

*REWIR - Negotiating return to work in
the age of demographic change
through industrial relations*

Update on progress: Ireland

3rd REWIR meeting

Rome, 31st January 2020



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Progress to date

1. Roundtable with key social partners (June 2019)
2. Secondary research (legislation, reports etc)
3. Workers survey
 - Ongoing – 51 responses in English - 14 usable responses from Ireland
4. EU survey
 - Malta, Cyprus, Greece, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and UK - Ongoing
5. Focus groups to Trade unions and employers (in progress)
6. Interviews with key social partners (in progress)
7. Next Steps

Key issues

- Current tight labour market
- No guidelines for employers or employees
- Public sector versus private sector differences
- Issues around reasonable accommodation
- Rhetoric versus reality
- Public v private sector differences
- Role of the line manager and co-workers
- Disclosure of illness (particularly mental health)
- Issues around ambiguity of sick certs
- Issue of private insurance companies and sick pay
- Culture of the organisation is key

Challenges – stakeholder group discussions

- Drawing on the same cohort of people (particularly trade union representatives) for different stages of the project
- Co-ordinating schedules for group discussions (managers and trade union)



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National level stakeholder interviews

- Those in red have already agreed to participate. Currently scheduling or have scheduled a date.
- **Patient groups:** Irish Cancer Society, Marie Keating Foundation, Arthritis Ireland, Croi, Mental Health Ireland, See Change,
- **Government:** HSE, Dept. of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Chief Medical Officer (Civil Service)
- **Trade unions:** SIPTU, IBRU, IMPACT
- **Employer groups:** IBEC, ISME, Chambers Ireland
- **Other:** Occupational health groups, Return to work consultants, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Health & Safety Authority

Next steps

- Finalise manager survey and distribute (min 60 responses)
- Complete group discussions with (1) trade unions and (2) employers
- Complete interviews with key stakeholders (first interview scheduled for 13th February)
- Draft national reports and policy briefs (June 2020)



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Key policy documentation

- HSE guidelines on rehabilitative employees back to work: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hrppg/rehabilitation-of-employees-back-to-work-after-illness-or-injury.html>
- Wellbeing Framework – being launched by Health Service Executive in April 2020
- 2019 Employee absenteeism survey (national survey of employers) by IBEC
- Working with Arthritis employer guide (IBEC)
- Marie Keating Foundation – Back to Work after Cancer
- Employer focused consultant: <https://www.connect4work.ie/>