



## **JobBridge: Government issues call to action for quality work experiences on internship scheme**

*Government working with private, voluntary and community sectors people without jobs and for the benefit of our country - Taoiseach*

Speaking at the launch of JobBridge, the new National Internship Scheme today (*Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011*), Joan Burton TD, the Minister for Social Protection, said she was very encouraged by the positive feedback from many employers to the new National Internship Scheme.

**Minister Burton said:** "The launch of 5,000 places in JobBridge by my Department will offer a real chance to many people to get six or nine months of critical work experience – a foot on the ladder after training, apprenticeship or graduation. The commitment of the private sector, led by Mr. Martin Murphy, Managing Director of HP Ireland who has chaired the Steering Group on the National Internship Scheme will, I hope, result in a wide range of internship opportunities opening up.

"Already Mr. Murphy and Mr. Sean O'Driscoll, Chief Executive of Glen Dimplex as private sector champions of JobBridge have been instrumental in securing the commitment of a large number of leading Irish and multinational companies to JobBridge.

"There is strong interest in participating in an initiative such as JobBridge. We have already received 500 expressions of interests from organisations offering approximately 1,000 internship opportunities. Over 320 of the members of ISME are committed to JobBridge and will have their vacancies available within 3 months."

Companies which have pledged their support to JobBridge include Dawn Foods, KPMG, HP, Glen Dimplex, IBEC, Quinn Group Ltd, Coilte, Accenture, TV3, Smurfit Kappa, Arthur Cox, Mercury Engineering, Hertz, Hertz Shared Services Centre, ESB, Bord na Móna, Tesco, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, A&L Goodbody, Failte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Glanbia and Aer Lingus.

**Speaking at the launch, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD said:**

“The Government is committed to getting Ireland back to work and JobBridge is an important part of that effort. Establishing a National Internship Scheme was a flagship commitment in last month’s Job Initiative. I believe that we need a collective effort by all sectors of society to tackle the challenges facing the country. JobBridge is just such a collective effort – with the goal of ensuring that we offer people the opportunity to gain work experience through a quality internship.”

**Mr Martin Murphy, Managing Director of HP Ireland noted that:**

“I have long advocated that industry should be leading the way in innovation and job creation in the Irish economy and I am extremely pleased by the positive reaction that we have received to date on this initiative.

From indigenous industry to multinationals to SMEs across a number of counties in Ireland, we have experienced the willingness of industry to play its role to equip individuals with new and enterprising skills that will give them the necessary experience to enter or return to the workforce and secure long term employment in this country.

The Steering Committee is a new example of how industry and the government can work together to instigate real change, and my hope is that this is the first of many such examples. We are confident that we can exceed the ambitious targets that have been set for the National Internship Scheme. We look forward to working with the companies and interns alike to build and develop a new model to deliver real value to all involved.”

Minister Burton concluded by saying: “I appreciate that, in the current climate, recruitment is a big decision for employers, particularly for small and medium enterprises. I would hope that some employers who, through JobBridge find talented and motivated interns, can make the decision to offer employment to their intern. In other words, the period of internship would be a job interview for a longer period of employment.”

**ENDS**

## **Overview of JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme**

JobBridge, which consists of 5,000 places, will give individuals on the Live Register for at least three months the opportunity to undertake a quality internship in an organisation in the private, public or community or voluntary sectors for a six month or a nine month period. Interns will receive an allowance of €50 per week in addition to their existing social welfare entitlement. This allowance will be payable for the duration of the internship. As the Department of Social Protection is paying the weekly €50 allowance to interns, there will be no direct cost to participating organisations.

JobBridge is open to jobseekers that are unable to get a job without experience, either as new entrants to the labour market after training or education or as unemployed workers seeking to learn new skills. The website ([www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie)) will be live from Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2011 for the purposes of advertising internship places. However information about the scheme will be available on [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie) from today, Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> June.

## **Questions and Answers**

### **1. How much will a participant get while participating in JobBridge?**

People taking up an internship will get €50 per week in addition to their existing social welfare payment.

Example of the weekly rate of payment for a jobseeker who is currently receiving the maximum rate of Jobseeker's Benefit

Personal rate (includes €50 top-up payment)		€238.00
Maximum Rate of Increase for a Qualified Adult, where applicable		€124.80
Each qualified child (See note)	Full rate	€29.80
	Half-rate	€14.90
Potential total weekly payment for a married jobseeker with two children		€422.40

Note: A participant will be paid an increase of €29.80 pw for each qualified child if they qualify for an increase for a qualified adult or if they are parenting alone. If they do not qualify for an increase for a qualified adult, they may receive a half-rate qualified child increase.

### **2. When will the first internship commence?**

It is expected that the first Internship will commence some weeks after the JobBridge launch. This is to allow time for organisations to apply via the dedicated website [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie) to offer internship opportunities and for individuals to apply for them. The website ([www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie)) will be live from Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2011 for the purposes of advertising internship places. However information about the scheme will be available on [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie) from today, Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> June.

### **3. Will participants keep their secondary benefits (e.g. medical card, rent supplement, mortgage interest supplement, fuel allowance, etc) while participating in JobBridge?**

Yes, participants will keep any additional benefits that they were receiving immediately prior to taking up an internship.

### **4. How long will the scheme last and for how long can a person participate in it?**

JobBridge will run for two years so applications for internships will continue to be accepted until June 2013. The duration of individual internship positions will be from six months to a maximum of nine months.

**5. Who will be eligible to participate in JobBridge?**

JobBridge will be available to individuals who are on the Live Register and have been in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance/Benefit or signing on for credits for at least 3 months.

**6. If an individual is not on the Live Register can they qualify?**

No, however, if an individual signs onto the Live Register and waits for 3 months, they will then become eligible.

It is important to note that an unemployed individual can sign on the Live Register for credits and not be in receipt of any Social Welfare payment.

If an individual is not willing to wait for three months they may apply for a work experience placement under the FAS Work Placement Programme immediately.

**7. How will the weekly €50 allowance be paid to interns?**

Participants on JobBridge will be paid an internship allowance by the Department of Social Protection via an electronic funds transfer into their bank account. The internship allowance will consist of their existing social welfare entitlements plus the weekly top up allowance of €50.

**8. How can jobseekers apply for internships?**

All internship opportunities in host organisations will be advertised on the dedicated website [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie). Provided an individual has been on the Live Register for at least 3 months they can apply via this website directly to the relevant host organisation for a specific internship. It is then a matter for each respective host organisation to decide how to select their preferred candidate. It is envisaged that many organisations would use a competitive interview selection process but this is entirely a matter for them.

Once an individual has been selected as a host organisations preferred candidate they are provided with an eligibility form which the individual must bring to their local social welfare office. The local social welfare office will complete this form and if the

individual is eligible the intern will submit the form back to the Employment Services Division of FAS, who will inform the host organisation that the internship can commence.

**9. Are there any conditions for the employers or organisations (which will be known as host organisations) which will make places available?**

- A host organisation must have a minimum of 1 full time employee who is employed for 30 hours or more per week (i.e. on payroll and subject to tax and PRSI).
- The internship will not be provided to displace an existing employee. The scheme administrator reserves the right to review cases where it is reported that this is the case.
- The host organisation’s Public/Employers Liability insurance and Motor Insurance, if applicable, will cover any internships on the National Internship Scheme.
- The host organisation must be fully compliant with current workplace health and safety and all other legal requirements.
- The host organisation must be a legal entity and may not be a Sole Trader.
- The host organisation may not have vacancies in the area of activity in which the internship is offered.
- If Garda Vetting applies to the internship, the host organisation must ensure that the vetting process is applied.
- The maximum number of internships a host organisation can offer at any one time is dependent on their number of full time employees:

<b>Number of Full Time Employees</b>	<b>Number of Internships</b>
1-10 employees	1 internship place
11-20 employees	2 internship places
21-30 employees	3 internship places
30 + employees	20% of the workforce to a maximum of 200 internships whichever is the smaller

Local branch offices of national organisations will be regarded as an individual host organisation for the purpose of the National Internship Scheme.

**10. What responsibilities will the host organisations have?**

The responsibilities of the host organisations will be to:

- Identify and advertise an internship opportunity to jobseekers;
- Select a candidate for an internship through an agreed application process;

- Provide the opportunity for the intern to learn or apply key skills in a workplace setting;
- Appoint a designated person to support the intern;
- Work with the intern to monitor and develop their skills;
- Abide by the Standard Internship Agreement; and
- Return a short online monthly compliance update to confirm the internship is progressing as agreed.

**11. How do organisations apply to participate in the scheme?**

Organisations apply through the dedicated website [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie) to register their wish to provide an internship opportunity. Applications will be vetted, and if approved they will be advertised on the website.

**12. Who will administer JobBridge?**

JobBridge will be administered by the Employment Services Division of FAS which is in the process of being transferred to the Department of Social Protection.

This is the first step in the establishment of a National Employment and Entitlements Service which will integrate the employment support services currently provided directly by the Department of Social Protection with those currently provided by FÁS into a single service.

This will provide a 'one stop shop' for people wishing to establish their benefit entitlements, seek employment and/or advice about their training options. The focus will be on the individual, their rights to a payment, their access to an opportunity to engage in employment, training or upskilling, as appropriate and their responsibility to engage with such opportunities.

**13. What measures are in place to prevent displacement?**

In order to participate in JobBridge, host organisations must make a declaration that they will not displace an employee. Organisations that attempt to use this scheme for displacement purposes will not be able to get their internships approved and will be banned from participating in this and other similar schemes.

**14. Is the National Internship Scheme an excuse for cheap labour?**

No. The National Internship Scheme provides an opportunity for those seeking employment to gain valuable work experience in a host organisation. The Scheme aims to keep participants close to

the labour market with the goal of improving their employability so that they enhance their prospects of securing employment upon completion.

**15. Companies which have pledged their support to JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme are:**

- HP
- Glen Dimplex
- IBEC
- Quinn Group Ltd
- Coilte
- Accenture
- TV3
- Smurfit Kappa
- Dawn Foods
- ESB
- KPMG
- Arthur Cox
- Mercury Engineering
- Hertz
- Hertz Shared Services Centre
- Bord na Móna
- Tesco
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers
- A&L Goodbody
- Aer Lingus
- Failte Ireland
- Enterprise Ireland
- Glanbia

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**