



Over EUR1 Billion NDP Investment In Range Of Measures And Supports To Encourage More Than 50,000 From Welfare To Work Opportunities

Seamus Brennan - Overall Investment Of Eur50 Billion On Social Inclusion Will Deliver Comprehensive Assault On Poverty And Exclusion

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan TD, today outlined full details of a €1 billion package of measures under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 specifically targeted at encouraging and supporting those on social welfare to make the transition from passive welfare payments to active participation in employment.

Minister Brennan said that for the first time the new National Development Plan includes a chapter dedicated to Social Inclusion with funding of almost EUR50 billion was earmarked to ensure that a decisive impact was made on remaining levels of poverty through targeted actions and early interventions.

The EUR50 billion investment is based on the lifecycle approach to Social Inclusion in the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* and has a particular focus on areas such as childcare services, employment activation measures, services for the disabled and supports for older people.

Minister Brennan said the measures outlined in the National Development Plan are a central element in an overall integrated and targeted approach that will be further enhanced with the unveiling within weeks of the new ten year National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. Building on *Towards 2016* and the new NDP, the National Action Plan will outline a comprehensive framework for implementing a streamlined, cross-cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The Minister announced that EUR50 million is being invested in a new initiative specifically aimed at encouraging and supporting the employment and participation of people of working age who are in receipt of social welfare payments. It will involve the Department of Social and Family Affairs, in co-operation with the relevant agencies, engaging on an individual case basis with all of these people, whether they are jobseekers, lone parents, people with a disability or in some other category. The target is to provide the opportunities for 20% of those of working age (16-65 years)



Department of Social and Family Affairs

on passive long-term welfare payments - over 50,000 people - to move to employment during the lifetime of the Plan.

Minister Brennan said employment has proven to be a major factor as an effective route out of poverty and also influences quality of life and social well-being. For that reason, while social welfare income support remains crucial and must be adequate to meet needs, passive income support is not sufficient if people are to have financial independence and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

He said the route map for helping and encouraging people from welfare to work will be further supported through sustained investment in other specific programmes, including-

- EUR591 million in the **Back to Work Programme**, the main element of which is the Back to Work Allowance Scheme (BTWA) that encourages the long term unemployed to take up employment opportunities by allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their social welfare payment plus secondary benefits over three or four years.
- EUR519 million in the **Back to Education Allowance** which is designed to help people in receipt of social welfare to improve their employability and job-readiness by improving their qualifications and education. There are two strands to the BTEA scheme, the **Second Level Option** and the **Third Level Option**.

Minister Brennan said: "In recent years as a result of our policies and investments we have lifted at least 250,000 people out of poverty, including 100,000 children. Despite this success, we continue to face the challenge of striving to finally end the unacceptable blemish of poverty and social exclusion. The new National Development Plan recognises this and has placed tackling remaining poverty and social exclusion centre stage. The Plan, coupled with the forthcoming National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the recent national agreement *Towards 2016*, represents the most wide-ranging, comprehensive and targeted strategic programme of action ever undertaken to confront and tackle remaining poverty and social exclusion.

"This programme recognizes that the development of human capital, through striving to ensure that the potential of no individual is neglected or overlooked, is as important for society as the building of physical infrastructure. The EUR50 billion investment, in addition to the annual welfare



Department of Social and Family Affairs

spend which this year will be over EUR15 billion, will help transform the lives of thousands of people by opening up new opportunities in employment, training and education.”

Expenditure on Social Inclusion

Expenditure on the programmes contained in the Social Inclusion Chapter of the NDP will be EUR49.6bn. In addition, there is expenditure in other chapters, which is crucial to combating poverty and social exclusion, including housing, education, employment and health. The main elements are-

- EUR19.3bn to support the provision of programmes and services for people with disabilities in line with the National Disability Strategy;
- EUR12.3bn Children’s Programme to provide childcare services, child protection and recreational facilities for children, and educational help for children from disadvantaged communities and those with special needs;
- EUR9.7bn to help older people live independently at home and to provide investment in quality residential care facilities for older people who are no longer able to live at home;
- EUR4.2bn in Working Age Education Support programmes to support further adult education, tackle early school leaving, improve student support and third level access;
- EUR1.1bn in Working Age in Social and Economic Participation programmes
- EUR1.9bn to support the development of our increasingly diverse communities, including voluntary and community bodies, and implementation of the National Drugs Strategy, this includes strengthening and enhancing the RAPID programme, which prioritises investment on 46 of the most disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns in the State. It also includes investment in the Family Resource Centres;
- EUR848m to support immigrant integration, language support, the social and economic advancement of members of the Travelling Community, the National Action Plan Against Racism and programmes and measures to combat gender inequality.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Many other areas of the NDP outside of the Social Inclusion Chapter are clearly significant from a poverty and social inclusion perspective. Key areas in the Social Infrastructure Chapter include:

- Over EUR21bn for housing, delivering assistance through social, affordable and voluntary housing schemes to over 140,000 households over the Plan period, including 100,000 new social and affordable units;
- Some EUR5bn to be invested in health infrastructure: acute hospital care; primary community and continuing care; and health information and communications;
- Some EUR5bn in schools development and EUR13bn in higher education;
- Almost EUR2bn for sport and culture.

In the Human Capital Chapter, key elements are:

- Almost EUR4.9 billion for targeted training and supports to groups outside the labour market such as the unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers and prisoners. This funding will also support increased participation of women, older workers, part-time workers and migrants;
- Some EUR2.9 billion to improve training for people in employment, to help upskill those who may be affected by industrial restructuring, to improve and enlarge the apprenticeship system and to provide progression opportunities for school leavers.

In the Economic Infrastructure Chapter, some EUR90m is to be invested in expanding the Rural Transport Initiative.

Ends