



Social Portrait of Communities in Ireland

Cross Departmental policies aim to target supports for smaller and particularly vulnerable communities in Ireland- Hanafin

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D. today (11th February 2009) launched the ***Social Portrait of Communities in Ireland***, the fourth in a series commissioned by the Office for Social Inclusion from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). Minister Hanafin was joined at the launch by Michael Finneran T.D., Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas.

Addressing an audience of Community and Voluntary groups representatives, Minister Hanafin said **“this Social Portrait examines the situation of specific vulnerable groups such as people living in areas of urban and rural disadvantage, migrants and ethnic minorities, Travellers and the homeless. Evidenced-based research and data on the changing nature, extent and causes of poverty is a vital element in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.”**

The series of Social Portraits is designed to be read by a wide audience, including members of the public, policy makers and others involved in the policy process. Minister Hanafin continued **“the Social Portraits add to existing research and help to provide a firm basis for developing strategies to address the problems experienced by particularly vulnerable groups.”**

“Most of the groups covered in the Social Portrait of Communities in Ireland face a particularly high risk of poverty and exclusion and it can be difficult to gather information on some of the groups to draw accurate social portraits of them.

As is evident from the varying circumstances of the groups described in this social portrait, people experiencing poverty are not a homogenous group. Addressing their needs during the current economic downturn gives rise to new challenges to ensure that their vulnerabilities are not made more pronounced.”



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Minister Hanafin said the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion promotes an integrated and targeted approach to strategies. **“A key priority of this plan is to improve the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas through programmes designed to build viable and sustainable communities.**

Specially tailored supports in addition to the normal social welfare, employment and other supports and services are provided to meet the needs of the groups described in this report.

Government supported programmes such as CLÁR, RAPID and Community Service programmes have a particular focus of supporting people and communities experiencing disadvantage and exclusion.

Access to healthcare, housing and education may be a particular concern for migrants and members of ethnic minorities. The newly established Office of the Minister for Integration being spearheaded by Minister Conor Lenihan has a cross Departmental mandate to develop, drive and co-ordinate integration policies across Government Departments and agencies. Responsibility for the progression of anti-racism policies now rests within the Office of the Minister for Integration.”

Minister Hanafin said that a range of programmes across Government also seeks to address the vulnerabilities of Travellers and support their fullest participation in Irish society. **“This and other research shows that the health, life expectancy and education attainment for Travellers continues to lag behind the general population. Since 2006 Traveller Interagency Groups have been established under each of the 34 County and City development Boards to co-ordinate the efforts of state agencies. A three year study is also underway into the health and social status of the Traveller community in Ireland, the results of which will help plan policy into the future.”**

The Minister said that homelessness represent one of the **“most extreme forms of social exclusion. While progress has been made in reducing the numbers of homeless people current Government Strategy to Address Adult Homeless is seeking to end long term homelessness and minimise the occurrence of**



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homelessness. In 2008 almost €60million was provided by Minister Finneran's Department to local authorities for accommodation and related costs for homeless people."

Minister Hanafin concluded by thanking the authors of the report, Brain Nolan, School of Applied Social Science, UCD, and Bertrand Maitre from the ESRI for their valuable high quality research into small, but particularly vulnerable communities in Ireland.

The first three Social Portraits in the series looked at children, people of working age and older people. Copies of these and the Social Portrait of Communities in Ireland are available from the Office for Social Inclusion at <http://www.socialinclusion.ie>.

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