

Changes to Legislation: as of 18 May 2026, there are changes to this Act which have not been implemented by the Revised Acts editorial team, see highlighted entries [here](#). Note that some amendments may not be in force until commenced by a commencement order or other provision.



Number 16 of 1996

PROTECTION OF YOUNG PERSONS (EMPLOYMENT) ACT 1996

REVISED

Updated to 27 July 2022

This Revised Act is an administrative consolidation of the *Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996*. It is prepared by the Law Reform Commission in accordance with its function under the *Law Reform Commission Act 1975 (3/1975)* to keep the law under review and to undertake revision and consolidation of statute law.

All Acts up to and including the *Electoral Reform Act 2022 (30/2022)*, enacted 25 July 2022, and all statutory instruments up to and including the *European Union (Organisation of Working Time in Inland Waterway Transport) Regulations 2022 (S.I. No. 392 of 2022)*, made 27 July 2022, were considered in the preparation of this revision.

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Number 16 of 1996

PROTECTION OF YOUNG PERSONS (EMPLOYMENT) ACT 1996

REVISED

Updated to 27 July 2022

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

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[No. 16.]

*Protection of Young Persons
(Employment) Act 1996*

[1996.]

Section

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FIRST SCHEDULE

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 94/33/EC OF 22 JUNE 1994

SECOND SCHEDULE

ENACTMENTS REPEALED



Number 16 of 1996

PROTECTION OF YOUNG PERSONS (EMPLOYMENT) ACT 1996

REVISED

Updated to 27 July 2022

AN ACT TO REVISE AND EXTEND THE LAW RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF YOUNG PERSONS IN EMPLOYMENT AND TO ENABLE EFFECT TO BE GIVEN TO COUNCIL DIRECTIVE NO. 94/33/EC OF 22 JUNE 1994 ON THE PROTECTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT WORK (OTHER THAN ARTICLES 6 AND 7) AND FOR THOSE PURPOSES TO REPEAL THE **PROTECTION OF YOUNG PERSONS (EMPLOYMENT) ACT, 1977**, AND CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE **CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT ACT, 1936**, AND TO PROVIDE FOR RELATED MATTERS. [26th June, 1996]

BE IT ENACTED BY THE OIREACHTAS AS FOLLOWS:

Interpretation.

1.—(1) In this Act—

“agreement” means a collective agreement, an employment regulation order or a registered employment agreement;

“break” means the interval during which a child or young person may not be permitted under this Act to work;

F1[“child” means a person who has not reached the age of 16 years;]

“collective agreement” means an agreement by or on behalf of an employer on the one hand, and by or on behalf of a trade union or trade unions representative of the employees to whom the agreement relates on the other hand;

“contract of employment” means—

(a) a contract of service or apprenticeship, and

(b) any other contract whereby an individual agrees with another person, who is carrying on the business of an employment agency within the meaning of the **Employment Agency Act, 1971**, and is acting in the course of that business, to do or perform personally any work or service for a third person (whether or not the third person is party to the contract),

whether the contract is express or implied or if express, whether it is oral or in writing;

“the Council Directive” means Council Directive No. 94/33/EC of 22 June 1994⁽¹⁾ on the protection of young people at work, the text of which, with the exception of Section II and the Annex thereto, is set out for convenience of reference in the **First Schedule**,

“day” means a period of 24 consecutive hours commencing at midnight;

“employee” means a child or a young person who has entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, entered into or worked under) a contract of employment and references, in relation to an employer, to an employee shall be construed as references to an employee employed by that employer; and for the purposes of this Act, a person holding office under, or in the service of, the State (including a member of the Garda Síochána or the Defence Forces) or otherwise as a civil servant, within the meaning of the [Civil Service Regulation Act, 1956](#), shall be deemed to be an employee employed by the State or Government, as the case may be, and an officer or servant of a local authority for the purposes of the F2[[Local Government Act 2001 \(as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014\)](#),] a harbour authority, a health board or F3[[a member of staff of an education and training board](#)] shall be deemed to be an employee employed by the authority F3[or board], as the case may be;

“employer” in relation to an employee, means the person with whom the employee has entered into or for whom the employee works under (or, where the employment has ceased, entered into or worked under) a contract of employment subject to the qualification that the person who under a contract of employment referred to in *paragraph (b)* of the definition of “contract of employment” is liable to pay the wages of the individual concerned in respect of the work or service concerned shall be deemed to be the individual’s employer;

“employment regulation order” means an employment regulation order within the meaning of the Industrial Relations Acts, 1946 to 1990;

“hours of work” does not include periods of rest during which the employee is not required to be available for work;

“industrial work” means such work as the Minister may declare by order under [section 2](#) to be industrial work for the purposes of this Act;

“inspector” means a person appointed by the Minister under [section 22](#) to be an inspector for the purposes of this Act;

“light work” means all work which is not industrial work and which, on account of the inherent nature of the tasks which it involves and the particular conditions under which they are performed, is not likely to be harmful to the safety, health or development of children, and is not such as to be harmful to their attendance at school, their participation in vocational guidance or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received;

“the Minister” means the Minister for Enterprise and Employment;

“prescribed” means prescribed by regulations made by the Minister;

“registered employment agreement” means a registered employment agreement within the meaning of the Industrial Relations Acts, 1946 to 1990;

“representatives of employees” means such trade unions as are, in the opinion of the Minister, representative of the employees in relation to whom the expression is used, or where there is no such trade union, such persons as are, in the opinion of the Minister, representative of such employees;

“representatives of employers” means such associations as are, in the opinion of the Minister, representative of the employers in relation to whom the expression is used, or where there is no such association, such persons as are, in the opinion of the Minister, representative of such employers;

“rest period” means any period which is not working time;

F4[...]

“trade union” means a body entitled under the [Trade Union Act, 1941](#), to carry on negotiations for the fixing of wages or other conditions of employment;

“the Tribunal” means the Employment Appeals Tribunal;

“week” means a period of 7 consecutive days;

“working time” means any period during which a young person is at work, at the employer’s disposal and carrying out his or her activity or duties;

F5[‘young person’ means a person who has reached the age of 16 years but has not reached the age of 18 years.]

(2) A word or expression that is used in this Act and is also used in the Council Directive has, unless the contrary intention appears, the meaning in this Act that it has in the Council Directive.

(3) In construing a provision of this Act, a court shall give to it a construction that will give effect to the Council Directive, and for this purpose a court shall have regard to the provisions of the Council Directive, including the preamble.

(4) In this Act a reference to a section or Schedule, is a reference to a section of, or Schedule to, this Act, unless there is an indication that a reference to any other enactment is intended.

(5) In this Act a reference to a subsection, paragraph or subparagraph is a reference to the subsection, paragraph or subparagraph of the provision in which the reference occurs, unless there is an indication that a reference to some other provision is intended.

Industrial work.

2.—(1) The Minister may by order declare any form of work to be industrial work for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Minister may by order amend or revoke an order under this section including an order under this subsection.

Prohibition on employment of children.

3.—(1) Subject to this section and *section 9*, an employer shall not employ a child to do work.

(2) The Minister may, by licence, authorise in individual cases, the employment of a child in cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities which are not likely to be harmful to the safety, health or development of the child and which are not likely to interfere with the child’s attendance at school, vocational guidance or training programmes or capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

(3) The Minister may, by regulations, authorise the employment of children over the age of 13 years in cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities which are not harmful to the safety, health or development of children and which are not likely to interfere with their attendance at school, vocational guidance or training programmes or capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

(4) An employer may employ a child who is over the age of 14 years to do light work during any period outside the school term:

Provided that—

- (a) the hours of work do not exceed 7 hours in any day or 35 hours in any week,
- (b) the work is not harmful to the safety, health and development of the child, and
- (c) during the period of the summer holidays, the child does not do any work for a period of at least 21 days.

(5) An employer may employ a child who is over the age of 15 years to do light work during school term time, provided that the hours of work do not exceed 8 hours in any week.

(6) Subject to *subsection (7)*, an employer may employ a child who is over the age of 14 years and who is a full-time student at an institute of secondary education pursuant to any arrangements made or approved of by the Minister for Education as part of a programme of work experience or educational programme:

Provided that the hours of work do not exceed 8 hours in any day or 40 hours in any week.

(7) The Minister may, after consultation with the Minister for Education and such other interested parties as the Minister sees fit, by regulations, make exemptions from *subsection (6)* in relation to the hours of work of children participating in a work experience or training programme approved by the Minister for Education under *subsection (6)*.

(8) An employer may employ a child over the age of 15 years to participate in a training or work experience programme pursuant to arrangements made or approved of by the Minister or FÁS — the Employment and Training Authority, provided that the hours of work do not exceed 8 hours in any day or 40 hours in any week.

(9) Whenever the Minister grants a licence under *subsection (2)* or makes regulations under *subsection (3)* or *(7)*, the Minister may attach to such licence or provide in such regulations such conditions as the Minister sees fit.

(10) An employer may retain in his or her employment any child of 15 years of age who was in his or her employment immediately before the commencement of this section:

Provided that the hours of work do not exceed 7 hours in any day or 35 hours in any week.

(11) An employer who contravenes *subsection (1)* shall be guilty of an offence.

Additional provisions in relation to employment of children.

4.—(1) An employer shall not employ any child on any work between 8 p.m. on any one day and 8 a.m. on the following day.

(2) Subject to *subsection (3)*, an employer shall ensure that an employee who is a child receives a minimum rest period of 14 consecutive hours in each period of 24 hours.

(3) The minimum consecutive hours of rest in each period of 24 hours specified in *subsection (2)* may be interrupted by an employer in the case of a child employed on activities that do not extend beyond 2 hours in each day or are separated, exclusive of breaks, over the day, provided that, in each period of 24 hours, the child receives a minimum rest period of 14 hours.

(4) An employer shall ensure that an employee who is a child receives, in any period of 7 days, a minimum rest period of 2 days which shall as far as is practicable be consecutive.

(5) The minimum period of rest during each period of 7 days specified in *subsection (4)* may be interrupted by an employer in the case of a child employed on activities that do not extend beyond 2 hours in each day or are separated, exclusive of breaks, over the day, provided that, in each period of 7 days, the cumulative rest period is 2 days.

(6) The Minister may, by regulations, reduce the minimum period of rest specified in *subsection (4)* to 36 consecutive hours in respect of any class of employees or class of work where in the opinion of the Minister this is justified for technical or organisational reasons.

(7) Whenever the Minister makes regulations under *subsection (6)*, the Minister may provide in such regulations such conditions as the Minister sees fit.

(8) An employer shall not permit a child employed by him or her to do for him or her any work for any period exceeding 4 hours without a break of at least 30 consecutive minutes.

(9) A child shall not be entitled to be paid in respect of the break specified in *subsection (8)*.

(10) An employer who contravenes *subsection (1), (2), (4) or (8)* shall be guilty of an offence.

Duties of employer in relation to young persons and children.

5.—(1) Subject to *section 9*, any employer who employs a young person or child to work for him or her shall—

- (a) before employing the young person or child, require the production of a copy of the birth certificate of, or other satisfactory evidence of the age of, the young person or child, as the case may be,
- (b) before employing a child, obtain the written permission of the parent or guardian of the child, and
- (c) maintain a register, or other satisfactory record, containing, in relation to every young person or child employed by him or her, the following particulars—
 - (i) the full name of the young person or child,
 - (ii) the date of birth of the young person or child,
 - (iii) the time the young person or child commences work each day,
 - (iv) the time the young person or child finishes work each day,
 - (v) the rate of wages or salary paid to the young person or child for his or her normal working hours each day, week, month or year, as the case may be, and
 - (vi) the total amount paid to each young person or child by way of wages or salary.

(2) An employer who fails to comply with the provisions of this section and the parent or guardian of a young person or child who aids or abets an employer in the contravention of this section shall be guilty of an offence.

Employment of young persons.

6.—(1) An employer shall not employ a young person on any work except where, subject to this section and *sections 7, 8 and 9*, the employer—

- (a) does not require or permit the young person to work for more than 8 hours in any day or 40 hours in any week,
- (b) does not require or permit the young person to work—
 - (i) between 10 p.m. on any one day and 6 a.m. on the following day, or
 - (ii) between 11 p.m. on any one day (provided the day is not before a school day during a school term where such young person is attending school) and 7 a.m. on the following day, where the Minister is satisfied, following consultation with such representatives of employers and representatives of employees as the Minister considers appropriate, that there are exceptional circumstances affecting a particular branch of activity or a particular area of work as may be prescribed,

- (c) ensures that the young person receives a minimum rest period of 12 consecutive hours in each period of 24 hours,
- (d) ensures that the young person receives in any period of 7 days a minimum rest period of 2 days which shall, as far as is practicable, be consecutive, and
- (e) does not require or permit the young person to do for him or her any work for any period exceeding 4 ½ hours without a break of at least 30 consecutive minutes.

(2) The minimum consecutive hours of rest in each period of 24 hours specified in *subsection (1) (c)* may be interrupted by an employer in the case of a young person employed on activities that do not extend beyond 2 hours in each day or are separated, exclusive of breaks, over the day provided that, in each period of 24 hours, the young person receives a minimum rest period of 12 hours.

(3) The minimum periods of rest during each period of 7 days specified in *subsection (1) (d)* may be interrupted by an employer in the case of a young person employed on activities that do not extend beyond 2 hours in each day or are separated, exclusive of breaks, over the day provided that, in each period of 7 days, the cumulative rest period is 2 days.

(4) The minimum periods of rest in each period of 24 hours and each period of 7 days specified in *subsection (1) (c)* and *(d)* shall not apply to a young person who is employed in the shipping or fishing sectors:

Provided that—

- (a) there are objective grounds justifying the non-application of the provisions;
- (b) such young persons receive appropriate compensatory rest times at some time during each period of 24 hours and each period of 7 days, and
- (c) the trade union or representative of the young person is consulted.

(5) The limitations on hours of work and on night work specified in *subsection (1) (a)* and *(b)*, and the minimum periods of rest specified in *subsection (1) (c)* and *(d)* shall not apply to young persons who are members of the Defence Forces when they are—

- (a) on active service within the meaning of [section 5](#) of the [Defence Act, 1954](#), or deemed to be on active service, within the meaning of [section 4 \(1\)](#) of the [Defence \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Act, 1960](#);
- (b) engaged in action in the course of operational duties at sea;
- (c) engaged in operations in aid of the civil power; or
- (d) engaged in training directly associated with any of the aforesaid activities:

Provided that such young persons are allowed equivalent compensatory rest times within 3 weeks of having ceased to engage in the aforesaid activities.

(6) A young person shall not be entitled to be paid in respect of the break specified in *subsection (1) (e)*.

(7) An employer who contravenes *subsection (1)* shall be guilty of an offence.

Employment of
young persons
under licence.

7.—(1) The Minister may, by licence, permit an individual employer to employ young persons on terms specified in the licence in lieu of any of those referred to in [section 6 \(1\)](#) and may attach to the licence such conditions as the Minister sees fit:

Provided that the Minister is satisfied that—

- (a) the terms of the licence are in compliance with the terms of the Directive,
- (b) the health, welfare and safety of the employees affected will not be endangered, and
- (c) compliance with one or more of the terms of *section 6 (1)* would be impractical due to the seasonal nature of the work or the technical or organisational requirements of the work or for other substantial reasons.

(2) Before granting a licence under *subsection (1)*, the Minister shall consult such representatives of employers and representatives of employees as the Minister considers appropriate.

Employment of young persons under regulations.

8.—(1) The Minister may, by regulations, permit any group or category of employers to employ young persons on terms specified in the regulations in lieu of any of those referred to in *section 6 (1)* and may include in the regulations such conditions as the Minister sees fit:

Provided that the Minister is satisfied that—

- (a) the terms of the regulations are in compliance with the terms of the Directive,
- (b) the health, welfare and safety of the employees affected will not be endangered, and
- (c) compliance with one or more of the terms of *section 6 (1)* would be impractical due to the seasonal nature of the work or the technical or organisational requirements of the work or for other substantial reasons.

(2) Before making regulations under *subsection (1)*, the Minister shall—

- (a) consult such representatives of employers and representatives of employees as the Minister considers appropriate, and
- (b) publish in such manner as the Minister thinks fit notice of the Minister's intention to do so and give persons desiring to make representations in relation to the proposed regulations a period of 21 days to do so.

Exclusion from or modification of certain provisions of Act by regulations in relation to employment of close relatives.

9.—(1) *Sections 3, 5, 6, 10 and 11* shall apply to the employment of close relatives subject to any exclusion or modification of the application of any or all of those sections or any provisions thereof as may be prescribed:

Provided that the Minister is satisfied that—

- (a) the regulations are in compliance with the terms of the Directive, and
 - (b) the health, welfare and safety of the employees affected will not be endangered.
- (2) In this section “close relative” means an employee who is employed—
- (a) by his or her spouse, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, stepfather, stepmother, brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister, and
 - (b) (i) in a private dwelling house or on a farm, in or on which both the employee and employer reside, or
 - (ii) in a family undertaking on work which is not industrial work.

Prohibition on double employment.

10.—(1) Subject to *section 9*, an employer shall not permit an employee to do for him or her any form of work on any day on which the employee has done any form of work for any other employer, except where the aggregate of the periods for which the employee does work for such employers on that day does not exceed the period

for which such employee could lawfully be employed to do work for one employer on that day.

(2) Whenever an employer employs an employee in contravention of this section, the employer shall be guilty of an offence and the employee, if he or she is a young person, shall also be guilty of an offence.

(3) The parent or guardian of an employee who aids or abets an employer in the contravention of this section shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) Whenever an employer is prosecuted for an offence under this section it shall be a defence for him or her to prove either that he or she did not know, or could not by reasonable enquiry have known, that the employee had done work for any other employer on the day in respect of which the prosecution is brought or that he or she did not know, or could not by reasonable enquiry have known, that the aggregate of the periods for which the employee did work on that day exceeded the period for which he or she could lawfully be employed to do work for one employer on that day.

Time spent on vocational training.

11.—Subject to *section 9*, any time spent, with the consent of his or her employer, by an employee who is a young person working under a combined work/training scheme or an in-plant work experience scheme shall be deemed to be working time for the purposes of *section 6*.

Display of abstract of Act.

12.—(1) Every employer shall display at the principal entrances to the premises where any of his or her employees work, and in such other places as an inspector may require, in such a position that it may be easily read by employees so employed, the prescribed abstract of this Act.

(2) An employer who fails to comply with the provisions of this section shall be guilty of an offence.

Preservation of existing rates of pay and conditions of employment.

13.—Where, in order to comply with the provisions of this Act, the hours of work prevailing immediately before the commencement of this Act in regard to all employees or any particular employee employed in any particular form of work are reduced or are otherwise altered, the following provisions shall have effect, that is to say—

- (a) the rate of salary, wages or other reward payable to any such employee immediately before the commencement of this Act and the repeal of the *Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1977*, in regard to normal working hours (within the meaning of section 7 of that Act) shall not be reduced or be otherwise altered to the detriment of such employee merely because of the said reduction or alteration in the hours of work of such employee;
- (b) the said reduction or alteration of hours shall not terminate or prejudicially affect the contract of service under which such employee is so employed immediately before the commencement of this Act, and every such contract shall continue in force after such commencement with such modifications only as may be necessary in order to comply with this Act;
- (c) every agreement which is in force immediately before the commencement of this Act and regulates or restricts the rate of salary, wages or other reward payable to any such employee shall continue in force after such commencement notwithstanding the said reduction or alteration of hours of work but with the modification that every rate of salary, wages or other reward which is fixed by such agreement and every restriction on any rate of salary, wages or other reward contained in such agreement shall remain unchanged in amount;
- (d) every minimum rate of salary, wage or other reward fixed by statute or under statutory authority which is in force immediately before the commencement

of this Act shall, if and so far as it is applicable to any such employee, continue after such commencement in force and unchanged in amount notwithstanding the said reduction or alteration of hours of work.

Emergency as
defence.

14.—(1) It shall be a defence to any proceedings taken against any employer for a breach of any of the provisions of this Act in relation to an employee who is a young person if such employer shows to the satisfaction of the court before which such proceedings are brought that any act occasioning such breach was rendered necessary or reasonably proper by the actual occurrence or the threat or reasonable anticipation of fire, flood, storm, violence, a breakdown of plant or machinery or any other emergency:

Provided that—

- (a) the work is of a temporary nature and has to be performed immediately,
- (b) adult workers are not available,
- (c) the young person is allowed equivalent compensatory rest time within 3 weeks of the date of occurrence of the breach concerned, and
- (d) the young person is paid at the rate of time plus a quarter for any time worked as a result of the emergency.

(2) A certificate signed by or on behalf of any Minister of the Government that an act done by or in relation to any young person employed by that Minister was rendered necessary by an emergency shall be evidence that such act was so rendered necessary.

Employer
records.

15.—(1) An employer shall keep, at the place where a young person or child is employed, such records as are necessary to show whether the provisions of this Act are being complied with in relation to his or her employees and such records shall be retained by the employer for at least 3 years.

(2) In any case where—

- (a) there is a dispute between an employer and employee, or
- (b) there is a prosecution for an offence under this Act,

and the records required to be kept by an employer under *subsection (1)* are not available, the onus of proving that the provisions of this Act have been complied with shall lie on the employer.

(3) An employer who contravenes *subsection (1)* shall be guilty of an offence.

Recovery of
money due to
employee.

16.—(1) Any sum of money due to an employee from his or her employer under any provision of this Act shall be recoverable by the employee from his or her employer as a simple contract debt in a court of competent jurisdiction.

(2) Proceedings for the recovery of any sum due by an employer to an employee under any provision of this Act may be instituted and maintained on behalf of the employee by his or her trade union or parent or guardian.

(3) Whenever in a prosecution for an offence under this Act, it appears that a sum of money is due by an employer to an employee, and the employer is convicted of that offence, a court may, if it is satisfied that the employer is liable to pay to his or her employee a sum of money, order, in addition to any penalty which it may impose pursuant to this Act, that the employer pay any such sum of money to the employee.

Refusal by child or young person to co-operate with employer in breaching Act. **17.**—An employer shall not penalise an employee for having in good faith opposed by lawful means an act which is unlawful under this Act.

F6[Decision of adjudication officer under section 41 of Workplace Relations Act 2015] **18.** A decision of an adjudication officer under section 41 of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 in relation to a complaint of a contravention of *section 13* or *17* shall do one or more of the following, namely—

- (a) declare that the complaint was or, as the case may be, was not well founded,
- (b) order the employer to take a specified course of action,
- (c) order the employer to pay to the employee compensation of such amount (if any) as is just and equitable having regard to all of the circumstances.]

F7[Decision of Labour Court on appeal from decision referred to in *section 18*.] **19.** A decision of the Labour Court under section 44 of the Workplace Relations Act 2015, on appeal from a decision of an adjudication officer referred to in *section 18*, shall affirm, vary or set aside the decision of the adjudication officer.]

Enforcement of determination of Tribunal. **20.**—F8[...]

Evidence of failure to attend before or give evidence or produce documents to Tribunal. **21.**—F9[...]

Powers of inspectors. **22.**—F10[...]

Offences by bodies corporate. **23.**—(1) Where an offence under this Act is committed by a body corporate or by a person acting on behalf of a body corporate and is proved to have been so committed with the consent, connivance or approval of, or to have been facilitated by any neglect on the part of any director, manager, secretary or any other officer of such body or a person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, such person shall also be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished as if he or she were guilty of the first-mentioned offence.

(2) Any summons or other document required to be served for the purpose or in the course of proceedings on a body corporate may be served by leaving it at or sending it by post to the registered office of that body or, if there is in the State no such office, by leaving it at or sending it by post to that body at any place in the State at which it conducts its business.

Prosecutions. **24.**—(1) An offence under this Act may be prosecuted summarily by the Minister.

(2) An offence, other than an offence under *section 19* or *22*, may be prosecuted summarily by the trade union of which the employee is a member.

(3) Notwithstanding *section 10* (4) of the Petty Sessions (Ireland) Act, 1851, summary proceedings for an offence under this Act may be instituted within 12 months from the date of the offence.

- Penalties. **25.**—(1) A person guilty of an offence under this Act shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £1,500.
- (2) Where a person after conviction for an offence under this Act continues to contravene the provision concerned, the person shall be guilty of an offence on every day on which the contravention continues and for each such offence shall be liable to a fine on summary conviction not exceeding £250.
- Repeals. **26.**—The enactments specified in *column (2)* of the *Second Schedule* are hereby repealed to the extent specified in *column (3)* of that Schedule.
- Expenses. **27.**—The expenses incurred by the Minister in the administration of this Act shall, to such extent as may be sanctioned by the Minister for Finance, be paid out of monies provided by the Oireachtas.
- Regulations. **28.**—(1) The Minister may make regulations for prescribing any matter referred to in this Act as prescribed.
- (2) A draft of every order proposed to be made under *section 2* and of every regulation proposed to be made under this Act shall be laid before each House of the Oireachtas and the order or regulation, as the case may be, shall not be made until a resolution approving of the draft has been passed by each such House.
- Short title and commencement. **29.**—(1) This Act may be cited as the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1996.
- (2) This Act shall come into operation on such day as the Minister may appoint by order.

Section I

FIRST SCHEDULE

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 94/33/EC OF 22 JUNE 1994

on the protection of young people at work

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 118a thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission ⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee ⁽²⁾,

Acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189c of the Treaty ⁽³⁾,

Whereas Article 118a of the Treaty provides that the Council shall adopt, by means of directives, minimum requirements to encourage improvements, especially in the working environment, as regards the health and safety of workers;

Whereas, under that Article, such directives must avoid imposing administrative, financial and legal constraints in a way which would hold back the creation and development of small and medium-sized undertakings;

Whereas points 20 and 22 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, adopted by the European Council in Strasbourg on 9 December 1989, state that:

'20. Without prejudice to such rules as may be more favourable to young people, in particular those ensuring their preparation for work through vocational training, and subject to derogations limited to certain light work, the minimum employment age must not be lower than the minimum school-leaving age and, in any case, not lower than 15 years;

22. Appropriate measures must be taken to adjust labour regulations applicable to young workers so that their specific development and vocational training and access to employment needs are met.

The duration of work must, in particular, be limited — without it being possible to circumvent this limitation through recourse to overtime — and night work prohibited in the case of workers of under eighteen years of age, save in the case of certain jobs laid down in national legislation or regulations';

Whereas account should be taken of the principles of the International Labour Organization regarding the protection of young people at work, including those relating to the minimum age for access to employment or work;

Whereas, in this Resolution on child labour⁽⁴⁾, the European Parliament summarised the various aspects of work by young people and stressed its effects on their health,

OJ No C 84, 4.4.1992, p. 7.

OJ No C 313, 30.11.1992, p. 70.

Opinion of the European Parliament of 17 December 1992 (OJ No C 21, 25. 1. 1993, p. 167).
Council Common Position of 23 November 1993 (not yet published in the Official Journal) and
Decision of the European Parliament of 9 March 1994 (OJ No C 91, 28. 3. 1994, p. 89).

OJ No C 190, 20.7.1987, p. 44.

safety and physical and intellectual development, and pointed to the need to adopt a Directive harmonising national legislation in the field;

Whereas Article 15 of Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (5) provides that particularly sensitive risk groups must be protected against the dangers which specifically affect them;

Whereas children and adolescents must be considered specific risk groups, and measures must be taken with regard to their safety and health;

Whereas the vulnerability of children calls for Member States to prohibit their employment and ensure that the minimum working or employment age is not lower than the minimum age at which compulsory schooling as imposed by national law ends or 15 years in any event; whereas derogations from the prohibition on child labour may be admitted only in special cases and under the conditions stipulated in this Directive; whereas, under no circumstances, may such derogations be detrimental to regular school attendance or prevent children benefiting fully from their education;

Whereas, in view of the nature of the transition from childhood to adult life, work by adolescents should be strictly regulated and protected;

Whereas every employer should guarantee young people working conditions appropriate to their age;

Whereas employers should implement the measures necessary to protect the safety and health of young people on the basis on an assessment of work-related hazards to the young;

Whereas Member States should protect young people against any specific risks arising from their lack of experience, absence of awareness of existing or potential risks, or from their immaturity;

Whereas Member States should therefore prohibit the employment of young people for the work specified by this Directive;

Whereas the adoption of specific minimal requirements in respect of the organisation of working time is likely to improve working conditions for young people;

Whereas the maximum working time of young people should be strictly limited and night work by young people should be prohibited, with the exception of certain jobs specified by national legislation or rules;

Whereas Member States should take the appropriate measures to ensure that the working time of adolescents receiving school education does not adversely affect their ability to benefit from that education;

Whereas time spent on training by young persons working under a theoretical and/or practical combined work/training scheme or an in-plant work-experience should be counted as working time;

Whereas, in order to ensure the safety and health of young people, the latter should be granted minimum daily, weekly and annual periods of rest and adequate breaks;

Whereas, with respect to the weekly rest period, due account should be taken of the diversity of cultural, ethnic, religious and other factors prevailing in the Member States; whereas in particular, it is ultimately for each Member State to decide whether Sunday should be included in the weekly rest period, and if so to what extent;

Whereas appropriate work experience may contribute to the aim of preparing young people for adult working and social life, provided it is ensured that any harm to their safety, health and development is avoided;

Whereas, although derogations from the bans and limitations imposed by this Directive would appear indispensable for certain activities or particular situations, applications thereof must not prejudice the principles underlying the established protection system;

Whereas this Directive constitutes a tangible step towards developing the social dimension of the internal market;

Whereas the application in practice of the system of protection laid down by this Directive will require that Member States implement a system of effective and proportionate measures;

Whereas the implementation of some provisions of this Directive poses particular problems for one Member State with regard to its system of protection for young people at work; whereas that Member State should therefore be allowed to refrain from implementing the relevant provisions for a suitable period,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

SECTION I

Article 1

Purpose

1. Member States shall take the necessary measures to prohibit work by children.

They shall ensure, under the conditions laid down by this Directive that the minimum working or employment age is not lower than the minimum age at which compulsory full-time schooling as imposed by national law ends or 15 years in any event.

2. Member States ensure that work by adolescents is strictly regulated and protected under the conditions laid down in this Directive.

3. Member States shall ensure in general that employers guarantee that young people have working conditions which suit their age.

They shall ensure that young people are protected against economic exploitation and against any work likely to harm their safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social development or to jeopardise their education.

Article 2

Scope

1. This Directive shall apply to any person under 18 years of age having an employment contract or an employment relationship defined by the law in force in a Member State and/or governed by the law in force in a Member State.

2. Member States may make legislative or regulatory provision for this Directive not to apply, within the limits and under the conditions which they set by legislative or regulatory provision, to occasional work or short-term work involving:

(a) domestic service in a private household, or

(b) work regarded as not being harmful, damaging, or dangerous to young people in a family undertaking.

Article 3

Definitions

For the purposes of this Directive:

- (a) 'young person' shall mean any person under 18 years of age referred to in Article 2 (1);
- (b) 'child' shall mean any young person of less than 15 years of age or who is still subject to compulsory full-time schooling under national law;
- (c) 'adolescent' shall mean any young person of at least 15 years of age but less than 18 years of age who is no longer subject to compulsory full-time schooling under national law;
- (d) 'light work' shall mean all work which, on account of the inherent nature of the tasks which it involves and the particular conditions under which they are performed:
 - (i) is not likely to be harmful to the safety, health or development of children, and
 - (ii) is not such as to be harmful to their attendance at school, their participation in vocational guidance or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received;
- (e) 'working time' shall mean any period during which the young person is at work, at the employer's disposal and carrying out his activity or duties in accordance with national legislation and/or practice;
- (f) 'rest period' shall mean any period which is not working time.

Article 4

Prohibition of work by children

1. Member States shall adopt the measures necessary to prohibit work by children.
2. Taking into account the objectives set out in Article 1, Member States may make legislative or regulatory provision for the prohibition of work by children not to apply to:
 - (a) children pursuing the activities set out in Article 5;
 - (b) children of at least 14 years of age working under a combined work/training scheme or an in-plant work-experience scheme, provided that such work is done in accordance with the conditions laid down by the competent authority;
 - (c) children of at least 14 years of age performing light work other than that covered by Article 5; light work other than that covered by Article 5 may, however, be performed by children of 13 years of age for a limited number of hours per week in the case of categories of work determined by national legislation.
3. Member States that make use of the opinion referred to in paragraph 2 (c) shall determine, subject to the provisions of this Directive, the working conditions relating to the light work in question.

Article 5

Cultural or similar activities

1. The employment of children for the purposes of performance in cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities shall be subject to prior authorisation to be given by the competent authority in individual cases.

2. Member States shall by legislative or regulatory provision lay down the working conditions for children in the cases referred to in paragraph 1 and the details of the prior authorisation procedure, on condition that the activities:

- (i) are not likely to be harmful to the safety, health or development of children, and
- (ii) are not such as to be harmful to their attendance at school, their participation in vocational guidance or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

3. By way of derogation from the procedure laid down in paragraph 1, in the case of children of at least 13 years of age, Member States may authorise, by legislative or regulatory provision, in accordance with conditions which they shall determine, the employment of children for the purposes of performance in cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities.

4. The Member States which have a specific authorisation system for modelling agencies with regard to the activities of children may retain that system.

SECTION III

Article 8

Working time

1. Member States which make use of the option in Article 4 (2) (b) or (c) shall adopt the measures necessary to limit the working time of children to:

- (a) eight hours a day and 40 hours a week for work performed under a combined work/training scheme or an in-plant work-experience scheme;
- (b) two hours on a school day and 12 hours a week for work performed in term-time outside the hours fixed for school attendance, provided that this is not prohibited by national legislation and/or practice;

in no circumstances may the daily working time exceed seven hours; this limit may be raised to eight hours in the case of children who have reached the age of 15;
- (c) seven hours a day and 35 hours a week for work performed during a period of at least a week when school is not operating; these limits may be raised to eight hours a day and 40 hours a week in the case of children who have reached the age of 15;
- (d) seven hours a day and 35 hours a week for light work performed by children no longer subject to compulsory full-time schooling under national law.

2. Member States shall adopt the measures necessary to limit the working time of adolescents to eight hours a day and 40 hours a week.

3. The time spent on training by a young person working under a theoretical and/or practical combined work/training scheme or an in-plant work-experience scheme shall be counted as working time.

4. Where a young person is employed by more than one employer, working days and working time shall be cumulative.

5. Member States may, by legislative or regulatory provision, authorise derogations from paragraph 1 (a) and paragraph 2 either by way of exception or where there are objective grounds for so doing.

Member States shall, by legislative or regulatory provision, determine the conditions, limits and procedure for implementing such derogations.

Article 9

Night work

1. (a) Member States which make use of the option in Article 4 (2) (b) or (c) shall adopt the measures necessary to prohibit work by children between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- (b) Member States shall adopt the measures necessary to prohibit work by adolescents either between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. or between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.
2. (a) Member States may, by legislative or regulatory provision, authorise work by adolescents in specific areas of activity during the period in which night work is prohibited as referred to in paragraph 1 (b).

In that event, Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that the adolescent is supervised by an adult where such supervision is necessary for the adolescent's protection.

- (b) If point (a) is applied, work shall continue to be prohibited between midnight and 4 a.m.

However, Member States may, by legislative or regulatory provision, authorise work by adolescents during the period in which night work is prohibited in the following cases, where there are objective grounds for so doing and provided that adolescents are allowed suitable compensatory rest time and that the objectives set out in Article 1 are not called into question:

- work performed in the shipping or fisheries sectors;
- work performed in the context of the armed forces or the police;
- work performed in hospitals or similar establishments;
- cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities.

3. Prior to any assignment to night work and at regular intervals thereafter, adolescents shall be entitled to a free assessment of their health and capacities, unless the work they do during the period during which work is prohibited is of an exceptional nature.

Article 10

Rest periods

1. (a) Member States which make use of the option in Article 4 (2) (b) or (c) shall adopt the measures necessary to ensure that, for each 24-hour period, children are entitled to a minimum rest period of 14 consecutive hours.
- (b) Member States shall adopt the measures necessary to ensure that, for each 24-hour period, adolescents are entitled to a minimum rest period of 12 consecutive hours.
2. Member States shall adopt the measures necessary to ensure that, for each seven-day period:

—children in respect of whom they have made use of the option in Article 4 (2) (b) or (c), and

—adolescents

are entitled to a minimum rest period of two days, which shall be consecutive if possible.

Where justified by technical or organisation reasons, the minimum rest period may be reduced, but may in no circumstances be less than 36 consecutive hours.

The minimum rest period referred to in the first and second subparagraphs shall in principle include Sunday.

3. Member States may, by legislative or regulatory provision, provide for the minimum rest periods referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 to be interrupted in the case of activities involving periods of work that are split up over the day or are of short duration.

4. Member States may make legislative or regulatory provision for derogations from paragraph 1 (b) and paragraph 2 in respect of adolescents in the following cases, where there are objective grounds for so doing and provided that they are granted appropriate compensatory rest time and that the objectives set out in Article 1 are not called into question:

- (a) work performed in the shipping or fisheries sectors;
- (b) work performed in the context of the armed forces or the police;
- (c) work performed in hospitals or similar establishments;
- (d) work performed in agriculture;
- (e) work performed in the tourism industry or in the hotel, restaurant and café sector;
- (f) activities involving periods of work split up over the day.

Article 11

Annual rest

Member States which make use of the option referred to in Article 4 (2) (b) or (c) shall see to it that a period free of any work is included, as far as possible, in the school holidays of children subject to compulsory full-time schooling under national law.

Article 12

Breaks

Member States shall adopt the measures necessary to ensure that, where daily working time is more than four and a half hours, young people are entitled to a break of at least 30 minutes, which shall be consecutive if possible.

Article 13

Work by adolescents in the event of *force majeure*

Member States may, by legislative or regulatory provision, authorise derogations from Article 8 (2), Article 9 (1) (b), Article 10 (1) (b) and, in the case of adolescents, Article 12, for work in the circumstances referred to in Article 5 (4) of Directive 89/391/EEC, provided that such work is of a temporary nature and must be performed

immediately, that adult workers are not available and that the adolescents are allowed equivalent compensatory rest time within the following three weeks.

SECTION IV

Article 14

Measures

Each Member State shall lay down any necessary measures to be applied in the event of failure to comply with the provisions adopted in order to implement this Directive; such measures must be effective and proportionate.

Article 15

Adaptation of the Annex

Adaptations of a strictly technical nature to the Annex in the light of technical progress, changes in international rules or specifications and advances in knowledge in the field covered by this Directive shall be adopted in accordance with the procedure provided for in Article 17 of Directive 89/391/EEC.

Article 16

Non-reducing clause

Without prejudice to the right of Member States to develop, in the light of changing circumstances, different provisions on the protection of young people, as long as the minimum requirements provided for by this Directive are complied with, the implementation of this Directive shall not constitute valid grounds for reducing the general level of protection afforded to young people.

Article 17

Final provisions

1. (a) Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive not later than 22 June 1996 or ensure, by that date at the latest, that the two sides of industry introduce the requisite provisions by means of collective agreements, with Member States being required to make all the necessary provisions to enable them at all times to guarantee the results laid down by this Directive.
- (b) The United Kingdom may refrain from implementing the first subparagraph of Article 8 (1) (b) with regard to the provisions relating to the maximum weekly working time, and also Article 8 (2) and Article 9 (1) (b) and (2) for a period of four years from the date specified in subparagraph (a).

The Commission shall submit a report on the effects of this provision.

The Council, acting in accordance with the conditions laid down by the Treaty, shall decide whether this period should be extended.

- (c) Member States shall forthwith inform the Commission thereof.

2. When Member States adopt the measures referred to in paragraph 1, such measures shall contain a reference to this Directive or shall be accompanied by such reference on the occasion of their official publication. The methods of making such reference shall be laid down by Member States.

3. Member States shall communicate to the Commission the texts of the main provisions of national law which they have already adopted or adopt in the field governed by this Directive.

4. Member States shall report to the Commission every five years on the practical implementation of the provisions of this Directive, indicating the viewpoints of the two sides of industry.

The Commission shall inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee thereof.

5. The Commission shall periodically submit to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee a report on the application of this Directive taking into account paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Article 18

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Luxembourg, 22 June 1994.

For the Council

The President

E. YIANNOPOULOS

Section 26.

SECOND SCHEDULE

ENACTMENTS REPEALED

Number and Year (1)	Short Title (2)	Extent of Repeal (3)
1936, No. 2	Conditions of Employment Act, 1936	Sections 15, 41 (1) (b), 45, 47 and 49 (7).
1977, No. 9	Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1977	The whole Act.

ACTS REFERRED TO

Civil Service Regulation Act, 1956	1956, No. 46
Conditions of Employment Act, 1936	1936, No. 2
Courts Act, 1981	1981, No. 11
Defence Act, 1954	1954, No. 18
Defence (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1960	1960, No. 44
Employment Agency Act, 1971	1971, No. 27
Industrial Relations Acts, 1946 to 1990	
Local Government Act, 1941	1941, No. 23
Petty Sessions (Ireland) Act, 1851	1851, c. 93

SCH. 2

[No. 16.]

*Protection of Young Persons
(Employment) Act 1996*

[1996.]

Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1977

1977, No. 9

School Attendance Act, 1926

1926, No. 17

Trade Union Act, 1941

1941, No. 22



Number 16 of 1996

PROTECTION OF YOUNG PERSONS (EMPLOYMENT) ACT 1996

REVISED

Updated to 27 July 2022

About this Revised Act

This Revised Act presents the text of the Act as it has been amended since enactment, and preserves the format in which it was passed.

Related legislation

This Act is not collectively cited with any other Act.

Annotations

This Revised Act is not annotated and only shows textual amendments. An annotated version of this revision is also available which shows textual and non-textual amendments and their sources. It also shows editorial notes including statutory instruments made pursuant to the Act and previous affecting provisions.

Material not updated in this revision

Where other legislation is amended by this Act, those amendments may have been superseded by other amendments in other legislation, or the amended legislation may have been repealed or revoked. This information is not represented in this revision but will be reflected in a revision of the amended legislation if one is available. A list of legislative changes to any Act, and to statutory instruments from 1984, may be found linked from the page of the Act or statutory instrument at www.irishstatutebook.ie.