

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**14 May 2004**

## **Family Diversity Initiative welcomes and celebrates the International Day of the Family**

### **Regrets that Minister's celebration didn't celebrate all family types**

The Family Diversity Initiative today welcomed and celebrated International Family Day but regretted that the celebration held by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs to celebrate the day and close the EU Presidency conference on the family celebrated an extremely selective view of family life in Ireland.

FDI spokesperson Catherine Lynch commented "unfortunately the real diversity of families that exists in Ireland was not noted or celebrated by Minister Coughlan. One-parent families, gay and lesbian families, families who are homeless or contain one or more members with a disability were not given an opportunity to celebrate this important day."

"This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family and as such this day presented a wonderful opportunity to celebrate and reflect the reality of family life in Ireland. Instead the minister chose to present a view of family life which did not embrace the range of diverse families and continued to leave certain families out in the cold and this time literally did not invite them to the party" said Lynch.

**ENDS**

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**Note to editor:**

The Family Diversity Initiative (FDI) is a coalition of organisations working with and representing the interests of diverse families in Ireland. This coalition recognises that the family exists in different structures and circumstances and challenges discrimination. Our vision is to achieve an Ireland in which people define their own families and which all these families are treated equally. Our mission is to promote equality, acceptance and understanding in Ireland for all families.

The objectives of the FDI are to:

- Co-ordinate and develop effective partnership working between NGO's who promote and represent diverse families, including the sharing of relevant resources.
- Identify key knowledge gaps in the experience of diverse families and seek to address these by research or other appropriate means.
- Support and co-ordinate policy interventions that address the institutional and social barriers to equality and social inclusion faced by diverse family groups.
- Co-ordinate an effective public awareness campaign on family diversity in Ireland.
- On achievement of the above objectives the Family diversity Initiative will re-assess its future.

FDI underpinning principles

- An understanding of "family life" that derives from our Vision Statement that people define their own families.
- Promoting equality of opportunity and social justice in its work and within the operating policies/ practices of the initiative.
- Acknowledging the right of people and families facing discrimination/ inequality to participate in solutions to redress that inequality.
- Partnership working with relevant external people/organisations which furthers the mission/aims of FDI.

The FDI currently includes membership from a range of organisations working with and representing families with varying structures and those who live in varying social situations. Current members of the steering group include, Age Action Ireland, Children's Rights Alliance, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), Focus Ireland, Forum of People with Disabilities, National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), One Family – Voice, Support, Action for One-Parent Families (formerly Cherish), One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN), Treoir- National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children.