



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

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Ó Cuív addresses INOU 'Make the Future Work' Conference

Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Minister for Social Protection, this morning (Tuesday 28 Sept 2010) opened and addressed the conference 'Make the Future Work' which was hosted by the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) in Dublin.

The conference represents the final phase in the INOU's strand of the "Ireland in Social Europe" project led by European Anti Poverty Network Ireland and also looked at the theme of job activation. Speaking with delegates, Minister Ó Cuív said: "This project is particularly timely and the findings will be very useful to policy makers and service practitioners in the field of activation and labour market programmes."

Minister Ó Cuív continued: "Unemployment is one of the greatest challenges that people face. People often think of unemployment purely in terms of income loss. However, it is also about dignity and confidence; the loss of something challenging to do every day; and the loss of social contact with workmates.

"We are coming through a very difficult economic period in our country and with recovery will come jobs - and the Government is taking steps to protect and create new jobs. Our over-riding priority now is to drive forward the process of economic recovery."



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The Minister made reference to a number of initiatives the Government is undertaking to create new jobs. He referred to the €40 billion **Capital Investment Plan** - one of the highest spends in the EU, and a major stimulus to the economy; the €500 million **Innovation Fund-Ireland** which will support enterprise development and job creation by drawing top venture capitalists to Ireland; the €360 million which is being invested in research and innovation involving third-level institutions that will create jobs and new enterprises. Minister Ó Cuív also referred to the Government's **Employment Subsidy Scheme**; the **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance** which aims to encourage the long term unemployed to develop a business while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their social welfare payment. At the end of August, 6,646 people were availing of the scheme; the €169 million which is being provided by the Minister's Department for the **Back to Education Allowance** for this academic year. Practical changes to ease its qualifying conditions came in to effect from Monday 19 July and the **PRSI job incentive scheme for employers** which is focused on creating new jobs for people who have been on the Live Register for 6 months or more.

The Minister also spoke about the *National Employment Action Plan* - which is the Government's main welfare to work measure which works with 18 to 65 year olds who are approaching 3 months on the Live Register. People who are unemployed in this age range are identified by the Department of Social Protection and referred to Fás for interview with a view to assisting them enter or re-enter the labour market.

Minister Ó Cuív also said: "The Government is hugely committed to creating jobs in the *competitive economy*. That is first and foremost our priority in Government. One of the priorities I have been given in my Department is job activation, which can benefit our *social economy*. Two work opportunity



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schemes – the Community Services Programme and the Rural Social Scheme have come in to my Department and are set to develop further. These schemes do not replace either commercial employment or full-time or part-time state employment, but they are good models with tried and tested delivery in providing social employment. Their development, with new eligibility, will not only provide opportunities for jobseekers but will also bring tangible benefits to communities across towns, cities and counties.”

In his concluding remarks, Minister Ó Cuív said: “I also recognise that, in the face of a massive unemployment challenge, we have to be innovative and look for new solutions. We cannot change global economics so we must rely on innovation and experience if the challenge is to be met. I want to assure you of my commitment and that of Government in meeting this challenge. To that end I will study with great interest the outcomes of this INOU conference.”

ENDS