



**Newly expanded AIB Better Ireland Programme donates EUR3.25 million for deserving children's projects.**

**4th February 2008**

AIB Bank today announced that it is significantly expanding its Better Ireland Programme. Having, over the last six years, focussed on children affected by poverty, AIB will now broaden its programme to include children with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

This year AIB will donate €1.85 million to local deserving projects for children. AIB's 185 main branches will each have €10,000 to award to local projects and recipients will be chosen by a public text vote from a shortlist of groups in each area. A further enhancement to this programme includes a donation of €1.4 million towards four innovative flagship projects which will impact and benefit over 950 children nationwide. For 2008, the chosen flagship projects are: Festina Lente, Bray; Limerick Youth Service; Ability West, Galway and St. Joseph's School for the Visually Impaired in Drumcondra, Dublin.

A key element of the expanded AIB Better Ireland Programme is the simplified and convenient application process. Application will now be made online through [www.aib.ie/betterireland](http://www.aib.ie/betterireland) over a four-week period from 4th - 29th February.

Community participation is a fundamental feature of the newly expanded AIB Better Ireland Programme. Local communities will be encouraged to get involved in choosing their favourite group, from a shortlist of three per branch, by an innovative public text vote during May. Each winning group will receive the prize money of €10,000 plus the proceeds of their text vote in July 2008. Runners-up, from each branch, will also receive the proceeds of their text vote.

**Mary Hanafin, T.D., Minister for Education and Science said:** "Encouraging people to help vulnerable children within their own community has been at the heart of the AIB Better Ireland Programme, for the last six years. By working in partnership with local organisations thousands of children have benefited. This year the particular focus is on targeting those most at risk either through disadvantage or special needs. By working in tandem with Government and community organisations, we can make a real difference to the lives of so many within our local communities."

**Donal Forde, Managing Director, AIB Bank said:** "Now six years on, the AIB Better Ireland Programme has benefited vulnerable children by donating €16m to over 1,600 groups, including €8.6m to AIB's Schoolmate Charities - ISPC, Barnardos and Focus Ireland. Today we are announcing the expansion of our programme to include children with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities and we are inviting our customers and local communities to have a say in who they want us to support. Local nomination, local voting and local benefit are what the new AIB Better Ireland Programme is all about."

**Ends**

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