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Department of Social Protection**

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Government remains committed to Social Inclusion

Minister Burton meets community and voluntary groups at 8th Social Inclusion Forum

"The challenges facing us are very different to those we faced when the current National Action Plan for Social Inclusion was drawn up in 2007" said Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD today (9th November 2011). ***"Since the targets were set, the economic context has changed greatly: unemployment has increased, incomes have fallen and the revenue available to Government to fund public services has decreased. Despite these altered circumstances, the Government remains committed to the goals of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and to building a socially inclusive and fair society."***

Minister Burton was addressing over 150 participants attending the eighth meeting of the annual Social Inclusion Forum in the F2 Centre in Rialto. The Forum, provides an opportunity for engagement between officials from Government Departments, community and voluntary organisations and people experiencing poverty in relation to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

The themes for discussion at this year's Forum were the ongoing review of the National Poverty Target and responding to the social impact of the economic crisis. During the course of the day participants discussed these areas in specific workshops:

- Children – Developments at a National level
- People of Working Age – National Employment and Entitlements Service
- Older People – The need to protect the most vulnerable in challenging times



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- People with Disabilities – National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities
- Review of National Poverty Target

Minister Burton said ***“The services provided by my Department impact on the lives of almost every person in the State and I am well aware that the vast majority of people who turn to my Department for support played no role in causing this financial crisis. In making very difficult decisions, within the tough budgetary constraints forced upon us, the Government is determined to do its utmost to protect the most vulnerable people in Irish society.”***

PRESS RELEASE ENDS

Notes for Editors:

The Social Inclusion Forum

The Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was established by the Government as part of the structures to monitor and evaluate Ireland’s National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007- 2016. The Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Social Protection has been given the responsibility by the Government to convene this annual event. The Social Inclusion Division was assisted in organising this year’s event by the Community Workers Co-operative (CWC) and the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland (EAPN).

Social Inclusion Division

The role of the Social Inclusion Division is to support the Minister and Government in developing and implementing Government strategies for preventing, reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty and social exclusion, and in promoting greater social inclusion and social cohesion in collaboration with other stakeholders including, in particular, people experiencing poverty.

European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland (EAPN Ireland)

The European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty. EAPN Ireland is the Irish link to the European Anti-Poverty Network which brings together civil society organisations from all over the European Union in order to put the fight against poverty at the top of the EU, national and local agenda.



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The Community Worker's Co-operative (CWC)

Established in 1981, the Community Worker's Cooperative is a national membership organisation that seeks to promote quality community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality, and contributing to the creation of a more just, sustainable and equal society.