

## Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Tourism is recognised as one of Ireland's most important economic sectors with significant potential to play a further role in Ireland's economic renewal. It offers a wide range of opportunities for people to access the labour market, across all ages, skills/qualification levels and backgrounds, dispersed throughout the country in both urban and rural locations.

The Tourism Division of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport sets national tourism policy, aiming to provide the strategic direction required to support the growth of a competitive and sustainable tourism industry, through the development, implementation and influencing of a range of policy actions and programmes by this Department, its Agencies and other Government Departments.

In noting that the University of Limerick Study on the Prevalence of Zero Hour Contracts and Low Hour Contracts in the Irish Economy included close examination of the hospitality sector (as one of the sectors identified for particular focus under its terms of reference), notwithstanding the fact that the overall hospitality sector is broader than the tourism industry, we wish to take this opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of this Study given the significant overlap between the two - particularly with regard to establishments serving tourists, such as hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars.

Overall, in supporting the growth of a competitive and sustainable tourism industry, we must take into account the needs of both employers and employees. On the one hand, where possible, we must avoid measures that threaten the on-going viability of tourism businesses placing additional administrative or financial burdens on businesses. It is quite likely that any additional costs to the employer would be passed on to the consumer, thereby threatening the overall competitiveness of our tourism industry and damaging the significant efforts made in recent years to rebuild our reputation as a good value tourism destination.

On the other hand, frontline staff in tourism businesses are the welcoming face of our tourism industry. It is therefore of critical importance that they are properly remunerated and otherwise supported in order to attract and retain well-motivated personnel. The Government's Tourism Policy Statement, *"People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025"*, which was published last year, recognises the need to maximise the attractiveness of the tourism sector as a career choice. Furthermore, the findings of the recently published Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) of the Hospitality Sector noted, inter alia, the need to improve retention in the sector, which will require a combination of approaches from industry and Government to including increasing the attractiveness of employment opportunities, as well as improving professionalisation, upskilling and training to keep people in the sector and give them better career prospect.

Although we have no further specific data or information available to us relating to zero hours contracts or other forms of non-guaranteed hours of work, other than general views gleaned anecdotally, we welcome the findings of the Study.

In particular, despite the Study finding that zero hours contracts within the meaning of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 (OWTA) are not extensive in Ireland, we note evidence of other forms of non-guaranteed hours of work such as the so-called " If and When" contracts or hybrid arrangements involving a combination of guaranteed hours and If and When contracts. For this reason, we believe that existing legislation and/or related regulations should be amended and updated to take account of these practices and to protect employees accordingly.

We would also support further attempts for the on-going collection of accurate data on the prevalence of non-guaranteed hours of work.

Tourism Division  
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport  
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