



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Rights Of Immigrants - New Information Factsheets Launched - Social Affairs Minister

Minister for social affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D., today launched a series of new information Factsheets for immigrants that will help bridge information gaps in key areas.

Minister Brennan said that the increasing divergence in the nationalities of immigrants in Ireland is reflected in the fact that information is now being provided in Arabic, Chinese, French, Romanian and Russian in addition to English.

"Immigration is, and will continue to be, essential to how we as a society, and as individuals develop and prosper. Immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland," the minister said. "people who come to Ireland seeking employment are welcome and it is a shared expectation on the part of the people of Ireland and the new arrivals that the experience will be a positive one and beneficial to all. As a nation, we have a responsibility to ensure that immigrants are aware of their rights and entitlements and are protected against exploitation."

Minister Brennan said: "I am aware that there are concerns about the requirement to be habitually resident in Ireland which was introduced as a qualifying condition for certain social assistance schemes and child benefit with effect from 1st may 2004. The basis for the restriction contained in the rules is the applicant's habitual residence. The effect is that a person whose habitual residence is elsewhere is not paid certain social welfare payments on arrival in Ireland."

"The question of what is a person's "habitual residence" is decided in accordance with European court of justice case law, which sets out the grounds for assessing individual claims. A review of the operation of the habitual residence condition is being carried out at present by my officials with a view to:

- Assessing its impact on different categories of persons claiming social assistance/child benefit and supplementary welfare allowance payments;



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- Assessing the current organisational arrangements in the department for administering the condition and the service provided to customers;
- Identifying opportunities for improvements to the administration of the scheme, including those aspects involving other departments;
- Examining all aspects of the decision making process; and
- Identifying emerging policy issues and considering how these should be addressed.

Account is being taken of the views received from various groups and organisations that have an interest in the area. I expect to be in a position to draw conclusions from the review by the end of the year.”

“I am delighted that the department’s information services provided funding of €60,000 to the immigrant council of Ireland for the publication of an information guide book on immigrant rights and entitlements in Ireland and eur60,000 for the translation of the guide book into several languages,” Minister Brennan said.

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