



MARY COUGHLAN HOSTS NATIONAL FAMILY POLICY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Mary Coughlan, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs today hosted a Public Discussion on *Strengthening Families in Ireland*, in Donegal town. This is the first in a series of five nationwide public consultations on the family through which the Minister is seeking the views of a cross section of family members and those people who work with them, about families in Ireland today, their changing needs and what they see as the priorities for strengthening family well-being. The remaining fora will take place later on in the year and their location and the times will be announced in advance.

At the conclusion of the series a detailed report will be prepared. This will be an important informant of preparations for the Presidency of the EU in 2004, which coincides with the 10th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family. The report will also inform the continued development of a more comprehensive and integrated family policy.

Olivia O'Leary, Broadcaster and Journalist, chaired the Forum today and will also chair the following four fora.

"The family is perhaps one of our oldest expressions of human relationship. It has survived through the years, adapting itself to changing socio economic conditions and the progress of humanity. In strengthening families, we need to know what works and what does not - addressing this need for first hand information will help inform public policy on our families," said Minister Coughlan.



“If we want to strengthen and support families we need to know much more about families. We need to know the problems, the challenges and the reward in having families. We need to know what works and what does not – addressing this need for first hand information will help inform public policy on our families. I look forward to an open, forthright and educational discourse”, added Minister Coughlan, at the Donegal forum.

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