this Friday, 5 August to discuss the issues at hand.

Migrant Integration Strategy to be published in autumn

Junior Minister for Equality, Immigration, and Integration, David Stanton has announced that the new strategy for integrating migrants will be published in autumn 2016.

The Minister was speaking at the National Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association on Sunday, 31 July. He said that the work being done of the new strategy was "advanced".

In the main, he spoke about the ways in which we can help integrate those who come to our country into the fabric of our society. His department, in order to do this, intends "to ensure that, not only are the lines of communication kept open, but that they are used on a regular basis to enhance trust and understanding. In addition, such lines of communication can be used to identify impediments or barriers to successful integration."

He continued,

"True integration, understanding and acceptance happens at a local level and it is within the local communities throughout the country that people can make a fundamental and positive difference to the lives of others."

Ireland's Lifelong Learning participation below EU average

Last Friday, 29 July, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) released a report on Lifelong Learning in Ireland. One of the main findings of the report was that Ireland falls below average EU figures when it comes to adult participation in Lifelong Learning. The participation rate in 2014 was below 7%; latest CSO figures estimate that participation is around 7.4%. The EU average is around 11%.

More points of interest found in the report are thus:

- Of adults aged 25-64 in Ireland (2.3m), 177,300 people participated in Lifelong Learning activities in Q4 2015; the majority of these (116,700) were in formal learning activities (colleges, schools etc); The rest participated in non-formal learning activities.
- Females were more likely than males (at 8% and 6.3% respectively) to participate in Lifelong Learning, particularly in non-formal learning activities.
- Participation rates seemed to drop with age. Those with higher education achievements were more likely to continue with lifelong learning.
- participation rates of those in the "economically inactive" and the unemployed were above the national average, and they were below the average for those in employment.
- Nationally, the participation rate for non-formal learning is particularly low. However, the rate of formal learning is amongst one of the highest in the EU.
- The National Skills Strategy that was published in January 2016 is committed to a medium-term goal of raising the participation rates for Lifelong Learning to 10%.

Una Halligan, Chair of the EGFSN, stressed the importance of the commitment to continued learning. She said,

"We need to create a culture of Lifelong Learning in Ireland, with shared responsibility on the part of employers, education and training providers, Government, and learners themselves. The greatest progress towards improving our Lifelong Learning rate could be expected to come from expanding opportunities for non-formal learning, especially in the workplace."

The report was prepared by SOLAS's Skills and Labour Market Research Unit on behalf of the Group.

This week at Public Affairs Ireland

On the Blog

Government's Personal Microfinance Credit Scheme helps those who most need it

PAI editor

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On Brexit: IMF forecasts slower economic growth

Tom Ferris

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Publicly-Funded Higher Education was the only Viable Option the Cassells Report Suggested

Annie Hoey

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Who Governs Ireland?

Michael Williams

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Fiscal Advisory Council Delivers Some Unpopular Advice

Tom Ferris

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The Public Professional, Issue 2

PAI have published the second issue of our Learning and Development magazine, *The Public Professional*.

This issue looks at a very timely and interesting topic in current HR and social conversations – well-being.

It includes articles on Resilience in the Workplace, Neuroscience in HR and Dignity at Work, as well as our regular features, such as our HR Helpdesk (in association with ByrneWallace) and Appointments.

The magazine is available through our website. It is free for our members. Non-members can purchase the magazine on a per-issue basis, or with a yearly subscription.

If you have any questions, you can contact our editor, Shauna at editor@pai.ie




PUBLIC AFFAIRS
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FRIDAY
30 SEPTEMBER

PAI BUILDING

9AM TO 1PM

Policy development and legislation in a changed political environment

The advent of a new minority Government this year represents a new vista for many in the public service and the political system. Instead of a Government being able to rely on an inbuilt majority in both the Dáil and Seanad, the new Government has no guaranteed assurances that legislation will be passed as proposed or in a timely fashion.

Our half-day conference will address these changes. Specifically, talks will focus on policy development and the legislative process in a changed political environment.

Government Chief Whip, Regina Doherty TD, will be the Keynote speaker.

It will take place Friday 30 September, 9.00am to 1.00pm.

For more information, or to book, you can call is at (01) 819 8500, email info@pai.ie or visit our [website](#)

Adjourned until 2.00pm on Tuesday 27 September 2016

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This week's Committee Meetings

Parliamentary Committees adjourned sine die