

PRESS RELEASE

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Immediate release.

IRELAND'S FUTURE PROSPERITY LINKED TO A THRIVING LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL POPULATION.

- GLEN PROMOTES "DIVERSITY POWERING SUCCESS" -

Ireland's future economic prosperity depends on how the Government and Irish society plans for diversity and attracts and retains some of the world's leading talent, it was stated today (Monday, 3rd April 2.15pm) at the launch by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) strategic programme entitled "Building Sustainable Change". **In attending the GLEN event, Deputy Ahern became the first Taoiseach to attend an Irish gay and lesbian event.**

The Programme aims to deliver greater equality and participation for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Irish society over the coming five years. "Research shows that countries that accept and include gay people are more successful economically and they are also more dynamic, inclusive and creative places to live." said Kieran Rose, Chair of GLEN.

Kieran Rose continued "Ireland is currently at the cutting edge of the global economy. Diversity and economic success go together. This has been recognised by some of the leading companies in the world and in leading technology driven economies in Europe and the US. Ireland has demonstrated this too with progressive economic and social policies powering our economic success. High ambitions and expectations for both are necessary if we are to sustain prosperity into the future.

"Nowadays young lesbian and gay people, like their heterosexual peers have high expectations for themselves and their society and see no reason why their horizons should be limited "continued Kieran Rose. "The Taoiseach has set high ambitions for Ireland, as can-do country benchmarked against the best. GLEN shares these ambitions and high expectations" said Kieran Rose.

GLEN's strategic programme launched by the Taoiseach seeks "not to manage our marginalisation, but to abolish it "says Eoin Collins, Director of Policy Change in GLEN.

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Official actuarial figures in the UK estimate that 6% of the population have a lesbian or gay identity. If this estimate was applied to Ireland, it would mean that the LGB population ranged from 300,000 and 400,000 people.

Under the Building Sustainable Change Programme, GLEN will:

- Seek changes in public policy including equality in legal recognition of our relationships and family life.
- Making public services more responsive to the particular needs of lesbian and gay people, especially in making schools safe for lesbian and gay students.
- Promoting equality in the workplace, where people can be openly gay in any career they choose.
- Strengthening lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations, particularly those serving more excluded or vulnerable people such as older people and those living outside the major cities.

GLEN's programme has been co-funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Irish Government. Atlantic has supported the lesbian, gay and bisexual community and other marginalised groups over several years. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has funded GLEN following on from a recommendation made by the National Economic and Social Forum.

GLEN is a non-governmental organisation which was set up in 1988 to bring about reforms in legislation and policies that affect LGB people. It is a "change-delivery" organisation which seeks to challenge all forms of discrimination and eradicate experiences of exclusion, deprivation and poverty.

- Ends -

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