

# Ministers Humphreys and O'Brien announce new Measures to support CE and TÚS schemes during COVID

From [Department of Social Protection](#)

Published on 2 March 2021

Last updated on 2 March 2021

**Extension of contracts until July 2021 to benefit 7000 participants**

**Clarification of 2017 rule changes for participants over 55**

**3000 additional places to be made available on schemes**

**Stakeholder Engagement Forum established**

Under measures announced today by the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, TD, and Minister of State Joe O'Brien, TD, Community Employment (CE) and TÚS schemes will benefit from additional supports being made available for them.

Since the start of the Pandemic, Ministers Humphreys and O'Brien approved the extension of CE and TÚS participant contracts that would have come to an end during Level 5 restrictions on a number of occasions, the most recent being the end of March. To date, over 5,000 participants have benefited from these arrangements.

Participants of both schemes whose contracts were due to finish over the period since last October will now benefit from a further extension up to the 2nd July.

This will benefit those 5,000 participants with existing contract extensions, and an additional 2,000 participants whose contract would ordinarily end between now and the start of July.

**Minister Humphreys commented:**

“The work that CE and TÚS workers carry out is absolutely vital to local communities right across the country. I have listened to the difficulties that some schemes have been experiencing during COVID and I hope that the measures we are announcing today will go some way to addressing these issues.

“My priority is to ensure that there's continuity and certainty for CE and TÚS schemes throughout the current restrictions.

“As Minister for both Rural and Community Development and Social Protection, I absolutely value the contribution that CE and TÚS schemes make on a daily basis in our towns, villages and parishes throughout the country.

“I have long been of the view that Community Employment needs to be viewed not just as an important employment and development support but also as an integral community service particularly in rural areas.

“The changes we are announcing today are an important first step and I am confident that through increased engagement with stakeholders, we can ensure that the important work carried out by CE and TÚS schemes deliver maximum benefits both for workers and communities.

**The Minister added:**

“Under the Government’s July Stimulus Programme last year, I secured approval for 3,000 additional places to support CE and TÚS schemes.

“These additional places underline the Government’s commitment to CE and TÚS and will provide opportunities for new schemes as well as facilitating more people on the existing schemes.

“Filling these additional places, as well as those arising from existing vacancies will be an absolute priority for my Department, once the economy and society begins to move beyond Covid and public health restrictions ease. It is my intention therefore to significantly scale up the numbers of referrals from local Intreo offices to CE and TÚS once the country begins to reopen.”

**Minister O’Brien commented:**

“All of these measures will provide further certainty to CE schemes, participants and the important community services they provide, while supporting long term unemployed during this challenging Covid environment.

“The measures that we are announcing today will provide certainty for CE and TÚS participants while high levels of public health restrictions remain in place.

“I would also like to re-assure participants of CE and TÚS projects that contracts due to end post 2nd July 2021, will be done on a planned and phased basis.”

At a meeting hosted by Ministers Humphreys and O’Brien with CE and TÚS project sponsors in January, the CE sponsors sought clarification regarding a change to the conditions relating to the participation on CE schemes that was introduced in July 2017. This change limited participation to a maximum period of 3 consecutive years. The Ministers asked officials in the Department of Social Protection to review this issue.

**Minister O’Brien announced:**

“Following the review by Departmental officials, I am happy to confirm that participants who were 55 years or older, at the time of the July 2017 rule change and who were already on a

CE scheme at that time, are not affected by the change and have the option of remaining on CE for up to six consecutive years.

“I have asked my officials to prepare a more detailed guide that will issue to all CE schemes in the coming days.

“We are also continuing to examine other issues that were raised at the January meeting.”

It was also announced today that a new CE and TÚS Forum comprising representatives of CE and TÚS schemes and officials from the Department of Social Protection will be established shortly. The purpose of the Forum is to discuss and exchange views on operational issues impacting on both schemes.

**Minister Humphreys explained:**

“In order to deliver maximum benefits for participants and communities, I believe it is vital that there is regular and ongoing engagement between the Department and those delivering these vital services on the ground.

“This new forum will be dedicated to sharing information with and hearing the views across both CE and TÚS sponsors on operational matters that impact on both schemes.

“I believe this new forum will be very useful in informing future service developments for the longer term as we emerge from COVID-19.”

## **Notes for Editor**

CE and TÚS schemes are employment and activation support measures for long term unemployed people and other people in receipt of long-term payments from the Department of Social Protection.

The schemes involve participants in the delivery of a range of services to local communities throughout the country. These include local amenities management, environmental projects, arts and culture, sports, childcare, sports, tidy towns, health-related services, meals on wheels and drug rehabilitation schemes. As well as contributing to the delivery of local services the participants, through their work on these schemes, develop a range of occupational skills and work experience that help to improve their own prospects of securing full-time employment.

Currently there are over 19,500 people participating in CE schemes and over 4,000 participants on TÚS.

In 2020 the Department of Social Protection invested €425 million in CE and TÚS schemes.