



## An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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### **Minister Burton gives opening address at INOU Conference and speaks of initiatives and developments to assist jobseekers**

Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton T.D. today (*Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2011*) gave the opening address at the Annual Conference of the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) in Dublin.

Minister Burton outlined details of the new National Internship Scheme which will commence in July: "My Department is developing the National Internship Scheme, which will provide up to 5,000 work experience opportunities for jobseekers in the private, public or community and voluntary sectors. I am pleased to be able to confirm that Mr. Martin Murphy, Managing Director of HP Ireland, has been appointed as the independent chair of the Steering Group which has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the National Internship Scheme."

Minister Burton continued: "Earlier this month, the Government took a major step in getting Ireland back on the road to recovery by announcing the Jobs Initiative. Not only is the Government trying to restore confidence in Ireland's economy through the Jobs Initiative, but my colleagues and I are working to restore hope and confidence in the huge numbers of people who find themselves out of work."

The Jobs Initiative contains measures to provide jobseekers with enhanced opportunities to maintain and develop their skills and competencies, whilst also offering the possibility of securing valuable work experience. It contains almost 21,000 training, education and internship places which will prepare and assist jobseekers to find jobs and get workplace experience.

The National Internship Scheme, which is part of the Jobs Initiative, will provide up to 5,000 unemployed people with an internship opportunity ranging from six to nine months in the private, public or community and voluntary sectors. During this time participants will receive an allowance, which will consist of a €50 per week top up on their existing social welfare entitlements.

Minister Burton explained: "The National Internship Scheme will assist in breaking the cycle where jobseekers are unable to get a job without experience, either as new entrants to the labour market after education or training or as unemployed workers whose existing skills will not be appropriate to the types of jobs that will emerge in post- recession Ireland. The scheme will also give young people a real opportunity to gain valuable experience to bridge the gap between study and the beginning of their working lives."



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“Aside from helping young people take their first step in their careers, I firmly believe that one of the other key benefits of the scheme is that it will enable individuals to get their foot in the door with a potential prospective employer.”

The Minister referred to other developments and initiatives in the Department of Social Protection which will assist jobseekers in accessing their entitlements and in getting back into employment. One of these is the establishment of a new 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 very much 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.

Minister Burton concluded by saying: “I want to acknowledge the invaluable service provided by the INOU since 1987 to unemployed people and their families through its work at local and national level. The INOU provides free, accurate, independent, comprehensive and user-friendly information to unemployed people. Their activity in the areas of training, research and policy advice is, and will be, of invaluable assistance in our efforts to build a better future for this country and I look forward to continuing to work with the INOU on the development positive opportunities for jobseekers.”

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**