



## **Minister Welcomes Social Partners Report On Reform Of Social Insurance System**

### **Developing A Fully Inclusive Social Insurance Model:**

#### ***A Review By Social Partners Of Pointers To Reform Social Insurance In A Changing Work And Social Context***

Welcoming A Report From The Social Partners Prioritising Areas Of The Social Insurance System For Reform, Minister Seamus Brennan, TD, Said Today: "Our Social Insurance System Has Served Us Well, But We Must Ensure Social Insurance Continues To Meet The Changing Needs Of Workers And Families Living In Irish Society Today".

The Minister Said: "The Question Asked Of The Social Partners Was How Can Our Social Insurance System Respond To The Challenges And Demands Of A New Era Of Competing Work And Home Life Demands On One Hand, While Also Ensuring The Social Insurance Fund Is Managed Prudently, So That It Can Continue To Meet The Future Social Protection Demands And The Needs Of An Aging Population. The Areas Marked Out For Priority Action In This Report Provide Pointers Towards Answering This Question."

Referring To The Analysis In The Report Of The Ireland's Changing Workforce Over The Past Fifteen Years The Minister Added "I Am Acutely Aware That As The Needs Of Workers Diversify, In Terms Of Patterns Of Work And Mobility, Improved Forms Of Social Insurance Protection Become Increasingly Important. There Is A Need To Continue To Modernise Our Social Insurance System, So That Society As A Whole Can Continue To Enjoy The Necessary Levels Of Social Protection. To Do This, We Must Ensure Social Welfare Benefits Are Co-Ordinated With Active Labour Market Measures And They Do Not Create Unnecessary Barriers To Flexibility In Working Needs.



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

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Minister Brennan Added: "The Social Welfare System Is Legally And Administratively Complex. Progress Must Be Well Thought Through To Ensure All Measures Advanced Will Meet Their Objectives. However, The Proposals Presented In The Report Are Now Being Examined Within The Department With A View To Bringing Forward Recommendations For Change Shortly."

A Working Group To Develop A Fully Inclusive Social Insurance Model Was First Established In 2002 Under The PPF And Continued Its Work Under Sustaining Progress. The Report, In Brief, Includes:

- An Overview Of Changing Labour Market Participation Trends, Their Impact On The Social Insurance System And Significant Changes In The Social Insurance System Over The Past Twenty Years;
- Issues Related To How The Social Insurance System Provides Access To Social Protection Through The Building Up Of A Contribution Record. The Working Group's Discussion Relates To The Main Groups Currently Without Such Access, Including Spouses Working In Family Businesses, Those Earning Less Than €38 Per Week (Threshold Below Which A Person Is Covered For Occupational Injuries Only) And People Who Work Beyond Pensionable Age;
- Issues Related To How Social Insurance Treats Workers With Gaps In Their Contribution Record Such As Those With Interrupted Work Patterns. The Working Group Examined How Work Arrangements Such As Part-Time Work Affect Their Contribution Records And Entitlement To Benefits And
- More General Issues Such As The Treatment Of Homemakers, How Non-Irish National Workers Are Dealt With By The Social Insurance System And The Level Of Maternity Benefit.

The Working Group Included Representatives Of ICTU, SIPTU, INOU, IBEC, IFA, ICMSA, CORI, Children' Rights Alliance, National Women's Council Of Ireland And Officials From The Departments Of Finance And Social & Family Affairs.

The Report Is Available On The Department Of Social And Family Affairs' website at

<http://www.welfare.ie/publications/fisimrep.html>

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