



MINISTER MARY COUGHLAN LAUNCHES **DONEGAL DISABILITY AWARENESS DAY**

Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today launched the Donegal Disability Awareness Day and officially welcomed home the North West athletes who participated in the Special Olympics. The awareness day, organised by the Donegal Network of People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI), aimed to highlight the European Year of People with Disabilities.

Minister Coughlan referred to the commitment and hard work exhibited by PwDI and its sister organisations; “I would like to thank PwDI and the Donegal branch for the work they have done over recent years in forwarding the cause of people with disabilities. The work done and the progress made to date impacts not just on people with disabilities but on society as a whole.”

She also welcomed the return of the Olympic Athletes; “The dedication, professionalism and enthusiasm you displayed are a credit, not only to yourselves, but to your families, friends and communities”.

Minister Coughlan spoke of the progress made in combating discrimination and in the provision of services to people with disabilities, citing the establishment of the Equality Authority and the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations as examples.

“This special Year gives us an opportunity to reflect on the achievements we have made, and more importantly, what we must do in the future to make Ireland a truly inclusive society for all our people,” added Minister Coughlan.

“These two pieces of legislation have been a key success in our efforts to create a more inclusive society and equality of access to employment and services are vital to facilitate social and economic independence for people with disabilities, to empower people to realise their full personal potential and make their own individual contribution to community life,” said Minister Coughlan.

The day’s festivities featured the European Year of People with Disabilities Bus, making the final stop in its Irish tour, and a parade of the Olympic Torch by the North West Olympic athletes. Various organisations operated information tables, including Minister Coughlan’s Department, and presentations were also given by organisations and agencies involved with the disability sector. An extensive programme of entertainment was provided including music, drama, face painting, games, prizes and bouncy castles.

Note for News Editors



European Union Information Bus

This 13 metre high-technology vehicle is touring Europe highlighting disability awareness. The bus has been in Ireland for 8 days and has visited towns and cities such as Dundalk, Waterford and Cork. The visit to Letterkenny is the final stop in its Irish tour. It has already travelled through cities, towns and villages in Greece, Austria, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. On board the bus there are Computers, Video and Digital Cameras, a Plasma Screen, Cassette Deck, VHS and DVD etc. Further info on the bus can be obtained from the following websites: www.eypd2003.org or www.eypd.ie

Equality Authority

The Equality Authority works to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. It has an in-house legal service and provides a free confidential information and advisory service to employers, service providers, individuals, trade unions and the legal profession on the implementations of both Acts and it deals with queries in relation to equality and discrimination.

Office of the Director of Equality Investigations

The Office of the Director of Equality Investigations is an independent statutory office contributing to the achievement of equality by investigating or mediating complaints of unlawful discrimination.