



## **An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection**

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### **Varadkar announces major survey of 20,000 self-employed people on Social Insurance (PRSI) reform**

Minister for Social Protection Leo Varadkar has kicked off a major survey of self-employed people to find out what new benefits they would most like to receive from Social Insurance (PRSI) reforms planned in future Budgets.

The Department of Social Protection survey being sent to 20,000 self-employed people also asks whether they would be willing to pay more PRSI in return for access to greater benefits, or whether they would prefer to maintain the status quo.

Minister Varadkar has indicated that he plans major reforms of the PRSI system for self-employed people, and brought a memo to Government in July on this matter.

**"There is plenty of evidence that self-employed people are not satisfied with the extent of the benefits they receive in return for paying PRSI. This issue has also been raised with me in the Seanad by Senator Ray Butler. I want to find out what new benefits they would most like to receive, such as long-term illness, injury, jobseekers and dental treatment benefits or whether they would prefer to maintain the status quo." Minister Varadkar said.**

**"The survey informs self-employed people which benefits are currently available to them, whether they consider them good value, and how much extra PRSI they would consider paying for access to greater benefits.**

**"I have announced my intention to reform the PRSI system along more European lines, in order to create a clearer link between PRSI contributions and the benefits received. Earlier this year I brought a memorandum to Government setting out my intentions, and this new survey will guide me and the Department in the next stage of reforms, in Budget 2017 and in future Budgets."**

The 20,000 self-employed people being surveyed include sole traders, partners, farmers, professionals and company directors and were selected from a random sample in the following sectors:

- \* Agriculture
- \* Construction
- \* Wholesale and retail
- \* Hotels and restaurants
- \* Transport, storage and accommodation
- \* Financial and other business services
- \* Health and education

The survey asks recipients which extra benefit entitlements would be most important to them, including:

- \* Long-term illness benefits
- \* Short-term illness benefits
- \* Dental and optical treatment benefits
- \* Work-related injuries benefits
- \* Unemployment benefits
- \* Benefit for time as a full-time carer

Respondents are asked to rate the range of benefit entitlements they currently receive from their PRSI contributions, and whether they consider this value for money. It asks how much extra PRSI they would be willing to pay in return for extra benefits. Respondents are also asked whether they would agree with an opt-in system whereby self-employed people can choose to pay more PRSI in return for extra benefits. And it asks whether the business has any form of insurance cover for health issues, unemployment or time spent as a carer.

The Chief Statistician in the Statistics & Business Intelligence Unit of the Department of Social Protection is overseeing the survey which is being sent out next week, and needs to be returned by August 31st.

**ENDS**