



Welcome to Restaurant and Catering News, the first edition newsletter of the Restaurant and Catering Forum.

The Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum is run by a committee of workers and was set up earlier this year by the Hotel Catering Arts Leisure and Entertainment branch of SIPTU and the Restaurant Workers Action Group of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland. The Restaurant and Catering Forum is committed to working together to protect working conditions and rates of pay for workers in the sector. Through informing workers about important developments

THE CATERING EMPLOYMENT REGULATION ORDER (ERO) – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

WHAT IS OUR ERO?

An (ERO) is the agreement between worker representatives and employers that determines workers wages and conditions (established through the Joint Labour Committee JLC). The Catering ERO determines wages and conditions for all workers in the restaurant and catering industries.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The government are carrying out a review of all ERO's. The Restaurant Association of Ireland and many employers are urging the Government to abolish the ERO and reduce workers wages. Also a group of employers (the Quick Service Food Alliance including Supermacs and Burger King) have united to legally challenge the ERO in the high court. This means restaurant worker rates of pay and conditions of employment are under attack. The result of both the review and the high court challenge will be known in coming weeks. RWAG has been very active calling on the government to protect workers wages and to keep of the Catering ERO.

What are ERO rates of pay?

Under the Catering ERO restaurant workers are entitled to;

- Head cook: €9.92 per hour
- Cook or chef: €9.50 per hour
- All other workers: €9.31 per hour
- Overtime pay: Time and 1/2
- Sunday pay: Time and 1/3

and planning actions the Forum campaigns to ensure decent pay and good working conditions for workers. The Forum welcomes workers in the sector to join the group and become actively involved in campaigns and building worker power. If you are an existing SIPTU member you can join the group by emailing mmannion@siptu.ie. If you are currently not a member of a trade union and you are a migrant worker you can get involved by emailing helen@mrci.ie or texting 083 3517956.

1st meeting of the Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum

Workers from SIPTU and RWAG met at the first meeting of the Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum in the Liberty Hall in February. Close to forty workers participated in the meeting where there was discussion and update about threats to rates of pay and employment conditions in the form of the government review of the Catering Employment Regulation Order (ERO) and a legal challenge posed by an alliance of employers



Gul Gencoglu, a restaurant worker from Naas chaired the meeting and spoke about the importance of getting involved in the Forum.

"The Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum is an opportunity for workers to take action on issues very important in our lives such as protecting our conditions of work and rates of pay. Restaurant workers are amongst the lowest paid workers in the country and attacks like those posed by the Quick Service Food Alliance and Restaurant Association of Ireland need to be challenged.. We need workers voices out there!"

in the Quick Service Food Alliance. At the meeting ideas were shared and actions were planned to protect the Catering ERO and ensure workers voices were heard defending current rates of pay in the sector.

Protecting the Catering Employment Regulation Order (ERO)

The Restaurant and Catering Forum has been fighting to protect minimum wages and conditions of workers. Restaurant owners and industry groups, in particular the Restaurant Association of Ireland, have been pushing government to cut the national minimum wage and the minimum wages for restaurant and other workers. They are using the government review to argue that in the recession they have no money to pay decent wages. Workers have agreed to fight their efforts, and have been standing up for fair and decent treatment for restaurant workers across the country. Actions have been organised and restaurant workers voices have been heard.

Power breakfast for your 1st day in power

An action outside the Dáil on Wednesday March 9th saw workers greeting politicians with a power breakfast on their first day in power. This breakfast came with a message **'Don't bite the hands that feed you', protect workers wages.** Workers handed out flyers along with breakfast treats encouraging politicians and members of

the public to remember low paid workers in future decision making. The breakfast action engaged over thirty politicians on the day including the Taoiseach Enda Kenny on his first day as the country's new leader. Local radio and national news paper coverage followed.

THE GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ERO'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- In February the government announced an independent review of all wage setting mechanisms including the Catering ERO.
- Employer and worker representatives and interested parties were invited to make submissions.
- Many workers fear the review could result in wages being cut or the abolishment completely of the ERO
- The restaurant and Catering Workers Forum sent in a submission to the review and supported over twenty individual workers to write letters calling on the government to **protect workers wages and conditions.**
- The review is over and a report is now with Minister Richard Bruton for consideration.
- The Dáil is currently debating the review and the Minister has referred to legislation being brought in to make changes to existing ERO's





An Taoiseach Enda Kenny is greeting with a power breakfast on his first day in power with a message “don’t give our ERO the chop!”

THE QUICK SERVICE FOOD ALLIANCE – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- The Quick Service Food Alliance (QSFA) is made up of employers who have come together to legally challenge the Catering ERO
- They have argued that it is unconstitutional and are calling for its abolishment
- The outcome of this legal challenge is expected in the coming months
- Supermacs a leading member of the alliance reported pre-tax profits of €6.2 million last year, and added six new outlets. Not bad for a restaurant chain that can’t afford to pay workers the ERO rate of pay!

Demonstration outside Supermacs against QSFA attack workers ERO

On the day the QSFA started their legal challenge in the high court the Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum organised an action outside of QSFA fast food outlets on O’Connell street. The action called on employer groups to stop their attack on workers wages. Members of the Forum were joined by union officials from Mandate, Unite, SIPTU and a diverse range of people from civil society including the National Women’s Council of Ireland and representatives from the Poor Can’t Pay Alliance. The Cleaners Campaign in SIPTU was in solidarity on the day voicing their own concerns about the impact of the legal challenge on all ERO’s. The action received widespread media coverage in local radio and national newspapers (see photos below) and a short film is available on u-tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVrCA5OQIxU> or MRCI’s website www.mrci.ie



Join our next action at The Irish Restaurant Awards Wednesday 18th May @ 5.30pm outside the Burlington Hotel

The forum and organisations and individuals in solidarity with low paid workers will have a public presence outside this year’s Irish Restaurant Awards (organised by the Restaurant Association of Ireland) (RAI). RAI have been very vocal in their calls for cuts to workers wages and the abolition of the Catering ERO. Workers and allies will greet dinner guests, who each paid €125 per ticket for the five course gala dinner, with a message to “enjoy their meal but not support RAI’s shameful unnecessary attack on workers wages”. Join us at the awards, text 083 3517956 to get more information about plans for the action. This is an important opportunity to counter the industry’s vicious campaign.

Know Your Rights!

All employees in Ireland are entitled to receive certain basic employment rights. These rights are governed by employment legislation which applies to all employees regardless of nationality. As an employee, it is important and advisable to keep a record of your working week including your breaks. We also recommend keeping all payslips and other work related paperwork. Any issues or incidents arising at work should be documented, with witnesses included. This information will be readily available if evidence is required.

Some of Your Basic Rights at Work

- ✓ **From 29th June 2009** the minimum rate of pay per hour for Restaurant workers (**for all areas of Ireland**):
 - Head cook: **€9.92 per hour**
 - Cook or chef: **€9.51 per hour**
 - All other workers: **€9.32 per hour**
- ✓ Restaurant workers are entitled to overtime pay after working 39 hours in that week. The rate of overtime is time and a half, example €9.92 + €4.96= €14.88 per hour overtime.
- ✓ If you work on a day in which you are due to be off you are entitled to be paid at a double rate of your normal hourly rate.
- ✓ If you are asked to work in excess of the hours on your roster you are entitled to your normal hourly rate of pay plus one half for each hour up to 12:00 midnight and after midnight at double your normal hourly rate.
- ✓ If you work on Sunday you are entitled to your normal hourly rate of pay plus one third.
- ✓ It is illegal for your employer to make you work more than 48 hours per week on a regular basis.
- ✓ It is illegal for your employer to dismiss you for asking for the correct minimum wage, for joining a trade union or if you wish to take maternity leave among other things. There are serious fines and penalties against employers if they do.
- ✓ If you have been working for the same employer for more than one year it is illegal for your employer to dismiss you unless there is a valid reason and proper procedures are followed.
- ✓ If you receive only accommodation from your employer the maximum amount your employer can charge for accommodation is €21.85 per week.
- ✓ Your employer must give you a written contract of employment within 2 months of starting work.
- ✓ You have the right to join a trade union and the right to have a union in the workplace.
- ✓ You must receive a payslip from your employer each time you are paid that indicates your pay and any deductions such as tax.
- ✓ You are entitled to paid holidays (called paid annual leave). This is normally 4 weeks of holiday for every year you work.
- ✓ On the 9 Public Holidays in Ireland (if you have been in employment more than 5 weeks) you are entitled to a paid day off on that day. If you work on a Public holiday you are entitled to double your pay on that day or a paid day off within a month of that day or another paid day of annual leave.
- ✓ You are entitled to a safe working environment.

For a more detailed list of your rights please visit the National Employment Rights Authority's website
<http://www.employmentrights.ie>

**Remember new members are always welcome to get involved
in the Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum**

Email helen@mrci.ie or mmannion@siptu.ie or text 083 3517956

For more information log onto <http://www.mrci.ie/Restaurant-Workers/> or www.siptu.ie