

Department of the Taoiseach

Annual Report - Summary 2005

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Mission Statement

To provide the Government, Taoiseach and Ministers of State with the support, policy advice and information necessary for the effective conduct of Government and for the dynamic leadership, co-ordination and strategic direction of Government policy.

Table of Contents

Mission Statement	2	
A Message from the Taoiseach	4	
Introduction by the Secretary General	5	
Chapter 1	The Role of the Department of the Taoiseach	6
Chapter 2	Overall Strategic Objective 1 - Supporting the Government	8
Chapter 3	Overall Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting the Taoiseach	10
Chapter 4	Strategic Priority A - Northern Ireland	13
Chapter 5	Strategic Priority B - European Union and International Affairs	15
Chapter 6	Strategic Priority C - Economic and Social Policy	21
Chapter 7	Strategic Priority D - Social Partnership	25
Chapter 8	Strategic Priority E - Public Service Modernisation	28
Chapter 9	Strategic Priority F - The Information Society and e-Government	32
Chapter 10	Strategic Priority G - Corporate Support Services	34

Appendices

Appendix 1:	Gender Breakdown of Staff Serving in the Department	39
Appendix 2:	Expenditure for the year 2005	40
Appendix 3:	Report on Payment Practices for 2005	41
Appendix 4:	Statement of Compliance	42
Appendix 5:	Department of the Taoiseach Customer Charter	43
Appendix 6:	Associated Bodies	46
Appendix 7:	Department of the Taoiseach Organisation Chart	47
Appendix 8:	Glossary of abbreviations used in this document	48



Bertie Ahern, TD
Taoiseach



Tom Kitt, TD
Minister of State
with special responsibility
as Government Chief Whip
and for the Knowledge Society



Noel Treacy, TD
Minister of State for
European Affairs

A Message from the Taoiseach

This first report on progress in respect of the priorities outlined in my Department's Strategy Statement 2005 – 2007 reflects the work of the Department's staff with other stakeholders to achieve our objectives for the year.

The priorities for 2005 included progressing implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and Irish interests in European and International circles; economic and social policy developments, particularly with regard to infrastructural development through the launch of *Transport 21*, and monitoring of progress in relation to the *National Disability Strategy*; the final phase of *Sustaining Progress* and preparations for negotiations on a successor agreement; and continued progress on the modernisation agenda for the public service including the continued implementation and enhancement of the eCabinet project

Without the continued commitment of the staff in my Department to the delivery of quality results, these achievements would not have been possible.

Bertie Ahern, TD
Taoiseach

Introduction by the Secretary General



Dermot McCarthy
Secretary General

This seventh annual report of the Department of the Taoiseach provides an overview of the Department's work during 2005. It reflects the progress made against the key priorities outlined in our Strategy Statement for 2005-2007.

The Department provides leadership and co-ordination across key areas of Government policy and aims at all times to provide an excellent service. Our modernisation initiative is an essential part of this process. Management and staff work in partnership to ensure that we continue to meet and exceed the changing needs of our customers.

The Department uses a range of different measurement techniques to ensure that we provide the highest level of customer service. We welcome your feedback on this report, or on any aspect of the service we provide, at any time.

This document contains material which has been summarised from a full-length version of the Annual Report. The full-length Annual Report is available from our website (at <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/index.asp?docID=2713>), or by contacting our Change Management Unit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dermot McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

Dermot McCarthy
Secretary General

Chapter 1

The Role of the Department of the Taoiseach

“The Taoiseach has a leadership role, and a corresponding involvement, in all major policy areas.”

Strategy Statement

This report is the seventh Annual Report published by the Department under the Public Service Management Act, 1997 and the first report on progress under the *Strategy Statement 2005-2007*.

The Strategy Statement sets out our key objectives and overall direction over the next two years. Each Division’s business plan is designed to assist the delivery of these objectives, which are, in turn, reflected in personal work objectives for each officer through the Performance Management and Development System. The Management Advisory Committee routinely monitors progress on the implementation of business plans.

The Role of the Department

The Department of the Taoiseach’s role derives from the constitutional and ceremonial role of the Taoiseach as Head of Government. The Government exercises the executive power of the State and is collectively responsible for the Departments of State. Accordingly, the Taoiseach has a leadership role, and a corresponding involvement, in all major policy areas.

The Department’s three key functions are:

- The efficient functioning of Government
- Supporting Government policy direction and co-ordination (focusing on major national priorities)
- Providing support services to the Taoiseach, the Government Chief Whip and the Minister of State for European Affairs.

The core tasks of the Department include the provision of the Secretariat to the Government; liaison with the President and the Houses of the Oireachtas; provision of Government Press and Information Services; and provision of private office, corporate support and protocol services for the Taoiseach and Ministers of State.

The Department’s *Strategy Statement 2005-2007* identified the following current policy priorities:

- Northern Ireland
- European Union and International Affairs
- Economic and Social Policy
- Social Partnership
- Public Service Modernisation

- The Knowledge Society and e-Government.

A Whole of Government Perspective

Operating at the heart of Government requires:

- An understanding of broader agendas and the external environment
- A focus on national policies of key strategic importance
- An ability to co-ordinate, lead and progress key cross-Departmental issues.

The Department contributes to the development and implementation of Government policy by:

- Providing advice to the Taoiseach on individual policy matters
- Supporting long-term planning and inter-agency co-operation in policy formulation and implementation
- Leading and participating in cross-Departmental initiatives, including the Cabinet Committee system
- Recognising the differing, and sometimes competing, interests in public policy and service provision, particularly in relation to social partnership
- Ensuring that there is consistency and coherence between policies, and that they are delivered effectively.

Close co-operation within the Department, and with outside organisations, is needed in order to carry out the Department's functions effectively.

The following chapters set out progress in achieving the Department's objectives during 2005.

Chapter 2

Overall Strategic Objective 1 - Supporting the Government

“The Government Secretariat continued to provide a comprehensive and effective service for Cabinet.”

Key Objectives:

- To provide a comprehensive and effective service to the Government and Cabinet Committees
- To inform, advise and support the President in the exercise of her constitutional powers and in the performance of her duties, as appropriate
- To develop a longer-term planning perspective and a closely co-ordinated approach across the Government system
- To support the Government Chief Whip on matters relating to the Government’s Legislative Programme
- To manage relations with the Office of the Attorney General, Chief State Solicitor’s Office, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law Reform Commission
- To provide a comprehensive information service to the national and international media and to the public, on behalf of the Government, the Taoiseach and his Department, and to promote a coordinated approach to media matters across Government Departments
- To operate the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 in relation to records of the Department
- To facilitate ongoing review of the need for amendment(s) to the Constitution

Developments in 2005

The Government Secretariat continued to provide a comprehensive and effective service for Cabinet. In addition:

- the *Cabinet Handbook* was updated during the year.
- a Government meeting was organised held in Cork - European City of Culture
- the eCabinet system was further progressed and improved

Thirty-four Bills were enacted in 2005.

The Taoiseach had five briefing meetings with the President during the year.

Participation in the Task Force on Emergency Planning and the Interdepartmental Working Group on Emergency Planning continued.

The Government Press Office (GPO) provided an extensive information service to the national and international media and to the public. It also worked to improve co-ordination by developing closer links between Press Officers and Emergency Planners in various Departments.

The Communications Unit continued to provide a media information service to Government Ministers and their Departments and has upgraded its technology.

The GIS helped to heighten public awareness and understanding of the National Development Plan and has promoted better public knowledge the Government's social inclusion initiatives

Chapter 3

Overall Strategic Objective 2 - Supporting the Taoiseach

“The Taoiseach’s Private Office continued to support the Taoiseach in his role as Head of Government and in his Parliamentary, Departmental and Public roles.”

Key Objectives:

- To support the Taoiseach in his role as Chair of Cabinet
- To effectively progress the policy priorities of the Taoiseach of the day
- To support the process of bilateral consultations between the Taoiseach and Ministers
- To provide a service of the highest quality and consistency to the Taoiseach, in order for him to carry out efficiently and effectively his roles, functions and duties, including domestic and foreign engagements
- To provide a protocol service of the highest quality to the Taoiseach, Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for European Affairs

The Private Office of the Taoiseach

In 2005, the Taoiseach's Private Office continued to support the Taoiseach in his role as Head of Government and in his Parliamentary, Departmental and Public roles, which involved: managing his diary commitments; processing the large volume of postal/email correspondence; dealing with telephone enquiries; ensuring that he received Government papers, briefing material, speeches and Parliamentary Question material in time; and organising the Taoiseach’s bilateral meetings with all Ministers and Ministers of State to review the implementation of the Agreed Programme for Government and other priority issues.

The Taoiseach undertook 29 official visits to foreign countries in 2005. This included leading a trade mission to China, attending three European Council meetings in Brussels and attending the funeral of Pope John Paul II in Rome.

In order to ensure that the Taoiseach had a quality, efficient and effective service the office was staffed on Mondays to Fridays from 8.30 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

The Taoiseach sponsored the National Economic and Social Development Office Bill and the Statute Law Revision Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Taoiseach also sponsored the Interpretation Bill, which was enacted and signed into law on 17 November, 2005.

The Private Office of the Minister of State/Government Chief Whip

In supporting the effective discharge of the Government Chief Whip’s responsibilities, his Office:

- Assisted with the organisation and agreement of Dáil business
- Prepared the legislative programme on a sessional basis, the weekly Dáil schedule, and the Dáil sessions calendar

- Co-ordinated with the offices of the Opposition Whips
- Provided necessary briefing documents, material for parliamentary questions, speech material and information on the passage of Bills through both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Private Office of the Minister of State for European Affairs

Support for the Minister of State for European Affairs in 2005 included:

- Organising and planning “Europe Week” which included the EU Science Olympiad, and a Seminar for European Affairs Ministers from new Member States
- Assisting the Minister of State in planning the campaign for a proposed referendum on the European Constitution
- Assisting the Minister of State in his role as Chairman of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on European Affairs
- Assisting the Minister of State in negotiations on the Financial Perspectives (the EU Budget 2007 – 2013)
- Assisting the Minister of State in the preparation of the National Reform Programme, under the relaunched Lisbon Agenda Process.

Protocol Service for the Taoiseach in his Representational and Ceremonial Duties

The Taoiseach’s programme of domestic engagements in 2005 came to approximately 428 official functions. A Protocol Officer was on duty on each occasion.

Incoming Visits

In addition, the Department contributed to the detailed planning and organisation of a number of visits by incoming dignitaries, such as:

- Prime Minister of Lesotho, the Right Honourable Pakalitha B. Mosisili
- President of the Republic of Hungary, H.E., Ferenc Mádl
- Emperor of Japan, His Majesty Emperor Akihito
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Right Honourable Mr. Peter Hain M.P.
- President of Serbia and Montenegro, H.E. Svetozar Marovic
- Prime Minister of Canada, The Right Honourable Paul Martin
- Prime Minister of New Zealand, H.E. Ms. Helen Clark
- President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos

Death of Pope John Paul II

The Department of the Taoiseach was involved in a number of events on the occasion of the death of Pope John Paul II. These included protocol assistance at the Mass for Pope John Paul II in the Pro Cathedral, and protocol assistance at the Sunset Service of Remembrance, Phoenix Park

National Day of Commemoration

The annual National Day of Commemoration was held this year on Sunday 10 July 2005 at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. Following a review of procedures, a number of changes were implemented which streamlined and improved the ceremony

Speechwriting

The Speechwriting Unit ensured the provision of high-quality speeches for the Taoiseach in a timely manner, to enable him to carry out his public engagements during the year. Approximately 270 speeches were either drafted or edited for consistency of style within the Unit during 2005.

Chapter 4

Strategic Priority A - Northern Ireland

“Today’s developments herald a new era for all people of the island of Ireland. This is a day that we have been working towards for over a decade.”

An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern T.D., on the IRA's announcement of an end to its armed campaign, 28 July, 2005

Key Objectives:

- To achieve lasting peace on the island of Ireland through the implementation of an agreed settlement founded on consent, and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island of Ireland, and between the islands of Ireland and Britain, as provided for in the *Good Friday Agreement*

Indicators

- Progress on implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

2005 was a very significant year for the Peace Process in Northern Ireland.

In December 2004, the Irish and British Governments published proposals for a comprehensive agreement, and although not all aspects were ultimately agreed, this represented considerable progress towards a final resolution of the remaining issues of contention between the Northern parties.

2005 began in difficult circumstances, following the Northern Bank Robbery in late December 2004 and the brutal murder of Belfast man Robert McCartney in January 2005. These effectively put paid to any prospect of agreement in the short-term.

Following these events, the Taoiseach and the Government made clear that there was no possibility of any progress until there had been a definitive end to all IRA paramilitary and criminal activity.

In July, the IRA announced an end to its armed campaign; and its intention to complete the process of arms decommissioning, and use exclusively peaceful means.

In September, the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning announced that IRA decommissioning has been completed.

The Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) published four reports during 2005. These reports showed a positive trend, particularly with regard to IRA activities. They also showed the complexity of the transition away from paramilitarism on all sides and identified serious issues that remained to be addressed.

These developments have given potential for a huge transformation in the situation in Northern Ireland and the restoration of the democratic institutions established by the Good Friday Agreement.

The Taoiseach met all political parties in the North on an ongoing basis in 2005. He also engaged with many other groups, including business, trade unions, voluntary groups and victims' representatives.

He also met on a number of occasions with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The partnership between the two Governments, and general relations between Ireland and Britain, remain strong and positive.

The North South Ministerial Council did not meet, while devolved Government in Northern Ireland was suspended. However, the work of the North South Implementation Bodies continued, as did work on agreed areas of co-operation. The Government placed a great emphasis on all aspects of North/South co-operation and ensured that it was part of mainstream policy-making processes including, for example, the work of the Cabinet Committees.

The work of the British Irish Council also continued. A Summit meeting of the Council was held in the Isle of Man, attended by both the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste. A series of ministerial and official meetings in various sectoral areas was held.

In April, the Government established an Independent Commission of Inquiry into certain aspects of the Dublin/ Monaghan bombings with Mr. Patrick MacEntee, S.C. as Sole Member. It also continued to press the British Government to co-operate with ongoing inquiries into the bombing.

Mr. Justice Barron's Report into the murder of Seamus Ludlow was referred to the Oireachtas for its consideration in November.

Relations with the UK, the USA, and Canada

The Taoiseach made successful visits to the US for St. Patrick's Day, and to address the UN in New York. He also visited Newfoundland. He met both the President of the US and the Prime Minister of Canada during the year.

Chapter 5

Strategic Priority B - European Union and International Affairs

“The Government has used the period of reflection on the European Constitution to promote active engagement with the European Constitution and to explain why ratification is important for Ireland and for Europe.”

Key Objectives:

- To support the Taoiseach in his role as member of the European Council and in his European and international engagements
- To identify Ireland’s key objectives in the enlarged EU and to develop a strategy for meeting these objectives through effective cross-Government coordination structures.
- To continue to develop and strengthen our bilateral relations and alliances with our EU partners at political and official level, to promote our national objectives and the EU’s agreed agenda.
- To communicate to the public the importance of our role in the EU to our future prosperity, security and development.
- To engage in effective relationships with international bodies and organisations and with non-EU states, in the area of bilateral trade

Indicators

- Effectiveness of the Cabinet Committee on European Affairs (CCEA) and the Inter-Departmental Co-ordinating Committee on European Union Affairs (ICCEUA) in ensuring a co-ordinated and coherent approach to our EU policies
- Outcomes of European Council meetings
- Outcomes of Irish participation in other international fora
- Well-planned and well-organised programme of bilateral visits and exchanges by the Taoiseach
- Preparation and publication of material for the third edition of *Ireland and the European Union: Identifying Priorities and Pursuing Goals*
- Improving Ireland’s placing in the European Commission’s Internal Market Scoreboard for the transposition of EU measures into domestic legislation.

Ireland’s Interests in the EU

The Department supports the Taoiseach as Member of the European Council, and as Head of Government, in dealing with Ireland’s role in European and international affairs. Working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and with other Government Departments, it aims to promote and protect Ireland’s interests in the EU and in other international fora. It also seeks to ensure that Ireland can contribute to the strengthening of the EU, and to the multilateral rules-based system, including the UN.

EU Co-ordinating Structures for which Department of the Taoiseach provided the Secretariat in 2005

Committee	Function	Frequency of Meetings
Cabinet Committee on European Affairs (CCEA)	The Taoiseach chairs the Committee. It either decides on issues or clears the way for their consideration by Cabinet	Monthly
Inter-Departmental Co-ordinating Committee on EU Affairs (ICCEUA)	The Minister of State for European Affairs chairs the Committee. It consists of senior officials from each Department, and is the clearing house for issues going to the Cabinet Committee on European Affairs and/or to Government. In 2005, the ICCEUA focussed on the timely transposition of EU measures , and on improving Ireland's position on the internal market score board	Monthly
Senior Officials' Group on European Affairs	This Department chairs the Group. In 2005 it prepared policy aspects of Ireland's EU agenda – in particular, Ireland's position at the three regular meetings of the European Council, and at the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government at Hampton Court Palace in October	Fortnightly
Chairing of, and participation in, other groups	The Department chaired a number of ad hoc groups – e.g. the ICCEUA subgroup on transposition. It also participated in groups chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Department of Finance, on subjects such as: Oireachtas Scrutiny, Presidency Logistics and Policy, the Initiative for Growth, and Communicating Europe	

Period of Reflection on the European Constitution

The rejection of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands was a significant setback in the process of its ratification. The June European Council decided therefore that there should be a pause in the ratification process. This would allow for a broad debate in all of the Member States on the European Constitution and on Europe generally. The Government has used this period to promote active engagement with the European Constitution and to explain why ratification is important for Ireland and for Europe. To help this process, the Department published the third edition of *Ireland and the European Union: Identifying Priorities and Pursuing Goals* and launched the website www.nationaldebateoneurope.ie, which makes key documents on Europe available to the public.

The Taoiseach also addressed a number of conferences on the future of Europe. Notable addresses include those at Humboldt University, Berlin on 2 June; the Association of European Journalists on 10 November; and the conference on “The Future of Europe – Uniting Visions, Values and Citizens”, organised by the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice on 27 September. This last conference resulted in the publication of an article by the Taoiseach in the quarterly journal “Studies”.

Lisbon Agenda

Following a mid-term review of progress under the Lisbon Agenda, the European Council agreed in 2005 that the Lisbon Agenda would be relaunched as a Partnership for Growth and Employment. Each Member State is required to prepare a three year **National Reform Programme**. This will take account of twenty-four integrated guidelines covering macro-economic, micro-economic, and employment policies. The European Council agreed to focus on two urgent priorities – growth and employment. It also endorsed action in two complementary areas –social cohesion and sustainable development.

Ireland’s **National Reform Programme** was sent to the European Commission in October 2005, following consultation with the social partners, and consideration by both Houses of the Oireachtas. It draws heavily on the *Programme for Government* and on the social partnership agreement, *Sustaining Progress*. The Programme identifies the various priorities, policies and actions Ireland is pursuing to deliver on the Lisbon Agenda. Overall, Ireland is performing well on many of the key Lisbon indicators, and is able to report strong progress against most of the twenty-four guidelines. The main goal for the next three years is to sustain and build on the progress of recent years.

The Government remains committed to achieving the Lisbon Agenda target of a 1.5% deficit on transposition of EU legislation, which is a standing item on the agenda of the ICCEUA. The Government has also approved a set of *Guidelines on Best Practice on Transposition of EU Directives*, developed by this Department.

Spring European Council

The Spring European Council took place on 22/23 March, and adopted Conclusions on the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact, and endorsed the report from the

Finance Ministers' Council (ECOFIN) on improving the Pact. It also reached agreement on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda.

June European Council

The June European Council took place on 16/17 June, and considered the European Constitution and the Financial Perspectives (the EU's budget for 2007 to 2013). It agreed that, while the ratification process for the Constitution remained valid, a period of reflection, clarification and discussion was needed, given the negative outcomes in the French and Dutch referendums. As agreement was not reached on the Financial Perspectives, the matter was handed on to the incoming British Presidency.

Informal Meeting of Heads of State and Government, Hampton Court Palace

In October 2005, Heads of State and Government held an informal meeting at Hampton Court at the invitation of Prime Minister Blair, in his role as President of the European Council. The theme of the meeting was the opportunities and challenges of globalisation, and the discussion focused on the competitive challenges posed by China, India and other emerging economies.

December European Council

The December European Council, which took place on 15/16 December, reached agreement on the Financial Perspectives.

Ireland had a number of concerns: that the 2002 agreement on funding for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) until 2013 be respected; that adequate cohesion arrangements be in place for new Member States and regions in transition; and that the Union be provided with adequate resources to fulfil all of its tasks.

The agreement on the Financial Perspectives provides for €62 billion in commitment appropriations over the period 2007-2013, amounting to just 1.045% of EU Gross National Income (GNI). Ireland will receive the following: €10.4 billion in direct farm payments and market supports; rural development receipts of approximately €1.9 billion; and some €800 million in Structural Funding. The agreement protects the national interests of each Member State, including Ireland, and allows the enlarged Union to move forward on a sound financial basis.

EU and International Programme

The Department supported the Taoiseach in his ongoing programme of engagements with EU and International Partners. In 2005, the Taoiseach undertook a number of bilateral visits to discuss and broaden our political, economic and cultural contacts. These included visits to Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Newfoundland, Poland and Spain. In his capacity as Head of Government, the Taoiseach attended the Euro-Med Summit on 27-29 November in Barcelona. He also met Mr. José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, on the latter's visit to Dublin on 30 June 2005.

Official visit to China, January 2005

In January 2005, the Taoiseach paid an official visit to China and Hong Kong. The aim was to further enhance Ireland's strong economic and trade links with China, the world's fifth largest economy and a key focus of the Government's Asia Strategy. The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment; the Minister for Education & Science; the Minister for Agriculture & Food; and the Minister for Communications, Marine & Natural Resources. He also led a large trade delegation of more than 200 people, representing over 120 companies from the business and academic sectors.

The visit was designed to progress our economic, trade, agriculture, education and tourism interests through dedicated commercial and trade events, and signings with Chinese partners. Irish businesses and colleges signed contracts worth €125.8 million during the visit, while Irish companies made investments of €46.5 million in China.

The Taoiseach also met President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jaibao and the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Mr. Tung Chee Hwa. Discussions focused on deepening bilateral political and trade relations; on EU/China relations; and on political issues, including human rights. The Taoiseach also made keynote speeches at the prestigious Tsinghua and Fudan universities, raising awareness of Ireland.

Launch of Phase 2 of the Asia Strategy

Given the growing economic and political power of Asia, it is important that Ireland should have strong relations with the region. The first phase of the Asia Strategy, from 1999 to 2004, was successful in creating awareness and developing Ireland-Asia relations, while merchandise exports from Ireland to Asia increased from €3.6 billion to over €6 billion during this period.

The strategy was reviewed during 2004, and the Government adopted a second phase in February 2005. The new strategy document, *A Decade of the Asia Strategy 1999 – 2009*, sets out ambitious goals for growth in investment and trade with eight priority Asian countries. The primary target is to increase the value of Irish goods exports to €9 billion by 2009, to include a trebling of exports in the food and drink sector, to €90 million.

Other key targets include an increase in the number of students Asian studying in Irish third-level colleges to 17,000 by 2009 and an increase in number of tourists to 150,000. A High Level Group has been established to oversee the progress of the Asia Strategy.

New York and the UN Summit

The Taoiseach attended the 60th High Level Plenary meeting of the United Nations on 14 September, which was convened to consider proposals for UN reform

The Summit adopted an outcome document, which represents a substantial step forward in UN reform. Among the many positive elements were agreement to

establish a UN Peace-building Commission and a new UN Human Rights Council and a re-affirmation of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

In his address to the Summit, the Taoiseach indicated that Ireland would reach the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) for Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2012. This would be three years earlier than the agreed EU target date of 2015. He also indicated that Ireland would reach an interim target of 0.5% of GNP by the end of 2007.

While in New York, the Taoiseach met Mr Peter Piot, the Director of UN-AIDS, and Mr Paul Wolfowitz, the new President of the World Bank. Issues discussed included UN reform, the G8 initiative on debt cancellation, HIV/AIDS, and ODA.

The Taoiseach attended the launch of the Clinton Global Initiative, which is focused on poverty, conflict and reconciliation. He also attended business events, hosted by Enterprise Ireland, to highlight the strong trading relationship between Ireland and the US.

Oireachtas Scrutiny Arrangements

In accordance with the European Union (Scrutiny) Act, 2002, the Department submitted a total of seven information notes to the Oireachtas, outlining the nature and purpose of draft EU proposals, and an indication of the possible implications of the proposals for Ireland. All of the draft proposals related to the work of the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

In accordance with Section 2(5) of the Act, the Department submitted a report to the Oireachtas in July, on *Measures, Proposed Measures and other Developments in relation to the European Communities and the European Union*. This report provided an overview of six draft legislative measures submitted to the Oireachtas on behalf of the CSO between January and June 2005.

Meetings and Engagements in 2005

Full details of the Taoiseach's EU and international engagements, which the Department facilitated in 2005, are set out in the full-length version of the Annual Report 2005 at <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/index.asp?docID=2713>

Chapter 6

Strategic Priority C - Economic and Social Policy

“Ireland’s economy continued to perform well particularly in the context of difficult international conditions”

Key Objectives:

- To provide effective briefing, policy advice and information on economic and social affairs, so as to lead a whole-of-government perspective in the policy formulation and national implementation process, adopting a longer-term perspective within which key strategic challenges can be met
- To achieve an outcomes-focused approach to addressing social policy issues through the work of the Cabinet Committees on Social Inclusion, Drugs, Rural Development, Children and Health
- To focus in particular on social inclusion, through implementation of the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy*, and to work with Government Departments and social partners, to ensure progress on the social inclusion provisions set out in *Sustaining Progress*
- To ensure the continued development and success of the international financial services industry in Ireland, with the support of Government Agencies and the industry, through the mechanism of the Clearing House Group and the various working Groups and Sub-Groups which operate under the aegis of the Department
- To contribute to the consolidation of the progress of recent years and the achievement of a medium-term growth rate, capable of sustaining high levels of employment and facilitating the evolution of a more equal society, in line with *Sustaining Progress*. Policies that secure national competitiveness, lower inflation, sustainable public finances, a fair and effective tax system, and environmental sustainability are central to this objective
- To ensure that Ireland is provided with a level of physical infrastructure that is affordable, provides value for money, underpins national development and is environmentally sustainable. The Cabinet Committee on Housing, Infrastructure and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) is the key mechanism for achieving this objective
- To ensure that domestic economic and social policy responds to international developments, especially at EU level, in a manner appropriate to our national objectives
- To support the provision of timely, credible and relevant data and statistics to inform the policy-making process, including through the work of the National Statistics Board and the Central Statistics Office.

Indicators

- Progressing the implementation of and reporting to the Cabinet Committees on:
 - Housing, Infrastructure and Public Private Partnerships
 - Social Inclusion, Drugs and Rural Development

- Children
- Health Strategy
- Key economic indicators (economic growth, inflation, employment, etc.)
- Department of Finance Review/Outlook
- Other reports (e.g. Economic and Social Research Institute, EU, OECD, International Monetary Fund etc.)
- National Anti-Poverty Strategy Progress Reports

Whole of Government Policy Development

The Department participated in a broad range of cross-Departmental discussions in key policy areas throughout the year. In 2005 Ireland's economy continued to perform very well, particularly in the context of difficult international conditions. This is underlined by economic achievements such as economic growth, at around 4.7%, which continued to be well in excess of the European average.

Infrastructure

The Department, as part of its role in promoting a whole of Government approach to the development of appropriate physical infrastructure, provides the Secretariat and Chair for the Cross-Departmental Team on Housing, Infrastructure and PPPs. This supports the corresponding Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach, and meets monthly.

Some of the significant developments in infrastructure in 2005 include:

- In November, Government launched Transport 21 (€34.4 billion for transport infrastructure development over the next ten years).
- A number of measures being implemented to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing units including the establishment of the Affordable Homes Partnership, which initiated a Call for Lands to identify lands with potential for affordable housing. Other measures include identification of sites and a land swap option.
- Key Government decisions in 2005 included: linking infrastructural investment with the National Spatial Strategy, under the forthcoming National Development Plan (2007-2013); progressing the Strategic Infrastructure Bill; development of a Centre of Expertise within the National Development Finance Agency to support the procurement of key infrastructure projects by PPP.
- Progress was also made in the areas of energy efficiency, alternative energy sources, climate change, waste management and ports policy.
- The Department chaired a Cross Departmental Team on North-South /All-Island co-operation which produced a report for the Cabinet Committee.

The Department participated in the Inter-Departmental Committee, and the Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology; and in progressing development of the Strategic Plan on Science, Technology and Innovation.

It also continued to contribute to a range of other bodies/structures, e.g. the OECD review, engagement with the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Tax Strategy Group, and PPP forums.

Supporting the Financial Services Industry

The Clearing House Group is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department, and deals with the continued development and success of the international financial services industry in Ireland.

Progress in 2005 included:

- Working with Government Departments and agencies to ensure the implementation of the Pensions Directive (IORPS) into Irish law, which was achieved on time
- The Investment Funds, Companies and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2005, was enacted in June
- The Insurance Group worked closely with the Department of Finance and the Financial Regulator on arrangements for the transposition of the Re-Insurance Directive
- Co-operating with the follow-up to the Deloitte report on the international financial services industry
- Preparatory work in relation to the formulation of a new strategy for the international financial services industry.

Monitoring and Responding to EU and International Developments

The Department coordinated preparation and submission to the European Commission of the National Reform Programme (2006-2008) (NRP) under the re-launched Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Social Policy

The Department works closely with other Departments and agencies to advance a range of social inclusion objectives. Examples of this include the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, the National Drugs Strategy and the National Disability Strategy.

Particularly relevant to the social policy agenda in 2005 was the publication of the NESC Report *The Developmental Welfare State*, which provides a revised account of the evolution of the Irish welfare state, identifies the social deficits that remain despite Ireland's remarkable economic progress and recasts the social debate in a way that can build consensus on how to improve social protection in Ireland.

The Department provides the Secretariat for three Cabinet Committees as follows: the **Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, the Cabinet Committee on Children, and the Cabinet Committee on Health**. The Committees are supported by Senior Officials Groups, chaired by this Department.

Lone Parents

A subgroup of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion examined the obstacles to employment faced by lone parents. The Group's report, along with a report on the Reform of Income Support Arrangements for Lone Parents and Parents on Low Income (undertaken by the Department of Social and Family Affairs) were submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion and to Government, and published. They will form the basis for a public consultation process.

National Disability Strategy

The Department was centrally involved in the development of the National Disability Strategy with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Senior Officials Group on Disability, chaired by this Department, monitors progress in relation to the Strategy.

Childcare

During 2005, the Department worked closely with the National Children's Office and other key Departments and agencies in developing a Childcare Strategy. Budget 2006 introduced a number of measures, including a five-year National Childcare Investment Programme, an Early Childcare Supplement, enhanced maternity and paternity leave entitlements and the establishment of a new institutional structure, the Office for the Minister for Children.

Long Term Care Working Group

The Department chaired a Working Group on Long Term Care of Older People, established to identify the policy options for a financially sustainable system of long term care and to rationalise the range of benefits, services and grants currently in place, taking account of the *Mercer Report on the Future Financing of Long Term Care in Ireland* (2002) and *O'Shea Report on the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme* (2003). The Group reported to Government in early 2006.

Social Partnership Agreement- *Sustaining Progress 2003-2005*

Chapters 2 and 5 are particularly relevant to the social inclusion agenda. Chapter 2 sets out ten Special Initiatives, eight of which contained a strong social inclusion element, and these were progressed during 2005 with Departments and social partners.

Statistics for Improved Policy-Making

Further progress was made in implementing the National Statistic Board's *Strategy for Statistics 2003-2008*. Departments developed individual data strategies, to be included in Strategy Statements and reported on in Annual Reports.

The NSB completed its report on *Policy Needs for Statistical Data on Enterprises*. It published a document on the *Statistical and Policy Value of Postcodes*; and a second set of National Progress Indicators as an input into the social partnership process.

Chapter 7

Strategic Priority D - Social Partnership

“The Department began the relevant preparatory work for negotiations on a successor to *Sustaining Progress*”

Key Objectives:

- To support the process of social partnership through the implementation of *Sustaining Progress*, and of a successor agreement, and to maintain and develop the structures of social partnership
- To develop a successor agreement to *Sustaining Progress*
- To facilitate the negotiation and implementation of agreements between employers and trade unions on pay and workplace change, as part of our system of national level social partnership agreements
- To support dialogue at national level aimed at ensuring industrial relations peace and stability
- To promote the development of a coherent and user-friendly framework of employment rights bodies and the application of the principles of Regulatory Reform to the body of employment rights legislation
- To promote partnership in the public and private sectors aimed at modernising the workplace and improving performance and service delivery
- To promote social dialogue at EU level in line with (a) agenda set out at Tripartite Social Summit held during Irish Presidency of EU in March 2004 and (b) agreement at the March 2004 European Council on the development of European Reform Partnerships.

Indicators

- Quarterly reviews with social partners and the provision of detailed progress reports
- Key economic indicators relating to components of the *Sustaining Progress* agreement
- A stable industrial relations climate
- Realignment of industrial relations bodies and modernization of employment rights legislation and codes
- Consensus reached with social partners on key issues
- High quality outputs from the National Economic and Social Development Office
- The continuing development of partnership as a key theme in European discourse.

Sustaining Progress

The Department provided the Chair and Secretariat to the Steering Group overseeing implementation of *Sustaining Progress*, which met four times during the year, and presented a report on its work. It also presented the *Final Report on the Special Initiatives* to the plenary meeting of the Social Partners in July.

The Department published three Progress Reports on the implementation of *Sustaining Progress* during 2005 and the tenth and final report was being prepared at the end of 2005.

As part of the *Sustaining Progress* agreement, Government and the Social Partners identified ten areas as Special Initiatives. The *Final Report on the Special Initiatives*, was published in July 2005, and concluded that the key actions for the Initiatives had been largely achieved. Where there had been issues around delivery, the Steering Group on *Sustaining Progress* had provided direction.

The Department commissioned research on the Special Initiatives process to provide an overview of the process and to document developments. The report has been made available to the Social Partners.

The Chairman of the Affordable Housing Partnership published his third report on the implementation of the Affordable Housing Initiative in July 2005 highlighting significant progress.

The Department also began the relevant preparatory work for negotiations on a successor to *Sustaining Progress*.

National Implementation Body

Negotiations on a successor to *Sustaining Progress* were due to have started in Autumn, 2005, but were overtaken by the need to address major industrial disputes at An Post and Irish Ferries. The National Implementation Body (NIB), chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and representing IBEC/CIF and ICTU, was centrally involved in resolving these disputes. Arising from this, the NIB agreed that the issue of employment standards, which had been raised by the Irish Ferries dispute, should be addressed in negotiations on a new social partnership agreement; and recommended that these be commenced at an early date. The negotiations were launched at the beginning of February, 2006, following a period of reflection and deliberation by the social partners.

The NIB met regularly in 2005 to help resolve a number of other disputes of national importance, in line with its role of overseeing the industrial peace and stability provisions of *Sustaining Progress*. Overall, the record low levels of industrial disputes, and days lost through industrial action during the year, show the continuing stability of the industrial relations environment.

National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO)

By the end of 2005 the NESDO bill had completed committee stage in the Dáil. The Department had continued to support the work of NESDO throughout the year.

National Economic and Social Council (NESC)

NESC completed its study on *The Developmental Welfare State* in May. It published its three-yearly strategic overview of Irish economic and social policy, *NESC Strategy 2006, People, Productivity and Purpose*, paving the way for negotiations to commence on a successor to *Sustaining Progress*.

National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)

The NESF report on Early Childhood Care and Education was published in September 2005 and work was undertaken on Care for Older People, and Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market. Reports were published in early 2006.

During 2005 the NESF held the second National Anti-Poverty Strategy Social Inclusion Forum, and also hosted, in conjunction with University College, Dublin, a conference on evidence-based policy making.

National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP)

The NCPP finalised the Report of the Forum on the Workplace of the Future, *Working to our Advantage: A National Workplace Strategy*, and provided the secretariat to the High Level Group established to oversee its implementation. Other key NCPP activities during the year included the publication, in conjunction with the University of Limerick, of new research on progressive human resource management practices, as well as a report on workplace innovation in Local Authorities.

Chapter 8

Strategic Priority E - Public Service Modernisation

“Our desire to deliver better public services for the citizen is the key driver of the modernisation effort.”

Key Objectives:

- To formulate and co-ordinate policy on Public Service Modernisation
- To ensure negotiation and implementation of modernisation programmes for the public service as part of social partnership agreements
- To support public service organisations in their implementation of modernisation programmes
- To promote improved quality of regulation through implementation of the Government’s *White Paper on Better Regulation*
- To introduce an appropriate model of Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) as a tool for evidence-based policy-making
- To develop and deepen the Quality Customer Service initiative across the Public Service
- To promote effective communication of the Modernisation Programme across the Civil Service

Indicators

- Progress reports to the Implementation Group of Secretaries General
- Effective implementation of the modernisation agenda set out in *Sustaining Progress*
- Completion of the roll-out of the Customer Charter Initiative i.e. Charters of Service Standards by Departments / Offices, accompanied by effective monitoring
- Agreement at General Council of the integration of Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) with wider HR policies and processes
- Ongoing communication of the Change and Modernisation Programme across the Civil Service, including publication of 6 issues of LINK, and significant volumes of website traffic
- Public Service Excellence Awards – publication and promotion of the scheme for the 2006 awards
- Progress on implementation of White Paper commitments as reflected in progress reports to Government
- Evidence of improved quality of Regulation e.g. from external evaluations or the Performance Verification Process
- Influence the evolution of Better Regulation policies at EU level as part of the wider Lisbon Agenda
- Feedback on training and other Better Regulation activities
- Successful completion of RIA pilot phase and implementation of proposals for mainstreaming RIA

Implementation Group of Secretaries General

The Implementation Group of Secretaries General comprises the Secretaries General of all Government Departments and the Heads of major Offices. It is chaired and supported by this Department, and co-ordinates and develops policy and the implementation of the public service modernisation programme. The Group, and its associated sub-groups, met regularly throughout 2005.

Implementation of *Sustaining Progress*

Public Service Modernisation Division (PSM) Division has worked to promote implementation of the public service modernisation agenda set out in *Sustaining Progress* in co-operation with the Department of Finance and other Departments, particularly through the Implementation Group of Secretaries General and its subgroups. Significant progress, as verified by the Performance Verification Groups, was recorded during 2005 including:

- agreement of the Integrated PMDS Model
- enactment of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2005.

Successor Agreement to *Sustaining Progress*

During 2005 the Division supported and co-ordinated the management side's preparations for a further modernisation agenda, to be included in any future social partnership agreement.

Change Management Network

The Change Management Network helps and supports those implementing the modernisation process in Departments/Offices by providing a forum for discussion and sharing of good practice. Regular meetings of the Network were held during 2005.

Performance Management

In 2005, an integrated PMDS model was agreed. It provides for the integration of PMDS with wider HR policies and processes and will strengthen the existing procedures for managing performance in the Civil Service.

Two major seminars to support PMDS in the Civil Service were held in 2005.

Representation on Inter-Departmental Committees

During the year the Division took part in a number of inter-departmental committees, including the Committee for Public Management Research and a committee on the setting up of the second Public Service Benchmarking Body.

Quality Customer Service (QCS)

In 2005 the main focus was the implementation and monitoring of customer charters. All outstanding charters were completed in 2005, involving training provided by the Department of Finance and support from PSM Division. This process was driven by the QCS Officers' Network, which met six times in 2005. A review to gauge the level

and quality of reporting on customer service in Annual Reports began in 2005, and an external evaluation of the customer charter process will begin in 2006.

Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey

A survey of civil service customers was commissioned during the year, with the results due in 2006. This survey was agreed with the QCS Research Sub-Group, and will be consistent with previous surveys undertaken in 1997 and 2002. It will provide useful information on customer satisfaction levels among the general public and business customers.

Redress

A High-Level Group on Redress was established to look at the issue of redress in the Civil Service. This Group will report to the Implementation Group in 2006.

Public Service Excellence Awards

A Management Group was established in 2005 to oversee preparations for the Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Awards 2006. These awards are for projects or initiatives that have improved services and administration. 153 submissions were received and an independent selection committee was established to select the Award recipients.

Communications

Six editions of LINK magazine, the newsletter of the modernisation programme, were produced in 2005. LINK is distributed to all Civil Servants, and is published in a variety of formats.

In addition, the websites www.bettergov.ie and www.betterregulation.ie continue to provide information on and contact points for the modernisation programme.

Better Regulation Group

In 2005, the Department continued to implement the commitments set out in the Government's White Paper, *Regulating Better*. The Better Regulation Group established three sub groups, which met in the course of 2005, to look at particular aspects of the action plan: (1) a sub-group on Appeals and Penalties; (2) a Working Group to examine the production of Statutory Instruments (SIs) in a standard electronic format; and (3) a Steering Group to oversee an audit of the regulatory framework in Ireland, and to map the bodies with regulatory functions and their reporting arrangements.

Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA)

The Government decided in June that RIA should be introduced across all Government Departments and Offices and applied to (1) primary legislation involving changes to the regulatory framework; (2) significant Statutory Instruments; and (3)

EU Directives and significant EU Regulations. In 2005, the extensive programme of awareness raising and training on RIA developed by the Better Regulation Unit included (1) presentations in Government Departments/Offices, (2) a two-day dedicated RIA Training Course (which will be delivered regularly in 2006 in conjunction with the Civil Service Training and Development Centre (CSTDC)); and (3) modules on RIA as part of the Policy Analysis and Legislative Processes run regularly by CSTDC. A RIA Guidance Manual was also prepared and approx. 1,200 copies were distributed by year end.

Public Consultation

The Taoiseach launched “Reaching Out – Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies” in July. These Guidelines are intended to promote better quality consultation across the Public Service and were circulated to public servants, Social Partners and other interested parties.

Statute Law Revision

The Taoiseach and the Attorney General launched an initiative in April 2004 to repeal legislation which pre-dates the foundation of the State and is no longer required. The Statute Law Revision (Pre-1922) Act 2005 provided for the repeal of 206 Acts which were enacted before the 6th of December 1922 which are no longer of any practical utility.

Better Regulation at European Level

The Department continued to represent Ireland at the Directors of Better Regulation. It also chaired a sub-group on a shared approach at European level to training on Impact Assessment. The Department was also represented on the Group of high-level national regulatory experts which advises on, and facilitates the development of, better regulation measures at national and EU levels.

Business Regulation Forum

In July, the Taoiseach announced the establishment of a new Business Regulation Forum to examine the regulatory and administrative burdens faced by Irish business. The Forum, which had its first meeting on 8th December, comprises senior business people and public officials, including a representative of this Department.

Involvement in Conferences and Events

During 2005 staff from PSM Division met visiting EU and other national delegations to discuss public sector modernisation issues. The Division provided speakers, facilitators and briefing material for a number of international (EU and OECD), national and local conferences, seminars and training events throughout the year.

Chapter 9

Strategic Priority F - The Information Society and e-Government

“The eInclusion Fund helps late adopters of technology to take part in an inclusive Information Society.”

Key Objectives:

- To support a strategic policy framework for Ireland to build and develop a knowledge society to underpin the emerging knowledge economy
- To support the work of the Taoiseach and the Government Chief Whip on knowledge society and related issues
- To promote ownership, participation and inclusion in the knowledge society
- To have adequate implementation mechanisms for relevant public policies

Indicators

- Progress reports
- Public perception of the existence of strong leadership and engagement with the issues to be addressed
- Sectoral acknowledgement of the importance of policies
- Increase in engagement with and participation in the knowledge society as reflected by annual surveys such as the Information Society Survey by the Central Statistics Office
- International benchmark reports

Co-ordinating Mechanisms

The Department chairs and supports the strategy Group of Secretaries General, and the Implementation Group of Assistant Secretaries. These Groups continued to address national Information Society and eStrategies during 2005.

New Connections

During 2005 the Department monitored progress under the seven policy strands of ‘New Connections – A Strategy to realise the potential of the Information Society’ and commenced preparations on a follow-up Action Plan.

eInclusion Fund

The Government allocated €1.025m for eInclusion initiatives in 2005. 117 applications for funding were received of which, 48 projects were funded.

eAccessibility Group

An interdepartmental eAccessibility Group was set up in 2005 to promote ICT accessibility for people with disabilities in Ireland. This group is co-chaired by the

National Disability Authority (NDA) and this Department's Information Society Policy Unit (ISPU).

eCabinet

eCabinet electronically supports the preparation and conduct of Government business. In November 2005, the level of service in preparing for and servicing Cabinet meetings was improved in all Departments and the Cabinet Secretariat, as was the circulation of post-meeting documents. The system was also improved to allow users to search for Government memoranda and other meeting-related documents.

Knowledge Society Foresight

One of the key conclusions in the final report of the Information Society Commission was the need to develop an approach to taking forward the Knowledge Society Foresight exercise initiated under *Sustaining Progress*.

The KSF Initiative will be fostered under the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO), and will form part of the NESC strategy, which the social partners will consider in the discussions on a new national agreement in 2006.

Information Society Fund 2005

The Information Society Fund operated with an evaluation board drawn from the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance. The Fund existed to "fast track" Information Society initiatives which progress the objectives set out in the Government's Information Society Action Plan.

In 2005, the Fund amounted to €3.984m. Of this, €9 was maintained in the Central Fund, and allocations totalling €34.984m were devolved to eleven other Departmental votes to support initiatives such as eCabinet, Revenue Online Services and Motor Tax Online. Expenditure from the Central Fund in 2005 exceeded €8.8m and supported projects such as the eConveyancing Project in the Law Reform Commission; the Irish Spatial Data Infrastructure (ISDI) Project in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; and the Virtual Private Network Telecommunications Project managed by the Department of Finance.

i2010 and eGovernment

This Department participated in EU fora on i2010, and contributed to the development of a Ministerial Declaration, which was adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Manchester in November 2005. Department officials also participated in a number of international eGovernment events.

Progress is continuing on electronic public service delivery. The most recent statistics (for 2004) show that current online sophistication of public service delivery in Ireland, at 84%, is well above the EU average of 65%.

Chapter 10

Strategic Priority G – Corporate Support Services

“...over 98% of customers find our staff to be courteous, efficient and friendly.”

Key Objectives:

- To manage the Department’s human resources so as to contribute to the organisation’s goals, while also promoting the personal development goals of individuals
- To deliver a financial management service that promotes and contributes to the effective use of the Department’s financial resources through the delivery of economy, efficiency, value for money and promptness in all expenditure
- To provide a reliable and effective information and communications technology service that meets the Department’s existing and future needs
- To ensure that the Department continues to meet its corporate legal responsibilities
- To support the provision of a high level of service to the Department’s customers, both internal and external; and to provide efficient and effective library, registry, archives, customer service and other support services
- To implement a Modernisation Programme that supports the achievement of the Department’s goals, and is aligned with the broader Civil Service Modernisation Programme and models of best practice
- To support and develop the partnership process in the Department.

Indicators

- Divisional reports to the Management Advisory Committee
- Periodic review by the Partnership Committee
- Results of customer surveys
- Results of employee opinion surveys
- Progress reports on implementation of new Financial and Human Resource Management Systems
- Internal and external reviews of service
- Reports from Human Resource Management System (HRMS)
- Progress reports on implementation of all new systems
- Civil Service Performance Verification Group reports for the Department of the Taoiseach.

Human Resource Strategy

Since the Department’s HR Strategy was launched in October 2003, significant progress has been made including:

- Maintaining levels of staff engagement and autonomy: 84% engagement by staff, as measured through the 2005 Employee Opinion Survey, reflecting their commitment to the Department and alignment with its goals
- Exceeding the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities

- Continuing progress towards meeting Government gender equality targets:
 - One third of Assistant Principal (AP) posts to be filled by women by 2005. In 2005, 53% of APs in the Department were female
 - The proportion of female representatives in the Principal Officer grade to rise from 27% to 40% by 2010. In 2005, 31% of POs were female

These targets are subject to the over-riding merit principle for all promotions. The overall gender balance in the Department at December 2005 was 33% male/67% female. The Department monitors gender imbalances arising in all grades (*see Appendix 1 for gender breakdown of staff serving in the Department*).

- Exceeding our own target of providing 3 training days per person. In 2005, staff availed of 4 days' training per person, while 3.6% of payroll was spent on training (just under our target of 4%)

In 2005, work commenced on the preparation of a new HR Strategy to cover the period 2006 – 2008. Agreement was also concluded with staff unions on a new internal promotions framework, which will move the Department towards the target in *Sustaining Progress* of 100% competitive process.

While this Department itself is not due to decentralise, it is expected that decentralisation will result in a turnover of around 25% of our staff over the next few years, as individuals opt to move with other Departments. Requests for transfer of staff have commenced, and the Department is co-operating fully in the early release of staff. Arrangements are being made by Personnel Division, IT Unit and individual Divisions for succession planning.

In addition to internal Civil Service rules and procedures, the Department is responsible for compliance with a number of statutory obligations. These were fully discharged during the year.

Training and Development

Progress continued in 2005 on our Training and Development Strategy, through providing formal training courses, coaching initiatives, on-the-job training, Refund of Fees Scheme, e-learning initiatives, and short courses. Some members of staff also took part in relevant Masters Courses, while further training was provided in areas such as PMDS (including Upward Feedback), induction for new staff (including equality training, quality customer service, and the Official Languages Act), interview training (for interviewers and interviewees), financial planning, and the Irish language.

Financial Management

Payments totalling €29.415 million were processed during 2005 (*see Appendix 2*).

The 2004 Appropriation Account was completed by the deadline of 31 March 2005, signed by the Accounting Officer and presented to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for audit. There were no adverse findings in respect of the 2004 Accounts. As required by law, the Finance Officer's Prompt Payments Report for 2005 is included as *Appendix 3* to this report. (Statement of Compliance from Finance Officer is also included as *Appendix 4*)

The Department has been among the leaders in implementing the new Management Information Framework (MIF) for Government Departments. Throughout 2005, work continued on improving procedures in line with new requirements for services, and for statutory, management and other reports.

The eCabinet Audit and a Payroll Audit were completed in 2005, and an audit on Procurement was begun. Follow-up Audit Reports on the Millennium Celebrations (winding up) and eCabinet were completed and forwarded to the Accounting Officer for his information.

ICT

A new ICT strategy, covering the period 2006-2008, was developed in 2005. This strategy includes a work programme aimed at supporting the Department's strategic objectives by using efficient, appropriate and innovative technologies. Implementation of the strategy has commenced. An "accessibility and usability" review of the Department's three websites was completed in 2005. It aimed to ensure that the Department has a dynamic web presence, which can support Departmental strategic objectives and meet all users' needs and expectations. The findings and recommendations of this review are currently being addressed.

Quality Customer Service

The Department's Customer Charter, published in 2004 (*see Appendix 5*), remains the benchmark against which we measure our success in meeting customer expectations. In 2005, almost 400 external customers, as well as participants in the tours of Government Buildings, were surveyed, while a "mystery shopping" exercise was also carried out.

Overall, the results show consistently high scores in relation to quality of our services. The most positive and welcome finding is that over 98% of customers find our staff to be courteous, efficient and friendly. Sample surveys of the response rate to telephone calls to the Department main switchboard showed that 100% of calls were answered in less than 15 seconds (ahead of the 90% target set in the Charter); 89% of customers agreed that the Department provides a quality service; 83% agreed that the Department actively listens to its customers; and 80% agreed that the Department provides its services fairly and equitably. 84% of suppliers were happy that clear tendering procedures were in place, while 80% were happy that payments were made in time.

The Department remains committed to ensuring a quality service delivery to the groups covered by the equality legislation, as well as those socially excluded due to

socio-economic and geographic factors. A Disability Group, set up as a sub-group of our Partnership Committee, has begun to review ways of ensuring that the Department complies with its obligations under the new disability legislation.

Modernisation Programme

The Department is required to report regularly to the Civil Service Performance Verification Group (CSPVG) on progress in respect of the Action Plan under the *Mid Term Review of Sustaining Progress*. During the year the Department submitted two progress reports to the CSPVG, in March and September. The Department subsequently was awarded the pay increases available under *Sustaining Progress* in recognition of the progress achieved.

During 2005, the Department received funding from the central Change Management Fund in support of key change initiatives undertaken within the Department. Funding was also provided for a number of Public Service modernisation cross-Departmental initiatives. The Department's Strategy Statement 2005-2007 was published, setting a clear direction for the Department's activities over the next few years.

Partnership

The Department's Partnership Committee, and its associated sub-Groups, provide a forum for involving staff in matters of importance to the Department. It has a particular role in assisting the implementation of the Department's Modernisation Programme.

During 2005 the Committee considered the following topics, among others: the Department's Fourth and Fifth Progress Reports to the Performance Verification Group; the new Civil Service Policy on a Positive Working Environment; recommendations in relation to Employee Recognition Awards; the Employee Opinion Survey 2005; training for structured Interviews; and revised training and support materials to assist the introduction of integrated PMDS/HR processes.

Official Languages

The Department's Scheme under the Official Languages Act was confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July and came into effect on 1 September 2005. It covers a three-year period from 2005 to 2008.

Recycling and Energy Usage

The Department follows best practice in relation to recycling. We take advantage of the available recycling facilities - including paper, cardboard, glass, tins, plastics, and IT and Electronic Equipment - and use recycled paper, wherever possible.

Our energy costs are shared with the other occupants of the Government Buildings complex, and discussions are continuing with them and with the Office of Public Works to identify further possibilities for energy savings.

Health and Safety

The Department continues to ensure compliance with national Health and Safety standards by monitoring, developing and communicating procedures to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for staff, visitors and contractors. The Department's Safety Statement is updated on a regular basis, annual safety audits are carried out, and Health and Safety training is provided.

Better Regulation

As a Department, our objective in relation to regulation is to ensure that, whenever regulation is justified, it is prepared in a fully transparent way which maximises public participation in its formulation. We also seek to ensure that it is clear, achieves its objectives, is not overly burdensome, is properly enforced, has no unintended effects and is reviewed regularly.

Freedom of Information

A manual which provides a guide to the structures of the Department to help access information under the FOI Acts, is available at www.gov.ie/taoiseach/publication/ Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are co-ordinated by the FOI Officer, Ms. Patricia Williams. (e-mail: foi@taoiseach.gov.ie; telephone 01 619 4154).

A total of 61 applications under the Freedom of Information Acts were received by the Department during 2005. Applications were received from the following groups: journalists 32; business 7; and others 22.

FOI requests were dealt with as follows:

Requests granted	22
Requests part granted	18
Requests refused	4
Requests withdrawn	5
No records held	12
TOTAL	61

Staff serving in the Department are permitted access to their individual personnel files and records on request, without the need for a FOI application.

Appendix 1:

Gender breakdown of Staff Serving in the Department

Grade	No of Staff	Male	Female	% of Women in each Grade
Secretary General	1	1	0	0
Second Secretary	1	1	0	0
Assistant Secretary	4	3	1	25
Principal Officer - PO	13	9	4	31
Assistant Principal - AP	32	15	17	53
Higher Executive Officer - HEO	22	7	15	68
Administrative Officer - AO	19	7	12	63
Executive Officer - EO	25	3	22	88
Staff Officer - SO	13	1	12	92
Clerical Officer - CO	49	8	41	84
Service Officers/Service Attendants	12	12	0	0
Cleaners	10	0	10	100
Totals	201	67	134	67

Note: Work sharers are counted as one person. People on secondment or on contract to this Department, or who are currently on career break, are not included. Figures reflect the position at December, 2005.

Appendix 2:

Expenditure for the year 2005

	2005 Provisional Outturn
	€000
ADMINISTRATION	
Salaries, wages and allowances	11,592
Travel and subsistence	775
Incidental expenses	1,519
Postal and telecommunications	506
Office Machinery & Office Supplies	919
Offices Premises Expenses	486
Consultancy Services	117
Information Society - eCabinet.	1,293
Total Administration	17,206
OTHER SERVICES	
National Economic and Social Council (<i>Grant-in-Aid</i>)	790
Grants under Section 2 of the Irish sailors and Soldiers Land Trust Act, 1988	0
Forum for Peace and Reconciliation	1
Commemoration Initiatives	86
All Party Committee on the Constitution	337
Information Society Commission	334
National Centre for Partnership and Performance	1,041
National Economic and Social Forum (<i>Grant-in-Aid</i>)	689
Tribunal of Inquiry (McCracken)	0
Tribunal of Inquiry (Moriarty)	3,437
Independent Commission of Inquiry	354
National Economic and Social Development Office	1,168
National Forum on Europe	1,295
Newfoundland and Labrador Business Partnerships	315
Einclusion	1,065
Science Olympiad	500
Commission of Investigation	926
Task Force on Active Citizenship	0
Gross Total	29,542
Less Appropriations-in-Aid	-127
Net Total	29,415

Appendix 3:

Report on Payment Practices for 2005

Details of Late Payments

	2005
Total Interest Paid in the Period	5041.01
Late Payments in Excess of €317:	
Total Number	416
Total Value	1,048,611.06
Total Amount of Interest	4,675.02
Average Length of Delay	19 days
All Late Payments:	
Total Number	853
As a Proportion of Total Payments:	
Total Value of Late Payments/Total Value of All Payments x 100	1,102,832.79/11,539,700x100 =9.6%

Appendix 4

Statement of Compliance

1. I acknowledge, as Finance Officer, that the Department of the Taoiseach is fully complying with the provisions of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997.
2. Procedures have been established in the Department to ensure compliance with the Act. These include a comprehensive system for handling all invoices received in the Department, guidelines issued to all the relevant staff and bodies under the aegis of the Department and training for all responsible staff.
3. It should be noted that the procedures referred to at 2. above can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material non-compliance with the Act.
4. In the year ending 31 December 2005, the above procedures were fully implemented.

Aileen Healy
Finance Officer
1 February 2006

Appendix 5:

Department of the Taoiseach Customer Charter

The Department of the Taoiseach is committed to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to all our customers.

Our mandate is to support the Taoiseach in his constitutional and ceremonial role as Head of Government and to assist him in providing effective leadership, co-ordination and guidance across key policy areas. The staff of the Department conscientiously and impartially serve the Taoiseach and Government of the day, the Ministers of State, the other institutions of State and the general public, always acting with diligence, efficiency and courtesy.

Our Commitments to our customers

We aim to provide an excellent service that reflects your needs and expectations. To achieve this, we make the following commitments:

Policy Development and Implementation

We will aim to ensure that our contribution to the development and implementation of Government policy adds value to the achievement of our national and international goals.

Contacting the Department

We will provide details of the role/function of staff in relevant publications and on the websites and specific contact information in all correspondence.

Responding to You

You will receive clear, timely and concise replies to all correspondence, including e-mails. If your correspondence relates to a matter that comes within the remit of another public body, we will direct the correspondence to that body and inform you accordingly. If you contact us by telephone, courteous and helpful staff will deal with your query without delay or, if they are unable to respond to the query, arrange for someone to do so.

Meetings

Meetings will be organised and conducted efficiently and effectively. You can expect excellent meeting facilities, timely notification and advance circulation of clear and concise documentation for each meeting.

Visitors to the Department

All visitors to the Department will be treated in a courteous manner and directed to their correct destination quickly. High quality reception facilities will be provided, including appropriate provision for people with disabilities.

Media Services

We will provide members of the media with comprehensive and timely briefings on Government policies and activities. Appropriate staff will also be available to ensure that you receive a prompt and satisfactory response to your queries.

The Irish Language

We will ensure that customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish can do so.

Websites and publications

We will provide accessible, informative and usable websites. We will ensure that our publications are clear and concise, address user needs and are available on our websites.

Tours of Government Buildings

We will provide informative tours of Government Buildings conducted by qualified guides, to make your visit a positive experience.

Diversity and Equality

We will respect the principles of equality and the diversity of our customers in the delivery of all services.

Suppliers

We will operate clear, impartial and transparent tendering/ purchasing procedures.

Evaluation and reporting

This Charter has been developed following consultation with a wide range of our customers. We have defined criteria by which we will assess our performance against each of our commitments and will regularly survey our customers on the quality of the services we provide. We will report on our performance against each of these criteria in our Annual Report.

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this Charter, or on any of the services we provide. We also have a procedure for responding to any complaints you may have.

In return, we expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.

Appendix 6:

Associated Bodies

The following Bodies are under the aegis of the Department of the Taoiseach:

National Economic and Social Development Office
National Economic and Social Council
National Economic and Social Forum
National Centre for Partnership and Performance

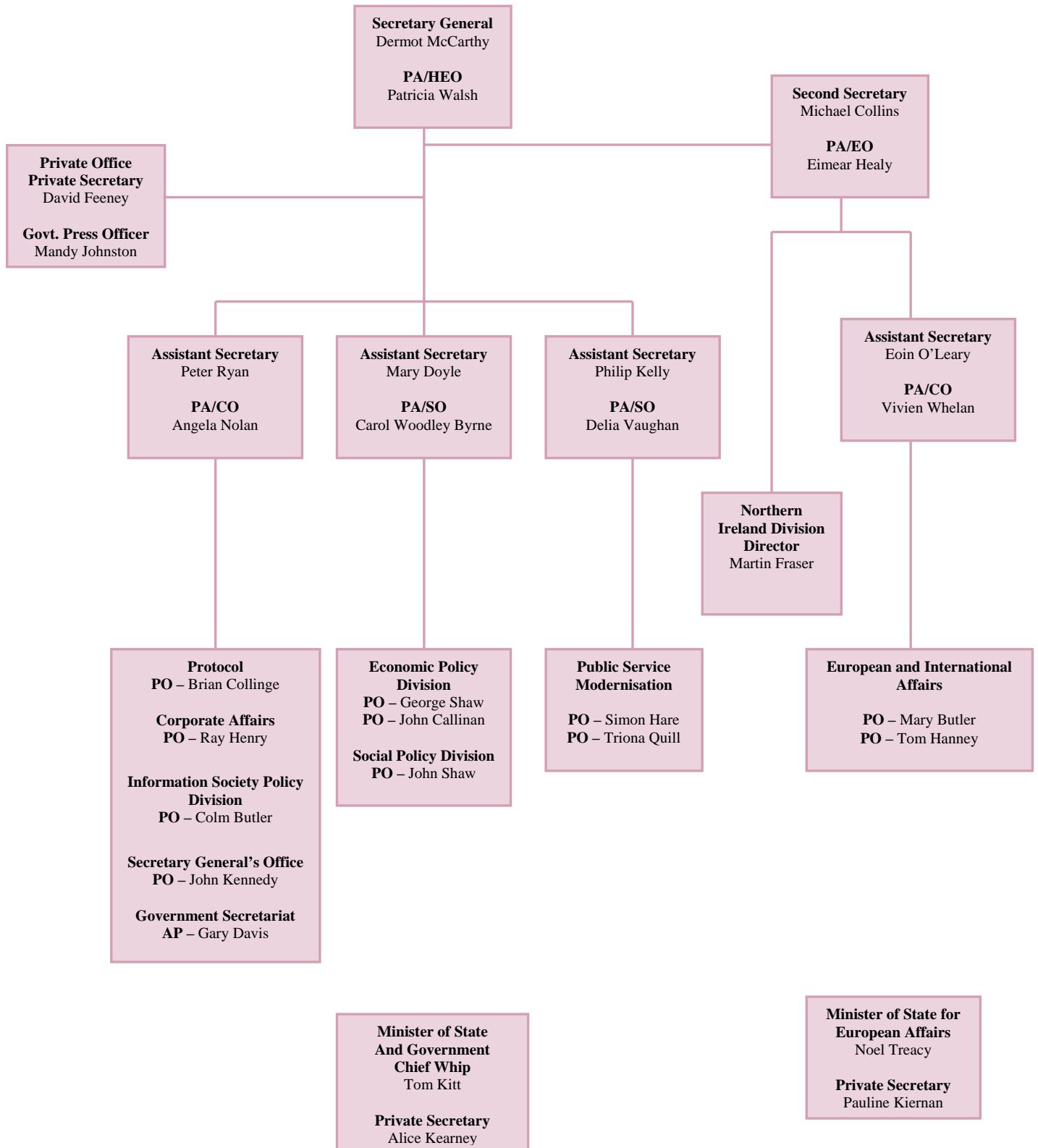
The following offices operate independently but are funded from the Department's Vote:

National Forum on Europe
Forum for Peace and Reconciliation
All Party Committee on the Constitution
The Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Bombings in Dublin, Monaghan and Dundalk
The Moriarty Tribunal
Commission of Investigation (Dublin and Monaghan Bombings 1974)
Irish Newfoundland Partnership
Task Force on Active Citizenship

In addition, the Taoiseach and/or Ministers of State have ministerial responsibility for certain administrative matters in the following independent Offices:

Central Statistics Office
Office of the Attorney General
Office of the Chief State Solicitor
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
Law Reform Commission

Appendix 7: Department of the Taoiseach Organisation Chart



Appendix 8:

Glossary of abbreviations used in this document

AO	Administrative Officer
AP	Assistant Principal
C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CCEA	Cabinet Committee on European Affairs
CMOD	Centre for Management and Organisation Development
CPMR	Committee for Public Management Research
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSPVG	Civil Service Performance Verification Group
CSTDC	Civil Service Training and Development Centre
ECOFIN	European Finance Ministers' Council
EIB	European Investment Bank
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Government Information Service
GNP	Gross National Product
GPO	Government Press Office
HEO	Higher Executive Officer
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
IBEC/CIF	Irish Business and Employers Confederation/Construction Industry Federation
ICCEUA	Inter-Departmental Co-ordinating Committee on EU Affairs
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IR	Industrial Relations
IMC	Independent Monitoring Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISC	Information Society Commission
ISPU	Information Society Policy Unit
KSF	Knowledge Society Foresight
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
MIF	Management Information Framework
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NCPP	National Centre for Partnership and Performance
NDA	National Disability Authority
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESDO	National Economic and Social Development Office
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
PO	Principal Officer
PPPs	Public Private Partnerships

PSM	Public Service Modernisation
PVG	Performance Verification Group
QCS	Quality Customer Service
RIA	Regulatory Impact Analysis
SI	Statutory Instrument
SMEs	Small to Medium Size Enterprises
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States