



NEWS RELEASE

23rd JANUARY 2008

Minister Cullen launches 'A Short Guide to the Irish Social Welfare system'

Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs today (23 January 2008) launched a new booklet '*A Short Guide to the Irish Social Welfare System*' published by the **Congress Centres Network** (CCN) – a 25-centre network established under the umbrella of the **Irish Congress of Trade Unions** (ICTU). The 47-page Guide aims to bring together a wide range of information and supports available within the Irish Social Welfare system.

Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Integration Policy, **Conor Lenihan TD**, also attended today's launch of the Guide, which is available in five languages – English, Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian and Russian.

Speaking today, **Minister Martin Cullen, TD** said: "This new free publication, outlines the kinds of payments and entitlements available within the Irish Social Welfare system. It explains how they can be accessed and answers clearly and concisely questions such as what happens when you become unemployed or ill or you find yourself parenting alone. This publication should prove to be a very practical resource within the Congress Centres Network itself and among statutory bodies, voluntary groups and non-governmental organisations."

Minister Martin Cullen TD continued: "One of the challenges identified by Congress Centres and particularly by migrants accessing the centres, is the problem of finding clear and reliable information around complex issues in a variety of languages. While many migrants are working to improve their English



language skills, these may not be sufficiently developed to allow them to access key information such as how the Irish Social Welfare system works. This in turn can put them at risk of unnecessary hardship, marginalisation and even exploitation.” Minister Cullen TD added: “I fully endorse the importance of developing services to a population base that is more diverse than a decade ago, one which presents new and different challenges and calls on us all to be more innovative in finding solutions.”

Minister of State Conor Lenihan TD said: “I am delighted to be here today at the launch of this information booklet. The problems associated with accessing information about services is one of the key issues raised by migrant groups. We must continually work to ensure that information on services is accessible to our new communities and this is an excellent example of how this can be achieved.”

Within the migrant population accessing Congress Centres, Polish, Lithuanians, Latvians and Russians have been identified by the Centres as among the most common and widespread nationalities utilising the network.

The Congress Centres Network (CCN) comprises of 25 centres around the country, many of which were established in the 1980s. Complimenting the CCN on their work in recent years, **Minister Cullen TD** concluded: “As the economic and social climate in Ireland underwent rapid change in the 1990s, the Centres had to readily adapt to new circumstances in order to remain relevant, vibrant and viable. For the last decade, the CCN has been to the fore in providing information to migrants and their families and advocating on their behalf.”



Editor's note: '*A Short Guide to the Irish Social Welfare System*' will be distributed by the Congress Centres Network to statutory bodies and agencies, community and voluntary organisations and to those who provide front-line services to people in receipt of social welfare payments.

Issued by:

Michelle Hctor, 087 8563070

Joan O'Shea, 087 139 4159