



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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### **Major Attendance Expected For Social Mobility Conference – Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs**

A major EU Presidency conference on reconciling social mobility and social inclusion is expected to attract up to 300 delegates when it opens next month.

“Mobility within the EU after the welcome accession of ten new States has proved a controversial topic, and this conference will reflect many of the themes and concerns currently on the political agenda, “said Social and Family Affairs Minister Mary Coughlan.

“A key point to be addressed in the conference will be about ensuring that those who are allowed to enter Ireland to work are given adequate support and protection. This will enable them to avoid the pitfalls of poverty and social exclusion, “added Minister Coughlan.

Other topics that will be addressed include discussion on developing policies and programmes that enable us to attract migrants with the right skills to meet our labour market needs, and providing adequate supports for emigrants and in particular emigrants in Britain.

The two day conference in Bundoran, County Donegal on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April has attracted delegates from the EU and accession states and will be opened by Minister Coughlan, Labour Affairs Minister Frank Fahey and Antonis Kastrissianakis, Director for Employment and ESF Policy Co-ordination, European Commission.

The opening conference will be chaired by Margaret Curran, Minister for Communities, Scotland.

Two workshops are expected to attract particular interest because of their topicality. The first on labour market and the case of Poland and Ireland will examine the preparation of workers in the source country and their integration into the host country and will be addressed by Krzysztof Kaczmarek, the Deputy Director of the Labour Market Department in Poland and Izabela Grabowska of the Polish Embassy in Ireland. Another workshop on access to social protection and information for migrants will be chaired by Jean Louis De Brouwer of Immigration, Asylum and Borders, European Commission and Bernd Schulte of the Max Planck Institute.

Minister Coughlan added: “These are important issues and Donegal with its long



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history of emigration and unemployment provides an appropriate backdrop for this important conference.”

The two day conference will adopt two broad pillars, European social mobility and skills and the social inclusion of migrant workers.

It is expected that discussion on the former will centre around the role of geographical mobility and migration to help solve skills bottlenecks on the European labour market and to support individual rights to freedom of movement. Special attention will be paid to the conditions required to enable migrant labour from the new Member States to access existing EU labour markets, seen both from the viewpoints of migrant workers and of the host country.

On social inclusion of migrant workers, contributions will be made on the main challenges facing migrant workers in the social and employment fields and how employment and social policies and programmes need to be and are being adapted to meet the special needs of this group.

**Ends** - March 17<sup>th</sup> 2004