



Irish Council for
Civil Liberties

ICCL: Monitoring rights during the pandemic
25-31 July

COVID-19-RELATED ADVOCACY WORK

The Pandemic Unemployment Payment

When it emerged that over 100 people had been cut off – without notice - from the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) by the Department of Social Protection because they had taken holidays, Our Executive Director Liam Herrick spoke to the State broadcaster's flagship programme Morning Ireland outlining our concerns. He highlighted issues with the lawfulness of the measures, how exactly the information was obtained, and the discriminatory impact on one section of society.

Our concerns were also covered by the [Irish Times](#) and the [The Irish Examiner](#). Liam Herrick also spoke to RTÉ's Nine O'Clock News, as well as local radio (KFM and CRC FM), the Hard Shoulder on [Newstalk](#) and the Last Word on Today FM. Liam was also invited to write an opinion piece for the [Sunday Business Post](#) which received much engagement across social media.

The story rolled on through the week, with the Department doing a “u-turn” mid-week by saying people would still be paid if they holidayed in green list countries. More than 2000 people have already been cut off. The discriminatory aspect also remains for people, many of them migrants, who travel to countries not on the Department of Foreign Affairs’ green list.

On Thursday, the Data Protection Commissioner stated it could not see how the Department’s blanket surveillance of people boarding flights to certain destinations conformed with their powers under the Social Welfare Act and our concerns were covered again in [the Irish Times](#), The Irish [Examiner](#), as well as on broadcast media.

The Data Protection Commissioner cannot put out a call soliciting information from affected people so we have done so. As we receive queries, we are asking people to make a complaint so that the DPC can take action.