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# WORKPLACE RELATIONS COMMISSION

## REPORTS AN INCREASE IN DEMAND AND OUTPUT

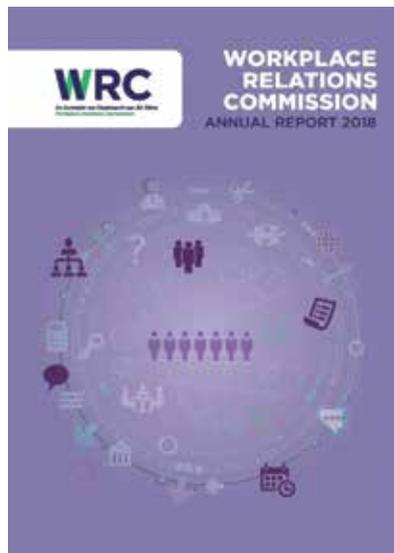
The Workplace Relations Commission’s fourth annual report has highlighted a 20% increase in the number of hearings by its Adjudication Service, and more than double the overall number of face-to-face mediations conducted during 2018, compared to the previous year.

Welcoming the WRC’s Annual Report in terms of service delivery and output in 2018, Pat Breen TD, Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market, and Data Protection, highlighted the Commission’s success in recovering over €3m in unpaid wages for employees over the year, an increase of 75% on 2017.

“As the economy continues to do well, we must ensure that those in work are paid what they are due and the WRC is playing a significant role in the pursuit of this objective,” Minister Breen noted.

The WRC’s Conciliation Service, which deals with industrial relations disputes, held 1,145 conferences covering some 926,427 employees in 2018. The Minister said it was heartening that, although 4,050 days were lost to industrial relations disputes in the period, this was the lowest level since 2012.

He paid tribute to the significant contribution of former Director General Oonagh Buckley to the success of the WRC



Paul Duffy, Chairperson of the WRC Board, and Pat Breen TD, Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market, and Data Protection, pictured at the launch of the WRC 2018 report on 26 April.

to date. Buckley had been its first full director, having taken over in summer 2016 from Kieran Mulvey who had held the position on an interim basis, following the establishment of the WRC on 1 October 2015.

Paul Duffy, Chairperson of the WRC Board, commented: “Building on the WRC achievements, the Board submitted a strategy statement to the Minister to cover 2019 to 2022.

Informed by core values of trust, independence, impartiality and innovation, the statement set the WRC a fundamental target of establishing itself as a world leader in delivering an effective, efficient and trusted workplace relations service.”

**INCREASE IN DEMAND AND OUTPUT**

Liam Kelly, who was appointed to the permanent position of Director General of the WRC, in mid-April, having served as Acting Director General since November 2018, said that the past year has “witnessed a significant increase in demand and output”.

He said that the hard work and commitment of staff “has been critical in managing the demand and delivering this level of output”. He thanked the Minister, the Board, and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation for their support over the period.

**Main findings of 2018 Annual Report:**

- Telephone enquiries increased by 10%.
- Conciliation referrals increased by 13%.
- Individual complaints for adjudication or inspection increased by 10%.
- Inspections concluded increased by 20%.
- The number Adjudications heard increased by 20%
- The number of Adjudication decisions increased by 32%.
- The number of overall mediations increased by 220%.

**WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE**

With a workforce of just under 200 staff, supplemented by over 30 external adjudicators, and with offices in Dublin, Carlow, Cork, Shannon, Sligo and another due to be opened in Ennis, Co. Clare, and operational bases for hearings and meetings in many counties, the WRC’s mission is to deliver high-quality service nationally and free of charge.

Pat Breen TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, visited the site of the new regional office of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), at Clare Technology Park in Ennis.

Due to open for business in the autumn, the new office will make available the full range of WRC services – conciliation, adjudication, mediation and inspection – to people living and working in the western region.

The expansion of the WRC services to the west region means complainants and respondents will not have to travel long distances to have their cases heard – particularly as the office is only five minutes from the motorway.

“The WRC continues to work to increase the number of such venues. Last year saw an increase from 10 to 17 venues and following a review with the Courts Service the WRC has also started this year to use some regional courthouses to hear adjudication cases,” the Minister noted.

**FACTFILE – LIAM KELLY**

Liam Kelly was appointed to the permanent position of Director General of the Workplace Relations Commission in mid-April for a five-year term, having served as Acting Director General since November 2018, following Oonagh Buckley’s move to become Deputy Secretary General at the Department of Justice.

He had been the WRC’s Chief Operations Officer since it was established in October 2015. Prior to his appointment, he was directly responsible for the drafting of significant industrial relations legislation in connection with collective bargaining rights, minimum wage and sectoral wage setting frameworks.

Over the course of his career Kelly has been actively engaged in employment rights and industrial relations as Human Resource Director of an Irish State agency and separately as both a Conciliation Officer and Advisory Officer in the Labour Relations Commission, which now forms part of the Workplace Relations Commission.

He holds an MA in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations, a Higher Diploma in Public Administration and is a Certified Workplace Relations Adjudicator.



**WRC Director General responsibilities include:**

- Advising the Board of the WRC in relation to the development of the medium-term Strategy of the Commission and driving the achievement of strategic goals through annual work programmes;
- Managing the delivery across the State of the highest quality early resolution, mediation and adjudication services in relation to complaints presented and disputes referred to the Director General;
- Ensuring effective inspection and enforcement activity across the State results in enhanced employment rights protection of workers and assists employers in meeting their responsibilities;
- Ensuring the delivery of quality service to WRC customers across all its activities.

## MAIN FUNCTIONS OF WRC

- Promoting the improvement and maintenance of good workplace relations.
- Promoting and encourage compliance with relevant employment, equality and equal status legislation.
- Providing guidance in relation to compliance with Codes of Practice.
- Conducting reviews of, and monitor developments in, workplace relations generally.
- Conducting or commissioning relevant research and provide advice, information and the findings of research to Joint Labour Committees and Joint Industrial Councils.
- Advising the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on the application of, and compliance with, relevant legislation.
- Providing information to the public in relation to employment legislation (other than the Employment Equality Act).

## REDESIGNED WEBSITE

The new-look website [www.workplacerelations.ie](http://www.workplacerelations.ie) was developed throughout 2018 with input from key internal and external stakeholders through focus groups, testing and surveys.

It aims to enhance user experience overall. For example, the 'Decisions and Determinations' page (a popular page on the website) has been redesigned to include a more prominent and powerful keyword search. It also includes filters, which are presented in order of popularity and tooltips to explain to users how to filter their searches.

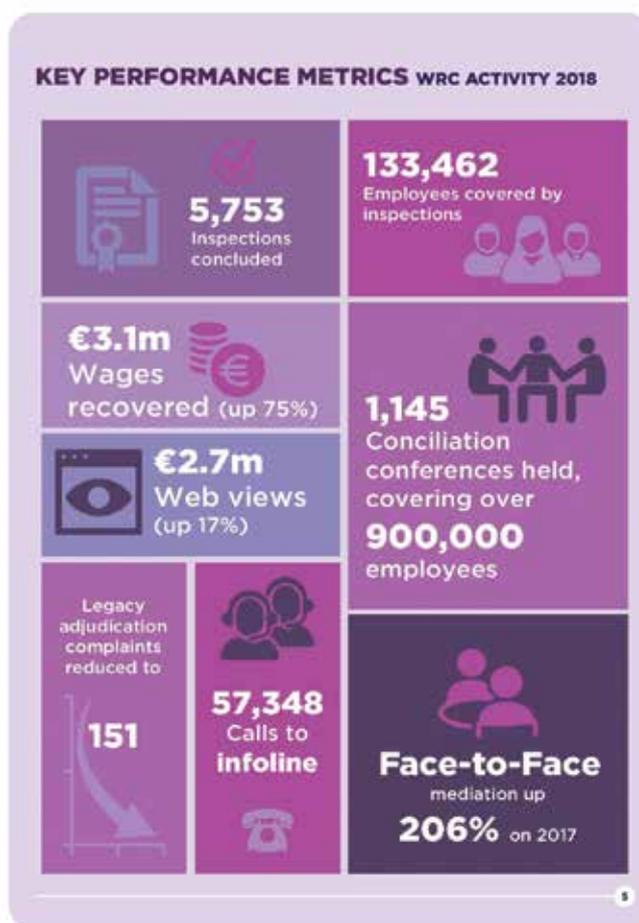
Speaking about the new website, WRC's Director General Liam Kelly said: "We are committed to continuously improving the service we provide, and it is an important part of our remit to educate the public of their rights and responsibilities under employment, equality and equal status legislation.

"This improved website and our new Twitter account will help people to find the information they need, when they need it, quickly and easily."

The Labour Court also launched its new website [www.labourcourt.ie](http://www.labourcourt.ie). All decisions from the WRC and Labour Court will be held on a shared database, which can be accessed from either site. The WRC can be found on Twitter at [@WRC\\_ie](https://twitter.com/WRC_ie)

## EQUITY AND FAIRNESS

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) was established on 1 October 2015 to deliver a modern, user-friendly and world-class workplace relations system in Ireland. Its activities are primarily concerned both with facilitating



and assisting workplace change and creating an environment of equity and fairness in employment.

The specialist services serve to play a vital role in contributing towards industrial peace, maintaining and sustaining enterprise productivity through engaging with employers and trade unions on issues of employee pay and rewards, and promoting orderly collective bargaining in the private sector.

Securing fair, impartial and effective employment rights adjudication services and appropriate and essential employment standards and enforcement are vital and important components of the strategic operations of the Commission.

The Commission has a broad range of functions including industrial relations advisory and conciliation services and the resolution of industrial relations disputes of interest between employers and workers across the public and private sectors. It provides a comprehensive early resolution, mediation and adjudication services in relation to the full spectrum of employment rights and equality cases.

It carries out workplace inspections to ensure the employment rights of workers and responsibilities of employers are respected and it has an enforcement function in relation to breaches of employment legislation.