



INOUE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2029



IRISH NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED

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THE IRISH NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED

“The INOU is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. The INOU represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment and cannot obtain it. We promote and campaign for policies to achieve full employment for all. We also campaign for an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents. The INOU is an anti-sectarian, anti-racist, non-party political organisation which promotes equality of opportunity within society.” (INOUE Mission Statement)

In keeping with our Mission Statement we seek to:

- develop and deliver information and advocacy services and training programmes to people who are unemployed and others distanced from the labour market;
- provide training and other resources to local organisations that support unemployed people;
- offer training and information supports and services to employment and other service providers;
- work in partnership with other national organisations seeking to combat inequality, social exclusion and poverty;
- engage with employers in relation to recruitment and redundancy;
- work closely with policy makers to inform and influence their work; and,
- engage with the media to inform public opinion on the issue of unemployment.

Since its establishment in 1987 the INOU has become a leading organisation in Ireland working with and on behalf of unemployed people. We have also gained a reputation for working efficiently and professionally with support organisations, policy makers, employers and the media. Developing our work at a time of significant change to ensure there is a clear focus on meeting the needs of unemployed people, other people reliant on social welfare payments and distant from the labour market in an inclusive and equitable manner will underpin this Strategic Plan over the years 2025 – 2029.

The organisation has almost two hundred affiliated organisations and eight hundred individual members. We work at a local and national level on issues affecting unemployed people and others reliant on a social welfare payment. We provide a range of training for people who are unemployed and organisations working with people

distanced from the labour market; we provide a welfare rights information service, primarily by telephone, by participating at in-person events; we analyse and discuss with our membership relevant Government policies; undertake advocacy work; and work with a wide range of other organisations on issues of common concern.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

The Central Statistics Office noted in the Labour Force Survey for Quarter 2 2025 that there were 2.82 million people in employment, a historic high; and 140,800 people were unemployed, a 7.3% increase on the same quarter in 2024. 31,800 were unemployed for more than a year, an increase of 18% over the year.

It is important to note that to be deemed unemployed a respondent in the week before the survey, must have been without work, available for work within the next two weeks, and actively seeking work in the preceding four weeks. There are many reasons why a respondent might answer no to one or both of these questions: little joy in securing a job; involvement in education or training; personal or social circumstances that present barriers to accessing employment.

The Potential Additional Labour Force (PALF) figure seeks to capture people who are seeking work but not immediately available; and people who are available for work but not seeking. PALF was defined by the European statistical office (Eurostat) following extensive international discussion regarding appropriate indicators to supplement unemployment figures. In Quarter 2 2025 this figure stood at 118,000, a decrease of 3.8% on Q2 2024.

Like the Census of Population, the Labour Force Survey captures Principal Economic Status (PES) whereby respondents identify whether they are at work, unemployed, a student etc. This figure captures how people identify themselves and in Q2 2025 151,100 people identified themselves as unemployed, a drop of 13.8%. When it comes to public employment services and activation the key figure cited is the Live Register, and at the end of Quarter 2, in June 2025, this Register stood at 172,663 people.

Each of these figures tells a slightly different story, some people may be captured in more than one of them, others in none, yet being unemployed, seeking meaningful employment, supports and services is critical for all of the people from whom this is their lived experience. They are the people the INOU seeks to represent and support.

The INOU's Annual Delegate Conference 2025 focussed on the potential effects of Artificial Intelligence, digitalisation and technological change on people who are unemployed, on affiliate organisations and on society as a whole. The impact,

particularly of AI, on the world of work and public services has the potential to dramatically change the nature of work and accessing employment. Examining these issues further and their potential impacts will be part of this Strategic Plan.

The theme of the National Economic Dialogue 2025 was ‘medium-term budgetary planning against a rapidly changing global backdrop’. In the background paper the Government noted that *“Few countries have benefitted as much from the liberalisation of trade and investment than Ireland; in a symmetric manner, few countries are as exposed to any reversal. Ireland’s economy is now deeply integrated into global supply chains and the associated investment has allowed the country to specialise in the production and export of high value-added goods and services. Accordingly, in a more polarised global economy, where trade frictions are more disruptive and where economic nationalism is more prevalent, Ireland’s capacity to continue raising domestic living standards could be tested.”* The INOU has lived experience of the impact of economic downturns on people who were unemployed, become unemployed and distanced from the labour market; we are keenly aware that the context within which this Strategic Plan is developed could change dramatically.

In the NED 2025 document, in Appendix 1: “Well-being” – How is Ireland performing?, the Government noted that *“This year’s data show that single-parent households, younger people in the workforce, unemployed people, people in bad or very bad health, households with lower incomes, and households in accommodation rented at market rates are population cohorts with lower well-being outcomes than other comparable groups across multiple well-being dimensions.”* This quote reflects the people who come to the INOU’s Welfare Rights Information and Advocacy Service seeking advice and support to navigate Ireland’s complex social welfare and related systems.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Aims: Over the period 2025 to 2029 our overarching aims are to:

- Work with and on behalf of unemployed people and those vulnerable in the labour market in order to bring about an improvement in their circumstances.
- Build synergies within our organisation and develop collaboration with other organisations in order to progress our aims and objectives.
- Ensure that work plans reflect the Strategic Plan and are properly implemented to provide high-quality supports and services to unemployed people.
- Continue to ensure the viability and financial sustainability of the organisation.

Key Objectives: Over the period 2025 to 2029 these objectives are to:

1. Develop and deepen engagement with unemployed people, increase their involvement in the INOU, document their views and experiences of employment and unemployment including the digital divide.
2. Develop and deliver quality services to people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market and the organisations which support them and provide services to them.
3. Inform and seek to influence policy, practice and public opinion on issues relating to unemployment and the labour market.
4. Engage with employers on issues relating to employment, recruitment, retention and unemployment.
5. Actively collaborate with organisations on issues that impact people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market.
6. Develop a communications strategy to generate awareness of the context, work and impact of the work we undertake.
7. Secure the longer-term viability of the organisation.

PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

Objective 1: Develop and deepen engagement with unemployed people, increase their involvement in the INOU, document their views and experiences of employment and unemployment including the digital divide.

We engage with unemployed people in a number of ways. Through individual membership and the General Branch unemployed people play an active role in the running of the INOU. We engage with unemployed people on particular issues using focus groups to explore their concerns and identify solutions. Unemployed people use our Welfare Rights Information and Advocacy Service, participate in our training programmes, in particular our two Local Training Initiative programmes, and their lived experience informs our work.

Over the next five years we will:

- 1.1.** Seek to grow individual membership and participation through more innovative ways including through contact with unemployed people via welfare rights information, focus groups and training.
- 1.2.** Consider a cohort-based approach to membership, to capture those who are vulnerable and underserved in the labour market, to ensure better representation across labour market categories and labour market experiences.
- 1.3.** Build on the model of focus groups as a form of engagement with unemployed people and those at risk of unemployment from across the regions.
- 1.4.** Draw on all areas of work of the organisation to ensure a comprehensive picture of the issues facing unemployed people and others vulnerable in the labour market is captured and feeds into policy development.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality services to people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market and the organisations which support and provide services to them.

The provision of services is a key part of our work, reaching thousands of unemployed people, incentivising affiliate membership and generating critical income for the organisation. In the coming years, it will be important for our services to individuals and organisations to remain relevant to the challenges faced by people as they negotiate their way through a complex social protection system, a changing labour market and range of education and training options.

Over the next five years we will:

- 2.1.** Develop and resource our role as a niche training provider to both organisations and individuals.
- 2.2.** Maintain and develop our role as a key welfare rights and advocacy service provider to unemployed people, other social welfare recipients and organisations working with them.
- 2.3.** Produce information and disseminate it through social media, targeted publications to support a diverse range of people to access the labour market through appropriate welfare to work, in-work and other supports and programmes.
- 2.4.** Monitor all services to ensure they continue to be relevant to changes in the labour market, in recruitment and retention, and to the experiences of people seeking and retaining employment.

Objective 3: Inform and seek to influence policy, practice and public opinion on issues relating to unemployment.

Seeking to influence policy, practice and public opinion can be challenging in any context. At a time of low unemployment, it can be particularly difficult to maintain a holistic focus on the unemployed and those most vulnerable in the labour market. In particular to ensure that supports and services are designed and delivered to be as meaningful as possible for unemployed people and other people experiencing socio-economic exclusion.

Over the next five years we will:

- 3.1** Inform and seek to influence public policy and practice to bring about changes to employment, education and training policies so that they are better equipped to needs of those most vulnerable in the contemporary labour market.
- 3.2** Reflecting the organisation's affiliation and work with colleagues in civil society organisations, deepen and develop a whole of Ireland and European dimension to our work.
- 3.3** Maximise the use of data generated by our direct engagement with unemployed people and those vulnerable in the labour market in informing policy, practice and public opinion.
- 3.4** Develop an explicit engagement with and analysis of how employment is changing, including AI developments, and the relationship between this and unemployment.
- 3.5** Develop an annual campaign of awareness based on one key issue per year and promote this widely, including addressing the issue of misinformation and its impact on people's lives.

Objective 4: Engage with employers on issues relating to employment, recruitment, retention and unemployment.

The INOU has sought to engage with employers over many years: from those who are creating jobs to those who are making people redundant. At a time of high employment there are still people who struggle to find work, who need supports and advice on how to secure a decent job. There are opportunities for the INOU to engage with employers on a broader range of issues, including recruitment and advising them of the benefits of employing unemployed people.

Over the next five years we will:

- 4.1.** Seek to involve employers in discussions on changing work practices, new forms of employment and mechanisms of recruitment and retention, in particular AI and digitalisation.
- 4.2.** Develop links across the Public Employment Service and enterprise support agencies exploring / promoting employment opportunities for unemployed people.
- 4.3.** Develop information and guidance for employers on favourable methods for the recruitment and retention of unemployed / people vulnerable in the labour market and the supports available to do so.
- 4.4.** Work with our colleagues in the Trade Union movement on the promotion and realisation of decent work.

Objective 5: Actively collaborate with organisations on issues that impact people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market.

We have developed very good working relationships with organisations working in areas of relevance to unemployed people. As the social protection, education, training and employment context continues to change and new issues emerge, it remains important for us to maintain and expand our collaboration with these and other organisations on the issues of common concern.

Over the next five years we will:

- 5.1.** Continue to work with colleagues in the community, voluntary, local development sectors on issues affecting unemployed people and those vulnerable in the labour market.
- 5.2.** Seek and / or develop collaboration with other organisations to advance our programme of work including EU and UK based organisations, Trade Unions, Employers and Employer Organisations and Universities.
- 5.3.** Seek strategic partners in all sectors to enable us to demonstrate effective services / supports for unemployed people and those at risk of unemployment.
- 5.4.** Develop strategic partnerships with organisations, agencies and initiatives working in communities and with groups that are particularly affected by unemployment and precarious work.

Objective 6: Develop a communications strategy to generate awareness of the context, work and impact of the work we undertake.

There are two key aspects to this objective. Firstly, not-with-standing the limited resources at our disposal, seeking to inform a greater number of people of the supports and services we provide, from welfare rights information and advocacy to training for individual unemployed people to organisations working with unemployed people and others experiencing socio-economic exclusion. Secondly, there is the need to inform a wide range of people on the issues facing unemployed people and how these need to be addressed holistically through the policy and political system.

Over the next five years we will:

- 6.1.** Develop a publicity strategy with emphasis on social and digital media to promote awareness of the context, work and impact of our work and generate discussion of relevant issues.
- 6.2.** Where possible, make more use of national, local and regional print and broadcast media to create awareness of our services to unemployed people countrywide.
- 6.3.** Develop a policy on responding to negative media contacts and negative views / questions regarding unemployment and disseminate responses.
- 6.4.** Develop and disseminate a series of case studies to generate awareness of the issues we work on, their impact on people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market.

Objective 7: Secure the longer-term viability of the organisation.

The INOU is dependent on improving our capacity in the organisation in order to achieve the aims and objectives set out in this Strategic Plan. Thanks to the core funding we receive, we have developed the organisation as the national voice for people who are unemployed. In order to meet the increasing demand for our expertise and services, the INOU will seek to develop our relationships with existing funders and explore other sources of funding, all supported by a robust system of responsible governance and oversight.

Over the next five years we will:

- 7.1.** Develop a strategy to broaden our funding and resource base, including EU programmes, actively seek new sources of funding to underpin our work.
- 7.2.** Continue to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme of staff engagement, support, training and development.
- 7.3.** Ensure our governance and organisational structures are in keeping with our legal and funding requirements; and support the work and development of the organisation over the coming period.

