



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Immigrants' Policy Needed - Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs

"EU countries need a policy for immigrants to ensure that those admitted as legal residents are given the supports they need to realise their potential and achieve social inclusion" Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs said today when opening an Irish Presidency Conference on mobility and social inclusion in Bundoran.

Representatives of up to 30 countries and the EU Commission are attending, together with representatives of immigrant organisations in Ireland and internationally. Irish Emigrant organisations from the USA and Britain, as well as from Ireland, are also represented.

Minister Coughlan pointed out that there are over 19 million immigrants in EU countries, of which 6 million are from other EU countries, including Ireland. "This number will grow after enlargement, but, according to experts, nowhere near the scale some are predicting."

Minister Coughlan added: "Ireland, given its own long history of emigration, has a special commitment to promoting the welfare of migrants. Nationally a Task Force on Emigrants has reported on how best we can provide the necessary support for them in cooperation with NGOs.

"Given the nature of migration, international cooperation is also vital. A major aim of this Presidency Conference is to highlight the need for this cooperation and how it can be facilitated and promoted with the support of the EU Commission. In this we are building on initiatives taken under the preceding Greek and Italian Presidencies."

"A holistic approach would aim to ensure that immigrants are in a position to obtain a decent job, yielding a sufficient income, and access to health, social services and other benefits".

"This would involve employment and social services working more closely together, in cooperation with NGOs, and corresponding services in other countries," said Minister Coughlan.

The Minister concluded by stating that "she hoped the Conference would assist in meeting this test in the Enlarged Union we are building".

ENDS
April 1st 2004