



National family policy consultation process announced by Mary Coughlan TD Minister for Social and Family Affairs

Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today announced the establishment of a series of consultative family fora to take the pulse of the nation on how best the state can support families.

Five regional fora, commencing in Donegal will provide the opportunity for mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, support, professional and representative groups to express the concerns and themes which dominate family life today.

The respected broadcaster and journalist Ms Olivia O’Leary has agreed to chair each of the five fora, which will be held in the coming months at venues throughout the country.

Each forum will cover various themes such as keeping families together, ageing parents, childcare and its provision, lone parents and family friendly workplaces.

”The scale and pace of change affecting the family - the most central unit - in recent decades has been unprecedented, “ said Minister Mary Coughlan.

”These changes include demographic trends, socio cultural changes, economic developments, unemployment, migration, industrialisation and urbanisation, technological innovation, the quest for equality between men



and women and widening opportunities for women, “ said Minister Coughlan.

”The impact of all these factors is the driving force in the creation of new family structures and attitudes to family life that needs to be taken into account in family policy development.

”I also intend to undertake some specific research into family policy areas and details of this research will be announced at a later date,” added Minister Coughlan.

“These fora will act as significant listening posts that will help to inform policy and will ensure that family friendly policies are kept at the top of the social partnership agenda. The outcome of this public consultation alongside the research evidence will be important informants of my Department’s preparations for the Presidency of the EU in 2004 which coincides with the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the United Nations International Year of the Family.

”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.

”Details of the various fora will be announced in advance as to their location



and the times. I expect to attend all of the forum meetings and hope to see as large a turnout of representative groups and individuals as possible at each event and I look forward to an open, forthright and educational discourse, “ concluded Minister Coughlan.

ENDS

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