

# ELECTING TO TACKLE UNEMPLOYMENT

## Tackling Unemployment

- To-date the Government has tried to address the unemployment crisis through existing resources, the term used is 'cost' or 'revenue neutral' and it is not working. The Live Register is at historically very high levels and though it appears to be falling this is not happening because unemployed people are finding jobs. Rather the decline has arisen because more people are emigrating; more people are going back to education; and more people are not making the transition from Jobseekers Benefit to Jobseekers Allowance because of their family circumstances.
- What's really worrying is the marked increase in the numbers of people on the Live Register for more than a year: to a point where this number is now greater than the entire Live Register at the beginning of 2007. If unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment is not properly and urgently addressed the social and economic cost at the personal and social level will become more deep rooted and intractable.

---

### Q for politicians:

**"What will you do to tackle unemployment?"**

---

## Social Welfare

- Given the extent of the unemployment crisis and the fact that there is no easy or quick fix to it, it is imperative that unemployed people and their dependents have an acceptable standard of living. At the very least social welfare payments must ensure that unemployed people can meet their basic needs. To that end, the INOU is calling for the cuts made to social welfare payments to be reversed.
- Social Protection services must ensure that now:
  - People who become unemployed have their claims processed and paid as quickly as is possible;
  - When people need to re-sign-on their claims are dealt with speedily;
  - When people are moving from Jobseekers Benefit to Jobseekers Allowance their claims are dealt with promptly;
  - The significant delays in the Social Welfare Appeals process are dealt with urgently;
  - The Supplementary Welfare system is providing a basic SWA payment for unemployed people waiting for their claims to be dealt with;
  - The system adapts to support people to find work in a more atypical labour market;
  - Supports are provided to self-employed people whose work has dried-up.

---

### Q for politicians:

**"Will you reverse the cuts made to Jobseekers Allowance and Benefit?"**

---

## Better Services for Unemployed People

- Employment and social services must start with the individual unemployed person.
- Participation in education, training and employment programmes must be by choice and be meaningful.
- Personal contact aimed at guiding the individual is required which would facilitate better decision making and better use of resources rather than the big stick approach.
- Employment and related services must understand the qualifications unemployed people already have and explore how these can be built on.
- Timely access to relevant information must improve. It is urgent that communication across all schemes and providers supports positive participation. To that end, maximising the use of online facilities is urgently required.
- Services must do all they can to make work placements and work experience available to unemployed people. However, work placements must be relevant to the person's needs and must not be used to replace paid jobs.

---

### Q for politicians:

**“How will you improve services to unemployed people?”**

---

### Jobs

- An integrated and inclusive Jobs Strategy that spells out how jobs will be created and maintained across the entire labour market must be developed and implemented ASAP.
- Such a strategy must also ensure that unemployed people are offered the most meaningful education, training and employment option for them. At a time of limited resources and too few options activation policies must have an end goal of a job and not become an end in themselves.
- Three new activation programmes have been introduced over the past few Budgets: the Work Placement Programme; the Skills Development and Internship Programme (SDIP); and TUS a community based programme. The terms and conditions differ across all three and the INOU urges that they all follow the standard set by the SDIP where participants will receive training and an additional payment of €100.
- The Community and Voluntary sector play a key role in the implementation of Active Labour Market Programmes in particular programmes like Community Employment and Jobs Initiative. Support for this sector must be maintained.
- Re-introduce the Back to Work Allowance and target it at the long-term unemployed and other long-term social welfare recipients.
- Improve access to supports to make self-employment a more viable option for unemployed people: a good starting point would be the extension of the time period on the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance.

---

### Q for politicians:

**What will you do to create decent jobs?**

---