

# IRELAND SET TO CELEBRATE ILO CENTENARY

To mark its centenary celebrations the International Labour Organisation, in collaboration with the National University of Ireland and the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation, will host a day of celebrations in Dublin on 17 September, which will also highlight the significant role played by Ireland in the ILO during that time.

**T**his year's centenary of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) resonates very strongly with Ireland, given the central role which Irishman Edward J. Phelan played in its foundation in 1919. Ireland's links with the ILO can be traced back to Phelan, the Waterford-born civil servant who became the ILO's first official.

During his term as ILO Director General from 1941 to 1948 he was the principal author of the 1944 'Declaration of Philadelphia', which charted a new path for the organisation whilst reaffirming its founding values.

The centrepiece of the celebrations on Tuesday 17 September will be a national conference at the Hibernia Conference Centre in Dublin Castle on the theme 'The Declaration of Philadelphia Revisited', inspired by Phelan's seminal document.

Through the lens of the 1944 Declaration, and in the context of the work done by the Global Commission and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work at the 108th Plenary Session in Geneva from 10-21 June, the conference in Dublin will consider issues arising in the changing environment.

A variety of speakers from the academic world, employer and trade union groups will offer different perspectives on these various issues, and will aim to provide fresh insights and an understanding on the challenges for work in the 21st century. The conference programme has been organised in consultation with IBEC and ICTU, with the opening address by the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins.

Following the conference, the biennial NUI/ILO Edward Phelan Centenary Lecture will take place that evening, starting at 6.15pm. The lecture, which was established in 2013 to honour Edward J. Phelan, will be delivered by Nobel Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi, who won the Nobel Prize in 2014 for his contribution towards the ending of child labour and his advocacy of the rights of children and young people to education.



**Pat Breen TD, Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, addressed the 108th Plenary Session of the ILO in Geneva on 12 June.**

Other speakers at the evening lecture will include Guy Ryder, ILO Director General; Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Danny McCoy, IBEC's Chief Executive Officer; and Patricia King, ICTU'S Secretary General.

## IRELAND'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

The Centenary's International Labour Conference (ILC), which took place in Geneva from 10-21 June, included high level visits from several heads of state, including President of South Africa, Cyril Ramphosa, the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, President of France Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Teresa May in one of her final official engagements as UK Prime Minister.

During his address to the ILO's 108th Plenary Session in Geneva on 12 June, Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection Pat Breen TD, said: "Ireland's close relationship with the ILO is evidenced by the fact that the ILO was the first international

organisation which the Irish Free State joined in 1923.

“The centenary year also coincides with Ireland’s first-ever term as a full member of the Governing Body. With international labour standards remaining at the heart of this organisation, in this regard, Ireland became the 29th Member State to ratify the Forced Labour Protocol in February.”

He said that this demonstrates Ireland’s commitment to combatting forced labour in all its forms. “The strong relationship with our social partners is fundamental to our ability to play an active role within the ILO, and this was amply demonstrated by the co-operation from the social partners, ICTU and IBEC in respect of the ratification process,” he noted.

## CENTENARY DECLARATION NEGOTIATIONS

A standard on combatting violence and harassment in the workplace is also being negotiated by one of the Centenary Conference Committees. And Minister Breen said the Irish Government is fully committed to the adoption of a convention, “which is as widely ratifiable as possible” on this topic.

“As it enters its next 100 years the continued work of the ILO will be key to ensuring a brighter future for everyone in the changing world of work. Many of the elements in the report of the ILO’s Global Commission on the Future of Work are reflected in the Irish Government’s Future Jobs initiative. Ireland’s economic turnaround over the past seven years has been remarkable.

“However, there’s no room for complacency as Ireland faces a range of new challenges, including declining productivity levels in SMEs, infrastructural constraints, skills deficits and labour availability, as well as concentrations in some sectors and markets.”

Minister Breen noted that governments, workers and employers are negotiating a Centenary Declaration to guide the ILO into its next 100 years. He also met with Ireland’s tripartite delegation, which includes senior officials from his own Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, as well as senior representatives from IBEC and ICTU, and congratulated them on their strong input to the business of the conference and its committees.

## STRONG LINKS WITH ILO

The International Labour Organisation, one of the UN’s oldest agencies, was founded in 1919 and brings together governments, employer and worker representatives of 187 countries to develop international labour standards and policies to promote decent work and social justice.

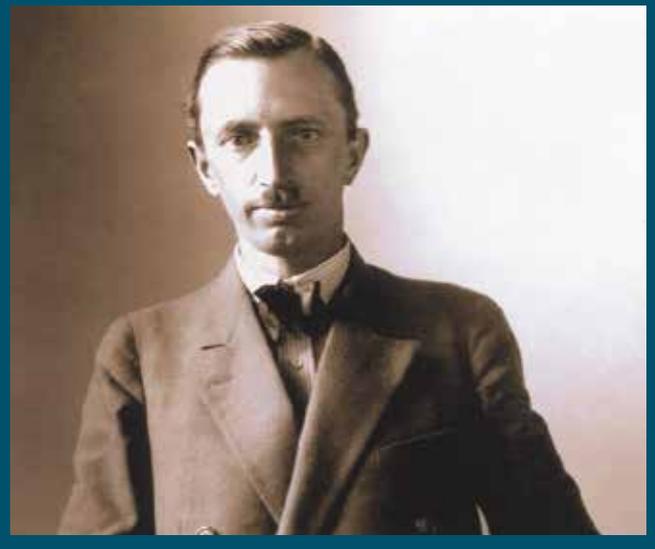
Many of the employment rights which Ireland currently benefits from, such as minimum working age, maternity leave, maximum weekly working hours and annual leave, are the result of negotiations over the past 100 years by the

### FACTFILE ON EDWARD J. PHELAN

*Waterford-born civil servant Edward J. Phelan had a distinguished career at the ILO. He was official advocate of the ILO Project at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, became its fourth Director in 1941 and was appointed Director General under its new constitution in 1946.*

*He was the innovator of the ILO “tripartite” formula which forms the basis of representation at ILO conferences. Each country’s delegation includes both government delegates and representatives of workers’ and employers’ organisations.*

*Edward J. Phelan accepted an honorary doctorate (LLD) in 1944, and was similarly honoured by the Universities of Laval and Montreal. The French Government made him a Commandeur de la Légion d’Honneur in 1951. Other honours included the Order of the Southern Cross (Brazil) and Grand Officier, Order of the Aztec Eagle (Mexico).*



constituents of the ILO.

Ireland became a member of the ILO in 1923 and it was the first international organisation which the new State joined. In June 2017 Ireland was elected to a Titulaire (speaking and voting) seat for the first time since joining the ILO in 1923.

The seat will be held for three years and will coincide with an active period in the ILO. In line with the unique tripartite nature of the ILO, Ireland is represented in the organisation by a delegation from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) together with representatives of IBEC and ICTU.

*\*To register for the conference email [ILO100@dbei.gov.ie](mailto:ILO100@dbei.gov.ie) and to receive an invitation to the evening lecture email [registrar@nui.ie](mailto:registrar@nui.ie)*