

Press Release

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Micheál Martin Announces New Visa Deal with US Government

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Micheál Martin has announced a major new agreement with the US Government that will enable Irish citizens to work and travel in the US for up to 12 months.

Speaking following a signing ceremony in Washington with the US Deputy Secretary of State, Ambassador Negroponte, the Minister said:

“I am delighted that following months of negotiations, we have reached an agreement on a new Working Holiday Agreement that will enable a minimum of 20,000 Irish citizens who are in, or have recently completed, post secondary education to work and travel in the US for up to 12 months. This represents one of the most significant developments in our visa arrangements with the US in almost two decades”.

Under the terms of the deal, up to 5,000 US citizens will also be able to work and travel in Ireland on the same basis. In addition to our new arrangements, the existing summer J1 programme will continue to exist as a separate programme.

The Minister said that the agreement represented a vital investment in the long term health of our relationship with the US. He pointed out “by working and travelling for a relatively lengthy period in each others’ countries, our young people will build important connections which will help maintain our very close ties to the US- it is in a very real way a major investment in the health and strength of this vital relationship”.

He highlighted the success of our similar arrangement with Australia- in which over 13,000 Irish people participated last year- and expressed the hope that the US programme would be equally successful.

Minister Martin emphasised that this initiative is separate to the Government’s ongoing campaign to find a solution to our undocumented. He said “today’s announcement is just one element in our three pronged approach involving a solution for our undocumented; new bilateral arrangements to provide reciprocal long term working visas (known as E3s) and the Working Holiday Agreement. Finding a solution for our undocumented remains a key priority for this Government”.

The Minister highlighted the inter-Departmental nature of negotiations led by his Department and expressed appreciation to the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform for their Departments’ assistance.

The Minister encouraged all those interested in the new arrangements to logon to the Department’s website- www.dfa.ie for full details.

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