

Wibar 3

Oxford Seminar

Collective Bargaining in the
Telecoms Sector

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Collective Bargaining in Ireland

Communications Workers' Union (CWU) – represent telecoms, postal/courier, ICTS and retail.

- Industrial relations in based on the 'voluntarist model'.
- No legal right to collective union representation making Ireland the exception in developed Western economies.
- New 'Collective Bargaining' legislation introduced last year – just tested and subject to appeal.



Collective Bargaining in Ireland

- Used to have national bargaining – ‘Social Partnership’
- Economic crisis hit Ireland hard
- Social Partnership was abandoned
- Was seen as toxic
- Public and private sector pay cuts became the norm



Collective Bargaining in Ireland

- Economy beginning to recover now
- Enterprise/company level bargaining is emerging
- First time since 1987
- Split now between public and private sector on bargaining level
- Public – national level
- Private – local/company level



Collective Bargaining in Ireland

- Sectoral bargaining is not a feature of the telecoms space
- More a feature of construction, security, electrical and contract cleaning and other sectors
- Unlikely to be return to national bargaining
- Impact of new legislation – possible legal challenge; sector bargaining given legal footing again plus...
- Possibility of new sectoral agreements



Telecoms in Ireland

- Like most of EU telecoms grew from a former state run monopoly
- Privatised in early '90s
- Ireland went from top of the leagues tables in telecoms development and investment and broadband to the bottom
- Privatisation quoted as a lesson in how not to do it



Telecoms in Ireland

- Former incumbent 'eir' - largest player in fixed line/broadband
- Very competitive market in both fixed line and mobile
- Sky, Vodafone, Three, eir, eMobile, BT Ireland (some other MVNOs)
- Emergence of contracting - big feature of telecoms
- National Broadband Plan – public procurement role



Bargaining Challenges?

- Fewer employees - fibre will decrease this further
- Union density has declined with emergence of non/anti-union employers
- No longer one union – one employer
- Struggling in face of emerging non/anti union employers who compete on labour costs





- Thanks

- Any questions?

