



Building a Society for All

Minister Hanafin launches the Irish programme for 2010 EU Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

“Creating a society in which every individual feels valued and has the resources and supports to participate in activities that are regarded as the norm, is at the heart of *Building a Society For All*” said Mary Hanafin T.D. Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today (5th February 2010), as she launched the Irish Programme for **2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion**.

Addressing over 200 representatives of interested groups at the launch in Dublin Castle, Minister Hanafin said **“the immediate challenge is to maintain the progress made in recent years in tackling poverty and to protect those who are most vulnerable in the economic downturn. The Government is determined to achieve the elimination of poverty. Restoring economic growth and sustaining high levels of employment are the first essential steps to achieve that aim.**

Countries right across the European Union have decided that the focus of attention for 2010 will be to build on progress achieved and plan and set priorities for the future.”

The European Year aims to convey the message that poverty and social exclusion diminish the lives and life chances of those affected and are obstacles to social and economic development generally. It also aims to reaffirm the importance of collective responsibility for reducing poverty among all interests. Minister Hanafin said **“a priority in the Irish national programme is to ensure that a voice is given to people experiencing**



poverty and social exclusion and those who work with them in policy development and its implementation."

Minister Hanafin went on say **"the aims of the European Year are echoed in the Irish Government's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 to 2016. This plan sets out the target to progressively reduce the numbers of people experiencing consistent poverty and to eliminate consistent poverty by 2016. Considerable progress has been made in recent years and the immediate challenge is to maintain the progress made in recent years and to protect those who are most vulnerable in the economic downturn"**

Referring to the recent Budget, Minister Hanafin said, **"in making very difficult decisions, in the tough budgetary environment in which we find ourselves, the Government is determined to do its utmost to protect the most vulnerable people in Irish society. In framing this year's Budget, the Government avoided any reductions in the State pension thus maintaining the income of over 474,000 people aged over 66.**

More than 420,000 children in welfare dependent and low income families were fully protected from cuts in Child Benefit and decisions were taken to ensure that as far as possible cuts in weekly rates were less than the decreases in prices over the past year, thus protecting welfare recipients in real terms."

Minister concluded by saying **"the designation of 2010 as European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion provides us with the opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved, to learn the lessons from the past and to lay the foundations for the type of society that we all aspire to have."**

Minister Hanafin also thanked the pupils of the Ballymun Wind Band Project who performed three musical pieces at the official



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opening of the event in Dublin Castle. She also thanked the Co-ordinator of the European Year from the European Commission, Ms. Anne Degrand-Guillaud and Mr. Chris Rice for his presentation on personal experiences.

Note for Editors

The Irish Programme for the 2010 Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The Irish programme to mark the year is being coordinated by the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. It involves a range of events and activities throughout the country that will be organised by Government departments, and agencies, local authorities, expert organisations, social partners, and national and local and community organisations. It includes:

- Regional seminars covering topics including Child Poverty; Access to Quality Work and Learning Opportunities; Access to Services for Older People and People with Disabilities.
- Workshops to explore specific themes reflecting the 'communities' dimension of National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. Topics include groups who are marginalized in society, urban and rural disadvantage, migration and traveller issues.
- Two social inclusion weeks in May and October to highlight best practice and showcase locally-based social inclusion initiatives and activities.
- Other events throughout the country will be organised under the auspices of the year to promote awareness of poverty and social inclusion. These will include once-off events and initiatives, organised by groups in the community and voluntary sector, the statutory sector, and sporting and cultural organisations.



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For example, the GAA, Camogie Association, FAI, Ladies FAI, IRFU, National Community Games and the Irish Sports Council have all indicated interest in becoming associated with the European Year. Many of the governing bodies for sport in Ireland undertake work to promote sport to particular groups such as people with disabilities, people experiencing unemployment or living in disadvantaged circumstances, older people, people who are homeless, Travellers and other minority ethnic groups.

Further information and the Irish programme for the year, including updated information on related events and activities during the year will be available at:

www.welfare.ie/en/eu2010 and at
<http://www.2010againstpoverty.eu/>

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