



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection**

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**Presentation by the Minister for Social Protection to the  
Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection in  
relation to the forthcoming EPSCO meeting and EU  
Presidency Priorities.**

Tomorrow (Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September), Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton TD will brief the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection on the forthcoming meeting of EU Social and Employment Ministers in Luxembourg on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October. Minister Burton will also take the opportunity to brief the Committee on her priorities during the forthcoming EU Presidency.

The meeting next week is a formal meeting of the Employment and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO). The Council covers a wide range of issues spanning the responsibilities of a number of Ministries including Social Protection, Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, Justice Equality and Defence, Health and more recently Children and Youth Affairs.

The key items on the Agenda for this meeting include:

- Towards a Job-Rich Recovery and Giving a Better Chance to Europe's Youth,
- Preventing and tackling child poverty and social exclusion and promoting children's well-being.

Both of these are strongly supported by Minister Burton.

One of the challenges faced by EU countries including Ireland is tackling unemployment, with a particular emphasis placed on the experiences of young people whose rate of unemployment across the EU is twice that of the total unemployment rate. There has been much activity at both national and EU level in attempting to face these challenges.

The Council Conclusions, which will be adopted on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> October, are a further development of the work done so far, including strengthening employment policy measures at both national and EU level. The conclusions call on the Member States and the Commission to take action on a number of fronts designed to step up job creation and labour demand.

On Child Poverty, the Council will agree Draft Conclusions which have been prepared under the Cypriot Presidency. The Conclusions recognise that income



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support measures will not, on their own, address child poverty. It is for this reason that access to services and children's participation are also important. Other items on the Council Agenda include the Opinion from the EU Social Protection Committee on the Semester Process. The key political message in this Opinion is that social policy issues are increasingly relevant in the Semester and that EPSCO has a key role in ensuring that the positive contribution of social protection to inclusive growth are properly reflected in all relevant Council recommendations. Associated with this is a proposal for a new social performance monitor. Also on the agenda is social security aspects of association agreements the EU has with Albania, Montenegro, San Marino and Turkey.

### **Youth Guarantee**

Minister Burton is also taking the opportunity to brief the Committee on her priorities for the forthcoming EU Presidency in the first half of 2013. One of the highlights of the Presidency will be to bring Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs to Dublin in February 2013 for an informal Ministerial Meeting. The general theme for the meeting will be "Supporting People into Employment", with a particular emphasis on youth unemployment.

The youth unemployment element will be particularly timely. In December 2012 the EU Commission will publish a Youth Transitions Package. The main element of this will be a proposal for a "youth guarantee" aiming to ensure targeted young people are either working or in appropriate training/work experience within a specified time after becoming unemployed.

The objective of the proposal is to intensify actions at EU and Member State level aimed at addressing the high level of youth unemployment across Europe. The EU Commission is very anxious to see significant progress in this area during the Irish Presidency and hopes that Council recommendations can be adopted.

### **Other Social Protection measures during the Irish Presidency**

During the Presidency, the Minister also intends to make progress on two key legislative measures, the Pensions Portability Directive and a regulation to amend the social security coordination regulations. These are valuable steps in ensuring that the free movement of workers is a practical reality.

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**PRESENTATION ENDS**