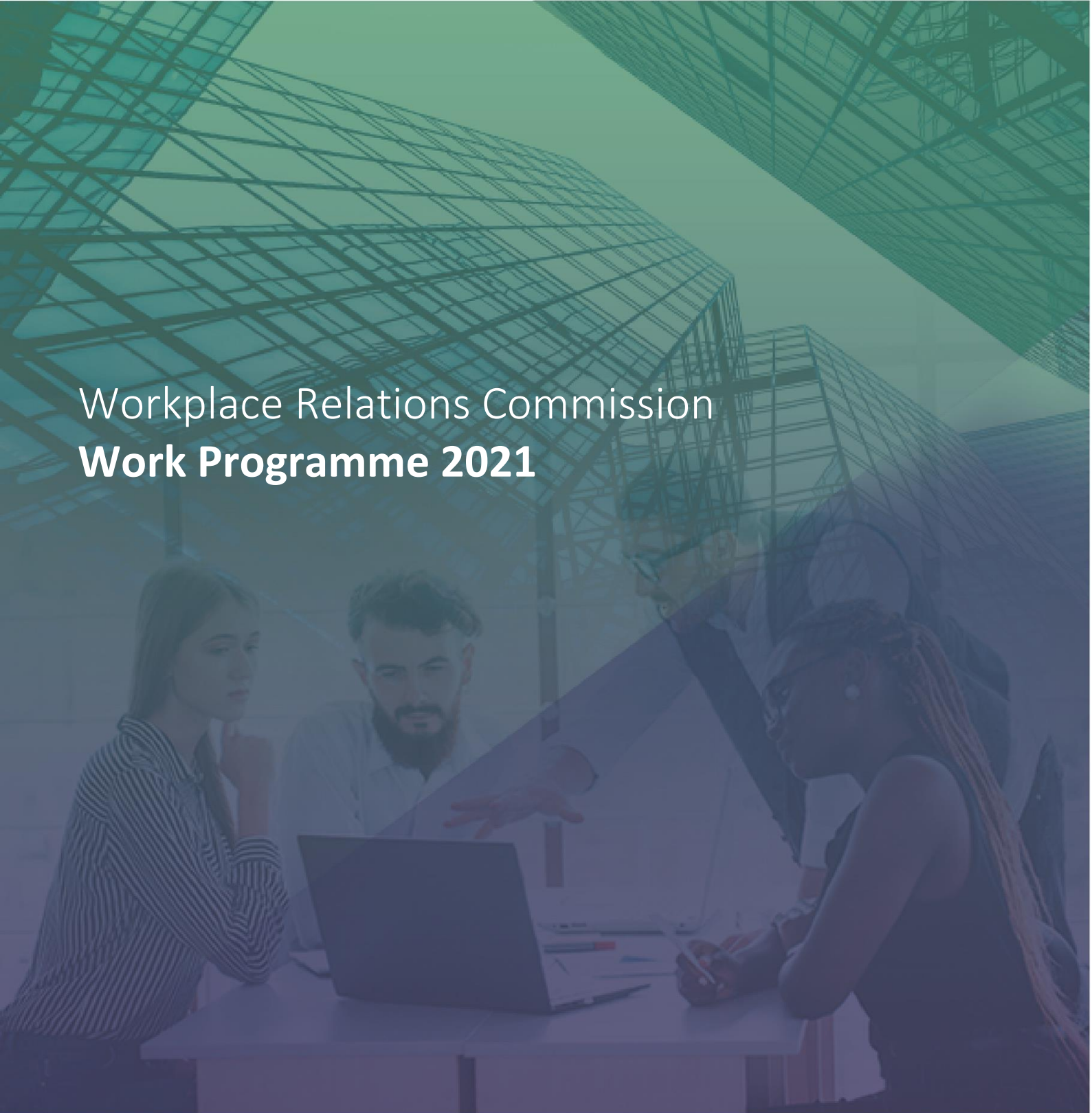


# WRC

An Coimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre  
Workplace Relations Commission

## Workplace Relations Commission **Work Programme 2021**



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## 1. Introduction

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) plays a key role in Irish society and the Irish economy. Its services help to maintain industrial relations stability, mediate and adjudicate in individual disputes, raise awareness of and improve industrial and employment relations generally, promote, monitor and enforce compliance with employment standards and provides recourse for people who feel they have been discriminated against in the delivery of services.

The Commission is staffed by 190 employees who are civil servants and part of the staffing establishment of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. They are supplemented by a further 42 adjudication officers who are contracted by the Minister to assist the Adjudication Service on a case-by-case basis.

The internal structure comprises five distinct Divisions:

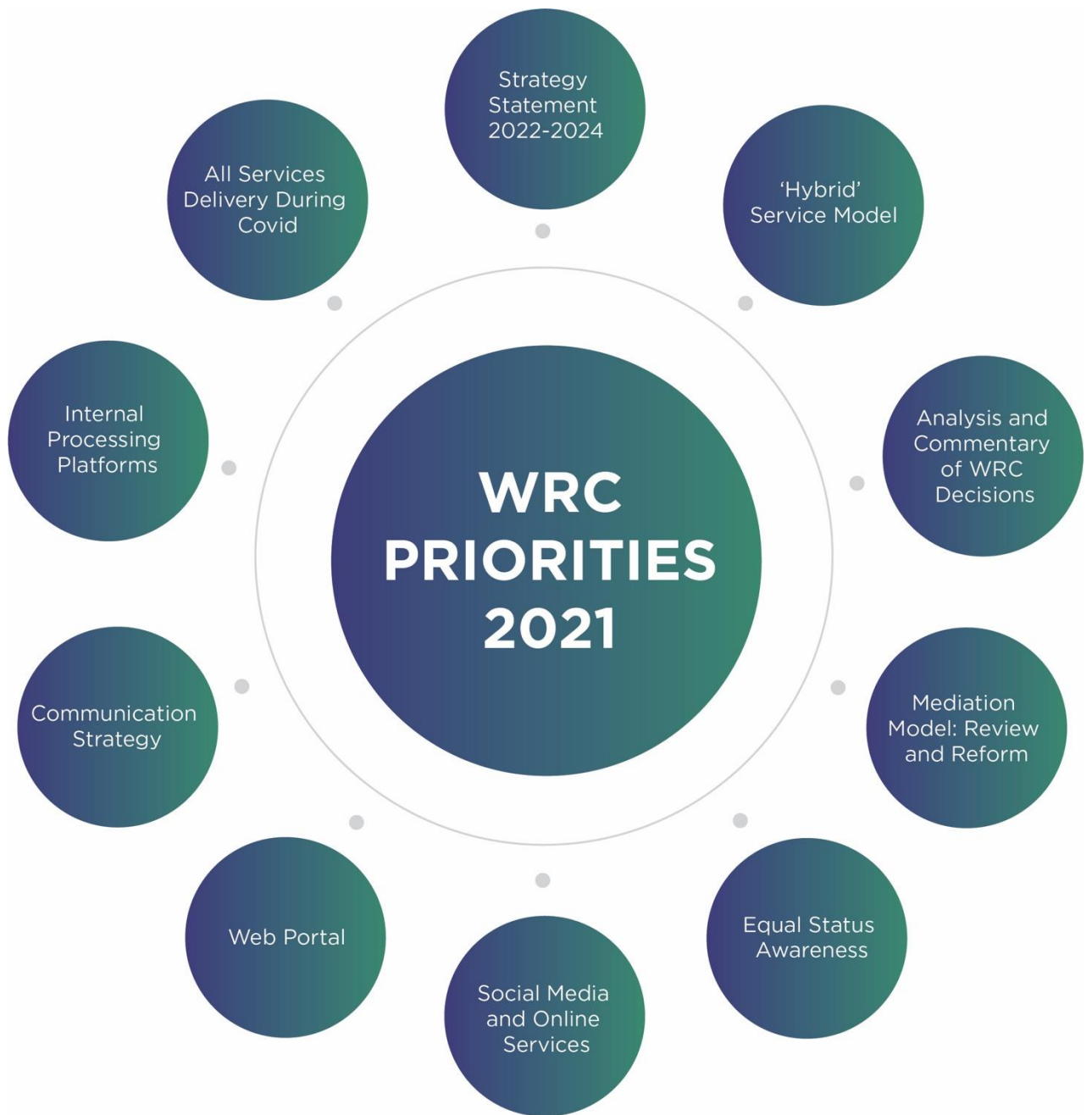
- Conciliation, Advisory and Mediation
- Adjudication
- Inspection, Enforcement, Information and Customer Services
- Corporate Affairs, Strategic Performance and Digital Services
- Legal Affairs

## 2. Work Programme Requirement

Section 22(1) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 provides that the Board, after consultation with the Director General, shall prepare and submit to the Minister, a Work Programme of the activities that the Commission intends to carry out in the year to which the Programme relates. Such a Programme must be submitted to the Minister by 1 December every calendar year.

The Programme reviews performance in the previous year while a more structured evaluation against Work Programme Key Performance Indicators is published annually in the WRC Annual Report.

### 3. Priorities 2021



## 4. Statement of Strategy 2019-2022

In late-2018, the Board submitted a Strategy Statement to the Minister *Fair and Compliant Workplaces and Equal Treatment in Services*.

Over the course of this Strategy, underpinned by the WRC Core Values of:

- Trust, Independence, Impartiality and Innovation, and a Vision to be:
- a world leader in delivering fair and compliant workplaces and the non-discriminatory delivery of services, the WRC Mission over the three years is to make sure that:
- people in dispute about compliance with employment or equality law<sup>[1]</sup>, or having conflicts in their workplaces will have their disputes resolved quickly and fairly.

More specifically, to deliver on these values, vision and mission, the Strategy sets out how best the WRC, over the period, will enhance service delivery:

- By promoting the improvement of, and the maintenance of good workplace relations,
- By promoting and encouraging compliance with relevant employment, equality and industrial relations law, and
- By promoting and delivering on the WRC's role in assisting parties in the resolution of disputes as well as informing them in respect of accessing the relevant WRC services.

### Delivery Elements

The Strategy has six key strategic delivery elements:

- Service Excellence
- Outreach and Prevention
- Communication and Engagement
- Leveraging Technologies
- Data and Measurement
- People and Structure

This Strategy and the delivery elements have provided the template and broad objectives for the WRC Work Programmes over the period.

During 2021, as required by section 21(2) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015, the Board will submit to the Minister a new Statement of Strategy to cover the period 2022-2024.

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<sup>1</sup> Including complaints submitted to WRC in context of Equal Status legislation

## 5. Review of 2020

### Overview: Impact of Covid19

The WRC plays a vital role in Irish society in delivering fair and compliant workplaces and the non-discriminatory delivery of services.

In this regard, its services are key in maintaining industrial relations stability, mediating and adjudicating in individual disputes, raising awareness of and improving industrial and employment relations generally, promoting, monitoring and enforcing compliance with employment standards and providing recourse for people who feel they have been discriminated against in the delivery of services or employment.

This contribution to society has been particularly important during 2020 and will be equally required next year in terms of mitigating and resolving issues arising from any economic effects of Covid and Brexit on places of employments, employers and employees.

The impact of Covid-19 on the WRC and on the delivery of some of the objectives set out in the Work Programme 2020 has been significant. The WRC, like so many other private and public sector employments and organisations, has been required to prioritise its resources and to pivot its various service delivery models to deal with what are unprecedented circumstances.

The WRC Information Service quickly and successfully transitioned to providing its telephone service remotely. In the year to date<sup>2</sup> it has dealt with some 51,000 such calls, on a par with 2019, while WRC activity in the area of collective disputes has remained active throughout the pandemic, delivered remotely and in-person, and the issues in dispute largely reflect the changing economic circumstances.

In addition, to carrying out its employment legislation monitoring role, the WRC Inspectorate has been assisting the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in visiting business premises to check compliance with the *Covid-19 Return to Work Safely* Protocols and to ensure that employments opened up safely and continued to carry out their business in line with these Protocols. Almost 90% of businesses visited were compliant at the time of the WRC site visit and inspection. Almost all of the remainder became compliant as a result of the visit requiring little further action by way of referral to the HSA.

Notwithstanding a short cessation of on-site visits and inspections early in the pandemic, these are running at a higher level than last year. In addition, where on-site inspections were not feasible, desktop inspections were carried out.

Over the Summer, following a comprehensive two-stage consultation process with its stakeholders, the WRC published a matrix of service delivery for the resolution of individual complaints during the period of Covid-19 by way of Mediation, Written Procedure, Virtual Hearings, and in line with the Roadmap for

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<sup>2</sup> End-November 2020

Re-Opening Society and Business and the Return to Work Safely protocols, a limited number of oral mediation and adjudication hearings in large meeting rooms on its premises.

The latter are offered most typically in more complex cases or where there is likely to be disputed evidence involving several witnesses.

Adjudication Services took a proactive approach to the introduction of new technology and new ways of working. Pilot virtual hearings were carried out with a number of stakeholders, before commencing delivery of adjudication hearings via a remote platform. This also entailed delivering training to WRC staff and to the adjudication officers on best practice in running remote hearings. Staff resources were allocated during remote hearings to provide a smooth customer experience and to assist parties who may be experiencing technical difficulties or are unfamiliar with the remote hearing practices. This process of scheduling and delivering remote hearings, by its nature, is extremely resource-intensive, both in terms of people and infrastructure. It also requires careful attention to attendant GDPR and fair procedure issues

In addition, the WRC provided input to broader relevant deliberations about possible legislative responses to the pandemic (e.g. remote hearings and consent, electronic service, etc).

A steady flow of activity was maintained since Covid-19 restrictions commenced in terms of the delivery of both Conciliation and Pre-Adjudication Mediation services. Whilst delivery of virtual and remote services has continued, it is fair to say that service users have indicated that it is not ideal where conciliation and mediation are concerned, given the absence of certainty medium-term on the viability of scheduling in-person, it will be necessary to embrace and engage in this new way of working in the short to medium-term.

#### **Work Programme 2020: Progress Report**

The impact of Covid19 notwithstanding, significant progress has been made in achieving the concrete goals set out in the Work Programme for 2020.

Over the period the WRC:

- Expanded its in-person delivery of services to its offices in Ennis and Carlow and made significant progress in relation to the development of its new Cork premises which will enable the WRC to deliver its full range of services from the site in early-2021.
- Through a combination of in-person and virtual conciliation, the Conciliation Service successfully met the demand for its expertise and assistance in resolving collective disputes over the period.
- Initiated and completed between March and July a review of some 900 cases awaiting adjudication hearings and which involved the relevant parties being identified and contacted to offer pre-adjudication mediation as an alternative to waiting on an adjudication hearing date.



Take up of this offer was extremely low but was a valuable learning for the service going forward. In that context, the WRC will continue to monitor the take-up of mediation by parties throughout 2020 and in Q1 2021 will, in consultation with its stakeholders, conduct a comprehensive review of the WRC mediation model and how best it can fulfil its statutory functions in this regard.

- The Adjudication Service had reduced the median time from receipt of complaint to 8 months by end Q1-2020 in line with the Work Programme 2020 ambition. Similarly, hearing dates were being offered to all complainants/respondents within 6 weeks of receipt of complaint. Post-Covid, delivery of remote hearings commenced in early July and oral hearings in early August. The delivery of oral hearings has been disrupted by the introduction of varying levels of restrictions across certain geographic regions and time.
- The Adjudication Service introduced new postponement guidelines in February, 2020 and these were published in the WRC website. Applications are now made to a dedicated email address – [postponements@workplacerelations.ie](mailto:postponements@workplacerelations.ie) and in the event that an application is made within five working days of the date of the hearing letter, the application is granted automatically, provided the written consent of the other party has been obtained and provided to Post Registration Unit with the request. The WRC has also introduced a process for any appeals of a postponement decision or an objection to a virtual hearing to be considered by an Adjudication Officer at a review hearing.
- Carried out a range of presentations were delivered to bodies including Ibec, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Civil Service IR Network, International Labour Organisation (ILO). In addition, during 2020, some 15 programmes were delivered which included six Modules for An Garda Síochána prior to the organisation's access to the services of the WRC on 1 February 2020. These programmes have been re-oriented in light of Covid and will continue to be delivered virtually.
- The WRC Inspectorate had carried out 6,875 site visits which combined Covid-19 and employment rights monitoring and as part of this process had initiated and/or completed over 1,498 full employment rights inspections with €1,588,000 unpaid wages recovered.
- Worked with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to move forward quickly on statutory issues impacting on efficient service delivery during Covid19 and in identifying legislative issues impacting on the delivery of the WRC statutory remit in the longer-term.
- Provided information on the role of the WRC in receiving and processing equal status complaints in relation to young persons from the LGBTI+ community. In addition, the WRC published equality case analyses through a popular HR and IR publication in Q420 as well as providing “mock” equality hearings as a third level institute in Q120.



- The WRC completed its rollout of its internal mediation support platform and significantly advanced the conciliation platform development. In addition, the WRC, in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and through the Framework Agreement established under Action 6 of Our Public Service 2020, advanced the repetitive processing goals set out in the Strategy Statement 2019-2022.
- An open Adjudication Officer (Assistant Principal Officer Level) competition was advertised on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and planning was advanced significantly for an external Adjudication Officer campaign in 2021.
- Achieved these outcomes, not only in the face of Covid but also in dealing with significant staff turnover which affected succession planning and required targeted learning and upskilling initiatives across all Divisions.

These achievements would not have been possible without the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff of the WRC. The support of the Minister and the Department has also been central in the development of the WRC since its establishment and in responding to the particular challenges posed by Covid during 2020.

## 6. Work Programme 2021: Top Level Goals

### Covid-19 Context

The impact of Covid-19 on the WRC and on the delivery of some of the objectives set out in the Work Programme 2020 has been significant and is reflected in the Work Programme 2021.

In terms of 2021 priorities (and the more detailed plans set out in Section 7), and subject to resource capacity across all of its individual Divisions, the focus of the WRC is very much on the continued delivery of its core services throughout the pandemic and beyond albeit in perhaps different models over the medium-term.

The Programme recognises too, that once circumstances permit, a return to more normal ways of working is vital in that the traditional “face-to-face” approaches to resolving collective and individual disputes, adjudication, and carrying out inspections is optimal. However, it may be that some of the changes to delivery may be incorporated into the WRC array of services in the longer-term. In such event, the WRC will work closely with its key stakeholders in their design and delivery.

### Service Excellence

The WRC will continue to improve the remote services being provided post-Covid and will also further develop the technological platforms and broader administrative and physical infrastructure within WRC offices to facilitate this.

The WRC legal team will continue to provide objective, independent and timely advice to all WRC divisions, and in advising or representing the WRC in litigation in which it is involved, including judicial reviews, plenary challenges and other complex litigation.

### Outreach and Prevention

Throughout the year, the WRC will work pro-actively with stakeholders, key influencers, companies and organisations nationally to support deeper understanding of good practice, prevent breaches, including those relating to exploitative labour practices, close gaps early and embed a culture of good workplace relations.

In addition, the Legal Affairs Division will build on developed networks both nationally and internationally to share best practice generally and developing systems around remote hearings.

### Communications and Engagement

The WRC will develop a new communications strategy in 2021 to better communicate the role of the WRC and deliver key messages around remit, service, value and impartiality.

The WRC will carry out awareness raising campaigns in the following areas in 2021:

- The role of the WRC in receiving and processing equal status complaints with particular emphasis on persons from the most discriminated against minority ethnic communities, and from the LGBT+ community.
- Deliver webinars on matters of particular stakeholder interest.

Further campaigns will be considered in the context of identified inspectorate high risk sectors.

### Leveraging Technology

“Digital First” is a pillar of the Public Service ICT Strategy. In alignment with this strategy, the WRC will initiate and continue to explore the potential for the further development of enhanced automated business processes. This will be achieved by engaging with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, (DPER), Reform and Innovation Division, and by leveraging the existing Robotic Process Automation (RPA) Framework provided by the Office for Government Procurement (OGP).

A Self-Service Portal which allows the users of the WRC’s services to create a case, view case status and history, upload documents, view hearing dates, submit a postponement request etc, will be progressed during 2021 and will bring many benefits in terms of improved customer satisfaction, efficiencies and a reduction in delays.

Social Media and Digital channels of communications, including the generation of native content, will be fully utilised to support the business objectives of the WRC operational Divisions.

### Data and Measurement

In line with the Public Service ICT Strategy, the WRC will develop further its capacity to enhance its data-driven decisions (DDDM) via the use of relevant software tools. These will be utilised fully in the context of inspection-risk-assessment and in monitoring and improving process flow in the Adjudication, Conciliation and Mediation services.

### People and Structure

To mitigate the impacts of pandemic restrictions and anticipated increased demand and to assist the delivery of its strategic priorities, the WRC will further develop the skill sets of its staff and work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on the recruitment of the skills needed to ensure that the WRC has the required human resource complement across all its Divisions to provide high-quality services.

## 7. Work Programme 2021: Divisional Programmes

### Conciliation, Advisory and Mediation

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
Provide timely, effective and efficient conciliation service and ensure demand is met whilst maintaining delivery of all services	Provide in-person and virtual conciliation in an appropriate timeframe to facilitate resolution of industrial relations disputes. Proactively engage with service users to support and provide assistance in the maintenance of positive industrial relations	As and when required by clients throughout 2020	Maintenance of high success rate in the resolution of industrial relations disputes.
Enhance client usage of relevant mediation services of WRC	Maintain mediation service delivery levels and aim to increase usage and provide more mediation regionally where required	Throughout 2021	Depending on ongoing Covid restrictions assess and renew levels of participation in the mediation process maintained and increased if possible. Consultation process undertaken. Cases triaged effectively and efficiently to bring about an overall reduction in numbers advancing to adjudication process in rights-based claims.
Chair and facilitate various different industrial relations and statutory fora in both the private and public sector	Facilitate discussions in a timely fashion. Assist parties deal with all issues in accordance with procedures and operations as set in agreed terms of reference	Throughout 2021	Effective delivery, operation and conclusion of all issues raised in accordance with protocols and procedures with the agreement of all parties
Ensure effective two-way communication with primary clients	Maintain effective dialogue with key clients in all regions and nationally	At all times during 2021	Effective operation of communication channels maintained

Improve site-specific workplace relations	Carry out reviews of industrial relations, chair joint working parties, facilitate resolution of individual disputes including referrals under the IR Act 2015	Throughout 2021	Effective, tailored programme delivery, high service user satisfaction, improved workplace relations
Provide workplace knowledge sharing	Develop and deliver further appropriate educational programmes with emphasis on positive industrial relations principles and working relationships	Throughout 2021	High Client Satisfaction – better understanding of issues and improved workplace relations
Review transition of An Garda Síochána into WRC processes	Work with parties on the ongoing transition to WRC services	Throughout 2021	Full transition achieved
Develop and implement new conciliation management system	Work with all WRC colleagues in developing and roll out new system	Throughout 2021	System fully operational as designed

### Adjudication Service

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
Deal with impacts arising from pandemic restrictions imposed during 2020.	Provide Adjudication Officers with full administrative support and oversight to achieve the goal	Throughout 2021	Deal with any Covid related build-up
Consider approaches to deal with anticipated increase in volume of complaints during 2021	Maintain appropriate administrative resourcing and monitor and review quantity and availability of adjudicators to ensure delivery capacity.	End 2020 onwards	Structured approach in place to deal with redundancy complaints and anticipated increase generally

Early receipt of concise submissions	Work with stakeholders to achieve this and explore development of templates or sample submissions to be published on website	Throughout 2021	Informative submissions received in a timely manner
Deliver high quality decisions	Internal Quality Control Review Group will review decisions to identify learning points, to ensure consistency of decisions in common areas, to improve the service provided to customers of the Adjudication Service.	Throughout 2021	High quality decisions issue in a timely manner, subject to available resources  Internally and externally recognised and delivered WRC adjudication standard

### Inspection and Enforcement Services

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
Promote and enforce compliance with employment law	Risk-based inspections, complaint-based inspections, with other State bodies where appropriate	Throughout 2021	4200 workplace investigations completed A 90% successful prosecution rate Notices issued appropriately and having effect. Appeals defended.
	Prosecute, as appropriate, offences under employment legislation	Throughout 2021	
	Issuing and processing of Compliance (as applicable) <sup>3</sup> and Fixed Payment notices and defend appeals to Compliance Notices	Throughout 2021	

<sup>3</sup> See Labour Court decision (CNN194), Boots Retail (Ireland) Ltd.

Focused targeting of non-compliant employers, sectors, regions	Deploy new risk selection arrangements for Inspection cases	Mid-21 onwards	25% of inspections will be focused on high risk employers
Enforce awards arising from decisions of Adjudication and Labour Court proceedings	Pursue civil enforcement of decisions and awards arising from decisions of Adjudication Officers and Labour Court in relation to adjudication and inspection activity and escalate to prosecution where appropriate.	Throughout 2021	Decisions and awards pursued in manner that maximises efficiency and effectiveness
Issue licences and enforce legislation in relation to Employment Agencies and the employment of Young Persons	Licenses processed and issued in an efficient and lawful manner	Throughout 2021	Applications processed within 21 days of receipt
Co-operate with other enforcement agencies	Facilitate training, staff exchanges, joint inspections and sharing of appropriate data, review MoUs to ensure they are current, valid and in compliance with GDPR requirements	Throughout 2021	Successful activities underpinned by legislation and appropriate MoUs. Review and renew, if appropriate, all existing MoUs.
Carry out targeted campaigns in the identified sectors	Campaigns carried out effectively and efficiently	Throughout 2021	Positively impact compliance and create/enhance awareness of relevant rights and duties



SME information and education programme to improve compliance generally	Work with Communications and Information Unit to ensure programme is effective and efficient programme.	Throughout 2021	Enhance compliance through targeted campaigns
Cooperate with International agencies on areas of mutual interest	Work with agencies, platforms and authorities with similar objectives such as the International Labour Organisation, the European Labour Authority, the European Platform for Undeclared work, EUROPOL	Throughout 2021	Attend all plenary sessions where designated as Irish member/delegate/ expert, provide appropriate assistance to programmes
			3.9 Socruithe a dhéanamh chun soláthairtí a dheimhniú le linn COVID-19

### Information and Customer Services

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
Provide non-directive information on WRC activities generally, employment legislation and redress mechanisms through a variety of delivery formats	Provide a high quality accessible, customer-focused and user-friendly response to telephone, email, white mail and other employment rights enquiries	Throughout 2021	90% of queries dealt with at initial query
	Co-ordinate the targeted participation of the WRC at employment law seminars, presentations, exhibitions, roadshows, webinars, etc.	Throughout 2021	Key events identified, targeted message deliver effectively and efficiently
	Use WRC social media platforms to raise awareness of employment legislation, relevant	Throughout 2021	Increased awareness of the WRC and its remit/services using social media accounts.

	decisions, WRC activities/remit and promote WRC redress mechanisms to the public.		Key events, days, campaigns. research and data identified and effectively publicised on social media.  10% y.o.y increase in following on WRC social media platforms  Evidentiary links between posts and referrals/contacts
Efficient processing of complaints and applications to the WRC	All complaints processed in a timely and efficient manner and referred to the appropriate redress forum	Throughout 2021	All current complaints processed efficiently with 90% of files created within 10 working days and respondent put on notice
Deliver Outreach and Communications Strategy	Identify WRC activities (including web-based and remote outreach) which can be used to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of WRC generally	Throughout 2021	Increased awareness and understanding of the WRC, its identity, role and functions, across industrial relations, employment rights, equality and equal status matters
	Complete Equal Status campaigns on the specific role of the WRC in terms of discrimination complaints relating to minority ethnic and the LGBT+ communities for both provision of information to communities and their representative organisations and the protection of rights	End-2021	Increased awareness of WRC role in this area and rise in relevant referrals to WRC
	Prepare bespoke targeted printed guides and templates for employees and employers	Q3 2021	Guides and templates launched and being used and accessed

## Legal Affairs

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
WRC legal service operating effectively and efficiently	Excellent independent, objective legal service to be provided with structures, procedures, and business processes operating efficiently	Throughout 2021	Legal service established and fully functional.
Provide appropriate legal training to staff and adjudicators – legally sound approach to all activities of WRC	Identify training structures, training needs and deliver. Provide training of legal services staff as needs arise and ensure CPD achieved	Throughout 2021	Training being implemented and Adjudicators up to date on jurisprudence
Assist Adjudication Services ensure Quality and Consistency	Regular quality assurance meetings reviewing issues arising, making recommendations and providing guidance.	Throughout 2021	Quality enhanced.
Manage legal services used within the WRC	Provide for legal services where appropriate (including panels for legal advice where appropriate)	Throughout 2021	Systems functioning effectively
Manage and provide for timely, effective and robust legal advice on all aspects of legal matters before, and involving, the WRC	Consider correspondence, provide advice, brief Counsel where necessary, manage case progress and outcome, liaise with CSSO, AGO and DBEI on legal issues as appropriate.	Throughout 2021	WRC manages legal matters effectively and efficiently. WRC has effective role in relevant legislative developments
Maintain a specialised database and library facility for Adjudicators and WRC staff generally	Ensure appropriate access to relevant external databases and virtual and physical library kept up to date	Throughout 2021	Databases and library in place and fully utilised

Set and manage legal costs within budget parameters	Monitor spend on legal costs/identify efficiencies	Throughout 2021	Legal Costs managed effectively, efficiently and within budget
Use available tools to help inform stakeholders of trends in complaints and decisions	Publish analyses of employment rights complaints and WRC decisions with particular regard to equality and equal status cases	Throughout 2021	Commentaries published
Work with DBEI to identify legal issues impacting on delivery of statutory remit	Identify key legislative priorities and assist progression where possible and liaise with DBEI in context of Supreme Court constitutional challenge and urgent Covid-related legislative reforms.	Throughout 2021	Issues identified with Department and progressed as appropriate
Develop stakeholder networks domestically, at EU and international level to share best practice	Stakeholder mapping and engagement	Throughout 2021	Strong network established to share best practice and be abreast of emerging legal trends in employment and equality law internationally
Adjudication Services supported in relation to remote hearings and Covid-related adjustments to WRC services	Advise WRC in relation to new procedures and policies around Covid-19, remote hearings and other adjustments required to ensure continuity of service, effective remedies, fair procedures and equality law obligations adhered to.	Throughout 2021	Robust, efficient systems in place to ensure WRC can pivot to deal with lockdowns and any new modalities required in light of evolving public health guidelines, providing a safe environment for service users and staff whilst ensuring continuity of service.

### Corporate Affairs, Strategic Performance and Digital Services

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
Maintain robust corporate governance framework in WRC	Oversee and monitor internal standards/policies/procedures	Throughout 2021	Corporate governance in WRC in line with best practice
Ensure WRC carries out statutory functions within budget	Oversee efficient and effective expenditure, monitor service demand and activity levels and liaise regularly with DBEI in this regard	Throughout 2021	Work programme achieved consistent with proper utilisation of budget allocation
WRC has functional flexibility	Ensure that the WRC can respond quickly to shifting demand and resource patterns across the full range of its activities.	Throughout 2021	WRC able to respond quickly to Divisional demand spikes and shifting resource patterns
Manage the WRC risk-based strategic, business planning performance culture at all levels of the organisation	Assist in implementation of, Board strategy and Work Programme and roll out via Corporate, Divisional, Unit and personal business plans, measure and take remedial action against risks and report on progress to MC and Board on a regular basis	Throughout 2021	WRC operating within coherent strategic and business plan framework
Enhance and inform the policy debate on workplace relations developments	In consultation with other Divisions identify areas of policy concern and input to policy formulation	Throughout 2021	Input provided and understood
South WRC region providing full service in WRC premises	Work with OPW to ensure the southern WRC region can facilitate the delivery of all WRC services by Q2	Q2 2021	Office fully operational
Set and manage legal costs within budget parameters	Monitor spend on legal costs/identify efficiencies	Throughout 2021	Legal Costs managed effectively, efficiently and within budget

Use available tools to help inform stakeholders of trends in complaints and decisions	Publish analyses of employment rights complaints and WRC decisions with particular regard to equality and equal status cases	Throughout 2021	Commentaries published
Work with DBEI to identify legal issues impacting on delivery of statutory remit	Identify key legislative priorities and assist progression where possible and liaise with DBEI in context of Supreme Court constitutional challenge and urgent Covid-related legislative reforms.	Throughout 2021	Issues identified with Department and progressed as appropriate
Develop stakeholder networks domestically, at EU and international level to share best practice	Stakeholder mapping and engagement	Throughout 2021	Strong network established to share best practice and be abreast of emerging legal trends in employment and equality law internationally
Adjudication Services supported in relation to remote hearings and Covid-related adjustments to WRC services	Advise WRC in relation to new procedures and policies around Covid-19, remote hearings and other adjustments required to ensure continuity of service, effective remedies, fair procedures and equality law obligations adhered to.	Throughout 2021	Robust, efficient systems in place to ensure WRC can pivot to deal with lockdowns and any new modalities required in light of evolving public health guidelines, providing a safe environment for service users and staff whilst ensuring continuity of service.
<u>Standardisation:</u> Monitor ICT systems to ensure they facilitate the delivery of efficient and effective WRC services	Review quarterly and update where needed (within budgetary)	Throughout 2021	Easy to use ICT systems working efficiently and effectively
Build of Industrial Relations Information System (IRIS)	Work with DBEI, Codec and internal partners to complete user-friendly case management system for Conciliation and Workplace Mediation.	Q4 2021	System operational

Build Portal	Phase 1 of Web Portal live Phase 2 of Web Portal live	Q3 2021 Q4 2021	Web form rolled out Document upload
<u>Automation:</u> Leveraging Technology to improve efficiencies and use of resources	WRC will work with DE TE to explore the potential uses of process automation in early-stage complaint receipt processing	Q1 2021	Potential uses identified and medium-term strategy developed, early pilot delivered Q1 2021
<u>Data Analytics:</u> Use of data analytics solutions to better inform management decision making	Tool Selected. Initial Dashboards designed and available Work with Inspection Risk Modelling Project to assist build of risk IT evaluation system as required	Q1 2021 onwards Q2 2021	Analytics fully utilised in decision making Risk Model operational
Communications	Develop a Communications Strategy to support the business objectives of the WRC  In consultation with the relevant Divisions proactively plan, deliver and measure WRC Communications content and campaigns. We will identify and deliver a number of priority campaigns, possibly an equal status campaign and the role of the WRC in terms of discrimination complaints relating to minority ethnic and the LGBTI+ community,	Q1 2021  Throughout 2021	Strategy developed and approved. Strategy supports the business objectives of Divisions  WRC content is preplanned, published and measured
Digital Media	Collaborate with DBEI and other Government Comms Units  Social Media Channels developed	Throughout 2021  Throughout 2021	Participate in GIS Communications Network  Twitter, LinkedIn and WRC website all regularly and used to support business plans



	<p>Twitter</p> <p>LinkedIn</p> <p>WRC.ie</p> <p>Work with stakeholders to evaluate effectiveness of the website and amend as necessary</p>	<p>Throughout 2021</p>	<p>Website current, relevant and used</p>
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