



Department of the Taoiseach
Roinn an Taoisigh

Review of the Special Initiatives Process under *Sustaining Progress*

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ANNEX 1: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Abbreviations

CCI	Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CII	Chartered Insurance Institute
CORI	Conference of Religious in Ireland
DoEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
DJELR	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
DCRGA	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DoTao	Department of the Taoiseach
DH&C,	Department of Health and Children
DSFA	Department of Social and Family Affairs
EOCP	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
FIE	Federation of Irish Employers
FUE	Federated Union of Employers
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
ICMSA	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IEA	Irish Exporters Association
IFA	Irish Farmers' Association
ITIC	Irish Tourist Industry Confederation
INOUE	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
MIAB	Motor Industry Advisory Board
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NWCI	National Women's Council of Ireland
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
PIAB	Personal Injuries Assessment Board
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
SFA	Small Firms Association
SVP	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Chapter 1 Background and Terms of Reference

1.1 Special Initiatives under Sustaining Progress

Under *Sustaining Progress*, 10 “Special Initiatives” were designated for priority attention¹. These involved policy areas identified by Government and the social partners for particular focus and effort which would yield a significant return to the community.

In choosing the Special Initiatives the Government and social partners were guided by a series of criteria including a focus on shared working in respect of the activities of organisations in a range of sectors, and areas where the social partners would be able to make a value added contribution to progressing the issues. The topics covered by the Special Initiatives were therefore intended to be complex ones that required co-ordination across multiple organisations, see Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1: Special Initiatives Under *Sustaining Progress* – WHAT THE AGREEMENT SAYS

Nature of Special Initiatives:

“These are all major crosscutting issues, that require the mobilisation of a range of resources across sectors, organisations and individuals and at different levels of Government. In approaching such issues, the emphasis should be on working together, building consensus and adopting a problem-solving approach to finding practical solutions. Importantly, it will bring clearly into focus the need to choose between the various demands for the use of scarce resources – financial and other”.

Mechanism for Progressing The Initiation:

“Each of the Special Initiatives requires different combinations of new analyses, consultations, experimental policy initiatives, joint action by Government and the social partners and deliberation based on experience.

Customised arrangements will require to be put in place in respect of each of the themes. To facilitate a planned and co-ordinated approach to the arrangements proposed in this chapter, the Steering Group will agree how action is managed in respect of each of the themes, taking account of existing structures and activities where appropriate. The involvement of Departments and Agencies at central, regional and local level in implementation of actions will be necessary.”

SOURCE: *SUSTAINING PROGRESS*, PARAS. 1.10, 1.11

The Initiatives are therefore important from two perspectives. Firstly, addressing the issue and delivering benefits for affected groups are clearly important in their own right. Secondly, the Initiatives constitute an approach to the challenge of achieving more joined-up working in a variety of key areas. There is now widespread acceptance, most recently emphasised in the NESC report on the Developmental Welfare State², that this is a key national need.

¹ *Sustaining Progress: Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005*, February 2003.

² National Economic and Social Council, *The Developmental Welfare State, Report No. 113, 2005*

The 10 Special Initiatives are:

- Housing and Accommodation;
- Cost and Availability of Insurance;
- Migration and Interculturalism;
- Long-term Unemployed, Vulnerable Workers and those made Redundant;
- Tackling Educational Disadvantage, Literacy, Numeracy and Early School Leavers;
- Waste Management;
- Care – Children, People with Disabilities, Older People;
- Alcohol, Drug Misuse;
- Including Everyone in the Information Society, and
- Ending Child Poverty.

The 10 areas involved cover a variety of mainly social issues, but also include costs and competitiveness (insurance), the environment (waste management), and housing (both an economic and a social issue). Each Initiative involved a number of more detailed “actions”, 67 in all, involving a heterogeneous range of interventions. These were monitored and reported on by the Steering Group for *Sustaining Progress*, which comprised representatives of each social partner pillar and relevant Government Departments.

1.2 Purpose of Report

With *Sustaining Progress* nearing its end, the Department of the Taoiseach commissioned this research on the Special Initiatives process which would document and identify lessons from the Special Initiatives process, and would also include suggestions on how to manage such issues and challenges for the future.

The Terms of Reference set out three specific objectives for the research:

- To provide an overview of the process by which the Special Initiatives were arrived at as part of the social partnership agreement framework;
- To document the progression of the Special Initiatives and the perspectives of different participants in the process;
- To identify lessons learned along the way, including suggestions on how to manage such issues and challenges for the future.

1.3 Work Programme and Challenges

The research has involved a number of components:

- A desk-based examination of background reports and other documentation;
- Interviews with a number of Government Departments and social partner representatives;
- A more detailed examination of three initiatives, with particular emphasis on the contribution of the specific Special Initiatives process to the policy area.³

1.4 Report Structure

The structure of the report is as follows:

- This chapter, Chapter 1, sets out the background, objectives and work programme;
- Chapter 2 describes the process of identifying, selecting and progressing the Initiatives, and the management and reporting arrangements;
- Chapter 3 summarises the individual Initiatives, and the process and progress of these and of the underlying actions;
- Chapter 4 presents the key findings and issues arising;
- Chapter 5 presents the report's conclusions.

The aim thus is not to review the details of individual Initiatives per se, but to develop insights in relation to how such issues across departments and across thematic areas might be addressed in the future. The report therefore is not a conventional in-depth evaluation of the individual Initiatives and actions. Rather it is primarily an examination of the process of the Initiatives, combined and individually. Progress under the initiatives is of course of interest, but mainly for the light it throws on the process rather than in its own right.

³ Discussions were held with representatives of the Departments of the Taoiseach; Finance; Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Environment, Heritage and Local Government; Social and Family Affairs; Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Irish Business and Employers Confederation; Chambers of Commerce of Ireland; Irish Farmers' Association; Representatives from the Community & Voluntary Pillar and NESC.

Chapter 2 Overview of the Special Initiatives Process

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to present an overview of the process of identifying, selecting, progressing and monitoring the Initiatives. Section 2.2 outlines the origins of the National Partnership Process and the concept of Special Initiatives. Section 2.3 presents the selection criteria used in selecting them, and gives a brief overview of the Initiatives. In Section 2.4 mechanisms for progressing and reporting on the Special Initiatives are presented.

2.2 Context and Origins

2.2.1 National Partnership Process

Since 1987 there have been six national-level social partnership agreements in Ireland. Social partnership is essentially a process of deliberation, involving a search for consensus in addressing trade-offs between and within different groups in addressing joint problems. Each agreement has had a term of approximately three years and has represented a national programme for economic and social development.

Each Irish social partnership agreement evolved in response to the changes in the economic and social challenges facing the country at the time of its negotiation. The same broad pattern of negotiation of social partnership agreements has been followed for each of the agreements, with a strategic report from NESC providing a focus for the subsequent negotiations. From the outset the aim was to develop economic and competitiveness policies in order to achieve a rounded agreement for the benefit of society. Each agreement has had a different focus and has contained significant innovations, reflecting the challenges and opportunities of their time.

In recent agreements, there has been a general shift away from exclusively macro-economic issues to social inclusion policies and the non-pay element of the agreements. The scope of the agreements has also widened in terms of the number of “pillars” involved and parties contributing to the negotiations. The early agreements were negotiated by Government and the three original pillars of trade unions, employers and farmers, and concentrated on pay-related issues. More recent agreements have incorporated a much broader range of issues, and have included a fourth “community and voluntary” pillar.

2.2.2 Evolution of Partnership Agreements 1987-97

Table 2.1 summarises this evolution of the partnership process from the Programme for National Recovery, negotiated in 1987 to the current agreement *Sustaining Progress*. It shows the increase in the number of pillars, an expansion in the scope of issues covered and a shift in the nature/focus of the issues covered.

At the time of the first Agreement (1987), the Irish economy was in crisis; GDP was 64% of the EU average, National Debt was 1.5 times GNP, inflation was running at an average of 12% for the period, the unemployment rate was 18.5% and 30,000 people were emigrating each year. The NESC Strategy for Development 1986-1990 set out the key principles needed to regenerate the economy and improve equity. The NESC Report pointed to the need for a strategy to manage interlocking elements of the economy and the behaviour of economic agents. More specifically, it was that moderate wage growth would underpin international competitiveness and reverse the cycle of pressures on the public finances.

The Programme for Economic and Social Progress 1990-1993 contained a new initiative on long-term unemployment. In the Programme for Competitiveness and Work, the goal was to achieve employment growth through competitiveness building.

2.2.3 Partnership 2000 and PPF

The Partnership 2000 Agreement, negotiated in 1997, marked a distinct change of focus from exclusively economic and competitiveness policies towards also including social justice policies. It was also the first agreement to include the Community and Voluntary pillar. This provided a wider and more inclusive approach to the process of negotiation and implementation. As a result the importance of achieving greater social inclusion and equality in society was emphasised. This could thus be said to be the origins of the Special Initiatives.

The subsequent Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, the immediate predecessor to *Sustaining Progress*, further developed this approach. It emphasised the need to ensure that national prosperity was shared and resources allocated to social inclusion were substantially increased, as well as maintaining international competitiveness and developing a knowledge economy. Five Operational Frameworks were established to achieve the stated objectives;

Framework I for Living and Working Conditions

Framework II for Prosperity and Economic Inclusion

Framework III for Social Inclusion and Equality

Framework IV for Successful Adaptation to Continuing Change

Framework V for Renewing Partnership

TABLE 2.1 EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS		
Year/ Agreement	Pillars and Parties	Goals
1987 Programme for National Recovery (PNR)	Government, Trade Union: ICTU Employer: CIF, CII, FUE <hr/> Farmer: ICOS, IFA, Macra na Feirme,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of a fiscal, exchange rate and monetary climate conducive to economic growth; ▪ Movement towards greater equity and fairness in the tax system; ▪ Reduce or remove social inequalities; ▪ Practical measures to increase job opportunities.
1991 Programme for Economic and Social Partnership (PESP)	Government, Trade Union: ICTU Employer: CIF, CII, FIE <hr/> Farmer: ICMSA, ICOS, IFA, Macra na Feirme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narrow the gap in living standards between Ireland and the rest of the European Community; ▪ Substantial increase in employment, particularly long-term unemployment; ▪ Develop greater social rights; ▪ Promote collective and individual social responsibility in relation to tax liabilities, business dealings, the environment and public services; ▪ Develop worker participation, women's rights and consumer rights.
1994 Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW)	Government, Trade Union: ICTU Employer: CIF, IBEC <hr/> Farmer: ICMSA, ICOS, IFA, Macra na Feirme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the number of people at work and reduce the level of unemployment through: Sustainable employment and enterprise, based on market-led growth and Community-based work with training, to give the unemployed an opportunity to develop the areas in which they live.
1997 Partnership 2000	Government, Trade Union: ICTU Employer: IBEC, CIF, SFA, IEA, ITIC, CCI Farmer: ICMSA, ICOS, IFA, Macra na Feirme Community and Voluntary Pillar: The Community Platform, Congress Centres for Unemployed, CORI, INOU, NWCI, NYCI, Protestant Aid, SVP,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain an effective and consistent policy approach in a period of high economic growth; ▪ Reduce social disparities and exclusion, especially by reducing long-term unemployment; ▪ Respond effectively, at both national, sectoral and enterprise level, to global competition and the Information Society.
2000 Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF)	Government, Trade Union: ICTU Employer: IBEC, CIF, SFA, IEA, ITIC, CCI <hr/> Farmer: ICMSA, ICOS, IFA, Macra na Feirme. Community and Voluntary Pillar: INOU, Congress Centres for Unemployed, The Community Platform, CORI, NWCI, NYCI, SVP, Protestant Aid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain international competitiveness through policies that encourage enterprise and investment; ▪ Ensure that those in work have a fair share of the increased national prosperity; ▪ Substantially increase the resources allocated to social inclusion; ▪ Enable Ireland to become a knowledge-based society, with the capacity to embrace the opportunities offered by technological change.
2003 Sustaining Progress	Government Trade Union: ICTU Employer: IBEC, CIF, SFA, IEA, ITIC, CCI. Farmer: ICMSA, ICOS, IFA, Macra na Feirme. Community and Voluntary Pillar: Congress Centres for Unemployed, CORI, INOU, NWCI, NYCI, SVP, Protestant Aid,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic competitiveness; ▪ Environmental sustainability; ▪ Efficiency through finding and implementing appropriate market and regulatory regimes; ▪ Socially acceptable
SOURCE: PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS 1987-2005		

Each framework was sub-divided into target issues, and forty issues were identified across the five frameworks. Within this structure, social justice issues were spread between Frameworks II, III and IV, thus incorporating 29 different, but overlapping, issues. The non-pay element and social justice issues were an important part of the PPF Agreement. However, the diversity of issues covered and the complex structure, did not lend itself to tackling the issues raised in a focused manner.

The *Sustaining Progress* Agreement therefore sought to refine this approach. Chapter Two of the Agreement set out a new approach to addressing issues of key national concern, highlighting 10 Special Initiatives. In Chapter 4 of the Agreement, a framework for building, maintaining and sharing economic development is set out and Chapter 5 addresses issues in relation to the delivery of a fair and inclusive society.

2.2.4 *Sustaining Progress*

The Special Initiatives reflect the nature of *Sustaining Progress* as a whole. The *Sustaining Progress* Agreement was negotiated in a period of considerable economic uncertainty. Following the period of extraordinary “Celtic Tiger” economic growth in Ireland, a number of factors including the dotcom crash, September 11th and a general global economic downturn, contributed to an economic slowdown. It is in this period of uncertainty that the *Sustaining Progress* negotiations took place.

In its strategy report, *An Investment in Quality: Services, Inclusion and Enterprise*, NESC defined the immediate challenges for public policy and social partnership in Ireland at the time; an increase in inflation rates, loss of competitiveness and deterioration in public finances as well as increased social inequalities and earnings disparities and increased demand on public services.

The extensive growth that Ireland had just experienced had positive social effects, but has also contributed to several social problems. The Report thus identified the challenges to be addressed for Ireland to secure long-term social and economic development:

- (i) Reduce inequalities;
- (ii) Major policy focus on poverty reduction;
- (iii) Control pressure on family life; and
- (iv) Protect key aspects of personal and social well being: housing, education, health, transport, life-long learning, enough income to live with dignity.

In response to the challenges identified, the overall objective of *Sustaining Progress* (reflected in its title) is to continue progress towards the realisation of the NESC vision for Irish society by sustaining economic growth and maintaining high levels of employment and securing living standards for all, while strengthening the economy’s competitiveness and thereby its capacity to resume growth in more favourable economic conditions. The key objective outlined was to make Ireland:

- Competitive in a changing world
- Environmentally sustainable
- Efficient through finding and implementing appropriate market and regulatory regimes;
- Socially acceptable.

A cautious approach was adopted in the agreement relative to the previous two agreements:

“The emphasis should be on working together, building consensus and adopting a problem-solving approach to finding practical solutions. Importantly, it will bring clearly into focus the need to choose between the various demands for the use of scarce resources – financial and other.”⁴

2.3 Special Initiatives Selection Process

The NESC Report provided the framework for the selection of 10 Special Initiatives. The Report dealt with both the traditional issues that were relevant to the social partnership agreements, as well as the so-called “softer” issues, such as quality of life issues. The social partners were asked to respond to the issues and concerns raised in the NESC Report and the 10 Special Initiatives were chosen through a process of negotiation and discussion between the Government and social partners, from a large list of candidates. The criteria as set out in the agreement were that the Initiatives should be:

- Capable of making a major contribution to the quality of Irish life;
- Amenable to being designed in a way which is both multidimensional and manageable;
- Provide a focus for shared working in respect of the activities of organisations in a range of sectors by virtue of their nature and the groups on which they impact;
- Allow issues of resource allocation and prioritisation to be addressed in a “whole of Government” way;
- Potentially encompass short, medium and longer-term perspectives;
- Social partners should be able to make a unique value-added contribution to progressing these issues.

The 10 Special Initiatives at headline level were selected during the negotiation process. The implementation of the Special Initiatives, including the choice of actions to be included in the Initiatives, was managed by the Steering Group after the negotiations and the lead Departments responsible for each issue were identified.

As explained in the previous section, the Special Initiatives evolved as a product of the social partnership process and in response to the economic climate that prevailed at the time of the negotiations. By concentrating on a smaller number of selected issues that required targeted action

⁴ *Sustaining Progress: Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005*, p. 17, February 2003

across Government Departments and social partners, the *Sustaining Progress* Agreement sought to improve the approach of earlier agreements.

The 10 Special Initiatives were outlined in Chapter 2 of the Agreement. A number of key actions were subsequently agreed by the Steering Group for each action and they are the instruments for implementation of the Initiatives. There are sixty-seven actions altogether. The number of actions within each initiative is variable from 11 in the Care Initiative to 3 in the Cost and Availability of Insurance Initiative. A lead Government Department has been assigned to take overall responsibility for each of the actions. The other relevant Departments are also identified. Table 2.2 lists the 10 Special Initiatives, their lead Departments and the number of actions in each initiative.

Initiative	Lead Department	Actions No.
Housing and Accommodation	DEHLG	6
Cost and Availability of Insurance	DETE	3
Migration and Interculturalism	DJELR	8
Long-term Unemployed, Vulnerable Workers and those made Redundant	DETE	5
Tackling Educational Disadvantage, Literacy, Numeracy and Early School Leavers	DES	10
Waste Management	DEHLG	5
Care – Children, People with Disabilities, Older People	DoTao	11
Alcohol, Drug Misuse	DH&C, DCRGA	8
Including Everyone in the Information Society	DoTao	5
Ending Child Poverty	DSFA	6
		67

2.4 Implementation Mechanism

2.4.1 Implementation Structure

Implementation of the Special Initiatives is the responsibility of Government and the social partners through regular meetings of the Steering Group and associated sub-structures. Implementation is also supported by quarterly meetings of the Plenary Group. The Steering Group has two key areas of responsibility:

- Managing and co-ordinating the implementation of the 10 Special Initiatives;
- Reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of the wider policy framework, as set out in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of *Sustaining Progress*.

Having selected the 10 Special Initiatives, the lead Department compiled a Scoping Paper for each Initiative. The Scoping Papers were used as a stock-taking tool to analyse the situation in relation to each of the Special Initiatives; to assess the policies and institutional arrangements already in

place; clarify the desired outcomes, highlight the priority areas to be tackled going forward and to propose a strategy for tackling those priority areas.

Based on this stock-taking process, the Steering Group could assess the most appropriate areas where they could add value and agree a common framework for the Special Initiatives, which sets out the key actions for each. In general, the Steering Group chose complex, strategic issues that transcended across various Departments

The Scoping Papers also allowed the Steering Group to identify the common elements of a framework for the Special Initiatives. Five crosscutting issues were identified:

1. The interconnectedness of the Initiatives;
2. Data/Information sources;
3. Progress indicators and timelines;
4. The need to integrate action at a national, regional and local level;
5. The opportunity to use the experience of the Social Partners in identifying examples of innovation or best practice and for partner organisations to make a contribution at regional and local level.

2.4.2 Monitoring and Reporting

The Monitoring and Reporting of the Special Initiatives occurs at a number of levels, including:

- Quarterly reports from the Steering Group to the Plenary social partnership meeting;
- Reports from lead Departments to the Steering Group;
- Bi-lateral meetings between Ministers and social partners to discuss the implementation of the Special Initiatives;
- Reports to the Steering Group from sectoral sub-groups (e.g., housing forum);
- Special reviews of progress published in 2004 and 2005 to inform the *Mid-term Review of Sustaining Progress* and the *Final Review of Sustaining Progress*.⁵

⁵ Further information is available at www.taoiseach.gov.ie

Chapter 3 Progress under the Special Initiatives

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the progress made under each of the 10 individual Special Initiatives to-date. There is a section on each Special Initiative, with the following sub-headings: lead department; rationale; objective; target issues; targets (where applicable); mechanism; actions and progress. A more detailed description of individual actions and their progress is given in Annex 1.

3.2 Housing and Accommodation

Lead Department:	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Rationale:	Rapid economic growth, a rising population and reduction in the average household size resulted in a significant increase in demand for housing in Ireland.
Objective:	To review the effectiveness of programmes to assist low-income groups, including those with social housing and special housing needs, to ensure that the resources available under those programmes contribute to breaking cycles of poverty and social exclusion.
Target Issues:	Social and Affordable Housing; Traveller Accommodation; Homelessness (particularly youth homelessness); Modernisation of the Private Rented Sector.
Mechanism: Initiative-level:	<p>The <i>Housing Forum</i>, with Government, social partners, local authorities and the voluntary and co-operative sector representatives, provides social partners with the opportunity to contribute to housing policy development.</p> <p>Under the <i>Social & Affordable Housing Provision</i>, the Government and social partners seek to ensure maximum return on resources made available to meet the housing needs of low income groups.</p> <p>A <i>Private Residential Tenancy Board</i> was established and reforms in relation to security of tenure, registration of tenancies and dispute resolution were introduced to improve conditions in the private rented sector, which plays an important role in the provision of affordable accommodation.</p>

Action-level: The *Affordable Housing Initiative* is aimed at those who, in the past would have expected to purchase a house from their own resources, but are unable to do so in the current housing market. It is intended that houses are made available to a target group, defined in terms of income and/or housing need on a full cost-recovery/commercial basis. (Action 1: Ongoing Implementation of the Affordable Housing Initiative)

Progress: The Housing & Accommodation Special Initiative highlighted four target areas that should be addressed by social partners. Six actions were outlined to tackle these issues. All of the actions outlined have been addressed, and the Initiative is seen as one of the most successful.

3.3 Cost and Availability of Insurance

Lead Department: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Rationale: This Initiative was introduced against a backdrop of very high insurance costs causing serious difficulties for businesses and consumers.

Objective: To bring about a reduction in insurance costs by the industry for the benefit of businesses and consumers.

Target Issues: The functioning of the insurance market;
The cost of delivery of compensation;
The competitiveness of the market.

Mechanism:
Action Level: A *Ministerial level Oversight Committee*, comprising the Ministers for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Transport and the Chairperson of Motor Insurance Advisory Board /Personal Injuries Assessment Board is responsible for implementation of the MIAB Action Plan. (Action 1: Implementation of the MIAB Action Plan)
The *Personal Injuries Assessment Board Bill, 2003* was passed to establish to tackle the delivery cost of speedy compensation to genuine claimants while reducing insurance costs for consumers and businesses. (Action 2: Establishment of the PIAB)

Progress: The Cost and Availability of Insurance Initiative set out three actions to progress the Government's Insurance Reform Programme. Progress has been made with the implementation of all of those actions, although follow-up to the insurance report has not yet been undertaken.

3.4 Migration and Interculturalism

Lead Department:	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
Rationale:	Issues relating to immigration, interculturalism and integration have become more relevant in Irish society in recent years.
Objective:	To develop a comprehensive policy framework on migration (immigration and emigration) comprising a Public Awareness Programme to address Racism, a medium-term economic migration policy and a long-term approach to emigrants and their needs.
Target Issues:	Economic Migration; Integration Issues; Racism and Interculturalism; Irish Emigrants.
Mechanism:	
Initiative-Level:	National Action Plan against Racism(NPAR).
Action-Level:	An anti-racism intercultural programme was introduced at every level of the education system. (Action 3: Continue to promote Migration and Interculturalism in the education sector and implement this programme at every level of the education system) A Steering Committee on Educational Issues of Non-nationals was established to co-ordinate the response to educating newcomers to Ireland. (Action 3)
Progress:	Significant progress has been made in raising the profile of migration and intercultural issues in Ireland. Publication of the National Action Plan against Racism, improved education facilities to cater for increased cultural diversity and improved conditions for migrant workers have been promoted through the Migration and Interculturalism Special Initiative.

3.5 Supporting the Long-Term Unemployed, Vulnerable Workers and those who have been made Redundant

- Lead Department:** Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Rationale:** The need to increase the quality of the workforce by promoting employment growth through increased female participation, equal opportunities and balanced economic migration policy; enhancing labour quality through education, training and life-long learning; promoting economic and social inclusion and eliminating long-term unemployment.
- Objective:** To equip people with the skills to give them access to good quality and secure employment over their lifetime and to continue the re-integration of the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups into the labour market, with a focus on progression opportunities.
- Target Issues:** Eliminating Long Term Unemployment;
Addressing the needs of those who have been made redundant;
Addressing the needs of low-skilled workers.
- Mechanism:**
- Initiative-Level:** The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment established a consultative group including representatives from the Department of Finance, Education and Science and Social and Family Affairs, along with the social partners to consider matters related to the labour market.
- Action-Level:** A number of FAS programmes are used to respond to the various issues covered under this initiative:
- Long-Term Unemployed:** The Intensification Process within the Employment Action plan⁶, Community Employment Scheme, Jobs Initiative Programme and Social Economy Programmes are designed to help the long-term unemployed get back to work by offering job placements on a full and part-time basis.
- Vulnerable Workers:** The Competency Development Programme, Bridging/Foundation Programme and Gateway for Women Programme are aimed at low-skilled, low qualification operatives in vulnerable sectors and early school leavers.

⁶ Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, Employment Action Plan, April 2002 (<http://www.entemp.ie/labour/market/publications.htm#neap>)

Those who have been made redundant: FÁS has developed a process of engagement with redundant workers and with large scale company closures.

Progress: Apart from increasing the numbers at work, this measure also aims to increase the quality of the workforce in order to achieve the economy's full potential. Five actions were outlined to reduce the number of long-term unemployed, protect employees in potentially vulnerable sectors and increase training opportunities of lower skilled workers. Progress with these is summarised in Annex 1.

3.6 Tackling Educational Disadvantage - Literacy, Numeracy and Early School Leavers

Lead Department: Department of Education and Science

Rationale: Education has a fundamental role to play in providing full access to life chances and breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

Objective: To prioritise investment in favour of those most at risk and optimise access, participation and outcome at every level of the system for disadvantaged groups.

Target Issues: Literacy;
Numeracy;
ICT Literacy;
Early School Leaving;
Disadvantaged groups.

Target: Halve the number of pupils with serious literacy difficulties by 2006;
Reduce the proportion of adults with low literacy levels to 10% by 2007;
Ensure that completion of upper second level education rates increase to 90% by 2006.

Mechanism:

Initiative-Level: The DES approach to tackling educational disadvantage is set out in the Programme for Government and the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion. DEIS (Deliver Equality of Opportunity in Schools) is an action plan for educational inclusion.

Progress: Ten actions were set out to, inter alia, improve literacy and numeracy levels in disadvantaged areas, tackle early school leaving, promote the development of student councils, and increase educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups. A number of projects have been rolled out under the Initiative and significant progress has been made.

3.7 Waste Management

Lead Department: Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Rationale: Given the increase in waste volumes, the diversity of waste to be managed, the controversy and opposition often associated with waste treatment options and the relatively poorly developed state of our waste infrastructure, clear policy direction on the waste agenda was required.

Objective: The overall policy objective is focused on putting in place a system of planning, and securing the delivery of the infrastructure to achieve the waste hierarchy: prevention, minimisation, significantly increasing recycling and, as a last resort, landfilling the residual waste which cannot be recovered.

Target: A diversion of 50% of household waste away from landfill by 2013;
A recycling level of 35% of municipal waste by 2013;
Recycling of 85% of Construction & Demolition wastes by 2013.

Target Issues: Effective management of waste;
Incineration and landfill policy;
Civic culture;
National Recycling Effort.

Mechanism:
Initiative-Level: The Waste Management Policy Papers (*Waste Management: Changing Our Ways* and *Preventing and Recycling Waste: Delivering Change*) provide the framework for implementation of this Initiative.

Action-Level: A Special National Advisory Group for Communications Strategy and three regional networks were set up to develop and implement a Communications Strategy to generate greater awareness of responsibilities pertaining to waste management. (Action 2: Building

a shared understanding through the development and implementation of a communications strategy to generate greater awareness in society of issues and responsibilities)

A Group, with a secretariat in Enterprise Ireland, was established to develop a Market Development Programme for Recyclable Materials (Action 3: Establishment of a Market Development Board and a Recycling Forum).

A Core Prevention team was set up in the Environmental Protection Agency to concentrate efforts on the top of the waste hierarchy and is rolling out a five year National Waste Prevention Programme which is overseen by the National Waste Prevention Committee comprising the relevant industry and public sector stakeholders. (Action 4: Concentrated efforts on the top of the waste hierarchy, i.e. waste prevention and waste minimisation)

Progress: Some progress has been made under all five of the Waste Management actions. A new Waste Management Strategy has been published since the *Sustaining Progress* Agreement; “Waste Management – Taking Stock and Moving Forward”⁷

3.8 Care – Children, People with disabilities and older people

Lead Department: Department of the Taoiseach

Rationale: A strategic approach is required to provide an infrastructure of care services that achieves a balance between the respective roles of families, the State, the private sector and voluntary organisations.

Objective: *Childcare:* To enhance the quality of childcare provision, to increase the availability of childcare places, facilitate parents in employment, education and training.

People with disabilities: To ensure the planning and delivery of services that will give people with disabilities the opportunity to live as full a life as possible and to live with their families and as part of the local communities for as long as possible

Older people: To support older people in independence and dignity at home for as long as possible.

⁷ DoEHLG, Waste Management: Taking Stock and Moving Forward, April, 2004

Target:	Childcare: Increase by 50% (28,000 places) the supply of childcare places throughout Ireland.
Target Issues:	Childcare; Older People; People with Disabilities; Supply of Care workers and associated Health Service Workers; Transport Accessibility; Care related tax expenditure.
Mechanism:	
<i>Initiative-Level:</i>	The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 (EOCP) was set up to stimulate increased supply of childcare places. A High Level Working Group on Early Childhood Care and Education reviewed the types of State expenditure on childcare. The key structure which guides implementation of this Initiative in relation to people with disabilities is the National Disability Strategy.
<i>Action-Level:</i>	A Working Group was established to identify policy options for a financially sustainable system of long-term care. (Action 5: Establish a Working Group to examine strategic policy, cost and service delivery issues associated with the care of older people) 12 Specialist Study Groups were established to progress the strategic review of existing service provision for people with disabilities. (Action 6: Progress a strategic Review of existing service provision for people with disabilities) An IBEC/ICTU subcommittee was set up to examine options in relation to the supply of childcare places to support employers and employees. (Action 9: Continue discussions with ICTU/IBEC to examine ways of addressing childcare needs of low paid parents and workplace-based childcare)
Progress:	The Care Initiative covers a series of complex issues that are difficult to tackle within a three-year timeframe. Eleven actions were outlined for the three target groups. Details of progress are outlined in table 7 of Annex 1.

3.9 Alcohol/Drug Misuse

Lead Department: Department of Health and Children (Alcohol)/Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Drugs)

Rationale: In the last decade Ireland has had the highest increase in alcohol consumption among EU countries. Related harm has also increased in parallel with increased consumption. There is also a need to tackle the related problem of drug misuse.

Objective: To prevent and reduce alcohol related harm in Ireland and to reduce the harm caused to individuals and society by misuse of drugs through a concerted focus on the four strategic pillars; supply reduction, prevention, treatment and research.

Target Issues: Alcohol consumption (particularly by young people);
Exposure of young people to alcohol marketing;
Access of children and adolescents to alcohol;
Drug misuse;
Treatment and other supports for drug misusers;
Research on the nature and extent of illicit drug use in Ireland.

Mechanism:
Initiative-Level: The Initiative is being delivered through the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol and continued implementation of the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 .

Action-Level: An Interdepartmental Group was established to coordinate responses to the recommendations made in the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol's Interim Report. (Actions 1: Implementation of recommendations arising from the Interim Report of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol & Action 2: Continuation of the work of the Task Force aimed at reducing and preventing alcohol related harm)
A Working Group was established to mobilise relevant stakeholders to achieve a targeted and measurable reduction in alcohol misuse (Action 4: Establishment of a Working Group to examine Alcohol Misuse)
An Inter-Departmental Group on Drugs ensures co-operation between Departments and agencies for the implementation of the 100 actions in the Drugs Strategy. (Action 6: A Critical Implementation Path (CIP) to be published shortly)
The Local Drugs Task Forces and regional Drugs Task Forces facilitate the input of the C&V pillar. (Action 7: Continued Support from the C&V Pillar)

A Steering Group made up of representatives of relevant departments and agencies as well as the Community and Voluntary sector oversaw the Review of the National Drugs Strategy and drew recommendations for the Report to be pursued throughout the remainder of the Strategy. (Action 8: Mid-Term Review of the National Drugs Strategy)

Progress: Existing Alcohol and drugs strategies were used as a roadmap for implementation of this initiative. Progress has been made through the work of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol, the Working Group on Alcohol misuse and the Regional and Local Drugs Task Forces.

3.10 Including Everyone in the Information Society

Lead Department: Department of the Taoiseach

Rationale: The growing influence of information and communication technologies is transforming the way people interact and do business. The building of an inclusive Information Society is a key national priority as outlined in the Government's Action Plan: New Connections.

Objective: The objective is to create meaningful and useful content to enable everyone to exploit technology to maximum advantage and to provide the levers for change and advancement that can help people to overcome barriers of personal and economic circumstances.

Target Issues: Digital Divide;
Revised Implementation Strategy.

Target: A national eInclusion strategy by end 2003;
By 2005, public services that maximise efficiency and effectiveness in terms of service delivery and use of resources will be available online.

Mechanism:
Initiative-Level: The national policy document on the Information Society "*New Connections – A Strategy to realise the potential of the Information Society in Ireland*" provided direction for the implementation of this Initiative.⁸

Action-Level: A review of the national eInclusion policy facilitated delivery of a revised national eInclusion Implementation Strategy. (Actions 2: Identification of the key components of a revised eInclusion Implementation Strategy, including

⁸ <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/index.asp?docID=631>

funding, particularly focussing on those on low incomes and late adopters & Action 3: Examination of the research commissioned by the Information Society Commission on how the Digital Divide is being tackled nationally relative to other countries and the need for further policy initiatives)

The Local Government Computer Services Board, in conjunction with the relevant Departments and agencies were responsible for piloting the Mobhaile initiative. (Action 5: Initiate a consultation process on how the ICT capacity of the Community and Voluntary sector can be built)

Progress: As more economic and social activities move to digital forms of delivery, people who cannot access ICT are potentially at a disadvantage. Five actions were introduced to improve access and availability of ICT.

3.11 Ending Child Poverty

Lead Department: Department of Social and Family Affairs

Rationale: Poverty can greatly inhibit the realisation of a child’s potential which can not only have potential long-term consequences for the individual’s well-being, but also in economic terms, for human capital and social cohesion.

Objective: To eliminate child poverty and to move to a situation of greater equality for all children in terms of access to appropriate education, health and housing, thus breaking the cycle of disadvantage and exclusion experienced by certain children in society.

Target: Reduce the number of children who are consistently poor below 2%

Target Issues: Education;
Health;
Housing;
Migrants, ethnic minorities and travellers.

Mechanism:
Action-Level: NESC was responsible for analysis of child income support arrangements. (Action 1: A review of child income support arrangements to be undertaken, including examining the effectiveness of merging Child Dependent Allowance (CDA) with the Family Income Support (FIS))

An IDG was established to oversee the development of a strategic approach to strengthening families. (Action 2: Develop a strategic policy to strengthen families, with particular focus on the coordination of supports to families)

A subgroup of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion was established to examine the obstacles to employment for lone parents. A Working Group was established within the DSFA, with representation from the Combat Poverty Agency, to review the income support arrangements for lone parents. A High Level Working Group on Childcare and early Education is working with the National Children's Office on the issue of child poverty. (Action 3: Undertake further analysis of obstacles to employment, with particular reference to lone parents, in the light of the NESC research on the OECD report on family friendly policies)

The Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion had responsibility for mapping the linkages between Departments and agencies with responsibility for children. (Action 4: Improve linkages between Departments and Agencies with responsibility for children)

The Office for Social Inclusion and the Social Inclusion Consultative Group monitored progress under NAPS. (Action 5: Use the structures established under the NAPS to achieve the NAPS target on child poverty)

The National Children's Office and the DSFA have responsibility for the Children's Longitudinal Study. (Action 6: Progress the Children's Longitudinal Study)

Progress:

In line with the National Children's Strategy and the National Anti Poverty Strategy, six actions were outlined to review child income support arrangements, support lone parents and improve delivery of services to support disadvantaged children. Progress is summarised in Table 10 of Annex 1.

Chapter 4 Key Findings and Issues Arising

4.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter 1, the purpose of this review was to provide an overview of the process by which the Special Initiatives were arrived at as part of *Sustaining Progress*; to describe the progression of the Initiatives, to capture the perspectives of different participants in the process, to identify lessons learned and make suggestions on how to manage such issues and challenges for the future.

The first of these has been the subject of Chapter 2, and the second has been dealt with in Chapter 3. This Chapter deals with the third and fourth items, i.e. capturing perspectives and identifying lessons learned. Chapter 5 deals with the final item, i.e. making suggestions for the future.

This Chapter has four subsequent sections. Section 4.2 recaps on the heterogeneous nature of the Special Initiatives and describes the challenge that this presents in drawing overall conclusions; Section 4.3 summarises the experience under the actions in terms of the degree of success achieved; Section 4.4 discusses the specific added value of Special Initiative status and Section 4.5 draws on the lessons from the Special Initiatives experience as a lead in to the following chapter. Throughout, perspectives of participants in the consultations are drawn upon to inform the view presented here.

4.2 Nature of the Special Initiatives

4.2.1 Overview

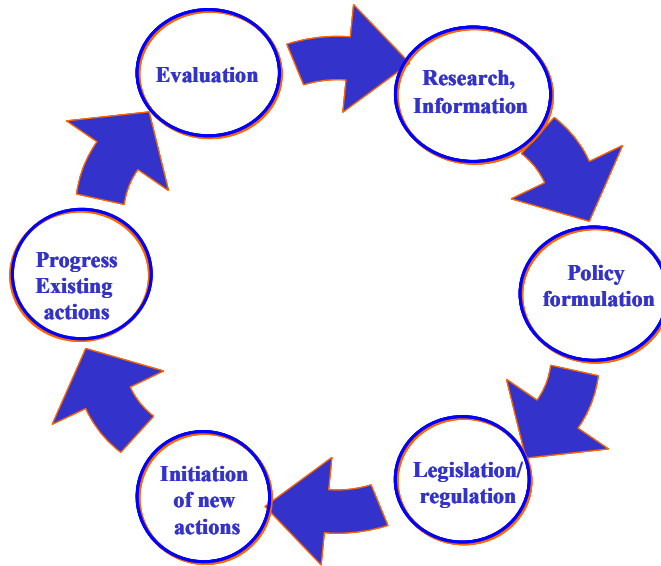
The Initiatives involve different departments as lead departments, different types of economic, social and other issues, different levels of specificity ranging from overall aspirations, e.g. ending child poverty, to quite specific implementation issues, e.g. in relation to motor insurance.

Their heterogeneity is even greater when the underlying actions are focused upon, of which there were initially a total of 67 individual ones identified in the Scoping Reports, and some others have de facto been added subsequently. The Initiatives are in practice made up of the actions within them (plus a bit more), and it is at that level that any concrete impact has to occur. As described in Chapter 2, these actions were derived subsequent to the agreement of the overall strategic areas of the Initiatives.

4.2.2 A Typology of Special Initiative Actions

In order to gain a better “handle” on what the Special Initiatives were about, we examined the nature of the 67 (original) actions and classified these into a series of broad types. As the basis for this, we use a series of headings within what might be broadly referred to as the “policy cycle”, i.e. the chronological stages through which public initiatives or investments typically evolve. These are shown in Figure 4.1.

FIGURE 4.1 THE POLICY CYCLE



Essentially this typology follows a logical flow (which obviously is not always followed in practice), from research and information to formulation of policy proposals, to passing legislation where that is required. This leads either to introduction of new Initiatives or the re-energization of existing ones, as a result of some kind of (formal or informal) review or evaluation, and back round to new investigations again.

We have categorised each of the 67 actions into the category in which we felt it primarily belongs. This was generally reasonably clear, e.g. development of legislation clearly belongs under legislation, background research belongs under research, etc. The results of this classification are shown in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1: NATURE OF THE ACTIONS UNDER SPECIAL INITIATIVES		
Category	Number of Relevant Actions	% of Total
Research, Information	7	11
Policy Formulation, Reports	16	24
Legislation	5	7
Initiation of new activities	12	18
Progress existing activities	24	36
Evaluation	3	4
Total	67	100

Table 4.1 shows that the purpose of 36% of the actions outlined was to progress an existing activity. 24% of the actions relate to policy formulation and 18% of the actions aim to initiate new activities in the target areas.

What this means is a clear weighting within the Initiatives towards the “upstream” part of the policy cycle. This is not an implied criticism. However, it is a factual observation, and one that perhaps does not fit fully with the spirit of the Initiatives being action-oriented problem-solving tools.

The description of the Special Initiatives in *Sustaining Progress* does acknowledge that they require “different combinations of new analysis, consultations, experimental policy initiatives, joint action by Government and the social partners, and deliberation based on experience”. The only question mark that this classification may present in practice is one of balance, and whether the experimental initiatives and joint actions are less present than analyses, consultation and deliberation.

This also throws up an issue for the future as to what the proper orientation might be, i.e. whether for example, as in the case of motor insurance, the Special Initiatives operate best when implementing already agreed actions, or whether they are more appropriate in the earlier stages of developing such policies for follow-up elsewhere.

Some other aspects of the actions also come across from this case-by-case examination including the fact that there are relatively few cases of new activity being initiated and a lot of emphasis on progressing existing agreements – which suggests blockages in the system which are difficult to resolve.

Also, though less obvious from the analysis, is the fact that there is a variety of other different types of things, e.g. one-off versus ongoing, and also old versus new, i.e. many of the actions, even the relatively upstream actions, are also agreed in other policy contexts, such as to measures under the NDP Operational Programmes.

There may thus have been some temptation to recycle, as part of the Special Initiatives activities, things that were occurring anyway. To the extent that this happens, it would mean that in such areas the Special Initiatives process would have limited added value. Conversely, the Special Initiatives will have most added value when, as intended, they can relieve blockages and give momentum to otherwise problematic actions.

4.3 The Degree of Success Achieved

4.3.1 What Constitutes Success?

In examining the Initiatives and the actions within them “success” can be judged at three levels:

- **the nature of the “process”**, i.e. whether a good and effective process was established through which the Initiative and its constituent actions could be furthered and the underlying objectives progressed;
- **achievement of “outputs”**, i.e. whether the Initiative has actually been achieving on the deliverables that it promised, whatever their nature, e.g. publication of Bills, the passing of legislation, preparation of reports, key results, and so on;
- **achievement of “outcomes/impacts”**, i.e. whether tangible results are being achieved on the ground, e.g. whether the Housing Initiative has indeed led to an increase in actual construction of affordable housing units (which it has), whether the Insurance Initiative has contributed to increased competition and lower motor insurance premia (which it has).

4.3.2 Degree of Success – Process

The first consideration here is the extent to which the individual Initiatives involve an identifiable process, i.e. clear management and administrative structures that facilitates some structural involvement of the social partners. This could be either new or pre-existing.

The extent of this varies, and generally it is also correlated with a higher degree of success in our downstream categories. A clear process is evident in the case of the Housing and Accommodation Initiative (the Housing Forum), Cost and Availability of Insurance (Ministerial Committee), Migration and Interculturalism (where the National Committee has been reinvigorated), and Alcohol and Drug Misuse (where the Drugs Task Force and associated structures are in place).

In some other cases, where there was no clear concrete mechanism, there was a tendency for other partners, individually or jointly, to place demands on Government rather than adopting a shared problem-solving approach. This includes in particular Care and Educational Disadvantage. In terms of lessons learned and implications for the future, some key observations here are:

- That, given the nature of the Initiatives, **some type of clear process** is a pre-condition for progressing such complex issues;
- That there needs to be **a clear lead organisation**. A committee or group that meets occasionally is unlikely to be enough and an organisation with appropriate policy and organisational role must step into the breach;
- That, in the case of Initiatives involving the public sector – and all of them to date do so – **enthusiastic leadership** by a civil servant at the appropriate level (probably Principal Officer or Assistant Secretary) is also required, and if absent creates an almost unfillable void;
- The Initiatives, especially **the actions, need to be as clear and specific as possible** as those concerned with “ongoing monitoring” and “continued attention” are unhelpful. It is both very difficult to progress such actions, and equally difficult to assess whether they are progressing.

4.3.3 Degree of Success – Progress

A reasonable barometer of the degree of progress of the Special Initiatives is the extent to which they are achieving their own stated objectives, especially where these objectives are reasonably tangible and identifiable, e.g. quantitative, or tangible key results. Also, as noted earlier, whatever about at overall Initiative level, at the level of the individual actions many of the intended achievements appear fairly modest and process-oriented.

There are, of course, caveats here. On the one hand, a number of the Initiatives involve activities where lead-times are very long and where a three-year period may simply not be long enough during which to make tangible progress. On the other hand, in cases where activities already under way were included as actions, the achievement of these is desirable but clearly cannot be double-counted as solely an achievement of the Special Initiatives process. We would feel, from our own observation of the actions, that there are a number of instances of this at action level.

Considerable progress has been made on a number of Initiatives. Relatively high achievers are the Housing and Accommodation Initiative and the Cost and Availability of Insurance Initiative. Others where there has been some progress include Migration and Interculturalism, Educational Disadvantage, Waste Management, and the drugs component in particular of the Alcohol and Drugs Misuse Initiative.

In terms of lessons for the future, a number of things emerge:

- Progress under the Initiative is generally correlated with the **quality of the underlying process**;
- Progress is correlated with the **type of actions** involved and there is arguably a trade-off here. By definition, complex issues are difficult and time consuming compared to the more straightforward issues covered;
- **Committed and enthusiastic leadership** are essential pre-requisites for progress.

The current suite of Special Initiatives, especially at the level of the Initiatives as a whole, whatever about individual actions, include some very challenging areas, many of which will take considerable time to genuinely progress. The challenge for the future may be not so much to abandon these areas, but to find more specific “early wins” within them which constitute key steps on the journey to eventual impact.

It has to also be acknowledged that in some areas there may be external obstacles or delays, and even the Special Initiatives’ process can only take things so far. A number of factors will always remain the prerogative of Government or the legislature, e.g. enactment or legislation, and the provision of resources.

4.3.4 Degree of Success – Outcome/Impact

Outcomes here refers to tangible results on the ground, something that might be evident to a citizen as distinct from someone interested primarily in process. In approaching this, we should repeat the statement in Chapter 1 that this report does not constitute a conventional evaluation of the individual Initiatives and actions.

Nevertheless, a number of observations can be made, based on the summaries of the individual Initiatives in Chapter 3.

Firstly, it is likely that high achievers in terms of outcome/impact correspond closely to those which have made considerable progress (as detailed in the previous section), and again the Housing and Accommodation, and Costs and Availability of Insurance stand out.

Parallel improvements on the ground are also likely to have resulted from activity in such areas as Migration and Interculturalism and Drug Misuse.

In relation to lessons for the future, a number are:

- Particularly in difficult areas, to ensure that some of the actions constitute tangible and potential early wins so that some degree of **tangible action** on the ground can be achieved. This is important for beneficiaries, but also perhaps to maintain the momentum and morale of those involved in these challenging areas;
- That the mainly Government Department, rather than executive agency, focus of the process may lead to an emphasis on **process and procedures, as opposed to on-the-ground service** delivery improvements. It must of course be acknowledged that impediments to service delivery frequently are at the process and procedure level.

4.4 Added Value of Being Special Initiatives

4.4.1 Aims of the Initiatives

The Special Initiatives as described in *Sustaining Progress*, set the bar quite high in this context. It is very much the letter and the spirit that the Special Initiatives process itself should contribute via the partners working together in problem solving mode. An important question therefore is to what extent this has been happening, or to what extent results achieved at Initiative and action level might have occurred anyway, i.e. without the area being a designated Special Initiative.

Assessing this faces the challenges already mentioned of heterogeneous Initiatives and actions, intangible areas, differing perceptions among the parties (even parties from the same pillar about the same Initiative or action), and the fact that the actions under the Initiatives are seldom unique to

the Initiative, but most often have an independent existence. In our assessment, we draw on three more detailed case studies, Housing and Accommodation, Insurance and Care.

Special Initiatives Case Study: Initiating Progress in an Important Area

Housing and Accommodation Special Initiative

As described in Chapter 3, this Initiative was designed in the context of the challenges facing housing and accommodation in the lead in to the *Sustaining Progress* negotiations, especially in the area of affordable housing.

The overall objective of the commitment in relation to provision of social and affordable accommodation was to review the sectors of the programme designed to assist low income groups, including those with social housing and special housing needs in order to ensure that the resources being made available are expended in a manner that contributes to breaking cycles of poverty and exclusion.

A number of actions were identified:

- Ongoing implementation of the Affordable Housing Initiative;
- Completion of the NESC report on housing in Ireland;
- Consideration of the report of the All Party Committee on the Constitution;
- Re-constitution of the Housing Forum as the mechanism to progress the issues;
- Agreement of the work programme of the Forum, and
- Progress on the issue of traveller accommodation.

With regard to the implementation process, the Special Initiative was led by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Housing Section) as the lead Department. The Housing Forum, already established under PPF, was re-constituted to provide the mechanisms for the social partners to contribute to housing policy development and progression.

Progress in practice is seen by the social partners as having been reasonably successful. From a situation of being viewed as unsatisfactory at the time of establishment of the Initiative, it is now perceived that good efforts and progress have been made across the range of issues directly within the scope of the Initiative, and indeed in a number of related areas such as homelessness. While quantitative targets for affordable housing output have not been met, and housing generally, including social and affordable housing, remains an important national issue, there is a sense of progress being made.

Key success factors for progress are seen as strong commitment from the Housing Section of the lead Department, the fact that the Initiative was of interest to all social partners from their differing perspectives, that a number of the partners including the community and voluntary sector had an opportunity to make practical proposals which were accepted by the responsible authorities, and that all parties gained a shared understanding of the issues and problems.

The social partners also agreed that the Forum had increased their understanding of the challenges facing Government in this area, and the fact that long lead times, while frustrating, can reflect genuine underlying challenges.

With regard to the added value of Special Initiative status, this Initiative is unusual in that a key component – the Affordable Housing Initiative, is also a commitment under the private sector pay component of *Sustaining Progress* (Part Two, Section 6) making the unique role of the wider Special Initiative harder to separate out. However, it is seen by the partners as the best example of how a Special Initiative can work, in this case especially via the work of the Housing Forum. The Forum is now seen as an important part of the process of housing policy development and implementation, and one which will continue.

4.4.2 The Experience in Practice

From examination of the Initiatives, and consultations with the stakeholders, the Initiatives could be grouped into three broad categories:

- Those where being a Special Initiative has had considerable impact in the area in question;
- Those where there has been a positive contribution but where there were other key positive factors also contributing to developments;
- Those where being a Special Initiative probably had relatively less impact to-date.

In the first category, the main candidate is Housing and Accommodation (see Case Study). Helping Vulnerable Workers and those who have been made Redundant is another candidate where the Special Initiatives process may have led to a re-invigoration of interest by the lead Department.

Initiatives that have made a positive contribution as a result of the Special Initiatives status include the Cost and Availability of Insurance (see Case Study), Alcohol and Drug Misuse and Ending Child Poverty. Care and Waste Management were two Initiatives where the impact to date has been less tangible.

4.4.3 Overall Benefits of Special Initiatives Process

The main overall benefit of the Special Initiatives process to date is likely to be the “spotlight” effect of highlighting the issues which the Initiative is designed to address and providing regular reminders in relation to the need to progress it.

There are a number of other areas where there are also benefits, but these in many cases remain potential rather than actual ones. These include:

- Increasing all partners’ awareness of the nature and complexity of issues. For example, the community and voluntary sector would accept that its involvement in the Housing Initiative not only made a contribution to the Initiative, but also increased its own understanding of the nature and complexity of the issues involved, and how they might take longer to address than some constituent organisations might wish;
- Its potential to introduce new ideas and approaches to issues, particularly to public sector approaches to these issues. Again, the community and voluntary sector would view the Housing Initiative as a case in point, where a number of its proposals were seen by the lead Department as useful and constructive;

Special Initiatives Case Study: Ensuring Rapid Action in a Specific Sector***Cost and Availability of Insurance Special Initiative***

A range of insurance issues were topical and controversial during the lead-in to negotiation of the overall Agreement, due to the high and rising insurance costs for both business and consumers. This resulted in the establishment of the Motor Insurance Advisory Board (MIAB) whose report attracted considerable attention at the time. The Board developed a total of 67 recommendations, with a number of these extending beyond pure motor insurance.

The Special Initiative targeted three follow-up actions:

- Implementation of the MIAB Action Plan;
- Establishment of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB);
- The undertaking of a joint DETE/Competition Authority study into the insurance market generally.

Considerable progress has been made on these in the intervening period. Some 45 of the 67 MIAB recommendations have been implemented and a further 15 are progressing; the PIAB was established and its members appointed in April 2004; and the final report of the joint study on competition issues was published in early 2005.

With regard to implementation mechanisms, the lead department was the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (relevant to PIAB), with involvement also of the Department of Transport (road safety) and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (regarding legal changes).

A Ministerial Committee of the three relevant Ministers was established, which met monthly and dealt with the individual recommendations. Progress made by the Committee was also reported on under the Special Initiatives process. DETE provided the Secretariat of the Committee.

While there are some outstanding issues, particularly in relation to follow-up to the joint report, the insurance sector is seen as one where progress was made relatively rapidly, e.g. establishment of a new state body within two years, and in the motor insurance area in particular there is now more price competition in the marketplace.

With regard to the added value provided by SPECIAL INITIATIVE status, two interpretations are possible. On the one hand, the area already had the momentum of a relatively high-powered and focused structure. It was an area of considerable public attention, and responsibilities were reasonably clear. There was also a consciousness of the need for simultaneous actions across the three Departments, e.g. PIAB without legal change regarding fraudulent insurance claims would have had more limited benefits – an important time-based dimension of joined-up government.

Based on the assessment of those most closely involved with the Initiative, we would feel that its status under *Sustaining Progress* added further impetus and focus to the situation.

- Experience from the ground: one of the potential benefits of the Initiatives is to bring the social partners into not just the policy-making process, but also the planning for delivery. However, deficiency in this regard is that as the Initiative is currently structured the social partners tend to meet only the central civil servants involved. In some cases, these may have a relatively operational role, e.g. in bringing forward legislation and so on. However, in many areas, most notably core public service areas such as education and healthcare, this “coalface”

responsibility lies at the level of executive agencies, schools, etc. and not at departmental level. Consequently, there is a degree of mis-match which needs to be considered in the future (we make some specific suggestions in relation to this in the next chapter);

- Confidence building: each of the partners becomes more aware of the preoccupations, priorities and constraints that face others, and that the positions adopted by other partners are not always as unreasonable as they first appear, and that their expectations are sometimes not as unreasonable as might be assumed;
- Avoidance of potential disagreement: the involvement of the social partners by its nature is meant to be shared problem solving approach. An aspect of this can be that early discussion of issues may head off actual or perceived disagreements about certain aspects of it. This is cited in the case of the insurance costs Initiative, that any potential discomfort of social partners with what was being planned had not materialised.

4.5 Special Initiatives – What Works and What Does Not

4.5.1 What Works?

Many of the examples of what has worked well in the context of Special Initiatives have already been cited in earlier sections of this Chapter, and in the individual Initiative summaries in Chapter 3. In brief the ingredients of success include:

- **Strong personal enthusiasm and leadership** from the responsible authorities, particularly from the lead partner representative. This is cited by various partners in relation to the progress under the Housing Initiative;
- Perceived **political commitment and interest**, to which all parties frequently respond. This is particularly important within the public service where there can often be perceived (and indeed actual) competing priorities with relative prioritisation fluctuating. The interest of an individual Minister for example can have a positive effect, as was the case in relation to insurance costs;
- **Interest across the partners**, rather than just among one or two, has also been cited as important. Again, the relatively successful Initiatives such as Housing and Insurance were cases where there was "something in it" for everyone. Housing and housing costs are an issue not just for disadvantaged people, but also for trade union membership in general, and the issue is of interest to employers in terms of facilitating wage moderation;
- Effective joined-up working across Government Departments is one of the aims of the Initiative, and its importance is also evident. Again, the Insurance Initiative is perhaps a classic example of this where the right kind of **co-operation** at the right time, an appropriate division of labour, and a **shared commitment** all contributed to the achievement of something in an area which, at the time, was a "hot" issue;

- Helpful in a variety of ways: **it builds shared understanding, it makes delivery easier and it enhances political support.** One of the reasons for relative lack of success in some Initiatives and actions may be that a vagueness or a generality made it difficult to know even what was really meant, much less what to do about it;
- Processes that lead to **tangible results** rather than merely feed into other processes also enhance enthusiasm, and the likelihood of tangible results. A future criterion for selecting actions may be to avoid these kind of areas and go for more genuine actions.

4.5.2 *What Does Not Work?*

Things that work less well are more or less the corollary of what works well. What does not work well as Special Initiatives are:

- Things that may be so difficult as to be virtually impossible;
- Things that are too catch-all and impossible to operationalise;
- Things where there may be a fundamental blockage which is beyond the scope of any partner to resolve.

Of a related nature are a number of other important lessons:

- **Difficult things take time;** success is likely to be inversely correlated with difficulty, although this is not an argument in favour of avoiding difficult things;
- Increasingly in Ireland, with both the improved economy and public finances, **resources alone frequently are not the answer** to difficulties. This emerges not just from the views of the participants, but also from observation of many areas of the current National Development Plan where funds have been under-utilised;⁹
- **Failures of joined-up government are ones that in some instances need to be resolved within the public service itself,** and discussion or involvement by other social partners may not necessarily help;
- Equally, however, there may be instances where the **positions of the other social partners, including the employers and trade unions, may themselves hinder joined-up government.** This will relate for example to issues where progress is dependent on reform and change programmes which may pose difficulties for individual trade unions and organisations.
- A related limitation of the present experience was perhaps **an unwillingness to challenge partners and positions of partners other than Government.** There is a sense in which the Initiatives have involved either one or more partners “ganging up” on the Government to demand action. However valid this was in many instances, there would appear to be a lack of

⁹ Fitzpatrick Associates, CSF Mid-Term Evaluation Update, 2005 and Department of Finance, NDP/CSF Progress Report 2000-2004.

willingness to challenge other partners on their positions, to question whether those positions too need to adjust if progress is to be made on many difficult issues. A number of non-governmental partners themselves made the observation that they felt there was a tendency for non-governmental partners not to be sufficiently challenged by the Special Initiatives process as it stands.

Special Initiatives Case Study: Continuing Challenges in Care Services

Care - Children, People with Disabilities and Older People Special Initiative

This has proved the most challenging of the Special Initiatives and one of those where the progress proved difficult.

As described in Chapter 3, the overall aim of the Care Special Initiative was ambitious, namely to develop an infrastructure of care that will address in the most effective way, the care needs of the three target groups: children, people with disabilities and older people. In each case more specific objectives were defined. A total of 11 separate Initiatives were identified. These have already been summarised in Chapter 3. They included, inter alia, enactment and publication of legislation, the publication of the Disability Bill, continued implementation of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) and developing a strategy for family policy.

The Initiative was led by the Department of the Taoiseach. This reflected the cross-departmental nature of the issues, involving the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Education and Science, and the Department Social and Family Affairs. None of the Departments directly involved stepped in to take the lead role.

In relation to progress, some progress has been made in a number of areas. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Bill was enacted in 2004 and the Disability Bill was published in 2004 as part of the National Disability Strategy and enacted in 2005, the EOCP Programme has continued to be successful. In a number of other areas however less progress was made, or actions are of themselves of a relatively process and non-tangible nature, although Budget 2006 decisions in relation to Childcare and Care for the Elderly represent significant developments.

Regarding the added value of Special Initiative status in this area, this would have to be judged to be limited in this instance. Reasons include the very broad scope of the Initiative, the absence of any of the directly responsible departments from the lead department role, well-known underlying difficulties in the relevant sections of government, most notably healthcare, and the possible absence from the Special Initiatives process of the direct operational players.¹⁰

The Special Initiatives Process has continued to keep the spotlight on the underlying difficulties, but it has probably to date not contributed a great deal to resolving them.

¹⁰ The Health Service Executive was established during the period of the Initiative.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

5.1 Context

5.1.1 *Socio-economic Context*

Formulating Special Initiatives in any new agreement will of course not be a mere repeat of what was done last time. As experienced in *Sustaining Progress* and before, all agreements are very much creatures of their time, and reflect the socio-economic environment in which they are negotiated. As noted in *Sustaining Progress* itself, that agreement (including the Special Initiatives) were very much a product of the fact that the period was seen at the time as “an interim period of particular difficulty and uncertainty”.

Looking ahead, the next period will also be different and will have potential implications for any new Initiatives. Differences will include:

- A yet again changed socio-economic environment, reflecting perhaps both a better recent economic performance than projected, but an increasingly uncertain and complex mid-term outlook. This reflects an uncertainty with regard to costs and competitiveness, the performance of the high-tech sector, the absence of productivity growth in the economy, the current reliance of economic performance on the consumer and construction sectors with associated question marks about the medium-term sustainability of this;
- In the policy environment, there are also important new developments including the decision to have a new National Development Plan 2007-13 (but which will not be finalised prior to the next agreement) and the establishment of rolling five-year capital envelopes in major areas of public capital expenditure as well as a new NAP/Inclusion 2006/2008.

5.1.2 *Overall Nature of Any Agreement*

Also important will be the overall nature of any new partnership agreement itself. The nature of the Special Initiatives clearly cannot be separated from the agreement, but is an integral part of it. So they and the remainder of the agreement clearly have an iterative relationship with each other.

There is a view, with some validity, that under the current agreement the Special Initiatives were almost over-burdened by their prominence. At times they became virtually synonymous with the agreement itself, and many of the other chapters and commitments attracted less attention. A manifestation of this is the fact that the Special Initiatives were up front in Chapter 2, and the decision that the overall *Sustaining Progress* Steering Group should devote most of its attention to the Special Initiatives.

This very prominent role may have led to the tendency under some of the Initiatives, at action level, to fall back on ongoing activities and even activities which are endorsed separately elsewhere in the agreement. This type of endorsement, while perfectly important and valid, is perhaps not a role that needs to be played specifically by the Special initiatives and using them in this way could lead to a fuzziness about what they constitute.

5.2 Strategic Choices

Following from the earlier sections, the Government and social partners would face a number of strategic choices in relation to the role and nature of Special Initiatives in a future agreement. Key choices will be:

- The role that the Initiatives play as a whole in the agreement and the relationship between them and both other sections of the current agreement, and other partnership mechanisms established under previous agreements;
- The overall nature of the Initiatives, whether for example they should focus on the big strategic issues on the one hand, or be geared more towards practical problem-solving on the other;
- The topical focus of the Special Initiatives and whether they should continue, as at present, to be heavily, though not exclusively, socially oriented, or whether they should take on wider pressing economic, quality of life and other issues also, e.g. road safety, traffic;
- The precise contribution that is expected from being Special Initiatives, as distinct from other types of public policy priorities or indeed other commitments in an agreement, This is something that will be closely related to selection criteria;
- The relationship between the Special Initiatives and other policy programmes, and how to avoid the dangers of multiple reporting about the same thing, e.g. under the NDP, NAPincl, Social Inclusion structures, NEAP;
- The management of the Initiatives and the relationship between this and the mainstream functioning of Departments and agencies;
- The role of the non-government partners in the Initiatives and how they could be both more proactive and more challenged, e.g. being the lead partners for some Initiatives, providing chairs (perhaps independent chairs) of Steering or Implementation groups etc;
- The link between Strategic Initiatives and resource allocation;
- Time-horizons and the choice between being relatively long-term or early wins;
- Whether to retain the current focus on the central Government level, or to look for greater involvement at regional and local developments (including indeed the relationship between the Special Initiatives and workplace partnership).

5.3 Overall Approach

Our suggested overall approach arising from the review can be summarised in two phrases:

- “keep the Special Initiatives special”;
- “keep the actions action-oriented, definable and timebound”.

By these is meant that the Special Initiatives process is a potentially important and useful one, but needs to be used reasonably sparingly in areas where it can make a genuine contribution. Any temptation to spread it too thinly, or make it too routine, risks the danger of it becoming nominal and defeating the purpose for which it is designed. These statements reflect an overall conclusion that the most appropriate role of Special Initiatives is to provide a temporary and distinct boost to areas needing particular problem-solving or log-jam clearing across the partners, and are at their best and most distinctive when turbo-charging action and delivery in areas that are already the subject of broad agreement. Linked to this therefore would be a shift in emphasis downstream from policy development with more overt links to action and delivery.

We are obviously aware of the fact that in the context of a partnership agreement it is important that many ongoing activities also be emphasised and endorsed. However, this need not necessarily occur in the context of Special Initiatives but can be done through other parts of the agreement, as indeed is already the case. However, there is a danger that this slips into the Initiatives also, and especially the choice of actions.

5.4 Future Direction

Our broad suggestions would be as follows:

1. To **retain the concept of the Special Initiatives**, and the actions under them, but as stated above to keep these Initiatives as special as possible, and the actions as action-oriented, definable and timebound as possible;
2. Related to this, to **ensure that other parts of the agreement as a whole contribute to the strategic objectives ahead** and to avoid the placement of the complete onus in this regard on the Special Initiatives;
3. That some broad strategic areas which are generally very appropriate for consideration by the social partners are probably too strategic to constitute good candidates for Special Initiatives but may need another type of mechanism;
4. That the criteria for Special Initiatives could be reduced and specifically could be areas:
 - a. where tangible problem-solving is important;
 - b. where there is a specific role for the social partners to add value;

- c. which are not being adequately dealt with elsewhere;
- d. involve achievable aims within a three-year time frame.

Whether the “white heat” of Partnership negotiations is the best setting for making strategic choices on numbers and subjects of Initiatives is a related issue meriting consideration;

5. The overall number of Special Initiatives could be reduced considerably;
6. The number of actions in individual Initiatives might be reduced but also kept under review;
7. That the Steering Group (or any successor) should have an oversight and monitoring role on all the Initiatives, but should avoid attempting to have any directly operational role or to micro-manage;¹¹
8. Within this, each individual Initiative should have its own dedicated implementation mechanism, e.g. committee, working group or forum involving both the existing social partners and Government Departments but also relevant delivery agencies, e.g. the Health Services Executive, local authorities etc. to bring the appropriate experience and expertise from the coalface;
9. Implementation mechanisms should ensure scope for non-governmental partners to be more proactive and challenged by the Initiative, with a focus on the contribution they can make to overcoming barriers or obstacles to progress and including how effectively existing resources are being utilised.
10. Regarding time frame, individual Special Initiatives should probably last for the period of an agreement and then cease. After this their activity can be mainstreamed (e.g. into the various existing Fora established under previous agreements), allowing the Special Initiatives spotlight to illuminate another area. Any overly long existence runs the danger of becoming tired and routine, and of duplicating existing normal processes.

¹¹ The use of the word “management” in this context is probably also inappropriate, since the Steering Group is not really in a management position. By and large that is the public sector department or agency.

Annexes

Annex 1: Actions and Progress under Special Initiatives

TABLE 1: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 Ongoing Implementation of Affordable Housing Initiative.	(i) Over 70 sites have been identified, which have the potential to deliver the 10,000-unit target figure. (ii) Legislation was enacted to allow the provision of mortgage finance by private lending agencies to affordable housing applicants. (iii) The Affordable Homes Partnership was established to drive and co-ordinate the delivery of affordable housing in the Greater Dublin Area .
2 Completion of NESC Report "Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy" ¹²	The Report was published in November 2004.
3 Consider the Report of the all Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution. ¹³	The Report was published in April 2004. The recommendations were considered as part of a wider examination of possible measures aimed at moderating land costs for housing and other essential public infrastructure.
4 The Housing Forum will be the main mechanism to progress issues in relation to the Special Initiative.	The Housing Forum was reconstituted to meet the role identified for the Forum in <i>Sustaining Progress</i> .
5 The work programme of the Housing Forum to be arranged in consultation with the Social Partners.	The Work Programme was agreed by Forum Members which includes representatives of Social Partners and relevant Government Departments.
6 Progress the issue of Traveller Accommodation by providing a strong focus for integrated action.	The issue is being progressed through (i) a review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998; (ii) an examination of issues to improve co-ordination of service delivery to Travellers; (iii) the Traveller Accommodation Programmes; (iv) the performance measurement scheme.
SOURCE: SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

¹² NESC, Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy, November 2004, (http://www.nesc.ie/inside_housing.asp)

¹³ The All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, Ninth Progress report – Private Property, 2004 (<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/Committees29thDail/constitution.htm>)

TABLE 2: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE COST AND AVAILABILITY OF INSURANCE SPECIAL INITIATIVE

Action	Progress
1 Implementation of the Motor Insurance Advisory Board (MIAB) Action Plan.	45 of the 67 recommendations have been implemented. A further 15 are progressing well.
2 Establishment of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.	The PIAB was established and its members appointed in April, 2004.
3 The undertaking by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Competition Authority is a joint study into the Insurance market.	The final report of the joint study of the Competition Authority and the DETE on "Competition issues in the non-life Insurance market" ¹⁴ was published on 8th March 2005.
SOURCE: <i>SUSTAINING PROGRESS</i> 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

¹⁴ The Competition Authority, "Competition Issues in the Non-life Insurance Market", March 2005 (<http://www.tca.ie/>)

TABLE 3: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE MIGRATION AND INTERCULTURALISM SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 Publish the National Action Plan against Racism.	"Planning for Diversity - The National Action Plan against Racism 2005-2008" was launched in January, 2005. ¹⁵
2 Continue to promote anti-racism and interculturalism through public awareness campaigns.	Increased funding was provided for the International Day against Racism activities 2004 and 2005. The "Know Racism" campaign was reviewed and incorporated into the National Action Plan against Racism.
3 Continue to promote anti-racism and interculturalism in the education sector and implement this programme at every level of the education system.	(i) Information is provided by DES on the integration of non-national students and travellers; (ii) additional resources were made available for schools to support the needs of students for whom English is not their first language; (iii) provision of in-service support materials by Integrate Ireland Language Training; (iv) Copies of NCCA Guidelines on "Intercultural Education in the Primary School" have been distributed to every primary school. (v) The SPHE and CSPE Programmes are designed to prepare second-level students for participatory citizenship; (vi) Modules on interculturalism have been developed and approved for use in the Further Education sector; (vii) A five year strategy on Traveller Education has been drafted.
4 Publish the Bill for the transposition of the EU Race Directive.	The Employment Act 2004 implements the EU Race Directive (2000/43/EC)
5 Implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Emigrants abroad on a phased basis.	Progress continues to be made on implementing many of the recommendations.
6 Complete the work of the working Group on Pay and Workplace in relation to economic migration.	A paper from Migrant Workers - Options Review Group, summarises the areas where the Department and the Social Partners have reached consensus in relation to the way forward.
7 Continue to develop anti-racism in the workplace campaign in partnership with ICTU, CIF and IBEC.	The Anti Racism in the Workplace Initiative takes place over a week in November.
8 Produce a Dignity at Work Policy in the Health Sector.	The Dignity at Work Policy was published in April, 2004
SOURCE: <i>SUSTAINING PROGRESS</i> 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

¹⁵ The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Planning for Diversity – The National Action Plan against Racism 2005-2008

TABLE 4: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED, VULNERABLE WORKERS AND THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN MADE REDUNDANT SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1. Implement the Employment Action Plan, including extension of the Preventive Strategy to all persons on the Live Register for more than six months.	(i) The Preventive Strategy commenced in Dublin in May 2003 and is now operational in all regions. (ii) As part of the Preventive Strategy, the High Support Process has been introduced for people who are experiencing major barriers in progressing from unemployment to work. (iii)The Bridging/Foundation Programme is geared towards providing early school leavers and referrals from the preventive strategy with educational, practical and personal skills training. (iv)The Expanding the workforce Programme is aimed at encouraging women to return to work.
2. Decisions arising from the review of the Community Employment Scheme, the Jobs Initiative Programme and the Social Economy Programme.	Up to 25,000 places will be supported for CE, JI and SEP in 2004 and 2005 with funding of €351mn in 2004 and €368mn in 2005
3. Consider the best way of tackling issues related to potentially vulnerable sectors.	(i) The Competency Development Programme is targeted at low skilled, low qualification operatives. (ii) FAS programmes in response to the one step up initiative include training in the areas of workplace education, contract cleaners and IT basic skills. (iii) Community Training offers a progression for workers made redundant, new entrants to the labour market, early school leavers and people who have participated in the CE measure and those who have undergone training under the early school leavers measure. (iv)FAS has developed a process of engagement with redundant workers and large scale company closures/downsizing
4. Complete the development of a new Employment Support Scheme aimed at increasing the full-time employment of people with disabilities.	A new Wage Subsidy Scheme for people with Disabilities has been developed on a three-year pilot basis, and €5mn has been allocated for the scheme.
5. Continue measures to make work pay and to encourage participation in the labour force.	Work is continuing in the context of broader economic and budgetary strategy; the National Employment Action Plan.
SOURCE: <i>SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005</i>	

TABLE 5: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE TACKLING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE LITERACY, NUMERACY AND EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS SPECIAL INITIATIVE

Action	Progress
<p>1 Improve availability of baseline data to facilitate systematic monitoring of progress on literacy and numeracy.</p>	<p>(i) The "Reading Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools" Report and the results of an evaluation of literacy and numeracy, provides baseline data against which changes in literacy standards in disadvantaged schools can be measured. (ii) National assessments of reading in first and fifth classes and mathematics in fourth class were completed in 2004. Reports on the assessments will be available shortly. (iii) The Irish national report on the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) was released in Dec. 2004 (iv) The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will develop a national report card template and will develop guidelines for teachers on assessment policy and practice.</p>
<p>2 Advised by the Educational Disadvantage Committee, complete comprehensive review of educational disadvantage programmes with a view to optimising synergy and integration between them.</p>	<p>(i) The Educational Disadvantage Committee submitted a Report on a more Integrated and Effective Delivery of School-based Educational Inclusion Measures. (ii) The DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools) Plan, launched in May 2005, will establish a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP), which will provide for a co-ordinated approach for tackling educational disadvantage in schools.¹⁶</p>
<p>3 Commence work in the development of the five year Traveller Education Strategy.</p>	<p>A joint working group, drawn from the Educational Disadvantage committee (EDC) and from the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education (ACTE) has finalised recommendations for a draft five year strategy on Traveller Education.</p>
<p>4 Implement the intensive five year remediation programme aimed at increasing literacy and numeracy in severely disadvantaged primary schools.</p>	<p>(i) The Primary Curriculum Support Programme trainers offer support to disadvantaged schools in their areas. (ii) The Reading Recovery Programme is now operating in 143 primary schools. Three new Reading Recovery teachers have been appointed in Cork, Limerick and Galway. (iii) Training of teachers in selected disadvantaged schools in <i>First Steps</i> – a programme that offers primary teachers an accurate means of assessing and monitoring children’s competencies and progress in reading, writing, spelling and oral language commenced in summer 2004 (iv) Under DEIS urban primary schools will have increased access to a literacy/numeracy support service and to literacy/numeracy support programmes such as Reading Recovery, First Steps and Maths Recovery</p>
<p>5 Continue tackling early school leaving by expanding the School Completion Programme, continuing the rollout of services of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and developing and implementing protocols for integrated working between NEWB and other related services on the ground.</p>	<p>(i) School Completion Programme services will be extended to all urban primary schools and second level schools participating in the new School Support Programme over the next two years. (ii) Rollout of the NEWB is continuing with priority being accorded to disadvantaged communities. (iii) The NEWB established a new website which will facilitate the reporting of attendance data by schools.</p>

¹⁶ http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/DEIS_action_plan_on_educational_inclusion.pdf

TABLE 5: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE TACKLING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE LITERACY, NUMERACY AND EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS SPECIAL INITIATIVE

Action	Progress
<p>6 In the area of second chance education, continue to target adult learning opportunities at those in disadvantaged communities. Continue to support the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programmes and enhanced opportunities for participation in education on a part-time basis under the Back to Education Initiative.</p>	<p>(i) Under Phase 3 of the Education Equality Initiative (2000-06) ten projects are being funded to address a variety of problems contributing to educational disadvantage of adults, including men in rural isolation, adults with disabilities, lone parents, rural unemployed, inner city early school leavers, non-nationals, women and travellers.</p> <p>(ii) Funding for adult literacy programmes continues to increase with a consequent rise in the number of participants.</p> <p>(iii) Increased funding for the Back to Education Initiative will increase the number of part-time training places available by about 1,000</p> <p>(iv) Projects under the fourth phase of the Education Guidance Initiative commenced operation in autumn 2005</p> <p>(v) In response to the recommendations in the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, in relation to data collection, the CSO included a module on adult learning</p>
<p>7 Enact Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2003</p>	<p>The Bill was enacted in July, 2004.</p>
<p>8 Pilot workplace literacy initiatives through a cooperative approach involving employers and unions through support from FAS, the National Adult Literacy Agency and vocational educational committees.</p>	<p>(i) NALA and FAS are co-operating to develop pilot projects in workplace literacy.</p> <p>(ii) NALA has also trained a number of tutors to provide literacy programmes in the workplace.</p> <p>(iii) A workplace literacy programme has been introduced in all Local Authorities.</p> <p>(iv) The DETE has allocated a budget of €2m to FAS in 2005 for a Workplace Education Fund, aimed at increasing basic skills in the workplace. National Adult Literacy Agency, Irish Business and Employers Confederation, Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Irish Congress for Trade Unions and Chambers of Commerce Ireland form a national steering group to allocate the fund.</p>
<p>9 Implement Priority Areas identified in National Youth Work Development Plan.</p>	<p>Two priorities were identified;</p> <p>1. The commencement of a child protection training programme for the Youth Work Sector. A comprehensive programme is being implemented.</p> <p>2. The appointment of an assessor of Youth Work. Preparations are being made for the appointment of an assessor of youth work.</p>
<p>10 Support the development of student councils.</p>	<p>Student Councils have been established in 558 of the 743 post primary schools. The DES participated in a working group which sought to identify barriers to establishing Student Councils and means of expanding Councils. The Group will report on its findings shortly.</p>

SOURCE: *SUSTAINING PROGRESS* 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005

TABLE 6: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER WASTE MANAGEMENT SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 Completion and publication of the national overview of waste management plans, with an emphasis on securing implementation, in terms of the roll out of the necessary waste management infrastructure.	The “National Overview of Waste Management Plans” ¹⁷ was published in April 2004. “Waste Management: Taking Stock and Moving Forward” ¹⁸ is the first five year report on the progress Ireland is making with regard to waste management. These documents set out a programme of “key points” to underpin future progress.
2 Building a shared understanding through the development and implementation of a communications strategy to generate greater awareness in society of issues and responsibilities.	The “Race Against Waste” campaign was rolled out in October 2003 – and is the most comprehensive waste awareness and communications campaign ever implemented in Ireland.
3 Establishment of a Market Development Board and a Recycling Forum.	A market Development Group was set up in 2004. A commitment has been given to the establishment of a broadly based Recycling Consultative Forum by end 2005.
4 Concentrated efforts on the top of the waste hierarchy (i.e. waste prevention and waste minimisation).	The National Waste Prevention Programme was launched in April 2004.
5 Continue to engage with the Social Partners concerning the issues arising in relation to waste charges and low-income households.	The Dept. has engaged with the DSFA to explore the issues involved in relation to waste charges and low income houses and concluded that there was no role for the social welfare system in providing income support in relation to waste charges. Private sector service providers have been asked to ensure that they offer a scheduled payment option.
SOURCE: <i>SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005</i>	

¹⁷ DoEHLG Government, National Overview of Waste Management Plans, April 2004

¹⁸ Department of Environment, Waste Management – Taking Stock and Moving Forward, April 2004, <http://environ.ie>

TABLE 7: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER CARE SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 Identify the scale of care needs in respect of childcare. Older people and problem with disabilities through information currently available in existing databases/reports, or developing new databases where necessary.	An initial examination has been carried out to establish what databases are available and to identify new databases required.
2 Enact the Education for persons with Special Educational Needs Bill, 2003	The Bill was enacted (19/07/2004).
3 Publish the Disability Bill	The Bill was published (21/09/2004).
4 Undertake a consultation process in relation to the "Study to Examine the Future Financing of Long-Term Care in Ireland" which was published in June 2003. The aim of this process is to focus all interested parties on the specific issues which need to be addressed.	A consultation document was circulated to interest parties on the specific issues and recommendations in the study. The feedback from the consultation was compiled and has been considered by the Long-Term Care Working Group
5 Following from the previous Action, the Department of Social and Family Affairs will establish a working Group, to include all relevant interests, to examine strategic policy, cost and service delivery issues associated with the care of older people.	An Inter-Departmental Working Group was established to identify the policy options for a financially sustainable system of long-term care and this took account of the views of the relevant interest groups. The final report will be discussed with these interest groups.
6 The Department of Health and Children will progress the strategic review of existing service provision for people with disabilities, in consultation with all relevant interests. An earlier part of this review will include the review of waiting lists for residential care for people with disabilities.	12 Specialist Study Groups have been established to progress the strategic review. The advice of eight of the groups has been received.
7 Implementation of a Code of Practice on Sheltered Occupational Services for People with Disabilities 2004/2005.	Details of waiting lists were published on the National Intellectual Disability Database
8 Continue the implementation of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) and work towards developing policy further in relation to the delivery and promotion of quality childcare, with a special emphasis on the development of school age childcare.	The development of a code of practice has been completed.
9 Continue discussion with ICTU/IBEC to examine ways of addressing childcare needs of low paid parents and workplace-based childcare.	Progress under the EOCP is very satisfactory with over €444mn of the Programme funding committed.
10 Develop good practice models of care in respect of older people.	A Draft Report has been prepared on the supply of childcare places to support employers and employees.
11 Develop a strategy for family policy	Appropriate proposals will be brought forward later this year.
SOURCE: SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

TABLE 8: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER ALCOHOL/DRUG MISUSE SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 Implementation of recommendations arising from the Interim Report of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol.	Progress has been made on 14 of the 21 recommendations.
2 Continuation of the work of the Task Force aimed at reducing and preventing alcohol related harm.	A second task force Report was published in September 2004 which contains further measures aimed at reducing alcohol related harm. It is intended that the combined recommendations of the two Reports will form a basis for a new Action Plan to be developed in 2005/2006. ¹⁹
3 Progress legislation on reducing exposure of young people to alcohol marketing.	The Heads of a Bill have been agreed by Government and are currently with Parliamentary Counsel. However it has been agreed to delay introduction of the Bill following completion of a comprehensive agreement with relevant stakeholders in relation to alcohol advertising and marketing practices.
4 Establishment of a Working Group to examine Alcohol Misuse	It has been agreed to establish a working group with an independent chair to mobilise relevant stakeholders.
5 Ongoing and sustained co-operation is required from Departments and Agencies to deliver 100 actions of the Strategy and mobilise available resources most effectively.	The Interdepartmental Group on Drugs meets regularly to discuss progress and obstacles encountered in implementing the 100 actions in the National Drugs Strategy. The MTR of the Strategy found that 49 actions were completed, work was underway on 45 actions and substantially more progress was required in the remaining 6 actions.
6 A Critical Implementation Path (CIP) to be published shortly.	The CIP was published in March 2004.
7 Continued support for the Community and Voluntary sectors.	The Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF) plans are being delivered through C&V projects in their areas
8 Mid-Term Review of the National Drugs Strategy	The Mid Term Review was published in March 2005. ²⁰
SOURCE: SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

¹⁹ http://www.dohc.ie/publications/strategic_task_force_on_alcohol_second.html

²⁰ <http://www.pobail.ie/en/NationalDrugsStrategy/ReportoftheSteeringGroupontheMid-termReviewoftheNationalDrugsStrategy2001-2008/>

TABLE 9: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE INCLUDING EVERYONE IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 Continuation of the mainstreaming of Information Society issues.	(i) Information Society Initiatives have been mainstreamed in the Statements of Strategy of all Government Departments and Agencies and eInclusion was identified as an important element in minimising the risk of exclusion in the NAPs/incl. (ii) Mainstreaming of Information Society is now an important tenet of Irish Information Society policy and is being advanced on a continuing basis. (iii) The CSO published statistics for the first on how ICTs are being used in Ireland; in the home and in business.
2 Identification of the key components of a revised eInclusion implementation strategy, including funding, particularly focussing on those on low incomes and late adopters.	(i) Five Priority areas were identified: 1. ICT Access 2. Learning and skills 3. Building the ICT Capacity of the C&V Pillar 4. Awareness raising 5. Mainstreaming Information Society issues. (ii) An eInclusion fund of €1.025mn has been provided for 2005 to promote greater engagement with ICT among disadvantaged groups and individuals, with a particular focus on older people and people with disabilities
3 Examination of the research commissioned by the Information Society Commission on how the Digital Divide is being tackled nationally relative to other countries and the need for further policy initiatives.	The iTech Research Report "eInclusion: Expanding the Information Society in Ireland" identified 2 sets of issues that needed to be addressed: ▪ building the capacity to use technologies ▪ creating the conditions the conditions that make their use more relevant to people's lives – ensuring that available resources are targeted towards those at greatest risk of marginalisation.
4 Examine how and in what manner ICT Literacy can be incorporated as a core focus of all relevant government-funded education and training provision.	An examination of Local Government's role in fostering appropriate partnership between the business community, the educational/training sector and community development groups to respond to local ICT training and literacy needs was initiated.
5 Initiate a consultation process on how the ICT capacity of the Community and Voluntary sector can be built.	(i) The Mobhaile Community and Voluntary Services Project was launched in April 2004. (ii) Analysis of the ICT needs and the ICT capacity of the C&V pillar was initiated
SOURCE: SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	

TABLE 10: ACTIONS AND PROGRESS UNDER THE ENDING CHILD POVERTY SPECIAL INITIATIVE	
Action	Progress
1 A review of child income support arrangements to be undertaken, including examining the effectiveness of merging Child Dependent Allowance (CDA) with the Family Income Support (FIS).	The National Economic and Social Council are undertaking an in-depth examination of CDA and FIS.
2 Develop a strategic policy to strengthen families, with particular focus on the coordination of supports to families.	Appropriate proposals will be brought forward early in 2006.
3 Undertake further analysis of obstacles to employment, with particular reference to lone parents, in the light of the NESC research on the OECD report on family friendly policies.	An Inter-Departmental Working Group was set up to examine the obstacles to employment for lone parents. A Working Group was also established in the Department of Social and Family Affairs to review the income support arrangements for lone parents. The Minister brought the final reports on lone parents to Cabinet to Government and will publish the documents as the basis of a consultation with relevant stakeholders.
4 Improve linkages between Departments and Agencies with responsibility for children.	Work on mapping the linkages has been completed and will contribute to identification of the gaps and overlaps in policy development in relation to children and service delivery.
5 Use the structures established under the NAPS to achieve the NAPS target on child poverty.	(i) Meetings of the Social inclusion Consultative Group focus on progress towards the achievement of NAPS targets, including the target specifically related to Child Poverty Reduction. (ii) The second Social Inclusion Forum continues to engage with line Departments on the assessment of progress made under the NAP/inclusion.
6 Progress the Children's Longitudinal Study.	The Study has been put out to tender and a preferred bidder has been identified. Contract negotiations for the first phase of the study, which is scheduled to last for seven years, are now underway.
SOURCE: SUSTAINING PROGRESS 2003-2005 FINAL REPORT ON SPECIAL INITIATIVES, 2005	