



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

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### **Minister Coughlan Cuts Red Tape To Help Job Seekers Overseas**

Unemployed people seeking work will be able to draw their social welfare entitlements in another EU country for up to six months, said Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan today.

"This easing of the restrictions which I expect to be agreed with other EU countries should be of great assistance to people seeking job opportunities within the EU," said Minister Coughlan.

"The person seeking work will continue to be paid their Irish social welfare benefit payment which can be delivered to a local banking institution. This will greatly assist Irish people who wish to broaden their search for work to other States within the EU," said Minister Coughlan.

The measure is one of a series of unemployment benefit measures that the Minister aims to pilot through to agreement during Ireland's Presidency of the European Union.

"A key aim of Ireland's Presidency in relation to social protection will be the finalisation of reforms of regulations to co-ordinate social security systems for workers and others moving throughout the European Union.

"A significant amount of detailed and painstaking work has been done in this area of reform, and it is my priority to ensure that these proposals are agreed and delivered in the term of our Presidency. I will be taking considerable care to ensure that workers and families who want to move within the European Union are not consequently penalised in terms of their social security entitlements," added Minister Coughlan.

"I would intend that this fundamental reform and modernisation of the co-ordination of rules of the social security system across the EU will result in ensuring our citizens have improved protection and that the EU will be able to adapt to future requirements in this important area of social protection.

"I expect this will be achieved by reinforcing the principle of equal treatment across member states and by simplifying legislation to ensure it applies to all EU citizens whether they are employed or self employed workers, pensioners, civil servants, students or non active persons," added Minister Coughlan.

The overall focus of Ireland's presidency of the EU will be to advance the EU social policy agenda and in particular make progress in delivering on the Lisbon Agenda, which sets out a ten year strategy to make the EU the world's most dynamic and competitive economy.

"Making work pay" has been chosen as the main theme for discussion at the Informal Council of Ministers for Employment and Social Policy from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2004 in Galway.

This is one of the four key policy areas identified for action in the Lisbon Agenda for the modernisation of social protection systems. Minister Coughlan intends to explore the actions needed to ensure that benefit and employment policies are mutually supportive.

**ENDS**

**December 27<sup>th</sup> 2003**