



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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Tuesday, 29 November 2016: Minister for Social Protection Leo Varadkar has welcomed new CSO figures showing that the unemployment rate has fallen to 7.3%, and the number of unemployed men has dropped below 100,000 for the first time in eight years.

“We have passed yet another milestone this year with the number of unemployed men falling below 100,000. I’m also encouraged that the unemployment rate fell to 7.3% in November, down from 7.5% in October and from 9.1% at this time last year.

“Men are still substantially more likely to be unemployed than women. It’s an unspoken issue that we need to do more about, given the impact that unemployment has on poverty, living standards, mental health, self-worth and self-esteem. It’s good to see that progress is being made and that we have met this milestone.

“This development follows a number of other breakthroughs in the last few months. Most recently the Government exceeded its target to move 20,000 people from long-term unemployment to work this year. We now have more than 2 million people at work, and the Live Register has fallen below 300,000.

“Fine Gael in Government has almost halved unemployment and my intention is to halve it again during the lifetime of this Government. But the more progress you make in tackling unemployment, the harder it gets.

“Today I was delighted to join my colleague, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation Mary Mitchell O’Connor for the announcement of 100 new jobs at West Pharma in Blanchardstown, on a day that 700 new jobs were announced nationally. But the Government cannot be complacent and we will continue to foster a pro-business environment by providing better infrastructure, servicing more land, keeping taxes low, providing our people with the skills and education they need to secure good employment, and making sure that Ireland remains at the heart of Europe and open to the world.

“Budget 2017 also continued the Government’s focus on activation, and our current efforts include:

- 1) More one-to-one engagement by case officers with jobseekers through Intreo Centres and JobPath;**
- 2) Making work pay through increases in wages and salaries that are sustainable and affordable, reductions in the USC and new social insurance benefits like paternity benefit;**
- 3) Supporting more people to enter self-employment and set up their own business or practice;**
- 4) Increasing the uptake by employers of financial supports like JobsPlus which subsidises employers who take on someone who is long-term unemployed and the Wage Subsidy Scheme for taking on someone with a disability;**

- 5) The development of an Action Plan for Jobless Households which will focus intergenerational employment and supporting people with disabilities and lone parents to take up employment;**
- 6) Reforming and recalibrating welfare to work schemes for the new economic environment, such as Community Enterprise, Tus, and Gateway;**
- 7) Matching employers with jobseekers through initiatives like JobsWeek, Careers Fairs and the Jobs Ireland website;**
- 8) Working across government to improve access to affordable education, training, housing and childcare.**

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