Press Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 4 October 2017

**COALITION OF CHARITIES CALL FOR PACKAGE OF MEASURES TO FIGHT SOCIAL EXCLUSION & SUPPORT COMMUNITIES**

**4 October 2017 - Six national networks, encompassing over 1,800 Irish charities, today called on Government to include a package of measures to help charities tackle growing social exclusion and support communities.**

The Wheel, Disability Federation of Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, Irish Rural Link, Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups and the National Youth Council of Ireland said the measures will **release substantial resources to help charities address growing social exclusion  for people with disabilities, carers, young people and people living in disadvantaged rural and inner-city communities.**

**The proposed measures are:**

* A VAT Compensation for charities based on a report published by the Minister for Finance in the 2015. Such a scheme could greatly boost charities work on issues such as housing and health. Housing charities, for example, cannot reclaim the VAT they pay every year on vital initiatives like direct housing provision and support services to homeless families. Budget 2018 should introduce a scheme capped at €20m to deliver an effective 50% VAT rebate to the sector.
* An enhanced Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to improve supports for people from disadvantaged areas. Budget 2018 should make an allocation of an additional €5m for SICAP for the year ahead, to ensure that it can continue to play a fully effective role in community development.
* Continuation and improvement of the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO). The current scheme runs to July 2019 and supports over 70 organisations. We are recommending that this fund be increased by 20% from €16.5M to €20m for the period August 2019 to August 2022, and that this figure be built in now to indicative rolling three-year budget allocations for the years ahead.
* A Special additional Contingency Fund of €2m for Social Enterprise, in line with the Dormant Accounts allocations in 2016/17. In addition, this figure should become an annual budget line, increased as appropriate to facilitate implementation of the government’s *Policy and Implementation Road Map on Social Enterprise*.

Ivan Cooper, Director of Public Policy at The Wheel said: “Every day we are hearing reports about the impact of homelessness, the lack of capacity in our health service, problems with the standard of care and growing social problems in rural areas; these issues are not unrelated: Ireland’s community and voluntary sector was subjected disproportionate funding cuts of between 35% and 45% during the recession, and the cumulative impact of these cuts is being felt in every community. The proposed measures will empower those who are best placed to fight growing social exclusion,” said Mr Cooper.

QUOTES FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS GO HERE.

The six networks also called on Government help reduce growing administrative costs for charities by to streamlining regulatory and reporting requirements for charities to help reduce growing administrative costs. The networks say these costs are ballooning and are diverting resources away from crucial services.

The six organisations have offered their support to Government to help for implementing the above-mentioned measures. They have also committed to involving people and communities in this collective effort.

 **-ENDS-**

**Interviews are available with the participants. Please contact Gert Ackermann on Tel: 086 176 9287 or email****gert@wheel.ie****.**

**ABOUT THE SIX NATIONAL NETWORKS**

**Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)** is the national support organisation for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions. There are 127 organisations within membership or as associates in DFI.

 **Care Alliance Ireland** is the National Network of Voluntary Organisations supporting Family Carers.  Our vision is that the role of Family Carers is fully recognised and valued by society. We exist to enhance the quality of life for Family Carers. We achieve this by supporting our +100 member organisations in their direct work with Family Carers through the provision of information, developing research and policy, sharing resources, and instigating opportunities for collaboration.

 **Carmichael Carmichael Centre** is the first and busiest largest shared facility for nonprofits organisations in Ireland. As a social enterprise serving the Irish Community and Voluntary Sector, the Centre has developed a range of specialised services to nurture and support the growth of social purpose organisations throughout Ireland.

**Irish Rural Link (IRL)** is the national network representing rural communities. It represents the interests of community groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies and sharing experiences and examples of good practice. IRL directly represents over 600 community groups with a combined membership of 25,000.

 **The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)** is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. *Is é Comhairle Náisiúnta na nÓg an eagras ionadaí­ochta an óige in Éirinn*. It represents and supports the interests of around 50 voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. It seeks to ensure that all young people are empowered to develop the skills and confidence to fully participate as active citizens in an inclusive society.

 **The Wheel** is Ireland’s national association of charities. Founded in 1999, we currently represent over 1,300 organisations across Ireland, reﬂecting the enormous scope and scale of this vibrant and diverse sector.

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