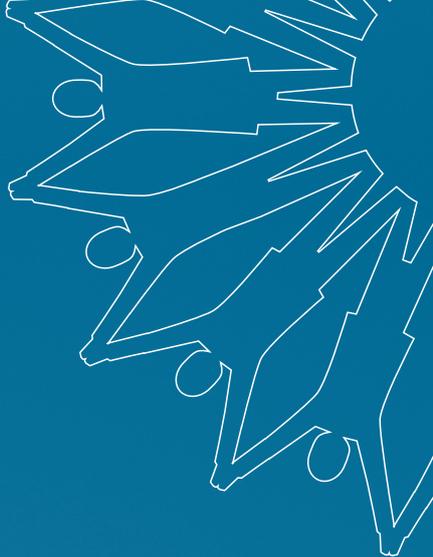


Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Report of the Commission on  
the Irish Trade Union Movement

# A Call to Action

Biennial Delegate Conference  
Killarney 4-6 July, 2011



**A better,  
fairer  
way**

STRONGER TOGETHER  
**CONGRESS**  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions





# Contents

- 1. Foreword 2
- 2. Introduction 3
- 3. The Process 5
- 4. The Commission’s Approach to Change 5
- 5. A Stronger Trade Union Movement 6
  
- Going for Growth**
- Building the Power of the Union Movement 8
- 6. Organising 8
- 7. The Social / Political Agenda 12
- 8. Changes in Structure and Organisation 13
- 9. Recommendations – A Call to Action 15

## 1. Foreword

**1.1** At the Congress Biennial Delegate Conference in July 2009, a motion was passed calling for a Commission to be established to review trade union organisation in Ireland, including structures and procedures, with the objective of optimising effectiveness through co-ordination of resources in the best interests of working people and their families. The Commission was established in April 2010. The members of the Commission are Mr David Begg, Mr Jack O Connor, Mr Peter McLoone, Mr Eugene McGlone, Ms Patricia McKeown, Ms Avril Hall-Callaghan, Mr Philip Bowyer and Mr Philip Jennings. Mr Liam Berney from the Congress Secretariat acted as Secretary to the Commission.

**1.2** The following were the agreed terms of reference;

- Chaired by a respected international trade union figure
- To submit a report not later than February 2011 – with such reports as it considers appropriate intermittently in the interim (to enable initiatives to be undertaken expeditiously);
- Secretariat to be provided by ICTU;
- Issues to be addressed to include the following:
  - Declaration of social democratic principles, values and objectives?
  - Optimising trade union power;

- Organising workers, maximising participation;
- Promotion of social democratic values through education and communication;
- Optimising the structure of trade union organisation in Ireland;
- Optimising communication;
- Maximising trade union co-operation and resource deployment;
- Developing the capacity for organising;
- Developing the capacity for consumer campaigns;
- Optimising synergies in education, training, procurement and service provision, etc.;
- Developing a capacity for political education and awareness building;
- Developing a capacity for interaction internationally and particularly within the EU;
- Optimising the capacity for policy development and economic and social research;
- Optimising the potential for co-operation with political parties and institutions committed to the social democratic project and the principles of social solidarity.

# The Republic of Ireland has endured a number of quite savage budgets over the last few years, which have taken €20.6 billion out of the economy.

- The Commission would be entitled to establish project groups as it considers appropriate;
- The Commission would be entitled to obtain expert advice, both nationally and internationally and to conduct polling and focus-group based research as it considers appropriate.
- In the course of its work, the Commission should consult with the affiliate unions and relevant Congress Committees, and should set up structures to facilitate this within two months of the commencement of its work.

## 2. Introduction

**2.1** As a result of the world financial crisis, major parts of the economy collapsed. The Republic of Ireland in particular took a heavy battering. It effectively lost its economic independence and is now a ward of the EU/IMF/ECB. It has endured a number of quite savage budgets over the last few years, which have taken €20.6 billion out of the economy. This has exacerbated the consequences of the crisis resulting in a leap in unemployment from 4.3% to nearly 15%. The poor were attacked, even to the point of reducing the minimum wage. A Government fell. Northern Ireland is caught up in the most severe round of cuts in public expenditure in memory under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition. This is only now beginning to bite. The cuts in public expenditure will be in the order of £4 billion and will cause massive redundancies and job losses within the public sector in Northern Ireland. There will also be repercussions particularly for the construction industry, which has similar to the ROI collapsed in recent years due to additional capital expenditure cuts. All this creates a very hostile environment for workers and the trade union movement in general.

**2.2** Worse still, there is no evidence of the austerity programme having had any remedial effect in the Republic. The Central Bank and the economic think tank, the ESRI, both recently wrote down their forecasts for economic growth in 2011 and 2012. Once again history is repeating itself, with 100,000

# *A Call to Action's* immediate objective is to build processes to bring unions together to define and begin the process of change.

people expected to leave the country in the near future. It is the aim of the Irish trade union movement to build an Irish economy that provides decent work and fulfilling lives for all its citizens.

**2.3** The crisis is of global dimensions affecting in varying degrees the countries of Europe and in particular of the European Union and the USA. It has brought increasing inequalities within and between countries and it is accompanied almost everywhere by attacks on public services and attacks on trade unions and trade union rights. This is epitomised in the USA with attempts in numerous States to simply take away from public servants their trade union and collective bargaining rights.

**2.4** In Ireland we have seen intense hostility to the labour movement from some sections of the media and cynical attacks on the leadership of trade unions as the movement has led public opposition to the severity of the austerity plans.

**2.5** In short, we have a new economic, a new political, social and labour relations situation in the Republic and Northern Ireland. While trade unions have to face almost daily crises, the Commission has had to try to focus on how to elaborate plans for change to strengthen the trade union movement in the longer term. It has been described as “building a ship on a stormy sea” with no blueprint to guide us. The conditions are very different from 1974, when a similar exercise was conducted at Congress.

That report tended to focus on a reduction in the number of unions, which at that time stood at 90.

**2.6** There is a necessity and an opportunity to change the trade union movement for the better in the coming year. The changes which are necessary can only be accomplished by trade union members and affiliates of Congress embracing change and committing themselves to the activities necessary to bring about change.

**2.7** That is why we title this report *A Call to Action*. Its immediate objective is to build processes to bring unions together to define and begin the process of change. It is a call to member unions to seize the opportunity and begin to take action now to assure the future of the trade union movement in Ireland. It is a path being pursued by trade union centres around the world as they adjust to new labour markets, a new workforce, different workplaces and precarious jobs.

**2.8** **We underline that there has to be a sense of urgency and determination to make significant changes in the coming twelve months. Our aim is to trigger processes now, with the aim to complete a report based on the actions taken by member unions for a special Conference of Congress in twelve months.**

### 3. The Process

- 3.1** In the past year the Commission has held discussions with numerous member unions of Congress. A number of unions have made written submissions. Meetings were held with representatives of Trades Councils, political parties and community groups.
- 3.2** There have been two meetings with the Northern Ireland Committee of Congress, a meeting with the Congress Women's Committee and participation in two conferences organised under the auspices of the Women's Committee. We have met with representatives of the Congress Youth Committee and members of staff in the Dublin and Belfast Offices. Congress staff and others provided reports and information and gave presentations, in particular concerning the Economy, the Labour Market and Communications Strategies. The Chairman of the Commission participated in the Congress Executive Council meeting.
- 3.3** On 1st March 2011, the General Secretaries of all affiliated organisations were invited to a preliminary presentation of the initial reflections of the Commission. Many unions and Commission members participated.
- 3.4** Resulting from that, meetings were held with unions active in the sectors of Education, Health Services, Commerce and Public Services. Consultations also took place with the Legal Affairs, Health and Safety and Communications Committees of Congress.

### 4. The Commission's Approach to Change

- 4.1** The Commission has been eager to ensure that all member unions had the opportunity to express their views and to contribute to formulating a strategy for change in Congress. The consultations and gathering of opinions so far has laid a firm basis for the development of the work of the Commission.
- 4.2** It has allowed the Commission to define a number of key issues. In particular the meeting on 1st March 2011 with the General Secretaries of affiliated organisations led to important guidance on how to proceed namely:
- There is a sense of urgency. The changing economic and political situation throughout Ireland presents important challenges and opportunities which should be tackled and seized.
  - There is an understanding that 49 separate unions does not provide the best platform to face today's challenges. There are too many unions. There is a need to consolidate capacity to attain critical scale, eliminate duplication and to achieve real focus on the essential tasks which face the movement. The Commission strongly recommends that we begin an immediate process of bringing unions together in common areas of the labour market and to encourage the development of sectoral plans on union structures, organising and negotiating strategies.

- Now is the time to seize the opportunities which exist for developing joint work and activities at sectoral level and these should be encouraged by the Commission as a means of facilitating rationalisation with unions committed to these processes.

- 4.3** This approach of identifying key issues and then creating processes which will allow and encourage unions to work together on common solutions and strategies is central to the thinking of the Commission.
- 4.4** During the course of the consultations, the unions, committees and staff have come up with many interesting ideas about subjects as diverse as reinvigorating activism at branch and local level; enhancing the work of women, youth and immigrant groups; reaching out to community and political groups; developing joint provisions of services and a common communications voice for the movement, as well as detailed observations on the Rules of Congress.
- 4.5** They inform the observations made in this report and more importantly they can be taken on board by the process of change that this report can launch. Suggestions are made as to where they can be taken up in future work.
- 4.6** Having identified the key issues and begun processes to deal with them, there should be a thorough review of the Congress structure, constitution and rules and financing to ensure they are appropriate to further these objectives and work programmes.

## 5. A Stronger Trade Union Movement

- 5.1** At the outset it is essential to emphasise that Congress covering Northern Ireland and the Republic has a vital role in bringing together the strength of trade unions into a formidable social and economic power. Congress has a tremendous capacity to mobilise support for its actions:
- It straddles political, social, religious and community differences in a way that no other social organisation does.
  - With 800,000 members, it is the largest civil society organisation on the island.
  - It regulates the relations between unions and mediates the relationship between workers and employers' organisations, Government and other civil society bodies.
  - It intervenes in industrial relations' disputes and it is the voice of the movement at the national level on all aspects of economic and social policy.
- 5.2** Equally it must be the voice of the movement in those international institutions which more and more influence the life of workers in Ireland, such as the European Union and the International Financial Institutions.

# Trade union membership in Ireland is relatively high compared to most other countries around the world. This provides a strong platform to adapt and grow.

- 5.3** While Congress is the single trade union centre on the island of Ireland, it operates in both jurisdictions and with certain distinctiveness in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Committee has established a number of sectoral sub committees which are charged with managing all the affairs – other than general policy, which is a matter for conference – of each particular sector. These function very well and are seen to be totally inclusive. For example, the Education Committee comprises not only teacher unions but also those unions that represent clerical, technical, administrative, cleaning, caretaking, school meals, classroom assistants and transport staff from other unions. These include Unite, NIPSA, Unison, SIPTU and GMB. Similarly the Health Committee involves all unions with an interest, whether they are representative of nursing staff (Unison/Unite) or pharmacists (Unite), paramedics (Unite/Unison and NIPSA). They also embrace the full range of key staff who vital keep the health service working: caterers, cleaners, porters etc and who may belong to one of four unions.
- 5.4** It is a confederation of Republic of Ireland based unions who operate in the Republic of Ireland only, Republic of Ireland based unions who operate in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland based unions who operate in Northern Ireland only, unions headquartered in the UK who operate in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, or who operate only in Northern Ireland.
- 5.5** It is a mixture of large general unions, industrial unions, craft unions, public service unions and professional unions.
- 5.6** Despite a long history of centralised collective bargaining, there is no legal obligation to compel employers to engage in collective bargaining in the Republic of Ireland. This contrasts with the situation in Northern Ireland.
- 5.7** The Commission has found that Congress enjoys a considerable loyalty from affiliated organisations. Trade union membership in Ireland is relatively high compared to most other countries around the world. This provides a strong platform to adapt and grow.
- 5.8** This is the starting point for shaping the future of the trade union movement in Ireland. We have a strong trade union movement. The main challenges are to increase the power of the trade union movement as a whole by making it stronger in terms of membership, membership density, organisation, participation, activities and finance.

# Going for Growth

## Building the Power of the Union Movement

### 6. Organising

**6.1** The levels of union organisation in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are relatively high. They share common characteristics, namely that organisation density in the public service is much higher than in the private sector. There is a great variety of unions in size, structure and characteristics, from general unions to very narrow occupation-based organisations. In both jurisdictions there are some areas of inter-union competition but generally these are limited and processes have been developed to assist in resolving difficulties.

**6.2** For certain unions, particularly in the public sector, there are very limited possibilities to expand membership simply because organisation levels are already very high. It is vital to face the reality of the new labour market, the new workplace, the evolving importance of manufacturing and service industries and the growth of SMEs. While being aware of the new challenges of organising in the new labour market, it is recognised that there is still considerable potential to expand. Union action is restrained by numerous factors including:

- inadequate legal backing for union recognition and collective bargaining in the Republic of Ireland;
- a lack of resources aggravated by duplication;
- difficulties in switching resources, financial and human, from servicing

existing members to organising new members;

- the need to develop people throughout union structures with the necessary skills and experience for sustained organising campaigns.

**6.3** Individual unions face widely different situations with regard to organising. However it is generally appreciated that the power of the movement to defend workers is diminished by weakness in any sector or key companies. It is understood that increasing the density of the trade union movement as a whole will strengthen the individual unions as well. We have to find innovative ways to enhance the role of women and to attract young people into membership.

**6.4** Individual unions alone cannot achieve this general raising of the level of organisation across the whole of the economy. Therefore, it is necessary to find ways for unions collectively to grow the trade union movement and to build its power to influence employers, Governments and other institutions.

**6.5** It is clear to the Commission that encouraging cooperation and developing activities in targeted sectors could result in increased capacity for workers to influence the direction of developments in those sectors. During the discussions with the Executive on the 1st March 2011, a number of potential sectors were identified and following this meeting the Commission convened meetings with some of the unions in these sectors. The

Commission is pleased to report some good early progress arising from these discussions as follows:

- The Commission met with the four teaching unions in the Republic of Ireland. The four teacher unions ASTI, IFUT, INTO and TUI separately approved a policy position at their Annual Conferences in 2007 to enter into discussions on proposals for a Federated Teachers' and Lecturers' Union. While the unions have worked closely together on a range of common issues and campaigns since then, no formal process to advance the Conference resolution was initiated. The teaching unions reaffirmed their commitment to engage on the Federation proposal. The parties have agreed to set up an inter-union working group to examine the issues involved and meetings are scheduled. The teaching unions will be meeting further with the Commission to discuss the outcome of this initiative.
- The Commission met with the PSEU and IMPACT. It did so because it had observed that over the last number of months the environment in which unions in the public sector operate is changing dramatically. It seems to the Commission that the Croke Park Agreement envisages the integration of the public service and that barriers to a unified public service labour market will be dismantled. Significant redeployment will occur within and across each sector of the public service and we anticipate that

this policy approach will continue beyond the lifetime of the Croke Park Agreement. The Commission is of the view that trade union structures developed in an era where the different sectors of the public service were, in effect, entirely separate organisations will not be fit for purpose under a unified public service. It seems to the Commission that the continued existence of separate organisations will inevitably act as an impediment to a more integrated public service. It is unlikely that the Government or the public service employers will accept that the requirements of, or the need for, the preservation of historical trade union structures are a legitimate consideration in the implementation of the new policy approach. There will be an inevitable requirement for trade union organisational structures to respond to and match changing public policy objectives. This is likely to focus on the separate organisations that represent broadly similar categories across the overall public service. Given this emerging environment we believe that these unions should begin to explore the organisational implications in public policy. To the Commission it seems logical that these discussions should include consideration of a process of amalgamations. Because of their historical working relationship in Congress, their broadly similar policy approach and because of the fact that the two unions represent people doing like work in different parts of the public service, the Commission would

suggest that the PSEU and IMPACT should commence this process.

- The Commission met with the CWU, IBOA, and Mandate, all of which are affiliates of UNI Global Union. These unions are already working closely together to develop cooperative and collaborative working arrangements in areas and sectors which deliver economies of scale and improved collective influence for their respective membership. While the spheres of influence of the three unions are still largely unique, they are beginning to blur around the edges with the main global employers in each sector offering a range of services and products which cut across all sectors and which in turn can profoundly impact on the main stakeholders in each sector. Not only the product mix, but the employment practices of the main global companies in each sector often act as a driver of change in each of the other sectors e.g. opening hours, flexibility, casualisation and outsourcing. Recognising this, the three unions have resolved to develop greater collaboration, information sharing and are exploring how they can develop strategies nationally and globally for greater support and mutual learning from shared experiences. With this in mind the managers of the training and education functions in the CWU, IBOA and Mandate have been working closely together in order to maximise the potential impact of the application of scarce training resources. This has resulted

in the development of shared generic training courses for activists and members of all three unions with joint delivery of courses, shared educational infrastructure and joint applications for funding. UNI Global Union has agreed to sponsor an initiative aimed at developing a collaborative approach amongst these three unions in the area of organising.

- 6.6** Given that resources are limited, the movement collectively must decide on the strategic targets for organising campaigns.

## Suggested Action

- 6.7** Congress should now convene a Strategic Organising Group. The group would be self electing, comprising those who wish to participate and contribute to the strategic organising effort. Participation of unions in both jurisdictions should be encouraged.
- 6.8** Its main purpose would be to take an overall look at the organising challenge; to shape the key organising campaigns, by mapping, deciding objectives, pooling resources, creating resources, training campaigning personnel, and common funds for activities. Congress's role would be to convene the group. Given their key role in organising, it is important to ensure that the voice of women, youth, immigrants and minority groups are heard in this group. It would be for the group to resource and decide how to carry out its work.

# The possibility of combining the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland groups should always be kept open.

- 6.9** The group should set overall targets and timelines for increasing union membership/density. In particular, for the mapping and planning phases of work, the group would need skilled research back up for its activities.
- 6.10** It is clear to the Commission that the progress made on developing the sectoral organising groups can be built on and the establishment of sectoral groups in other areas of the economy is vital. It is clear to the Commission that this progress can be built on and the establishment of sectoral groups in other areas of the economy is vital. The Commission is aware that Congress has established a committee comprised of unions representing workers in the community sector in the Republic of Ireland and that a similar committee exists in Northern Ireland. Other obvious sectors would include construction, manufacturing and distribution and health. The Commission would also point to the examples given at 5.3 in relation to Northern Ireland, which are delivering benefits for the unions concerned and the members.
- 6.11** These types of activities should be encouraged in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. The situations in the two jurisdictions are not exactly the same, given the nature of the unions participating. Nevertheless, there is scope for work with all those unions willing to follow this path.
- 6.12** The possibility of combining the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland groups should always be kept open.
- 6.13** The aim of these groupings is not simply to set unions on a route to federations, amalgamations or mergers. This may be a result, but short of that, there is an enormous amount of valuable work which could be done. The agenda for such groupings should always include: strategic organising, mapping, objectives, targeted companies, international cooperation, consumer campaigns, and resources, human and financial, in the sectors. This work should feed into the work of the Congress Strategic Organising Group. It might also include:
- Defining industrial organising policy for the sector and advising on political or regulatory objectives.
  - Planning joint campaigns.
  - Planning shared services to provide unions with training, procurement, legal services, promotional/publicity materials.
- 6.14** The UnionConnect research project conducted with UCD among five collaborating unions should inform potential strategy, best practice and assist in identifying the role of Congress in supporting a strategic approach.
- 6.15** The work of the Congress on developing communications to reach into the community and to develop clear and coherent messages from Congress must be taken into the work of these groups.

# All trade union activities and the livelihood of all workers will be affected by decisions taken at political and regulatory levels.

## 7. The Social / Political Agenda

- 7.1** There is very wide agreement that Congress should devise a short statement which would set out simply a vision of society and economics based on social solidarity and fairness and not simply accepting the dominance of the free market. It should serve as the face and the basis for a new strategic communications strategy for Congress to members and a broader public, which does not have much time or inclination to study traditional union rule books or publications, however worthy they are. The idea would be a statement of principles and objectives in language that can be easily understood and welcomed by as wide a section of the population as possible.
- 7.2** It is equally important that the trade union movement has the means of communicating these ideas and is able to campaign to win public support. This should be backed by a strategic communications capacity to conduct ongoing campaigns on a vast scale.
- 7.3** The principles embodied in it would also serve to guide and to evaluate the policies developed by Congress. All trade union activities and the livelihood of all workers will be affected by decisions taken at political and regulatory levels.
- 7.4** Trade unions have and will mobilise to influence the decision-making bodies. The political situations in the two jurisdictions

are different. However, in both there is always a need to develop means of lobbying across political party boundaries, whether it is in the Dublin Parliament, the Stormont Assembly or even Westminster.

- 7.5** But in the battle to determine the outcome of these bodies, ideas will also be important. It is acknowledged that the establishment of the Congress Economic Research Unit by a coalition of the willing is a progressive development, which should add to the unions' power in the economic field in Northern Ireland and the Republic. It is vital that the unit is resourced to a level to achieve critical scale. The Commission will need the involvement of the Unit in drafting a Charter on Economic Policy. The Commission should also complete its work on labour market trends and identify where the jobs of tomorrow are. This could prove a template for similar initiatives in the socio/political fields in need of strategic funding in future.
- 7.6** Taken together, the mission statement and the development of policies in economic, political and social matters should be a major contribution to developing a vision and policy breaking with the savage free market philosophy of recent years adopted by political parties and Governments across a wide swathe of the political field.
- 7.7** The Commission is aware that a considerable amount of preliminary work has been done on communications, in formulating a strategic approach,

informed by extensive research among unions and across the membership. This work clearly determines that our mission, values and purpose (our brand identity) must be transmitted more consistently, coherently and effectively in a way that demonstrates trade union unity. This has the potential to be a powerful weapon in reaching, engaging with and mobilising our constituency as well as the broader public audience. This work must continue and its results should be integrated into the work of the other groups mentioned in this report. We underline the need for a strategic communications policy which addresses the scale of activity required to connect with union members, unorganised workers and civil society generally.

## Suggested Actions

- 7.8** Congress should formulate a new Strategic Plan to win hearts and minds for the objectives of the movement outlined in Article 11 of the Constitution of Congress in the context of the regressive direction of public policy in Ireland and Europe. This should be completed as quickly as possible after the Biennial Delegate Conference following consultation with affiliates and the other groups working on change.

## 8. Changes in Structure and Organisation

- 8.1** The most urgent tasks are to move forward the work:
- of formulating a new Strategic Plan,
  - of establishing the sectoral groups,
  - of addressing the issues related to strategic organising,
  - of developing a communications capacity,
  - and on the redefinition of the mission and political policies and activities of Congress.
- 8.2** But the Commission should also begin to draw from this work what will in practice be the real priorities for the work of Congress in the years to come. These priorities should form the basis for a review of the staffing, structure and organisation of Congress and its affiliates. In the light of the international dimensions, particularly European, of economic, legal and social questions demonstrated in recent times, it should also create the post of International Secretary at a senior level as soon as the finances permit. Neither Congress nor any of its affiliates has a dedicated international resource for Ireland which is most unusual in the European Trade Union Movement, particularly for an island entity. The continued active involvement of Congress in the work of the ETUC and the ITUC is important.

**8.3** Any constitution or rule book should be measured against how well it allows the organisation to reach its objectives, in this case the new economic, political and organising agenda of Congress. This would mean taking a fresh look at all the rules relating to the representation in Congress, the frequency and agendas of the Executive Council and the Biennial Delegate Conference, as well as questions raised in the consultations regarding: the settlement of disputes between unions, and the representation of youth and other groups in the governing bodies of the organisation. The Northern Ireland Committee of Congress has specifically proposed:

- That the Northern Ireland Conference be dovetailed into the Congress BDC being held on the first day of the conference week;
- That the Northern Ireland Conference be chaired by the Chair of Northern Ireland Committee.
- That the Northern Ireland Conference elects the incoming Northern Ireland Committee Chairperson by popular vote of the delegates;
- That the Chair of The Northern Ireland Committee automatically becomes one of the Vice Presidents of Congress;
- That the Standing Orders Committee for Congress becomes the Standing Orders Committee for Northern Ireland Conference.

**8.4** From meetings held with various Congress Committees the Commission has become aware of the vital work undertaken by these structures. The Commission is aware that some defining of the formal role of Committees, such as the Legal Strategy Committee, would be very helpful to their functioning. The Commission is also aware the Education & Training Committee of Congress in the Republic is undertaking a training needs analysis of unions and the outcome of this should inform any restructuring.

**8.5** And, finally, it must address the questions of the resources and finances of Congress.

## Suggested Actions

**8.6** Congress should complete a review of the Constitution of Congress and the organisation, staffing and financing of the movement in the light of the objectives being set. The review and detailed recommendations should be completed by Spring 2012.

Congress should build on this base to develop a vision of Ireland that offers people an alternative to the severe free market approach.

## 9. Recommendations – A Call to Action

**9.1** Congress will formulate a new Strategic Plan.

**9.2** Congress should build on this base to develop a vision of Ireland that offers people an alternative to the severe free market approach which has imploded in recent times. It should develop the means to win wide public support for these different approaches to economic and social questions.

**9.3** The key objective must be to increase the level of density of trade unions in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland in terms of numbers of members and quality of union organisation. We call upon members to drive change, to commit themselves to organising, to creating an organising culture in unions with collaborative pooling of resources.

**9.4** Trade unions must start to work together now to pursue cooperation/ rationalisation of activities in sectors. This work has begun with the convening of meetings of unions in different sectors. Work should take place in the following groupings:

- Teaching Unions;
- The Public Service;
- Construction;
- Communications, Banking, Retail, Security/Cleaning;

- Manufacturing and Distribution;
- The Community sector;
- Health.

**9.5** Agendas of the sectoral meetings should include:

- Strategic Organising;
- Industrial, regulatory and collective bargaining issues;
- Defining industrial/organising policy for the sector and advising on political or regulatory objectives in the framework of general Congress policy;
- Planning joint organising campaigns, including developing consumer campaigns;
- Planning shared services to provide unions with training, procurement, legal services, promotional/ publicity materials.

**9.6** The sectoral meetings should be convened as soon as possible. The plans and activities decided in the sectoral groups will be incorporated in the Commission report to Congress. The Commission will seek to play an active role in the work process.

**9.7** Congress should convene a Strategic Organising Group. The group would be self electing, comprising those who wish to participate and contribute to the strategic organising effort. Participation of unions in both jurisdictions should be encouraged.

**9.8** Building on the work of the Communications Group, Congress should finalise a strategic communications policy to address the scale of activity required to connect with union members, unorganised workers and civil society generally.

**9.9** Congress should complete a review of the Constitution of Congress, including the proposals cited earlier from the Northern Ireland Committee, and organisation, staffing and financing in the light of the objectives being set. This should also seek to address the lack of an International Secretary. A report should be completed by 2012.

**9.10** Additional future work will include:

- Integration of women and youth;
- Work with the Legal Affairs, Health and Safety and Communications Strategy Committees;
- Further analysis of the Irish labour market to identify future job trends;
- Support for a new legal framework concerning the right to organise and collective bargaining.

**9.11** We will also convene a Global Union Roundtable and invite selected trade union centres from around the world to learn from each other's experience.



[www.ictu.ie](http://www.ictu.ie)

31/32 Parnell Square  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

Phone: +353 1 8897777  
Fax: +353 1 8872012  
E-mail: [congress@ictu.ie](mailto:congress@ictu.ie)  
[www.ictu.ie](http://www.ictu.ie)

Carlin House  
4 - 6 Donegall Street Place  
Belfast BT1 2FN  
Northern Ireland

Phone: +02890 247940  
Fax: +02890 246898  
E-mail: [info@ictuni.org](mailto:info@ictuni.org)  
[www.ictuni.org](http://www.ictuni.org)