



CitizenFirst Final International Conference
26th September 2008

Welcome Address by Cllr. Bernard Hanrahan
Cathaoirleach, Mid-West Regional Authority

Minister, Conference Delegates, European Colleagues,

As Cathaoirleach/Chairperson of the Mid-West Regional Authority I would like to welcome you all to Ennis, Co. Clare, this morning to the CitizenFirst Final International Conference.

The theme of today's event is: **"CitizenFirst...Using Technology To Include All Citizens"**, and is aimed at public, local and voluntary stakeholders working on providing solutions to social exclusion in local communities by exploring the benefits of Information Communications Technology.

The Conference marks the end of over four years of work by four European Regions, namely: Mid-West Ireland, Cambridgeshire in the UK, Eindhoven in The Netherlands and West Flanders in Belgium, all of whom are represented here today.

The CitizenFirst Project is a Technology based European Initiative funded by INTERREG IIIB North West Europe and is aimed at bridging the digital divide that is apparent in all our regions in many facets. A key recommendation from the CitizenFirst experience is that Access to Information Communications Technologies must be available to all members of the community if the continued digitalisation of public services is to be deemed a success.





We have a very exciting programme of speakers here today and I would particularly like to thank Minister Máire Hocht, T.D. for agreeing to provide the key note address here this morning. I would also like to thank Michela Marasco who has travelled from Lille in France, the Headquarters for the INTERREG North West Europe Programme.

You will also hear from Rebecca Morgan, one of the CitizenFirst Partners, about the key lessons learned through the eInclusion projects as well as some recommendations for local and regional policy makers.

In the second half of today's programme we will be inviting representatives from some of the Pilot Projects in the four North West Europe Regions, where you will hear the on-the-ground experiences with some interesting results.

Finally I would like to wish you a successful conference and I know you will receive some valuable experiences in this area of Information Technology & community engagement. I would also encourage you to let us know your own experiences during the Questions and Answers sessions.

I would now like to welcome Minister Maire Hocht to the podium. Minister Hocht is the Minister of State for Health and Children with responsibility for Older People.

Thank You.

